

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

MEETING MINUTES

COMMISSIONERS ATTENDING: REBECCA STONE, LIZ STILLMAN, MEENAKSHI GARODIA, HOMA SARABI, NICOLE MCCLELLAND, AILEEN LEE, LUCY CHIE. CAROL CARO, HADASSAH MARGOLIS.

COMMISSIONERS ABSENT: GLORIA RUDISCH

OTHERS ATTENDING : CAITLIN STARR (STAFF)

1. Administrative details:

- i. Review of the Calendar: May -- Town election on May 4th; reminder to submit for reappointment for commissioners who have terms ending 2021. Dr. Chie added: Planned Parenthood Advocacy celebration 5-6 p.m. May 5th (free but contributions helped). She noted that BAAFN, 5/5/21 6-7:30 p.m. student essay awards overlaps with this meeting. Ms. Starr is (zoom) hosting the BAAFN event so BCW will move our meeting to 7:30 p.m. for May 5th. Dr. Chie also alerted us to Mass PPD (post partum depression) fundraiser 5/8 2-3:30 p.m. There are 3 Brookline folks involved. Links as follows: Planned Parenthood: www.pplmvotes.org/MACchoices; BAAFN: Register Now by clicking on this link: https://brooklinema.zoomgov.com/webinar/register/WN_K_SM68iATQKDOE1BM6ccbwmappd; MAPPD: <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/flourishing-through-21-tickets-144454480239>.
- ii. Vote to approve minutes from meeting of March 3, 2021: moved by: Ms. McClelland seconded by: Dr. Chie. Unanimous approval (Ms. Margolis was not yet present for this vote).

2. Public Comment: No one appeared for public comment.

3. Planning for Women of the Year celebration April 28th @ 7:30 pm: Ms. Stone will release the formal announcement of winners tomorrow (4/8/21) via email blast and poster. She has spoken with all 6 women, they are thrilled and surprised. 3 additional nominees stood out as Brookline COVID Heroes; Ms. Stone will reach out to them and their nominators individually and they will be mentioned/honored at the event.

Discussion of event, whose zoom is best suited to host. Decision to establish a registration system and link (Ms. Sarabi will create that google doc), with Zoom link to follow close to the event. Decision that a non-Town zoom account will be used to maximize security controls. Consensus that all attending should be seen, so not “webinar” style because we want honorees to see the community that has come out to honor them. We can explore Zoom options for issues such as muting. Ms. Stone would like to do a dress rehearsal of the event

because there are a lot of honorees, introducers, and speakers. Kim Kushner has agreed to be the “featured speaker.” Ms. Garodia will order plaques for honorees. She will drop off the items with flowers on the day of and give to the honoree's families to give them on the Zoom. The event planning committee will decide if there will be certificates as well. Honorees will have 1-3 minutes each and Ms. Kushner will have 3-5 minutes. Ms. McClelland noted that each honoree will need an intro as well. The event planning committee will decide on how we will handle this. They will meet by the end of the week.

4. Subcommittee Reports

- i. Legislation & Advocacy: Overview of May TM Warrant (Nicole McClelland): Ms. McClelland explained that normally this subcommittee would talk about all articles that may have a gender justice or equity impact. Last year in both May and November there were a number of them, but the warrant (as read by Ms. McClelland and Ms. Stone) for this May does not have any articles with a clear impact on women and girls in Brookline. There were some interesting warrant articles to note in other regards:

Article 9 is the FY22 omnibus town and schools budget with line items that are relevant to BCW work.

Art. 33 about having the uses of emergency funds received by the town better outlined and disclosed to the public.

Art. 35 aimed at increasing voter participation which is generally pretty low in Brookline municipal elections. This article encourages the town and Town Clerk's office to promote better voter turnout.

Art. 40 is a non-binding resolution to support B.I.G. because of loss of funding from broadcast utilities in recent years.

Ms. McClelland believes the lack of relevant articles is something we should take as a call to work on more issues. Ms. Stone mentioned racial disparities in COVID data collection and problems with having better disaggregated data for health outcomes in general, especially for women and women of color. Ms. Stone believes that the disproportionate impacts on Black women are off the charts for COVID. Ms. Sarabi says that this disparity is not a surprise and COVID is highlighting something that was always there. Ms. Stone added that local health departments are typically underfunded in terms of doing this work and said maybe this is something we could bring to the budget discussion in the future if not this May. She noted something Ibram Kendi and Elizabeth Warren said in a recent webinar about health data and inequity: If you can't see it, you cannot do anything about it. We have time to think about it since TM is in late May-we can make a statement about fully funding public health departments to collect this data and be responsive to disparities. Dr. Chie pointed out that the state legislature acted to ensure COVID data would be disaggregated by race etc.

