

**CITY OF NORWALK
NORWALK COMMISSION ON GENDER EQUITY
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES - MARCH 9, 2026
VIA ZOOM VIRTUAL CONFERENCE**

ATTENDEES: Kristina Testa-Buzzee, Shannon O'Toole-Giandurco, Ivonne Zucco, Sharon Baanante, Emma Dignoti, Jasmine Prezzie, Joy Dejaegar

STAFF: Brandalyn Fulton Williams

I. CALL TO ORDER

Ms. Testa-Buzzee called the meeting to order at 7:02 p.m.

II. ROLL CALL

Ms. Testa-Buzzee conducted the roll call. A quorum was established.

III. ACCEPTANCE OF MINUTES

A. Regular Meeting: July 14, 2025

Ms. Testa-Buzzee stated that the minutes from the Regular Meeting of July 14, 2025, were before the Commission for review and asked if there were any edits.

****MS. BAANANTE MOVED TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF THE REGULAR MEETING OF JULY 14, 2025.**

****MS. DEJAEGAR SECONDED THE MOTION.**

****THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY. THE MINUTES WERE APPROVED AS PRESENTED.**

IV. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Diane Lauricella, 21 Little Fox Lane

She expressed that she was pleased to see the Commission back on track and needed especially nowadays. She stated that true gender equity means including equity on all boards, commissions, committees, and authorities. She noted that the City still does not have anywhere near gender equity on several boards and commissions, especially the Shellfish Commission, Board of Estimate and Taxation where there is one female, and the Harbor Commission, and a few others. She suggested advertising openings in local papers instead of only online. She referenced the honoring of women commissioners for Women's History Month and noted her past issues with the Water Quality Committee that were never resolved and that there is currently no water quality committee that advises the mayor. She indicated she would speak with the new mayor, Barbara Smith, about this. She thanked all of the commissioners for volunteering and hoped to have discussions about improving gender equity across the board. Ms. Testa-Buzzee thanked Ms. Lauricella for her time and attention.

V. UPDATES

A. Reappointments of Commissioner Testa-Buzzee, Prezzie and Coffy by City Council February 2026

Ms. Testa-Buzzee publicly thanked the City Council for the reappointments of herself, Ms. Prezzie, and Ms. Coffy on February 26, 2026.

VI. NEW BUSINESS

A. Identifying an action agenda and priorities for the Commission

Ms. Testa-Buzzee opened the floor for an open discussion to identify and clarify the Commission's action agenda and priorities for the year, suggesting a focus on two or three achievable action items.

Ms. Zucco stated that as part of the legislative group, a priority should be engaging the whole Commission into inviting informative bipartisan dialogue on issues in line with the Commission and continuing to pursue informing the public in Norwalk about what is happening regarding gender equity and issues that may affect Norwalk residents.

Ms. O'Toole-Giandurco referenced the point made by Ms. Zucco and welcomed Ms. Fulton Williams as staff liaison, noting a gray area on whether the Commission is allowed to have its own social media page to get information out, as the Bike Walk Task Commission seems to have its own but the Commission was told anything done needed to be through the City. She asked where the Commission can publicize events such as the one Jasmine has helped with the public schools. Ms. Testa-Buzzee noted the tactical question about social media and that it might be a priority to get clarity on that.

Ms. Baanante suggested thinking in buckets with the overlying umbrella of partnering with the City, including figuring out the social media piece and how to market it, marketing the positions open on the boards and commissions as the public speaker suggested, getting access to gender-related data that the City owns so the Commission can be data-driven, gender data for commissions and boards, gender data for sports offered by Parks and Rec to ensure everything is equitable, and identifying opportunities for the Commission to participate in relevant City events such as the raising of the pride flag and Women's History Month programs. Ms. Testa-Buzzee emphasized wanting to make sure the Commission is invited to participate rather than having to ask permission and that an acknowledgement of the existence of the Commission is part of that partnership.

Ms. Zucco suggested pursuing partnerships with nonprofits aligned with the mission to raise more awareness in the town. Ms. Baanante added that the outreach committee could have one nonprofit or a legislator at each of the next meetings.

Ms. Prezzie stated that she had nothing different to add but agreed with everything being said and that these are the priorities agreed upon last year, with overarching priorities and many things attached to them. She emphasized the visibility based on personal connections and the need for invitations from the City.

Ms. Testa-Buzzee asked about other areas for gender data such as mental health use of services in the City through a gender lens. Ms. Baanante suggested starting with the human services department and having a meeting just to talk about data. Ms. Zucco suggested having a conversation again about having a small budget as a Commission to support efforts such as a tablecloth and representation of youth on the Commission for the three openings. Ms. Testa-Buzzee confirmed youth would mean high school and college students and noted there is nothing preventing them from joining.

