

**CITY OF NORWALK  
COMMISSION ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN  
SPECIAL MEETING  
FEBRUARY 21, 2024  
VIA TELECONFERENCE**

ATTENDANCE: Claudia Connor; Chair, Sharon Baanante, Ivonne Zucco, Kristina Testa-Buzzee, Sarah Rendon-Garcia, Shannon O’Toole-Giandurco,  
Jasmine Prezzie

STAFF: Michelle Woods-Matthews

**CALL TO ORDER**

The meeting was called to order at 7:05

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

Ms. Connor noted that the minutes for January, 8, 2024 had not been posted. She said they would revisit the approval at the March meeting.

**PUBLIC COMMENT**

Ms. Romney Donald addressed the recent resignation of DEI Officer Latoya Fernandez. She asked if the commission would be part of the selection process. Ms. Connor was not sure what the commission's role would be. Ms. Woods-Matthews indicated that the mayor's office was creating a search committee to fill the vacancy.

**NEW BUSINESS**

**a. Diversification of Boards and Commissions Committee**

- Met with LaToya Fernandez in January
  - o Looking into possibilities around gathering demographic data from Boards and Commissions
  - o Working with Human Resources to establish some trainings for onboarding new commissioners of Boards and Commissioners

Ms. Baanante elaborated on discussions she had with Ms. Fernandez. She expressed hope that they could work with the city and move forward. Ms. Connor asked Ms. Woods-Matthews if there would be an interim person they could work with or if everything would be on hold. Ms. Woods-Matthews said Ms. Fernandez had worked with several departments and would find people to help them in the interim.

**b. Norwalk female wrestlers show how to be 'Tough for a Girl' in award-winning film: 'Role models'**

There was no update. Ms. Woods-Matthews made a note of the fact that the film played well at the festival. Ms. Baanante stated she had seen the documentary about the former Norwalk High female wrestler wrestling with men.

**c. Claudia Connor stepping down as Chair. Vote for new Chair at April 8 meeting.**

Due to time constraints, Ms. Conner announced she was stepping down as chair. She indicated her intent to stay on the commission. Ms. Woods-Matthews asked if anyone was interested in running for the position they should contact her.

**d. Community Outreach and Civic Engagement Committee**

Ms. Testa-Buzzee presented the update on the Impact Awards.

- ImpACT Award
  - o Posted on the Cities social media properties
  - o Sent to Common Council leadership, community partners via the Community Services list and the library's list.
  - o NPS sent it to their parent list
  - o Ivonne picked up flyers being distributed through the community
  - o Nomination Committee to schedule a meeting with Michelle; will use rubric to evaluate nominees.
  - o Ideas for inviting individuals to March meeting to celebrate the awardees from NPS and City of Norwalk, etc.
  - o Brainstorming agenda for March meeting and when to announce the ImpACT winners.
  - o Location for March meeting: either room in City Hall or Library.

Ms. Testa-Buzzee stated that February 23, 2024, was the deadline for the ImpACT awards nominations. She noted they had eight nominations and hoped they would receive more for the youth award before the deadline. She stated she would be sharing the Rubric draft with the committee.

Ms. Zucco asked if there was enough money and time to create plaques or certificates. Ms. Woods-Matthews indicated they could make certificates. Ms. Connor stated she asked the mayor's office about plaques but was unaware of any response.

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## **OLD BUSINESS**

### **a. An update on the Menstrual Equity Law**

Ms. Connor elaborated on her discussion with Sandra Faioes, Deputy Superintendent of Schools. She stated she was pleased with Ms. Faioes and the BOE's attempts to make progress in their attempts to comply with the law.

Ms. Baanante thanked everyone involved with the process.

### **b. Next steps on proposing a name change to the Commission**

Ms. Connor stated she had followed up on the request to change the commission's name to The Commission on Gender Equity. Ms. Woods-Matthews said the Mayor's office and Ordinance Committee wanted to keep the word \*women\* because it was more inclusive. She Requested that the commission consider the addition. Ms. Testa-Buzzee requested to hear the entire name again. Ms. Woods-Matthews said, The Commission on the Status of Women and Gender Equity. Ms. Baanante was concerned about the highlighting of a specific gender. Ms. Testa-Buzzee stated she wanted to process the feedback before moving forward with a decision. Ms. Connor suggested waiting and looking to their bylaws to come up with a name that would be more inclusive, and meetings may be necessary to get clarification.

### **c. Community Outreach and Civic Engagement Committee**

Ms. Zucco indicated she had nothing to report because they were working on the ImpACT award. She mentioned another item but stated they would wait till the April meeting to present it.

### **d. Diversification of Boards and Commissions Committee**

- Pilot of Onboarding Document with new Commission member next steps
- Jessica Edward's Mentor on the Commission

M Ms. Baanante stated that Ms. Zucco was going to be a mentor for the new commission member, Ms. Jessica Edward. She said the Pilot of the Onboarding Document had been sent out, and they would see how it goes from there.

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**d. Monthly Board and Commission vacancy announcement reminder**

Ms. Baanante described the process of finding out online what vacancies there are. She mentioned the Board of Taxation in District E has an opening.

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Ms. O’Toole Giandurco asked a question not related to the meeting about changes in the public comments rule in virtual meetings and how it might impact their meetings. Ms. Woods-Matthews indicated that at present it would only affect the common council.

**MOTION TO ADJOURN**

**\*\* MS. ZUCCO MOVED TO ADJOURN THE MEETING.  
\*\* MS. PREZZIE SECONDED THE MOTION.  
\*\* THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

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

Respectfully submitted,

Telesco Secretarial Services