

BROOKLINE COMMISSION FOR WOMEN
MEETING WEDNESDAY, May 3, 2023
(ONLINE VIA ZOOM AND RECORDED)

MEETING MINUTES

- I. Administrative details: **Meeting started at 7:05pm**
 - a. Attendees: Ms. Felina Silver Robinson, Ms. Liz Stillman, Ms. Aileen Lee, Ms. Carol Caro, Ms. Hadassah Margolis, Ms. Neela Kaushik, Dr. Lucy Chie. Absentee: Ms. Nicole McClelland, Ms. Meenakshi Garodia. Administrator: Ms. Caitlin Starr. Presenter: Mr. Jonathan Davis.
 - b. Vote to approve minutes from meeting of April 11, 2023. Moved to accept to minutes as they are by Ms. Caro. Seconded by Ms. Stillman. Dr. Chie abstained due to not being present for last meeting.

- II. Public Comment
 - a. No public comment.

- III. One of the co-petitioners of WA 21 - Jonathan Davis TMM P17 attended (was invited by) BCW meeting to discuss and share information about WA 21; WA 21 is about creating a new General By-Law Section 8.xx on Innholder license requirements to deter sex trafficking in hotels.
 - a. Mr. Davis reported that there were 2 minor amendments on WA 21 by the Advisory Committee. After the amendments were made, it was voted in favorable action; vote was 15 to 5. Please see details of WA 21 in the attached PDF file. Select Board also unanimous voted in favor of WA 21.
 - b. Issues that were clarified: the Police department does do annual inspection of the hotels and can make sure that the signage are present, as stated by the By-Law. Police department don't just inspect the hotels from a complaint. If the hotel is not in compliance, the police department will notify the Select Board and also the hotel. The way to enforce this is through the hotel's annual license renewal. The Select Board is the committee that issues and reviews licenses, therefore will have the power to not re-issue the hotel's license due to violating the By-Laws; without a license the hotel cannot be opened for business. The WA 21 is geared towards put the business license at risk as a way to stop sex trafficking in hotels.
 - c. WA 21 requires hotels to provide training to employees on recognizing trafficking. The Select Board can also question whether a sufficient percentage of all employees have completed this training during license renewal. If they have not met the criterion, the Select Board can decide to give the hotel a provisional license to give them time to meet the appropriate requirements of the By-Law. Although the by-law does not require room surveillance, licensees will be required to state in their licencing application to the Select Board what their policy is in regards to room surveillance. This will give the Select Board an opportunity to see what may end up being the best practices for the hotels in Brookline.

- d. Hotel management do not have a problem with the requirement to train their employees. They only had an issue with posting any signage at the front of the house (where guests circulate), but felt comfortable with signage at the back of the house (for staff). Mr. Davis said that Town Counsel has reviewed the language of the article twice, both the older Fall 2022 version and also this amended version.
 - e. Will the Select Board get a chance to see what the trainings will look like? This article states that the Select Board can designate someone else in the Town to keep track of over-seeing the enforcement of the By-Law. Ms. Margolis shared her concerns of whether this issue & By-Law will be taken seriously and enforced correctly, rather than the Town just doing due diligence. Ms. Margolis also worked on bringing attention to whether the states and hotels that had appropriate signage up does yield the results of decreased sex-trafficking? Mr. Davis shared that he did not know the answer to this question. The municipalities that had this By-Law stated that better to have these trainings and signage than not to do anything about it. Ms. Margolis also wondered about unintended consequences like immigration issues with deportation. Mr. Davis response to this was that he heard from others -- that victims themselves did not necessarily see themselves as victims.
 - f. Ms. Stillman inquired about whether the trainings and signages will be in other languages besides English. Mr. Davis shared that chances are reputable agencies who conduct these trainings will have signage and training in other languages. Ms. Stone noted that the By-Law says the training is required to be done by a reputable organization that provides this kind of training. Hotel Licensee has to report to the Select Board or the designee by the Select Board: they identify the training entity (must be a reputable organization that provides this type of training, content of the training, dates of the training, number of employees trained and not trained. Ms. Stone also asked for clarification on whether the required signage posted in the hotels will have multiple languages? Mr. Davis reported that the specific language requirement is not written in the WA, yet as a co-petitioner he would consider this a FRIENDLY amendment. Discussion that language should be appropriate to the diversity of the languages spoken by the staff / employee, and the licensee can determine what languages this should be. Ms. Stillman suggested that maybe the requirement can be similar to the signage by OSHA; languages that OSHA notices are posted in.
 - g. Ms. Stone moved to amend the article (as voted the Advisory Committee) to include the requirement for the signage to be in as many languages as would normally be required in an OSHA posting / signs. Seconded by Ms. Stillman. All BCW commissioners unanimously voted yes.
 - h. Ms. Stone moved that BCW urge favorable action to Town Meeting on WA 21 as amended, and should our amendment not be accepted for some reason, BCW would still urge favorable action by Town Meeting. Seconded by Ms. Stillman. All BCW commissioners unanimously voted yes.
- IV. Update on questionnaire by BCW with the LWVB on women opting not to run for re-election for town office.

