

**CITY OF NORWALK
COMMISSION ON GENDER EQUITY
SPECIAL MEETING MINUTES - APRIL 20, 2026
VIRTUAL MEETING VIA ZOOM**

ATTENDEES: Dr. Kristina Testa-Buzzee, Sharon Baanante, Joy Dejaeger, Emma Dignoti, Simone E. Morris, Shannon O'Toole Giandurco, Jasmine Prezzie, Ivonne Zucco, Emma Dignoti.

STAFF: Brandalyn Williams.

I. CALL TO ORDER

Chair Dr. Testa-Buzzee called the special meeting of the Commission on Gender Equity to order at 7:04 p.m. on April 20, 2026.

II. ROLL CALL

Dr.. Testa-Buzzee conducted roll call. Present were Ms. Baanante, Ms. Dejaeger, Ms. Dignoti, Ms. Morris, Ms. O'Toole Giandurco, Ms. Prezzie, Ms. Zucco, and Dr. Testa-Buzzee. Dr. Testa-Buzzee announced that seven members were present and a quorum was established.

III. ACCEPTANCE OF MINUTES

A. Regular Meeting: March 09, 2026

- **MS. BAANANTE MOVED TO REVIEW THE MINUTES OF THE MARCH 9, 2026, REGULAR MEETING.**
- **MS. ZUCCO SECONDED THE MOTION.**
- **THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

Dr.. Testa-Buzzee noted that the minutes from the March 9, 2026 regular meeting had been distributed and that she had a few corrections. Dr. Testa-Buzzee requested that she be referred to as Dr. Testa-Buzzee in the minutes rather than Ms. and that the minutes reflect that there were two vacancies at that time rather than three.

- **MS. PREZZIE MOVED TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF THE MARCH 9, 2026 REGULAR MEETING AS AMENDED.**
- **MS. DEJAEGER SECONDED THE MOTION.**
- **THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY. THE MINUTES WERE APPROVED AS AMENDED.**

IV. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

No public comment.

V. UPDATES

A. Welcome Commissioner Morris

Dr. Testa-Buzzee welcomed Ms. Morris as the newest commissioner. Ms. Morris introduced herself, stating that she has been a Norwalk resident since 2002, has owned her own business since 2015 as a leadership development consultant and executive career coach, and focuses on workplace inclusion. Ms. Morris expressed that this aligns well with the Commission's work and that she looks forward to contributing.

B. Review of Elevate and Lead

Dr. Testa-Buzzee thanked Ms. Prezzie for her leadership in the Commission's involvement with the Elevate and Lead program. Ms. Dignoti stated that the event was a great success, crediting Ms. Prezzie for making it happen on short notice and noting the strong partnership with the Norwalk Board of Education. Ms. Dignoti expressed that the Commission should do more events like this to increase visibility and help the City of Norwalk. Ms. Dejaeger agreed and noted that her volleyball players and daughter found the event empowering, highlighting the children's choir as a brilliant idea. Ms. Baanante echoed the positive feedback and appreciated seeing the nonprofits showcased. Dr. Testa-Buzzee noted that the event was collaborative with everyone contributing. Ms. O'Toole Giandurco complimented Ms. Prezzie again and stated that the Commission had been missing this type of impact. Ms. Prezzie agreed that the Commission had set a new standard and that the partnerships with nonprofits, the City of Norwalk, and Norwalk Public Schools were key to the success. Ms. Morris added that the event created nice momentum following the Mayor's Ball. Dr. Testa-Buzzee requested that Ms. Williams provide the Commission with a copy of the video shown at the Mayor's Ball highlighting Women's History Month. Ms. Morris suggested creating a sizzle reel of the Commission's work and events. Dr. Testa-Buzzee asked that Ms. Morris hold that idea for discussion under new business related to social media.

VI. OLD BUSINESS

A. Highlighting of Women Commissioners

Ms. Zucco reported that a meeting is scheduled for next week with Ms. Dejaeger, Ms. Dignoti, and Ms. Williams to begin brainstorming ideas for highlighting women commissioners. Ms. Williams noted that since the last meeting four women have been appointed to commissions, including Ms. Morris to this Commission, one woman to the Historical Commission, and two women to the Harbor Management Commission.

