

**CITY OF NORWALK
COMMISSION ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN
REGULAR MEETING
JUNE 12, 2023**

ATTENDANCE: Claudia Werman-Conner, Chair; Sharon R. Baanante, Ashley Gulyas, Ivonne Zucco, Kristina Testa-Buzzee, Sarah Rendon-Garcia,. Jasmine R. Prezzie, Diane Lauric, Shannon O’Toole-Giandurco.

STAFF: Michelle Woods-Matthews

GUESTS: State Representative Lucy Dathan, Diane Lauricella

CALL TO ORDER

Ms. Werman-Conner called the meeting to order at 7:02. A quorum was present. Ms. Matthews welcomed Representative Lucy Dathan.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

May 8, 2023 Corrections requested. The following corrections were made: Page 1 incorrect spelling of Ms. Baanante name. Page 2 Remove Diversification section. Page 3 Add Pride in the Park discussion. Page 4 under Diversification on Boards and Commissions delete 3rd sentence (Openings are now posted for the following boards). Page 2 Ms. Rendon-Garcia did not report under Outreach and Civic Engagement. Page 2 correct name spelling “Reardon” to Rendon. Page 3 should reflect Sarah A. Rendon shared her screen. Page 2 Correct last name of Vicki to Oatis

- ** MS. TESTA-BUZZEE MOVED TO APPROVE THE MINUTES
- ** MS. O’TOOLE-GIANDURCO SECONDED THE MOTION
- ** MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY

PUBLIC COMMENT – NONE

NEW BUSINESS

A) Representative Lucy Dathan

Representative Lucy Dathan thanked the commission for doing a great job in Norwalk to further what women need in our community. Rep. Dathan will provide her email and would like to hear ways to help out with your concerns. Two weeks ago the bill to change the minimum age to be eligible to marry to 18 and above has been sent to governor and is waiting for his signature. Womens Business Development Council located in Stamford has been given a grant for \$800,000 to help fund Minority Owned Business and other services that affect women in general. Earned Income Tax Credit was extended. Funding was increased for debt free college, special education, early education, child care providers, and healthcare. This investment is helping Connecticut

families and women in our state Rep. Lucy Dathan led the initiative on 50001 house bill for the democratic caucus. Connecticut has a long waiting list due to budget issues. There is over 2000 people in our Autism community waiting for services and about 600 people in our developmentally disable population waiting for services.

Ms. Baanante inquired about the status of free menstrual products bill for Middle & High School Students. Rep. Dathan said additional funding has been put together and currently helping out in communities with the products. Mandate says it is in effect as of July 1, 2023. Next fall the products will be available. Period Poverty affects the girls that can't afford the products and the amount of learning lost as a result is huge. Ms. Werman-Conner will make efforts to ensure our community is aware. Ms. Werman-Conner would like for Rep. Lucy Dathan to keep the board aware of all bills that are relevant to this commission so we may elevate our voice in the community.

Rep. Dathan acknowledged all of Norwalk is invited to attend a legislative summary event. Ms. Matthews will share Rep. Lucy Dathan email with the group.

B) Presentation Commissions Introductory

Ms. Werman-Conner shared her screen and will email to everybody. The information is pulled from the flyer, bylaws, and purpose statement. It was also shared with Outreach Committee. Screen 1 – The Norwalk Commission on the Status of Women. Screen 2 – Our Purpose. Screen 3 – Goals. Screen 4 - Membership & Officers. Screen 5 – Committees. Screen 6 – Meetings. Screen 7 - Names of the current commissioners. The intent/idea is to have something to have as a snapshot of the commission. Ms. Werman-Conner welcomed any questions or suggestions and will email the presentation to everyone.

C) Documentary “Take the Ice

Ms. O’Toole will follow up with the women who did the documentary and will report back at the next meeting.

D) Efforts to Celebrate Legislative Passing

Ms. Matthews proposed the idea that when bills are passed the public may not be aware. There is nothing in particular but something to keep in mind for further publicity and advocacy as you see fit. Ms. Werman-Conner suggested a letter or opinion piece to the Norwalk Hour, or social media celebrating once the bill is signed. Possibly for next meeting, we can have a concrete proposal on specifically what we can do to mark and celebrate.

E) Diversification of Boards of Commissions Committee

Ms. Baanante addressed you can apply on line now. Ms. Woods Matthews noted that there is an automatic response when someone applies.

F) Outreach and Civic Engagement Committee

Possible Upcoming Table Surveys

Ms. O'Toole commented we have not been able to get in contact with Sono Arts Fest, Still waiting on dates for Juneteenth celebration, and Police Department Event. Looking into Farmer's Market, and Oyster Fest. Ms. Gulyas commented Juneteenth is this Saturday on the Green no other details. Ms. Baanante noted it is from 4 to 8 this Saturday. Ms. Gulyas regarding the Farmer's Market can reach out to Erica director of programs at FCC asked for dates from the committee we would like to reserve she will reach out. Ms. O'Toole suggested being more strategic with the outreach committee with events to avoid duplicate people/responses. Ms. Gulyas agreed it does tend to be the same folks each week with the farmer's market. Pride in Park had a lot of response but mostly non residence; whereas, the farmer's market will be more targeted resident response. Ms. Zucco suggested checking on dates with the committee. Ms. Gulyas offered to send out possible dates for Farmer's Market to see if there is possible availability. Ms. Testa-Buzzee suggested multiple farmer's market. Ms. Werman-Conner suggested there may be value in having a table at the farmer's market but not a survey or doing one in July but not in August. Ms. Woods- Mathews will confirm the Police Night Out is August 15th. Ms. Testa-Buzzee commented it would be a great event to reach a different audience.