(<https://malegislature.gov/Laws/SessionLaws/Acts/2020/Chapter93>) Ms. Lee said perhaps this is our job as BCW and we should talk about this more. Ms. Stone agreed we should think about how we as a commission should proceed and discuss further. There is a lot to think about, but let's table it for the moment while we gather resources and think about the value we can add.

Ms. Stone noted also that the BCW is involved in some issues that haven't become warrant articles yet, such as the Town's procurement practices relative to DBEs (disadvantaged business enterprises) and whether we should have a formal policy to prioritize contracts with DBEs. The Town Administrator, Kara Brewton and Deborah Brown (who had submitted an article on this in the past) were supposed to speak with us in January, but will instead come tell us about staff efforts on this in June. Ms. Garodia asked whether there had been progress on getting a gender-bias survey of pay scales; Ms. Stone will follow up with Ms. Starr.

Other discussion of connecting with other women's commissions statewide to support the bill on allowing campaign accounts to pay for child care. Ms. Stone believes that the MA Commission (MCSW), which is the omnibus organization for all MA commissions for women, has supported this, but not sure what has happened. Commissioners agreed that we should be more active with other CSWs in the state. Ms. Stone said she had been in touch early in Covid with MCSW but needed to follow up. Ms. Caro mentioned the MCSW monthly newsletter has a lot of this information. She will email the newsletter to other commissioners.

- ii. Community Supports (Hadassah Margolis): Committee met on Monday (April 5), and discussed keeping eyes and ears open to anything happening in the community that we can partner on or amplify. Subcommittee keeps coming back to question of improving our visibility. How can we partner more effectively? Two meetings ago, we discussed housing support and Ms. Lee spoke to Laura Ritolo at the ACLU in NYC and there are resources available on "know your rights" in many languages about housing and domestic violence. How do we make this kind of resource known? Should it be a flyer, dropped off in certain areas? We don't know enough about immigrant trends in the community. Ms. Stone noted that CDICR has a new subcommittee on Brookline immigrants (Immigrant Advancement Committee). Jessica Cheku is the chair. Another issue, per Ms. Lee, is how we can partner better with the Housing Authority. Ms. Caro is planning to meet with the Housing Authority and pointed out that new immigrants tend to pass through the school system and we could hand out info at school registration. Ms. Stone added that there had been an organization that did this in the past and noted that this is an area of intersection with Women Thriving. Ms. Starr announced that she will be the chair of that Board in May. Ms. Stone thinks we should be communicating more and we each have value to add to the other.

Ms. Margolis said a lot of the meeting was about visibility and how we reach more people and get them engaged. There are a lot of resources and events that we have a hard time communicating about. Ms. Sarabi said this is a universal problem and that one issue is that we tend to reach the same people each time. Ms. Garodia believes we should have a regular TAB column; Ms. Caro didn't think it was likely. Ms. Stone said she thought we should be more visible for a reason, not just to be visible. The big question is what are we trying to accomplish

and what is our place in the sea of other organizations and grass-roots groups out there? She believes our new mission and values are moving us in the direction of doing more policy work and amplifying gender equity issues. We should be creating a contact/distribution list for the BCW. We can start by getting registrants for the April 28th event to provide names and email addresses and then build from there.

5. Liaisons and Other Updates: Ms. Stone reported that the working group on sex education met with the SHARP Warriors earlier today. Students are organizing a “Day of Change” to focus attention on sexual harassment, rape culture, consent, patriarchy etc. They will let us know the date. The students described a difficult meeting with deans about the DeVos Title IX new regs and it was all bad news: harsh new rules about reporting and aggressors’ rights. Some of the students said the regs changes were a surprise and the conversation left students without clear information on how to report incidents. They wanted more guidance from deans and faculty. After that, the BCW working group met in a breakout group with K-12 health coordinator Carlyn Uyenoyama and students to talk about policy and curriculum on sex education moving forward. BCW members told the students the Sch Committee is open to policy change and articulation of sex education being part of health and wellness, but that because of covid and new leadership coming on board in July, PSB staff and Sch Cmte cannot act on this until next fall. We will continue to work with SHARP Warriors to be ready for those conversations in the fall. They are poised to do a survey of middle schoolers on the units being rolled out now. We may have another meeting in a few weeks on what can be done this spring in May and June. Ms. Stillman offered to trace laws and any Biden admin changes through Westlaw.

Sch Cmte Policy Subcommittee: Ms. Stillman said there will be a meeting on Monday 4/12, but the agenda is not really relevant for BCW. There is one item regarding school resource officers, and we’re curious about that item. Ms. Stone said if there’s a chance to ask, the students had mentioned some discomfort around AWARE (pka D.A.R.E.) officers and she wondered whether AWARE officers appear in uniform when they teach those classes. Ms. Stillman will attend and ask if there is an opportunity to do so.

6. New & Old Business. None to report.

Meeting adjourned at 9:08 p.m.