

**CITY OF NORWALK
COMMISSION ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN
REGULAR MEETING
JANUARY 13, 2025
VIA TELECONFERENCE**

ATTENDANCE: Shannon O'Toole-Giandurco; Co-Vice Chair, Ivonne Zucco; Co-Vice Chair, Emma Diognoti, Sharon Baanante, Joy Fatuba– De Jaeger, Sarah Renden-Garcia

STAFF: Michelle Woods-Mathews

OTHER: Jillian Gilchrest (D); State Representative, Dominique Johnson (D); State Representative. Chantal Coffy (7:42 p.m.)

I. CALL TO ORDER

Ms. O'toole– Giandurco called the meeting to order at 7:02 p.m.

II. ROLL CALL

The roll was called as reflected above.

III. ACCEPTANCE OF MINUTES

A. Regular Meeting: November 18, 2024

**** MS. ZUCCO MOVED TO APPROVE THE MINUTES.**

Ms. Rendon-Garcia noted her name was misspelled several times in the minutes. Ms. Baanante requested the removal of Ms. Tersta-Buzzee's name stating she was not a member of the Policy Committee.

**** THE MOTION TO APPROVE THE MINUTES PASSED UNANIMOUSLY**

IV. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

No members of the public were present for comment.

V. OLD BUSINESS

A. Ordinance Committee Presentation

Ms. O'Toole Giandurco stated the Common Council approved the name change. No members of the Common Council were present, so she read their follow-up into the record. The Ordinance Committee requested a change from gender non-conforming to gender diverse. She then explained what would be happening as they moved forward.

**** MS. BAANATI MOVED TO APPROVE THE CHANGE TO THE LANGUAGE.**

**** MS. DIGNOTI SECONDED THE MOTION.**

**** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

B. Bylaws Amendment

Ms. O-Toole Giandurco explained once they've been through the full path to approval the bylaws would have to be amended.

C. Committee Updates

1. Community Outreach

There were no Community Outreach updates.

2. Policy Advocacy

Ms. Baanante gave her an update on the new Legislative Advocacy Committee. She stated that they need to identify relationships and partnerships and create a process to move forward effectively. She also noted that if anyone was passionate about a bill coming forward that aligns

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with what they're doing, they should send her an email, and they would try to research it.

VI. NEW BUSINESS

While waiting for the two speakers the members discussed ideas regarding the March awards ceremony.

Rep. Johnson arrived at 7:13 p.m.

Rep. Gilchrist arrived at 7:15 p.m.

Ms. Baanante noted that Representative Johnson was instrumental in the reinstating of the Commission on the Status of Women.

A. Welcome by Kristina Testa-Buzzee, Chair, Norwalk Commission on the Status of Women

In the absence of Ms. Testa-Buzzee, Ms. O'Toole Giandurco welcomed the guests.

B. Introductions by Representative Gilchrest and Representative Johnson

There were no introductions by either party. The Commission proceeded straight to questions.

C. Questions:

- What priorities are on the table this year when it comes to gender equity centered policy?

Ms. Guilchrest stated she was the Chair of the Human Services committee. She discussed the increase in medical rates given to providers. She also discussed her presence on the Reproductive Rights Caucus. Pointed out several proposals that would strengthen patient/provider protections and Medicaid funding for Planned Parenthood in anticipation of actions taken by the new administration. She then discussed the partnership between Yukon Health and Jackson laboratory sample collection program that will aid research into potential diagnostic tools for endometriosis. Ms. Guilchrest continued by saying there were several proposals addressing sexual assault, domestic violence, and human trafficking.

Representative Johnson mentioned the proposal to ban female genital mutilation. She stated childcare and early childhood education were important priorities. She indicated the Early Childhood and Childcare Trust was already assigned a number and would be a high-priority bill. She also stated they were bringing back the lactation bill designed to make sure lactation consultants are licensed appropriately. Representative Gilchrest pointed out the bill was to recognize the IBCLC's in-state statute for Medicaid coverage.

- What are some of the ways that the CT legislature is continuing to act to protect reproductive healthcare rights in the state? Is the CT legislature considering a state constitutional amendment to more permanently protect these rights?

Rep. Guilchrest stated that they are continuing to prioritize access to all reproductive healthcare including abortion. She explained the importance of Medicaid funding and the difficulties posed by the Hyde Amendment. She said they wanted to codify EMTALA to ensure patient/provider protection. She added it would ensure protection for a person who arrives at the ER with a reproductive complication and will receive emergency care. Rep. Gilchrist mentions the expansion of the Shield Law. She went on to discuss the implementation of a federal non-cooperation Clause to ensure non-compliance if individuals in another state are looking to ban things on our behalf. She mentions the change from an infertility model to a fertility model with Medicaid coverage. Lastly, Ms. Gilchrist stated if the Reproductive Rights Caucus led the charge for a constitutional amendment they would support it though they would like something that protected the LBGTQ community as well. She explained the various pitfalls involved in trying to get a constitutional amendment.

Rep. Johnson addressed the concerns of the LBGTQ community. They felt a constitutional amendment protecting a right to privacy would be more effective.

- With mass deportations expected by our new Presidential Administration, can you tell us what state resources are available to assist mothers and families who may be impacted? Should we expect any bills or legislation to help protect this community?

Rep. Johnson said she had heard about potential legislation. Rep. Gilchrist described some of the issues that could be adversely affected by the new administration. She indicated they wanted to extend the protections to school librarians that are now given to public library librarians. She explained the Medicaid coverage currently available to undocumented individuals. She continued by saying they were having a conversation with the Department of Social Services that data about undocumented individuals remains private and can't be used by federal agencies.

Rep. Johnson discussed the apprehension in many communities about what may happen under the new administration. They indicated conversations are happening in Hartford about being proactively reactive to potential situations..

- What is the best way for our Commission and for individuals watching to advocate and keep up to date on bills?

Rep. Johnson said if you feel strongly about an issue it's best to talk to your state representative now. They said bills could be proposed until 1-18-25. They explained the process and the need to follow through at every phase. They also described the cga.ct.gov website referring to it as a bill tracker.

VII. DISCUSSION

Ms. Renden Garcia asked if there were any bills about the impact of social media on young people. Rep. John stated they felt data privacy and consumer protection would be priorities. They described several other issues that were being discussed. Ms. Rendon Garcia further emphasizes the need for protection for the younger folks.

Ms. Coffy (7:42 p.m.) thanked Ms. Gilchrist for her advocacy.

VIII. ADJOURNMENT

**** MS. FATABA DEJAEGER MOVED TO ADJOURN THE MEETING.**
**** MS. DIGNOTI SECONDED THE MOTION.**
**** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

The meeting was adjourned at 7:44 p.m.

Respectfully submitted
China Mayhew
Telesco Secretarial Services

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