Outreach Committee next meeting falls on Juneteenth – suggested to postpone a week or have discussion offline.

Ms. Gulyas noted that the flyers are not condensed back to two committees. We have lots of flyers. Ms. Werman-Conner suggested we can verbally engage people and tell them.

G) Commission Members

Melody has resigned from the commission due to travel and work commitments. We have two vacancies. The mayor has received a few applications to consider. Ms. Woods-Matthews commented it is great to recruit new folks and thank you. The mayor is reviewing resumes and will keep us posted. Ms. Testa-Buzzee asked where and how does the commission's endorsement of candidates come into play. Ms. Woods-Matthews commented it is at the discretion of the Mayor; however, every recommendation helps and is important. Ms. Testa Buzzee asked if we can advocate for an answer by the next meeting. Ms. Woods-Matthews noted there is a process, however, she will pass the information along.

OLD BUSINESS**A) Community Outreach and Civic Engagement*****Pride in the Park Event***

Ms. Werman-Conner extended a thank you to everybody. It was a great day. There was a lot of foot traffic. At the end of day, the tokens were separated and tallied. Ms. Werman-Conner shared her screen of survey results, and will email. There were a total of 241 respondents. Ms. Gulyas gave a big thank you to Ms. Werman-Conner and her son for all the set up and break down. The table looked beautiful. Ms. Werman-Conner

suggested for next year more give aways to lure people to the table, like pencils and stickers. Most of the respondents were out of town. Ms. O'Toole commented that people were engaged and it was a success. Ms. Baanante suggested renaming our commission to be more inclusive and to send any ideas her way and recommended LGBTQ+ representation on our commission. Ms. Woods-Matthews applauded the commission.

Norwalk Public Library Partnership

Ms. Gulyas the "Get a Grip" books are available at the library suggested ages 8 to 12, they have a bookmark in them. As of Wednesday, not many have been picked up, however, they are just recently visible in glass. 10 copies were given to Pride in Park. Wednesday June 28th @ 6 has been added 5:30 to 7:30. Refreshments needed. Ms. Gulyas will return the few books left and check on the interest. Ms. Werman-Conner suggested if you can't make it to offer a refreshment. Ms. Gulyas will send out an email with pdf of bookmark and sign- up sheet. Ms. Testa-Buzzee asked if we can post on our own social media, Ms. Woods-Matthews replied yes.

Update Outreach Meetings

Ms. Zucco organized a meeting on May 15th with Jennifer Kaalund director of The Greater Fairfield County Foundation, Inc. Possibility of collaborating with League of Women's voters. Ms. Werman-Conner received a call from the Greater Fairfield County Foundation. Their goal is to further women's leadership and women leadership potential, and urge women of all ages to get involved in running for office. Goal is by 2030 to inspire a quarter million women to take the first step toward public leadership. We agreed to stay in touch.

T- Shirts

Ms. Zucco will follow up and is waiting on new logo. She will collect sizes from commission. Ms. Wood-Matthews confirmed logo should be ready by the first week in July. Ms. Werman-Conner suggested once we have logo, we can get a tablecloth with commission name and logo.

Diversification of Boards of Commissions Committee

Ms. Baanante is putting together an onboarding and mentorship guide. It will take several months due to research. If you have any ideas, please email Ms. Baanante. Ms. Testa-Buzzee suggested getting feedback for onboarding from prior members. Ms. Baanante will add them to her list. Harbor management commission has two vacancies. It's a 9-member commission. Currently, there are 6 men and 1 women. They provide support to our city in presenting and enhancing the use vitality and quality of life associated with Norwalk Harbor and Long Island Sound. If you know anyone who may be a good fit, please reach out to them. They meet once a month on the 4th Wednesday of the month at 6pm.

UPCOMING COMMUNITY EVENTS

Ms. Woods-Mathews: Ms. Gulyas sent around the one-year anniversary of ROE being overturned June 24 at 10 am on the Green. Spread the Word, if interested in speaking email Ms. Gulyas. Juneteenth details and Sono Arts details will be confirmed. There are a lot of fun events happening all summer. Great community events summer concert series, outdoor movies. Look on city social media. No table opportunities but exciting.

Adjournment

**** Ms. Zucco moved to Adjourn**

**** Ms. Baanante seconded the Motion**

**** Motion passed unanimously**

The meeting was adjourned at 8:24 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,
Michele Watson
Telesco Secretarial Services