

**CITY OF NORWALK
COMMISSION ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN
SPECIAL MEETING
JULY 25, 2022**

- ATTENDANCE:** Anna Keegan, Chair; Sharon Baanante, Kristina Testa Buzzee, Claudia Werman Connor, Jasmine Prezzie, Ivonne Zucco, Shannon O'Toole Giandurco, Sarah Rendon Garcia, Iliana Zuniga, Chantal Coffy
- STAFF:** Michelle Woods Matthews, Director of Communications
- OTHER:** Bob Kocienda and Roshni Yousuf, Center for Youth Leadership

CALL TO ORDER

Ms. Keegan called the meeting together at 6:05pm.

CENTER FOR YOUTH LEADERSHIP PRESENTATION

Mr. Kocienda said they'd shared a timeline of accomplishments leading up to the legislation that schools were required to have tampons and pads in school restrooms. He said that some people disagreed with the wording of the legislation that they were required in every bathroom, noting that at schools like BMHS it was easy to navigate, and you might not need every bathroom to be stocked. He said they ultimately signed on with the statute and would be working with the State Department of Health on a regulation.

He said this was an equity issue, generally affecting girls more than boys, resulting in the loss of academic time in classrooms to go to the nurse's office to get tampon or pad. He said the general use of bathrooms was another issue.

Ms. Yousuf said that BMHS had started a bathroom task force. She said they had good dialogue with Ms. Wood about issues including the tampon issue. She said she thought they would be in place by 2023 and that they hoped to tackle other bathroom issues next school year. Mr. Kocienda said they didn't think the high schools met the standard for how many bathrooms needed to be open.

He said the next thing they wanted to move to was placing tampons and pads in public buildings in Norwalk and brought it to the commission. He said it was following the lead of Ann Arbor, Michigan.

Ms. Garcia asked if they were free in school bathrooms. Mr. Kocienda said they were currently free usually in the nurse's office. He said they would remain free, noting that the legislation did not call for a dispenser. He said that the legislation called for them to be in every bathroom regardless of gender. Ms. Yousuf said that the students were advocating for all gender bathrooms, that they'd presented it to Dr. Estrella and that apparently, she had agreed with making all gender bathrooms.

Mr. Kocienda said that the Center for Leadership had met with custodians and building leaders and that they suggested dispensers, because the baskets had been vandalized. He said they could buy dispensers that only dispensed two or three.

Ms. Keegan asked what the ideas were behind restrooms in public buildings. Mr. Kocienda said it would be in all the bathrooms in public buildings like City Hall, Department of Health, restrooms at the beach and libraries.

Ms. Coffy asked how long it would last if people took many at a time and asked about the budget. Mr. Kocienda said they were working to get the budget from Ann Arbor and would share. He said they were trying to create access, and there were students who didn't have access to them over the weekend. Ms. Yousuf said there probably would be people who took advantage of the access, but there were people who really needed them. Mr. Kocienda said there was a youth education piece—that they wanted students to be comfortable discussing them openly. He said they provided information in addition to tampons and pads. He said they would do likewise in city restrooms.

Ms. Connor said that it would be important to look at what the subsidized cost would be, that it was worth considering a small fee as they looked at public buildings, beyond schools. She noted that she wasn't pushing for it, rather she wanted to raise it as a point of discussion. She asked Mr. Kocienda to share the budget from BMHS.

Ms. Zuniga asked if they'd investigated any available grants and asked them to share any research they had, she noted that city budgets got locked in early. Mr. Kocienda noted that the legislation for the schools had been delayed a year because most school districts had locked in their budgets for 2022-23.

Ms. Buzzee asked if there was cost analysis for small businesses? Mr. Kocienda said they would share anything they got, he said the Period Movement was looking to get manufacturers to provide tampons and pads for city buildings.

Ms. Banaante said she supported the Commission backing this. Ms. Keegan thanked the Center for Youth Leadership for the presentation.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

May 16, 2022

**** MS. BUZZEE MOVED TO ACCEPT THE MINUTES OF MAY 16, 2022, AS SUBMITTED**

**** MS. ZUCCO SECONDED THE MOTION.**

**** MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY**

PUBLIC COMMENT

There was no action on this item.

OLD BUSINESS

A. Reports of Committees

- Nominations Committee

Ms. Connor said there were no updates.

- Research Committee

Ms. Garcia said that she'd created a spreadsheet of categories priorities from research on other commissions on women. She said she would send it to Ms. Matthews to share and asked for input. She said the committee would meet in the next few weeks to make plans for the next few months.

