

**CITY OF NORWALK
COMMISSION ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN - REGULAR MEETING
MARCH 13, 2023
VIA TELECONFERENCE**

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Members of the public who wish to provide "live comments" will need to register in advance and use the Zoom meeting platform. All participants will be muted upon entering the meeting. To speak, click the "raise your hand indicator" and you will be called on by the host of the meeting during the public comment section.

Members of the public who wish to view the meeting, but are not participating, can view a live stream on the City of Norwalk YouTube channel. This stream is delayed by approximately 20 seconds.

Members of the public who wish to provide public comment are encouraged to submit those via email in advance of the meeting. For these comments to be read into the record, they should be submitted at least three hours in advance of the meeting start time. Please email Michelle Woods Matthews at mwoodsmatthews@norwalkct.org to provide written public comment prior to the meeting.

ATTENDANCE: Claudia Conner, Chair; Sharon Baanante; Chantal Coffy;
Shannon O'Toole Giandurco; Jasmine Prezzie; Sarah Rendon Garcia;
Kristina Testa Buzzee; Ivonne Zucco

STAFF: Laosie King and Michelle Woods Matthews

I. CALL TO ORDER

Ms. Conner called the meeting to order at 7:05 p.m.

II. APPROVAL OF MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

a. February 1, 2023

**** MS. COFFY MOVED TO APPROVE THE MINUTES AS PRESENTED**
**** MOTION PASSED WITH TWO ABSTENTIONS (MS. COFFY AND MS. ZUCCO)**

February 13, 2023

**** MS. BAANANTE MOVED TO APPROVE THE MINUTES AS PRESENTED**
**** MOTION PASSED WITH ONE (1) ABSTENTION (MS. ZUCCO)**

III. PUBLIC COMMENT

There were no members of the public who wished to comment this evening.

IV. NEW BUSINESS

- Diversification of Boards of Commissions Committee

- o Diversifying Boards and Commission presentation
- o Laosie King and Michelle Woods Matthews from the Mayor's office will give an update on how the City has responded to recommendations from the Diversification of Boards of Commissions Committee's presentation

Ms. Baanante shared her screen and thanked the members of the Diversifying Committee. She described the purpose and goals of the committee, along with the make up and data of the City of Norwalk. Currently there are 32 boards and commissions and Ms. Baanante reviewed the make up of those boards and commissions. She said the numbers have improved and they are focusing on the board and commission positions that are appointed by the Mayor.

Ms. Testa Buzzee explained that part of their research includes looking at best practices. They hope that by diversifying boards and commissions, decisions will be made that represent the community. It will also increase the trust of the community.

Ms. Baanante reviewed the five best practices and noted that most of the items have been accomplished.

Ms. Conner thanked the Committee members and said it was heartening to see the progress. She said she saw a lot of overlap and that can be a discussion at next month's meeting.

Ms. King thanked the Commission for pushing this topic. She said that for decades mayors have appointed people they know and there was no process. She added that a lot of progress has been made.

Ms. King explained that the plan in her office is to offer City Government 101 and provide training to board and commission members. This training will include DEAI, ethics and FOI along with how meetings are conducted. Ms. King explained that it is a lot of work to teach, track and train. They also have to think about collecting demographic information. The bottom line is that the Mayor has to feel comfortable that anyone they appoint will support their vision.

Ms. King said they also have to consider that boards and commissions have rules and they have to balance party parity rule. It is a political process in terms of having a common vision for the direction of the City. She said the best way to have diversity on boards and commissions is for people to submit their interest. She added that it is hard to find people who are willing to join a board or commission.

Ms. O'Toole Giandurco said the Mayor is very willing to review names and it is up to the Commission to make people aware of the openings.

Ms. Testa Buzzee asked if there was a marketing budget to promote this. Ms. King said they do not have a budget, but she can take this up with Ms. Woods Mathews about promoting this on social media.

The next step is that Ms. King and Ms. Woods Mathews will meet with the Ambassadors to come up with a game plan.

b. Advocacy efforts to support legislation this session.

- Claudia Conner, Shannon O'Toole Giandurco and Michelle Woods Matthews share updates.

Ms. Woods Matthews talked about the Domestic Violence and Gun Control Bill. This bill would require a 10-day waiting period before an individual could purchase a firearm. Another part of the Bill requires safe storage of firearms.

Ms. Conner talked about the Child Marriage Bill which increases the legal age of marriage to 18.

**** MS. COFFY MOVED TO SUPPORT HB6569 AND WOULD SUPPORT THE
COMMISSION TAKING ACTION BY WRITTEN TESTIMONY
** MS. BAANANTE SECONDED
** MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY**

c. Community Outreach and Civic Engagement work

- Project ideas

Ms. Conner said she and Ms. Alessandro met and discussed ideas for partnership. She said she will ask Ms. Alessandro to share those ideas at the next meeting. They hope to get regular meetings scheduled. They would like to create an annual event next year for Women's History Month. The Commissioners discussed the event and funding opportunities.

V. OLD BUSINESS

a. Reports of committees following Special Meeting

- Community Outreach and Civic Engagement
- Research Committee
- Diversification of Boards of Commissions Committee

These items were discussed earlier.

b. Updates about the April 10th meeting:

- Members of the Norwalk Actions for Reproductive Justice will present to the Commission and discuss upcoming events.

Ms. Rendon Garcia reported that they are working on a survey this summer and the next phase will be to work on the details for the survey questions. She said they are working on follow up on providing feminine products in city buildings. Ms. Zucco is working on a cost analysis.

Ms. Baanante reported that the Committee members will meet this month to discuss how they want to move forward.

A fund raising event will be held on March 31st at the Blind Rhino for the Norwalk Actions for Reproductive Justice.

- The Lt. Governor plans to come to an upcoming meeting.

The Lt. Governor will join a meeting when she is available.

Ms. Conners announced that a new member of the Commission will join next month's meeting. There is still one more vacancy on the Commission. She encouraged people to go to the City of Norwalk's website and apply.

VI. MOTION TO ADJOURN

**** MS. TESTA BUZZEE MOVED TO ADJOURN**

**** MS. PREZZIE SECONDED**

**** MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY**

There was no further business, and the meeting was unanimously adjourned at 8:18 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Rosemarie Lombardi
Telesco Secretarial Services