

BROOKLINE COMMISSION FOR WOMEN
WEDNESDAY JANUARY 6TH, 2021 AT 7 PM
(ONLINE VIA ZOOM)

MINUTES

COMMISSIONERS ATTENDING: REBECCA STONE, HADASSAH MARGOLIS, NICOLE MCCLELLAND, LUCY CHIE, HOMA SARABI, AILEEN LEE, ELIZABETH STILLMAN, MEENAKSHI GARODIA, CAROL CARO, FELINA SILVER ROBINSON

COMMISSIONERS ABSENT: GLORIA RUDISCH

OTHERS ATTENDING: CAITLIN STARR (STAFF)

A quorum being present, the meeting was called to order at 7:03 p.m.

Ms. Stone informed the group that, in light of the day's events in Washington, D.C. (an insurrectionist mob stormed the Capitol building to disrupt certification of the electoral college votes), the discussion planned on Disadvantaged Business Enterprises (DBEs) would be postponed, probably to the February meeting, to allow everyone to be better able to focus on that issue when it was discussed. Invited guests have been notified and all agreed. Ms. Stone further allowed that commissioners might want to either adjourn now or keep the meeting short because of the emotional impact of the day. Each Commissioner was polled about whether to adjourn/curtail the meeting: Ms. Caro agreed, Ms. Stillman agreed, Dr. Chie, Ms. Sarabi, Ms. Lee, and Ms. Garodia were willing to adjourn or meet as planned, Ms. Silver Robinson agreed and shared an upsetting (related) experience for her and her daughter that occurred earlier in the day. Ms. McClelland and Ms. Margolis suggested an abbreviated meeting. Ms. Stone then suggested we vote the minutes and do quick updates but postpone other items to a future meeting and plan to adjourn at 7:30 p.m.

1. Minutes from meeting of December 9th, 2020: With no changes offered, the minutes were moved by Ms. Stone, seconded by Ms. Caro and Ms. Silver Robinson, and unanimously approved. Ms. Stone noted that she plans to circulate minutes earlier for future meetings and to include highlights in the draft minutes for commissioners to be able quickly to review any action items discussed.
2. Public Comment: No one appeared for public comment.
3. Discussion with invited guests of Brookline efforts to support/prioritize contracting with Disadvantaged Business Enterprises (DBEs) - Postponed to the February meeting with the kind understanding of the invited panelists.
4. Discussion/Planning for 'Women of the Year': inviting nominations for Brookline women's efforts in the community since March 2020. Ms. Stone will circulate a memo outlining next steps for this effort.

5. Liaison reports & Updates:

- i. i. Ms. Stillman reported that the School Committee's Policy Subcommittee has drafted a change to the proposed new Title IX policy. They have agreed to include policy guidance concerning recordkeeping for both substantiated and unsubstantiated claims under Title IX, including annual reporting. Ms. Stillman circulated a statement (see Appendix A) she delivered before the School Committee (BSC) on behalf of the BCW asking for these changes. After appearing before the BSC, Ms. Stillman emailed them language from a MA Bill passed Jan 5, 2021 relative to the same reporting in higher education, suggesting to the BSC that the bill's language was instructive for Brookline's policy purposes. Ms. Stillman will attend the School Committee meeting this coming Thursday (1/14/21) where she anticipates the BSC will vote to approve the new language. She will report back on the outcome of that vote.
- ii.
- iii. ii. Dr. Chie reported great news that the MA legislature voted to override the Governor's veto of the ROE Act provisions in the budget bill, meaning those provisions are now law. Dr. Chie summarized that the law removes many obstacles to safe, timely abortion care, particularly for children 16-17 for whom now no judicial proceedings or parental consent will be required. For those 15 and younger, parental or judicial consent is still required, but bypass proceedings may be remote rather than in person. Late abortions (above 24 wks gestation) are legal for fatal fetal anomalies, and criminal liability language has been stricken for some procedures. Additionally, nurse practitioners can provide abortion care.
- iv. iii. Ms. Garodia reported that she heard back from the School Committee and staff with answers to her questions about sexual health education in Brookline. The PSB uses the Planned Parenthood Get Real curriculum for grades 7-9. Ms. Garodia said she still has a lot of questions about the curriculum and its implementation. She feels that Get Real might focus too narrowly on not initiating sexual activity at a young age, and she said we don't know how well the curriculum is implemented, if there is training for educators who deliver the curriculum, and what role the Brookline PD plays with their role in the separate AWARE program (aka drug education). She said that SC Member Jennifer Monopoli (chair of the Curriculum Subcommittee) and Health Director Carlyn Uyenoyama have responded helpfully and it's good that the conversation has started. Ms. Stone said the BCW working group on this issue will discuss how to follow up.
- iv. Ms. Margolis reported that there are many women who have spoken with her about wanting to run for Town Meeting in the May election but are concerned about child care. She hopes we can take some time at a later meeting to talk about what the BCW could do to address the issue of child care for civic participation when we can no longer meet on Zoom. Ms. McClelland, who has been looking at the possibility of providing child care for some public meetings at Town Hall, said the town does not have a fund to help those campaigning for office. Ms. Stone added that this is an issue

the BCW is working on, including trying to expand remote attendance rules to allow greater civic participation. ODICR staff last year looked into what other towns have done in terms of providing child care at meetings. Ms. Sarabi agreed we should find an initiative we can support. Ms. McClelland said that the pandemic restrictions have made this harder to look into because everything has been remote, and that we need to gather more information to know what would help women participate in campaigns, in office, or at civic meetings going forward.

v. Ms. Stone reported that another late-session gender equity/justice bill by the MA legislature established a commission to look into the extremely high rates of maternal morbidity and mortality for women of color, particularly Black women, in the U.S. Ms. Stone has done work professionally on maternal stress and birth/child outcomes and looks forward to following the work of this commission.

Ms. Caro moved to adjourn, seconded by all and passed unanimously at 7:35 p.m.