

**City of Norwalk
Commission on the Status of Women
Regular Meeting
February 13, 2023**

ATTENDANCE: Claudia Werman Conner, Kristina Testa-Buzzee, Shannon O'Toole Giandurco, Jasmine Prezzie, Melody D'Alessandro, Sharon Baanante

STAFF: Michelle Woods Matthews, Director of Communications

OTHER:

I. Call to Order

Ms. Conner called the meeting to order at 7:03.

II. Approval of the minutes from January 9, 2023

******Ms. Prezzie moved to approve the minutes from January 9, 2023.**

******Ms. Testa-Buzzee seconded the motion.**

******The motion passed with Ms. Baanante abstaining.**

III. Public Comments

Diane Lauricella is happy to see there are events around Women's History Month. She suggested that a book club would also be a good idea. She discussed a letter she wrote to Nancy on Norwalk about an incident that happened at a planning and zoning meeting and the need for gender sensitivity/diversity training. She felt she was attacked for giving constructive criticism.

Ms. Lauricella hopes that the Commission actively endorses female candidates for board and commission positions.

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IV. New Business

a. Updates about March 13 meeting:

- **Lt. Governor Susan Bysiewicz – will be a guest speaker.**

Ms. Conner confirmed Lt. Gov Bysiewicz will speak at the March 13 meeting. Ms. Matthews stated this is an opportunity for the commission to discuss with her what issues can be most impactful in supporting women. The commission will gather questions and send them to Ms. Matthews to forward to the Lt. Gov before the March 13 meeting.

- **Melissa Murray, a member of Norwalk Actions for Reproductive Justice asked if she could present to the Commission and discuss upcoming events.**

Ms. Murray asked to be a part of the March meeting, however, the agenda is full for the March meeting so the commission feels that it would be better to invite her to the April meeting. Then they would be able to give her more time, and do some research into the Norwalk Actions for Reproductive Justice issues and be better prepared to engage with them.

******Ms. Giandurco moved to invite the Norwalk Actions for Reproductive Justice to the April meeting.**

******The motion passed unanimously.**

b. Create a committee to focus on community outreach and civic engagement work:

- **They will review the ideas from the Special Meeting and come back to the Commission with some recommended next steps at the March meeting.**

Ms. Prezzie volunteered to join the committee with the purpose of action, moving forward with community outreach. Ms. Conner also agreed to join.

******Ms. Baanante moved to create a community outreach committee.**

******The motion passed unanimously.**

c. Women's History Month event ideas

Ms. Matthews proposed planning something for Women's History Month. Ms. Baanante asked if it was the commission's role to create events. Other commissions in Norwalk don't plan events, and maybe this would come under the outreach committee. Ms. D'Alessandro doesn't feel that they can get an event organized by March, but would like to look ahead to organize an event with the Norwalk Historical Society to celebrate women in Norwalk's history. She suggested that they look into what the Historical Society is already doing, so they don't overlap. Also, it would be nice to offer some sort of incentive to get more students involved. Ms. D'Alessandro will talk to the Historical Society and will report back to the commission at the next meeting. Ms. Matthews added that it is important to communicate with the schools to make sure they are not doing something similar, and that they are on board with working with the commission.

d. Women's Rights Are Human Rights, Exhibition opened in January at the Fairfield University Art Museum through April 6, 2023.

Ms. Matthews shared the details of the exhibition at the Fairfield University Art Museum since Ms. Garcia wasn't able to attend the meeting and share the details herself.

e. The Nominating Committee put forth a slate of election nominations for Chair and Vice Chair.

Ms. Conner feels that a Nominating Committee is no longer needed, and that everyone on the commission can contribute to inviting new members.

******Ms. Prezzie moved to disband the nominating committee.**

******Ms. Baanante seconded the motion.**

******The motion passed unanimously.**

Ms. Conner confirmed that Ms. Keegan had stepped down from the committee in February and would no longer be the Chairperson. Ms. Prezzie put forth their suggestions for going forward. Ms. Conner was nominated as the new Chairperson and Ms. Giandurco was nominated for Vice-Chair. Ms. Baanante asked each woman if they believed in reproductive rights. Ms.

Conner stated that she does believe in reproductive rights, however, that is not a qualifier for this position. Ms. Giandurco also confirmed that she believes in reproductive rights.

******Ms. Testa-Buzzee moved to accept the slate as proposed.**

******Ms. Baanante seconded the motion.**

******The motion passed unanimously.**

V. Old Business

a. Reports of committees following Special Meeting

• Diversity Committee

o Presenting Diversifying Boards and Commission presentation at March meeting

Ms. Baanante confirmed that they will present at the March meeting. They will reiterate what they have already done, and the plans going forward.

o Working with the City on initiatives to diversify Boards and Commission

Ms. Matthews stated the first step is identifying which boards and commissions have the least amount of gender parity.

• Nominations Committee

This committee has been disbanded.

• Research Committee

Nobody from the Research Committee is in attendance tonight. The committee has a meeting scheduled for February 21, 2023. Ms. Conner explained that the committee was created to prioritize objectives for the Commission on the Status of Women. Ms. Baanante stressed that conducting a survey of public opinion would really help. The city was originally against a survey.

VII. Adjournment

****** Ms. Testa-Buzzee moved to adjourn the meeting**

****** Ms. Prezzie seconded the motion.**

****** The motion passed unanimously.**

The meeting adjourned at 7:53. .

Respectfully submitted.

Amy Chaple
Telesco Secretarial Services