B. Bylaws discussion update

Dr. Testa-Buzzee reported that the legislative working group consisting of Ms. Baanante, Ms. Zucco, and Ms. Dignoti had received guidance from the Corporation Counsel. The guidance

stated that the Commission does not need to update its bylaws in order to submit letters of testimony or support or dissent on legislation. The Commission can bring such matters to a full Commission meeting for a vote. Ms. Baanante asked for clarification on the internal process for approving such letters. Dr. Testa-Buzzee stated that items would be brought to the Commission for a vote. Ms. Zucco and Ms. Dignoti confirmed their agreement with the approach.

Dr. Testa-Buzzee also reported that aspects of the ordinance and bylaws need to be aligned, including references to meeting dates, quorum requirements, and procedural rules. Dr. Testa-Buzzee and Ms. O'Toole Giandurco volunteered to work on updating the bylaws. Dr. Testa-Buzzee noted that the updated bylaws would first be brought to the Commission and then submitted to the City Council.

C. Commission Vacancies

Dr. Testa-Buzzee reported that there is now one vacancy on the Commission. She also reminded members that three terms will expire in September: those of Ms. Dejaeger, Ms. O'Toole Giandurco, and Ms. Zucco. Dr. Testa-Buzzee asked that they inform her and Ms. Williams if they are interested in reappointment or not. Ms. Baanante asked about the party affiliation of the current open seat. Ms. Williams stated she would check and send the information by email.

VII. NEW BUSINESS

A. Biennial Report

Dr. Testa-Buzzee stated that she will prepare a draft of the biennial report as required by the ordinance, providing a high-level summary of the Commission's activities. She asked if anyone would like to assist. Ms. Baanante volunteered to help. Ms. Williams noted that the specific content requirements are outlined in Chapter 115, Section L of the City Code.

B. Social Media Project Plan

Dr. Testa-Buzzee reported that she, Ms. Zucco, and Ms. O'Toole Giandurco had discussed the need for a social media presence. Ms. Zucco, Ms. Morris, and Ms. Dejaeger volunteered to work on developing a social media project plan. Ms. Baanante asked whether the Commission could have the City post information on its behalf rather than maintaining its own accounts. Dr. Testa-Buzzee and Ms. Williams confirmed that the Commission is permitted to create its own social media accounts and that the City may also promote Commission events when possible. Ms. Morris asked whether the Commission has a budget. Dr. Testa-Buzzee and Ms. Williams confirmed that the Commission does not currently have a budget. Ms. Zucco stated that the working group would discuss feasibility and parameters.

C. Commission Ordinance and Bylaws

This item was addressed under Old Business.

D. Memorial Day Parade

Dr. Testa-Buzzee reported that the Women’s League of Voters had invited the Commission to march in the Memorial Day Parade. Discussion ensued regarding whether to march with the League or as a separate entity and the importance of visibility and branding. Ms. Morris noted the need to consider the Commission’s brand. Dr. Testa-Buzzee stated that members should email her directly if they are interested in participating.

E. FOIA Reminders

Ms. Williams provided an overview of Freedom of Information Act requirements, reminding members that Commission business conducted via email is public record, that group emails among a quorum can constitute a serial meeting, and that committees or working groups reaching a quorum are also subject to open meeting requirements. Ms. Williams emphasized the importance of handling business during official meetings and keeping records organized. Dr. Testa-Buzzee, Ms. Zucco, and Ms. Morris asked clarifying questions, which Ms. Williams answered. Dr. Testa-Buzzee stated that formal training on these matters is forthcoming.

VIII. DISCUSSION

Dr. Testa-Buzzee announced an upcoming Connecticut Business and Industry Association HR hotline workshop on pregnancy in the workplace scheduled for April 29, 2026, and stated that she would share the link.

Ms. Williams thanked members who attended the Sexual Abuse Awareness Month event at City Hall and announced that the Lesbian Visibility Flag Raising event, originally scheduled for today, has been rescheduled to Thursday, April 23, 2026 at noon at City Hall.

IX. ADJOURNMENT

****MS. PREZZIE MOVED TO ADJOURN THE MEETING.**

****MS. SHANNON O'TOOLE GIANDURCO SECONDED THE MOTION.**

****THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

The meeting was adjourned at 8:03 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,
Courtney Baldwin
Recording Secretary