- a. Ms. Stone shared that she had not heard from the League. Ms. Stone noted that since our last discussion, she realized that the questionnaire did not need to ask for people's names and it might discourage people from responding back to the questionnaire. She has amended the questionnaire to only ask for names if/when the individuals agree to an interview. Ms. Silver Robinson will ask the LWVB to vote on moving this questionnaire forward during their next board meeting.
- V. Vote on inviting Jo-Anne L. Ochalla, LICSW, from the Center for Violence Prevention and Recovery at BIDMC, to come and give a presentation to BCW to see how we might be able to work together on outreach.
- a. How BCW can be helpful and useful as a resource to her? Hold on this vote. Ms. Silver Robinson will share the website detailing what the training will be shared by Ms. Silver Robinson after today's meeting. To have more information on what this presentation will be like and how BCW commissioners can be helpful in this cause.
- VI. Vote on the reproduction of the Childcare Center Booklet that the BCW had previously put out. Felina has been working on updating this document.
- a. Lots of request to update this booklet. This information is from the League of Women Voters. The spreadsheet is complicated to read therefore Ms. Silver Robinson is cleaning it up to make it reader friendly.
 - b. This was first done years ago by an intern in ODICR and some Women's Commission members, so it used to be on BCW's website but Ms. Starr said that there had not been staff or an opportunity to update it since then so it's badly out of date. What information is on the booklet: name of daycare center with all contact information, size of the daycare center, ages of children at the daycare center.
 - c. Ms. Stillman and Ms. Stone both noted that childcare is a shared responsibility and not just an issue for women. They expressed some discomfort with this being owned by the Commission for Women and said maybe it was more appropriately situated in the Department of Public Health.
- VII. Updates on working groups / subcommittees
- a. Warrant Article on Reproductive Rights – Ms. Stone reported that the article had unanimous endorsements for favorable action from: School Committee (Ms. Stone does not know whether the language will be incorporate it as a Schools policy), Advisory Committee on Public Health, Advisory Sub-Committee on Human Service, one vote short from the Advisory Committee (AC member felt it was redundant with the State's law), Select Board, and the Commission on Diversity (CDICR) – it will be presented at Town Meeting a week from tonight. Full Advisory tweaked the language: so that town employees would not be held accountable for acting out of ignorance (as opposed to out of intent), they added the word "knowingly" in the violations section.
 - b. Status of letter re: pay equity – new Select Board elected and this is a good time to reintroduce the pay equity study, lack of numbers of women holding positions

that have higher pay scales / category. Urging Select Board to do study to look at recruitment and retention. Ms. Stone will work on this letter.

VIII. Old & New Business

- a. Ms. Caro is interested in pursuing the project on doing a program where Women working in the Brookline government be interviewed, and it can be a half an hour interview. She spoke with Heather Hamilton to pursue this. She is also asking if someone else in the commission with better medial skills or be the emcee, or have an interest in this project will join her. Ms. Stillman and Ms. Margolis volunteered to help, and probably Ms. Garodia may be interested too. Ms. Stillman's daughter may be able to help.

Next meeting: **Wednesday June 7th, 2023 at 7pm.**

Meeting ended at 8:26pm.