

**COMMISSION ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN
SPECIAL MEETING
APRIL 25, 2022
VIA TELECONFERENCE**

To allow public access, anyone may access a meeting by telephone, Zoom, and/or the City of Norwalk YouTube channel. Specific instructions and links can be found at www.norwalkct.org/meetings

Members of the public can call in and listen to a meeting. They will not be able to speak or see any of the meeting participants. Each meeting will use a unique Meeting/Webinar ID.

Members of the public who wish to provide "live comments" will need to register in advance and use the Zoom meeting platform. All participants will be muted upon entering the meeting. To speak, click the "raise your hand indicator" and you will be called on by the host of the meeting during the public comment section.

Members of the public who wish to view the meeting, but are not participating, can view a live stream on the City of Norwalk YouTube channel. This stream is delayed by approximately 20 seconds.

Members of the public who wish to provide public comment are encouraged to submit those via email in advance of the meeting. For these comments to be read into the record, they should be submitted at least three hours in advance of the meeting start time. Please email Michelle Woods Matthews at MWoodsMatthews@norwalkct.org to provide written public comment prior to the meeting.

ATTENDANCE: Ana Keegan, Chair; Sharon Baanante; Kristina Testa Buzzee; Claudia Werman Connor; Jasmine Prezzie; Ivonne Zucco; Shannon O'Toole Giandurco (7:32 p.m.)

STAFF: Michelle Woods Mathews, Director of Communications

I. CALL TO ORDER

Ms. Keegan called the meeting to order at 7:18 p.m. The above members of the Commission were in attendance (as appeared on the meeting screen).

II. APPROVAL OF MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

a. March 21, 2022 Minutes

The following corrections were made to the minutes:

Correct the spelling of Ms. Baanante's name throughout.

Correct the spelling of Ms. Werman Connor's name throughout.

Page 5: Remove Ms. Baanante's name from the Nominating Committee

**** MS. TESTA BUZZEE MOVED TO ACCEPT THE MINUTES AS
CORRECTED
** MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY**

III. INTRODUCTION OF NEW STAFF

Ms. Keegan introduced Ms. Woods Matthews. Ms. Woods Matthews introduced herself and reviewed her background.

IV. PUBLIC COMMENT

Ms. Keegan read the following letter submitted by Ms. Diane Lauricella:

1. Can this Commission include a public comment section at the beginning (or end) of its meetings, similar to the process followed by the Common Council?
Since the 1990's, women have a lot to say!

2. I ask that the Commission consider adoption of a goal of 50% Appointment Equity:

All Boards, Commissions, Committees, Agencies, etc. should have a goal of minimum 50% gender equity, given the current female population in Norwalk.

3. As one of its first missions, can this Commission create a "Gender Equity List" of # women on each Board, etc.?

Can your Commission start and ensure that the BET (Board of Estimate and Taxation) selects qualified women to fill at least the next three vacancies? There is currently one seat vacant after Sheri Brown was elected to the BOE. One female on this important Board is still not enough! There are similar gender imbalances on the Harbor, Shellfish Commissions and Pension Board, and

additional female seats needed on the important Planning and Zoning Commission.

Part of the issue is the manner that the City and Council conducts its outreach advertising the vacancies. Unlike other towns, Norwalk does not publicly announce vacancies in the news and on social media. This is due to many reasons that this Commission can help improve upon.

4. Gender Sensitivity Training: For many women, it is often difficult to "feel heard" at meetings and be given "a place at the table". Norwalk has made many great strides related to its staff hiring processes, but the volunteer Boards, Commissions and other officials often reflect gender-based beliefs from their backgrounds, at times representative of sexist traditions.

I can give you several examples of times when women speaking at select Norwalk meetings have been made to feel "less than" or ignored. In addition, women who speak up are treated so much more harshly than men who speak up. I would be happy to present these examples and offer positive solutions to improve the situation at a future meeting.

4. Events: I heartily advocate that this Commission enhance its work with a series of outreach events such as listening sessions. There are many opportunities to elevate this issue beyond norms mentioned in books like "Men are From Mars, Women are From Venus". I am sure that the Library would be interested in a forum or book series.

There were no other public comments this evening.

V. OLD BUSINESS

a. Committee Reports

- Nominations Committee

Ms. Testa Buzzee reported that the Committee did not meet, but they plan to meet and will have a report by the next meeting.

Ms. Keegan asked Ms. Prezzie to give Ms. Woods Matthews a list of everyone's phone numbers.

Ms. O'Toole Giandurco joined the meeting at 7:32 p.m.

- Research Committee

The Research Committee met on April 4, 2022. Ms. Rendon Garcia will chair. The Committee will create a survey to address the real needs of the community. Next steps were reviewed. Meetings will be held on the first Monday of the month. It was noted that the City asked the Committee to hold off on conducting a survey for the time being since they will be sending out their own surveys on other issues.

- Diversity Committee

Ms. Baanante reported that the Diversity Committee met on April 6, 2022. They will meet on the first Monday of the month. They are working on creating a brief presentation for stakeholders. Once the presentation is ready, they will share their draft.

VI. NEW BUSINESS

a. Discussion and motions on playing fields for girls' sports

Ms. Testa Buzzee raised an issue about condition of the sports playing fields for girls. She said she sees inequity in the options for girls' fields.

Ms. Keegan asked for specifics of the inequity. Ms. Testa Buzzee said she understands that some of the girls' softball fields are not cared for as well as the boys' field. She added that she still needs more information. Ms. Keegan asked if these are Parks and Recreation fields or school fields. Ms. Testa Buzzee said she needs to find out.

Ms. O'Toole Giandurco said she was on the Parks and Recreation Committee and also grew up on these fields. She said that when parents tried to maintain the fields, there was pushback. She said that when she was on the Parks and Recreation Committee they had the same problem with goose remnants at the Beach. They brought in a company that used dogs to chase the geese. She said she would be happy to reach out to Parks and Recreation to see if they are still using that company.

Ms. Keegan said they need to get more data to create a list of what they need to know, such as which fields and what families are complaining about and what is the procedure being followed by Parks and Recreation. Ms. Keegan said the job of this Commission is to hear both sides. Ms. Testa Buzzee said they need to identify if it is an issue. Ms. Baanante asked if this was the tip of the iceberg and is concerned that that this Commission is not overstepping their role. Ms. Testa Buzzee asked how many of the sports facilities are women only sports. She said she would like an assessment of the sports fields. Ms. Keegan said they can discuss this further.

Ms. Baanante asked about this Commission getting involved in the Legislative session. She said it is too late this year but she will add that topic to next month's agenda. She added that the purpose of this is to build a relationship which will leverage this Commission to help Bills go through. Ms. Keegan thanked Ms. Baanante for taking on the task of data gathering.

VII. MOTION TO ADJOURN

**** MS. BAANANTE MOVED TO ADJOURN**
**** MS. ZUCCO SECONDED**
**** MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY**

There was no further business, and the meeting was unanimously adjourned at 7:56 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Rosemarie Lombardi
Telesco Secretarial Services

DRAFT