

**COMMISSION ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN
REGULAR MEETING
MAY 16, 2022**

ATTENDANCE: Ana Keegan, Chair; Sharon Baanante, Kristina Testa Buzzee, Claudia Werman Connor, Jasmine Prezzie, Ivonne Zucco, Shannon O'Toole Giandurco

STAFF: Michelle Woods Mathew, Director of Communications

CALL TO ORDER

Chair Keegan called the meeting together at 7:08 p.m.

Approval of Minutes of Previous Meeting April 25, 2022

The Chair asked for approval of the minutes.

Ms. Baanante made the following corrections:

Page 4, 2nd paragraph, line two read first Monday, but should read "1st Wednesday"

Page 4, last paragraph, line five should be replaced with:

"Ms. Baanante stated that the fields could be the tip of the iceberg for gender inequity at NPS. She also stated that we should do our research with the heads of the Athletic Departments and that we should carefully approach this so that our Commission does not appear to be overstepping our role."

**** MS. CONNOR MOVED TO ACCEPT THE MINUTES OF APRIL 25, 2022, WITH CORRECTIONS.**

**** MS. ZUNIGA SECONDED THE MOTION.**

**** MOTION PASSED WITH ONE ABSTENSION MS. ZUNIGA.**

PUBLIC COMMENT

There were no public comments.

OLD BUSINESS

Discussion and motions on playing fields for girls' sports

Ms. Giandurco commented that there was a meeting last week with Ken Hughes. The short-term solution for the geese at NHS girls softball field has been found to get them out of the area. The biggest issue has been resolved to move them out. The inequity is the use of the fields has been addressed. They cannot be interchanged in purpose, a baseball field is not a softball field. There are things in motion to bring the solutions into place. Once Christina returns from her travels we should have some information for this Commission. BMHS is getting a new field, a turf field. As the construction continues at NHS they will get a new turf field. Once she has touched base along with Christina with the athletic people, there will be an update.

Chair Keegan asked to be kept informed if there is support needed for funding.

She said that AD picked up the cost for NHS and the other fields are under the construction budget. He also wanted this commission to know that the individual leagues who use specific fields, end up owning the fields and they often pay for items needed for the field to stay in good condition. He stated that at Broad River the league paid for the improvement. It is good information to know as the City is not the one choosing who gets items.

Ms. Connor was surprised about the article in the newspaper about the nominations discussed in the meeting.

Chair Keegan stated that this item about communication would be included in tonight's meeting under new business.

Committee Reports

Nominations Committee

Ms. Connor stated she met with Christina and they agreed that there should be a draft a pitch document describing the commission and how they would seek nominations and how the process would proceed. There will be an item brought to the commission for review. There is not a representation of younger women to bring diversity and fill that open seat. They will send a statement for review and bring suggestions to the next meeting.

Chair Keegan asked Ms. Matthews to look into the process of commissioners being appointed by the Mayor and pass that information forward for Ms. Connor and Christina. The information will be put in the overview. Michelle knows who to ask and will research the process.

Research Committee

Ms. Garcia thanked Ivonne for giving a report at the last meeting. The group has had illness and work travel which has prevented getting information. Iliana has been researching and put together bullet points to assist in not recreating the wheel in focus groups and what items would be of interest to the women who wish to represent in our community. There is a commission on women, children and seniors which may give referrals.

Iliana stated that links have been added to the findings on the web sites. She will work on obtaining names and contacts to assist in development and reporting back to this commission. Ideas for categories and points of interest.

Ms. Connor asked if Michelle would join the Research Committee to give some of her findings as she did this in another state.

Ms. Baanante stated that Hartford is the only municipality that has a commission for women in CT.

Ms. Matthews stated that VA has municipalities that had commissions on women and she will contact them.

Chair Keegan said that municipalities will have things that we may or not be able to do here.

Diversity Committee

Ms. Baanante said the group met and they are about 90% completed with a presentation. The group has met with the City and partner them demonstrating how our strategies can help the city with diversity. Next step is meeting with Ms. Connor Chair Keegan, and Ms. Matthews to take the proposed information apart and put it back together to create a sound diversity plan. This will enable the group to know who the stakeholders are and who the group will want to meet with in future.

