

**City of Norwalk  
Commission on the Status of Women  
Regular Meeting  
Monday, November 21, 2022**

**ATTENDANCE:** Claudia Werman Commer, Jasmine Prezzie, Ivonne Zucco, Melody D’Alessandro, Sharon Baanante, Claudia Werman Conner, Kristina Testa-Buzzee, Chantal Coffy

**STAFF:** Michelle Woods Matthews, Director of Communications

**OTHER:** LaToya Fernandez, Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Officer

**I. Call to Order**

Ms. Werman Conner called the meeting to order at 7:22.

**II. Approval of the minutes from Sep 19, 2022**

**\*\*\*\*Ms. Prezzie moved to approve the minutes from Sep 19, 2022 with the spelling correction noted.**

**\*\*\*\*Ms. Zucco seconded the motion.**

**\*\*\*\*The motion passed with Ms. Baanante abstaining.**

**III. Public Comments**

Diane Lauricella called in to offer her support for the commission on the status of women. Ms. Lauricella was disappointed that to date no one from the commission has responded to her letter written last winter, and her comments at the commission meeting last month. She also pointed out that this meeting wasn’t on the town’s home page. There may also be a problem with the links to the minutes.

Ms. Lauricella feels that her extensive experience with working in male dominated workplaces gives her insight into the issues facing women in the workplace.

#### **IV. Old Business**

##### **a. Follow up on ideas shared by Marguerete Leuter, the Vice Chair and former Chair of the Arlington, VA Commission**

Ms. Leuter attended the September meeting and shared ideas of what is happening in VA. Ms. Conner mentioned that one idea was to invite some elected officials to join the meeting to share ideas. She has reached out to a few, and is hoping they will join the December meeting.

Ms. Baanante suggested inviting Dominique Johnson as her experience directly relates to women's issues. She would also like to get feedback from the community as well.

Ms. Testa-Buzzee added that the commission should be mindful about who is invited to speak.

Ms. Matthews reiterated that the goal is to understand what legislation is being proposed.

It was decided that every few meetings, one or two elected officials would be invited to speak.

##### **b. Reports of committees.**

###### **• Nominations Committee**

Ms. Conner stated that when the committee met, there were two vacancies. They have filled one spot with Ms. D'Alessandro, and still have one spot empty. She would like the commission to create a system for filling vacancies as they arise.

###### **• Research Committee**

Ms. Zucco said that Ms. Garcia is still on maternity leave, so they were not able to meet. Each committee member is reaching out to a few cities that have instituted free pads and tampons in public bathrooms to understand what the budgetary costs are. Understanding these costs is the next step in implementing a similar program in Norwalk.

• **Diversity Committee**

Ms. Baanante explained that they have created a 22 deck presentation on how to add diversity to the government committees in Norwalk. This deck will be shared with all committees.

**V. New Business**

**a. Introduce a new member of the Commission: Melody D'Alessandro**

Ms. Matthews introduced Ms. D'Alessandro. She has extensive experience in a wide range of workplaces that will be an asset to the commission. Ms. D'Alessandro is happy to join the commission and is looking forward to working with everyone involved.

**b. Introduce the City's new Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Officer, LaToya Fernandez**

Ms. Matthews introduced Ms. Fernandez. She is the first Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Officer in the city of Norwalk. Ms. Fernandez gave some background information on her experience and why the issues of diversity and inclusion are so important to her. She is looking forward to working with the commission. Ms. Shantelle and Ms. Baanante welcomed her. Ms. Zucco is pleased to have her experience to enhance the work of the commission.

**c. Propose dates for 2023 Meetings of the Commission on the Status of Women at 7:00 PM on the second (2nd) Monday of each calendar month unless otherwise noted. Meetings are held by Video Conference and Teleconference.**

Ms. Matthews shared the calendar for the upcoming year. Ms. Conner noted that the by-laws state that the commission should meet on the third Monday of each month.

**\*\*\*\*M. Testa-Buzzee moved to accept the dates proposed pending amending the by-laws.**

**\*\*\*\*Ms. Prezzie seconded the motion.**

**\*\*\*\*The motion passed unanimously.**

Ms. Matthews shared an update on the City of Norwalk website. She showed the commission how to find information on upcoming meetings. This list includes which committees have vacancies.

**d. Propose meeting with a member of the State Delegation in December to see if there's legislation the Commission would consider getting behind and supporting this session.**

This was already discussed.

## **VII. Adjournment**

**\*\*\*\* Ms Testa- Buzzee moved to adjourn the meeting**

**\*\*\*\* Ms. Baanante seconded the motion.**

**\*\*\*\* The motion passed unanimously.**

The meeting adjourned at 8:15.

Respectfully submitted.

Amy Chaple  
Telesco Secretarial Services