Ms. Baanante noted that recruiting three more commissioners should be at the very top of the list. Ms. Testa-Buzzee stated that nothing in the conversation needed a vote but that there may be some action items and that she, along with the vice chairs Ms. Zucco and Ms. O'Toole-Giandurco, can have conversations about getting a plan together.

B. Commission Calendar — including

1. Norwalk Public School Event for Womens History Month

Ms. Testa-Buzzee asked Ms. Prezzie for an update on the Norwalk Public Schools event. Ms. Prezzie summarized that Norwalk Public Schools has planned a community event for Women's History Month on March 24th at City Hall at 5 o'clock with student performances, a TED Talk style presentation by a female teacher from Tracy, and collaboration on the Impact Awards. There will be a networking piece in the lobby with five tables for agencies and organizations that promote gender equity. The Commission can have its own table, read its mission and goals, and provide recommendations for other organizations. Nominations for outstanding woman or young woman of Norwalk are through a Google form on the landing page. Norwalk Public Schools will handle promotion through social media, Parent Square, newsletter, and an event page. The mayor has a tentative yes to attend. Ms. Testa-Buzzee noted the need to extend the nomination deadline to the 18th with review by herself, Ms. Dignoti, and Ms. Prezzie. Ms. Prezzie agreed to share the updated flyer. Ms. Fulton Williams agreed to follow up on the mayor's attendance and requested to be copied on future communications regarding the mayor. Discussion followed on who would participate on stage, with Ms. Testa-Buzzee, Ms. Dignoti, and Ms. O'Toole-Giandurco indicating availability to help in any way needed. Ms. Prezzie stated the more the merrier. For the table, the Commission would highlight itself and answer questions. Ms. Prezzie confirmed they are open to suggestions for other agencies to table and will handle outreach. Ms. Baanante asked if the outreach committee had already started a list of nonprofits. Ms. Testa-Buzzee stated they would address that under the outreach committee update.

2. Highlighting of Women Commissioners

Ms. Testa-Buzzee noted that this was an idea referenced previously but that no one had raised their hand to lead it. Ms. Zucco raised her hand to lead this initiative. Ms. Dignoti and Ms. Dejaegar raised their hands to help. Ms. Baanante asked if it was to be done in the next month. Ms. Testa-Buzzee stated to give grace as it might be hard this month and that it does not necessarily have to happen in March. Ms. Zucco stated she could move it quickly if she could get bios from everyone. Ms. Fulton Williams offered to provide the recent list of women on each board and commission as she reviews them. Ms. O'Toole-Giandurco suggested taking this as a go-forward project after the awards event. Ms. Testa-Buzzee summarized that the priority this month is the Norwalk Public Schools event.

VII. OLD BUSINESS

A. Legislative Advocacy Committee Update

1. Bylaws discussion "Discuss revisions to Commission on Gender Equity's bylaws"

a. Advocacy

Ms. Baanante provided the update on behalf of the Legislative Advocacy Committee consisting of herself, Ms. Dignoti, and Ms. Zucco. She stated the committee drafted language to update the bylaws so the Commission could advocate in an advisory role on issues directly impacting women and gender-expansive individuals in Norwalk, with all letters or testimony requiring review and full vote by the Commission and done in partnership with the City. Next steps include sending the language to corporation counsel for feedback, circulating it to commissioners, reviewing and discussing at the April meeting, and holding a public hearing for comments at the May meeting. Ms. Testa-Buzzee noted the need to confirm the accurate timeline. Ms. Baanante confirmed review and discussion next with a potential vote following. Ms. Fulton Williams requested the language, previous emails from the City, and any previous letters for background.

b. Reappointments

Ms. O'Toole-Giandurco suggested adding language to the bylaws that commissioners serve until replaced to prevent future pauses during election seasons. Ms. Testa-Buzzee noted that other board bylaws have that language.

B. Outreach Committee Updates

Ms. Testa-Buzzee stated the outreach committee currently consists of Ms. Prezzie and Ms. O'Toole-Giandurco and asked for any updates. There were none at this time. Ms. Zucco suggested connecting with the Rowan Center for Sexual Assault Awareness Month in April to amplify the voice of the local agency and offered to make the connection. Ms. Testa-Buzzee stated she would reach out to all current commissioners to confirm continued membership on the outreach committee.

C. Commission Vacancies

Ms. Testa-Buzzee stated there are three vacancies. Ms. Baanante noted the website usually tells who is needed but is not updated. Ms. Fulton Williams agreed to update the website. Ms. Testa-Buzzee asked for a volunteer to identify all agencies with vacancies for the next meeting but none volunteered immediately.

VIII. DISCUSSION

There was no additional discussion.

IX. ADJOURNMENT

****MS. O'TOOLE-GIANDURCO MOVED TO ADJOURN THE MEETING.**

****MS. PREZZIE SECONDED THE MOTION.**

****THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

The meeting was adjourned at 7:59 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,
Courtney Baldwin
Recording Secretary