NEW BUSINESS

Explanation of Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) and news

Ms. Matthews FOIA was enacted in 1975 in CT. It has two essential requirements; any meeting of a public agency must be held and transparent to the public; we are a public agency created by a public entity and when we have a forum anything we say is subject to FOIA and the public has the right to see it; in person, virtual or electronic meeting. Every meeting that has an agency that has been created by the City. The City has a YouTube channel so anyone can access the meeting. Therefore, anything that you say can be put in the

newspaper or a publication. It is important to be aware of what one might say and we all represent a government. Printed, photos and presentations can be seen and viewed by the public. Agenda for the Common Council has many attachments.

Ms. Zuniga asked what happens at an event and speaking in public as a member of the committee, do you ask for permission.

Ms. Matthews said it is what you chose to say you are speaking in personal capacity. Check prior to going to a session to be sure the information is properly recognized as personal verses in a formal capacity. Be careful of comments on social media to control the setting.

Ms. Giandurco stated that an agenda is very important as it is published prior to meeting because we are servicing the public. Adding items at the last minute is not good, so an agenda to keep the public aware of what will be done.

Chair Keegan stated that the minutes were in person with a minute taker.

Ms. Matthews stated that it is being looked in going forward.

Ms. Zucco asked about her personal email that has other information.

Chair Keegan suggested a separate email for business information, nothing personal related in same file.

Ms. Zuniga said that everything is recorded and therefore comments and information is open to public.

Ms. Connor asked if the "Chat box" is captured.

Ms. Matthews commented that it can be.

Discussion of Procedures

Chair Keegan commented that there should be a procedure by which a member can to bring something to the Commission so that Commission will be prepared ahead of time. It would be best to bring to Ms. Matthews to review with you and discuss whether is more information needed before bringing to the full Commission.

Ms. Baanante stated that these boards and commission are for the citizens of Norwalk, not those who work for the city. Ms. Matthews would be driving what we do or not.

Chair Keegan commented that it would be rounded out by Ms. Matthews; she might bring it to the Agenda Committee; that way there would not be a question without an answer before bringing to the Committee. She commented further that this group is not the ones that will continue into the future, but the staff will be.

Ms. Giandurco commented that it seemed better to have the Agenda Committee to have the first pass and then to Ms. Matthews. Then the items would go to Ms. Matthews. All were in agreement to choose this route.

Question was raised as to who the Agenda Committee group is composed of.

It was stated that the members are Chair Keegan, Ms. Baanante, and Ms. Prezzie.

Chair Keegan proposed following this process and adding this to the agenda for next meeting.

Discussion and Motions on Recent News Regarding Abortion

Ms. Baanante asked how does this Commission want to go forward in letter writing on current issues.

Chair Keegan agreed that a calendar would be a good way to write about things this commission cares about.

Ms. Connor said that there has no discussion on this subject as a commission. Each one has her own opinion. What are the issues that the Commission want to leverage the collective voice of this Commission. There are a lot of elements and not assume all are in sync on a specific subject.

Research Committee might be group to take on the specific issue and do we all align on the issues.

Ms. Garcia agreed there should be a discussion. But how are going to have the Research Committee have enough time to process and take a stand as a Commission.

Ms. Zucco asked if discussions on issues are a meeting.

Ms. Matthews stated it would be a meeting and open for public access.

Ms. Baanante asked when a Commission go into executive session?

Chair Keegan suggested looking into the procedure and bring information back at next meeting.

Ms. Zucco asked if a forum could be held at the library.

Ms. Matthews said it could be done in the library with notification and a sign up sheet.

Ms. Matthews reviewed the change in the abortion law for the State of Connecticut. CT has expanded those who can perform abortion.

Ms. Connor commented that over the subject of abortion there could be some plan to rally around and agree to a position.

Chair Keegan said it seems that there is a path to follow but we need to get more organized to write on a subject.

Chair Keegan commented that there may be a group to address an issue and prepare letter writing on a subject. This would be added on the next agenda. Possibly a PR Committee. This group would be keeping up with news items for consideration.

Ms. Zucco asked about creating a rotation of individuals to be on the committee(s).

Ms. Connor agreed that people who have expertise may be a point to consider.

MOTION TO ADJOURN

Chair Keegan asked for a motion to adjourn.

- ** MS. BAANANTE MOVED TO ADJOURN THE MEETING.**
- ** MS. GIANDURCO SECONDED.**
- ** MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

The meeting was adjourned at 8:11 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Alvina LR Decker
Telesco Secretarial Services

