

**City of Norwalk
Commission on the Status of Women
Special Meeting
February 1, 2023**

ATTENDANCE: Michelle Woods Matthews, Claudia Werman Conner, Anna Keegan, Sarah Rendon Garcia, Ivonne Zucco, Kristina Testa-Buzzee, Shannon O'Toole Giandurco, Chantal Coffy

STAFF: Latoya Fernandez, Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Officer

I. Call to Order

Ms. Matthews called the meeting to order at 5:30

II. Public Comments

Diane Lauricella called in to discuss women on public boards in Norwalk. She would like the two empty seats on the Board of Estimation to go to women. She is also concerned that there aren't enough women on the Board of the Harbor Watch. She made the point that she has not always been treated well by board members. She feels there should be training on how to treat women in all commissions and boards in Norwalk City Government.

III. Discuss 2023 and beyond priorities ideas: a. Special Guest: LaToya Fernandez, Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Officer

Ms. Matthews introduced Ms. Fernandez and explained that she will outline two or three priorities for the commission this year. Ms. Fernandez mentioned that she met with the Fairfield Community Foundation and feels working with them will help to get women on boards and commissions in Norwalk,

She would also like to get involved with youth organizations to get them involved with the city at the local level to create a pipeline of community service opportunities.

Ms. Matthews shared her list of priorities. She talked about a recent presentation about the Hill sisters who were Norwalk residents who were instrumental in gaining suffrage for women. The city recently dedicated a plaque to the Hill sisters, and would like to make this history a point of interest in Norwalk.

Ms Matthews would like to organize more outreach opportunities to partner with the commission. Lastly, she would like to advocate for legislation promoting women in politics, and mental health issues among youth in Norwalk.

Ms. Zucco said the Norwalk Redevelopment Office will offer 10 workshops for non profit organizations. She will share the details in the email to the commission.

All agree the presentation about the Hill sisters was impactful, and will be a stepping stone to further women's empowerment. Ms. Garcia would like to have more community engagement around historic women in Norwalk that have made a difference. Ms. Testa-Buzzee mentioned Ms. Cave who was one of the first female mayors of Norwalk.

All agree there is urgency in getting women on boards and commissions in the city of Norwalk, and a great way to do this would be an awareness event. Ms. Coffy suggested working with the Business Development Council.

Ms. Zucco asked how to know what seats on boards and commissions are available. Ms. Matthews showed where to look on the City of Norwalk website, which is regularly updated.

Ms. Coffy will reach out to the BET to understand the requirements for their two empty seats, and let the commission know.

There was discussion about how the commission members can share their experiences and help new appointees to boards. This can be offering in boarding or mentorships.

The next steps are to identify short term and long term goals.

VII. Adjournment

****** Ms. Conner moved to adjourn the meeting.**

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

The meeting adjourned at 6:45.

Respectfully submitted.

Amy Chaple
Telesco Secretarial Services