- Diversity Committee

Ms. Banaante said they'd finalized their presentation on the diversification of boards and commissions which included data and benefits of diversity. She said they had a meeting on Thursday with the Chief of Staff to discuss it. She noted she'd shared it with the commissioners and welcomed feedback.

NEW BUSINESS

a. Discussion and motions on Center for Youth Leadership Presentation

Ms. Garcia said she didn't recommend waiting for information from the committee but recommended starting the work. Ms. Keegan said they would have to start with the Ordinance Committee. Ms. Giandurco said that ordinance was part of the Common Council, and it was a process to go through. She said steps included drafting and public hearing. She said they should have everything in order before they go to Ordinance.

Ms. Zuniga asked who they would talk to about the number of bathrooms they had to

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budget for. Ms. Matthews said they should put together the questions in a spreadsheet and then make sure to direct them to the right person. Ms. Giandurco said she wasn't sure it had to be an ordinance, rather it could be a city policy. She said that she wanted to be mindful of small businesses and said maybe they could focus on city buildings.

Ms. Connor said she wanted to focus on City buildings, and to emphasize the education piece the Center for Youth Leadership had discussed. Ms. Buzzee said that a way to build in support from private partners was to invite them to engage with the campaign.

Ms. Zucco said they could create a badge for social media, or in certification for their windows to say they support those who menstruate.

Ms. Keegan suggested they get an inventory of public bathrooms, get a cost analysis, look at the statute from Ann Arbor, MI, plan a phased approach. Ms. Giandurco suggested they work with the Community Services Committee of the Common Council.

Ms. Connor asked if they could just assign out the tasks Ms. Keegan had reviewed rather than creating a committee, noting that they didn't have any other substantive projects right now. Ms. Zuniga agreed but noted there needed to be a person to keep the project moving.

Ms. Zuniga and Ms. Coffy said they would volunteer as project managers and work together to keep it moving. Ms. Zuniga suggested that in addition to the items listed by Ms. Keegan, they look at neighboring towns, and look to see if there were grants to tap into.

The assignments were:

- Ms. Connor: Grant research
- Ms. Keegan: Language of other ordinances
- Ms. Zucco: Cost analysis
- Ms. Garcia: Research neighboring towns and The Period Movement, etc.
- Ms. Matthews: Find the right person to find the number of bathrooms.

The commissioners agreed to all send their work to Ms. Zuniga and Ms. Coffy.

b. Questions for other Commission on the Status of Women groups

Ms. Matthews said this overlapped with what Ms. Garcia had reported from the research committee. She said she had a list of contacts to share as well.

Ms. Garcia asked her to reach out to see if they'd done surveys or focus groups. Ms. Keegan said she was interested in hearing where they had pushback and what else they were working on.

c. Discussion and motions on the creation statement committee

Ms. Keegan said that sometimes the news cycle called for the statements from this commission and asked if they wanted to create a committee authorized to issue statements.

Ms. Buzzee said that she wasn't sure she'd want someone to issue a statement that they weren't all comfortable with. Ms. Zucco said that the idea had been to make it a rotating committee. She said to have all the voices heard they needed to do that.

Ms. Garcia asked if there was someone who could do a first draft. Ms. Connor said that it was hard to draft as a group, she suggested they streamline the process. Ms. Keegan noted that all Commission output was subject to FOIA and therefore they needed to be mindful of the process.

Ms. Banaante said it should start from the chair and the vice chair, and they should assign commissioners based on the topic.

Ms. Zuniga asked if they could use whatever the Common Council used. Ms. Keegan said that she thought they discussed in meetings, but shared drafts. Ms. Buzzee said having a draft to respond to was a good start and having feedback from the commission in a timely manner and within the letter of the law was important.

Ms. Keegan said that there should be an email from the chair and vice chair asking who should draft the statement, based on the situation, and then have a meeting to review the draft.

****MS. ZUNIGA MOTIONED TO HAVE THE CHAIR AND VICE CHAIR DELEGATE DRAFTING STATEMENTS AND THEN HAVE A MEETING FOR DISCUSSION**

****MS. CONNOR SECONDED IT**

****MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY**

Ms. Keegan said it was typical to skip a meeting in July or August and asked about the August meeting, she said they'd figure out if they had a quorum and then decide if they should hold it.

MOTION TO ADJOURN

**** MS. ZUNIGA MOVED TO ADJOURN**

**** MS. GARCIA SECONDED.**

**** MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

The meeting was adjourned at 7:15 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

L. Grassilli

Telesco Secretarial Service

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