

**BROOKLINE COMMISSION FOR WOMEN
MEETING TUESDAY July 5, 2023, 7:00 P.M.
(ONLINE VIA ZOOM AND RECORDED)**

AGENDA

- I. Administrative details: **Meeting started at 7:04pm. Attendees:** Ms. Liz Stillman, Ms. Aileen Lee, Ms. Rebecca Stone, Ms. Carol Caro, Ms. Meenakshi Garodia, Dr. Lucy Chie, Ms. Neela Kaushik, Ms. Julia Khazan, and Ms. Cynthia Levay-Arnfeld. **Administrator Present:** Ms. Caitlin Starr. **Absentee:** Ms. Hadassah Margolis.
 - a. The BCW elects leadership at the beginning of Brookline’s fiscal year at a planning and reorganization meeting in July. Ms. Stillman announced that a week prior to this year’s meeting, chair Felina Silver-Robinson resigned from the Commission, effective immediately, and asked former chair, Ms. Stone, to preside over the election of new officers. Ms. Stone then called for nominations for BCW chair for 2023 – 2024:
 - i. Ms. Garodia nominated Ms. Stillman for chair, seconded by Ms. Caro. Ms. Garodia spoke to Ms. Stillman’s nomination, referring to Ms. Stillman’s invaluable and steadfast effort in the Title XI project with BHS. Ms. Lee expressed that working with Ms. Stillman in the past year’s executive team had been effortless, for she was direct, organized and efficient. No other nominations. Ms. Stillman accepted the nomination and abstained from voting based on tradition. A roll call vote unanimous for Ms. Stillman, with Ms. Levay-Arnfeld and Ms. Khazan neither had been sworn in as BCW commissioners. Ms. Stillman took over as chair of the meeting.
 - ii. Ms. Stone nominated Ms. Lee for Vice Chair and Ms. Stillman seconded the nomination. Ms. Stone shared that Ms. Lee had been an amazing support to the BCW, an active learner and participant in this commission. She said that Ms. Lee was eager to develop her civic engagement by participating in BCW and also willing to take on leadership role when called upon. Ms. Garodia commented that the meeting minutes were well done. No additional nomination. Ms. Lee accepted the nomination and abstained from voting based on tradition. A roll call vote was unanimous for Ms. Lee as Vice Chair.
 - iii. Ms. Levay-Arnfeld and Ms. Khazan nominated themselves to be co-secretaries. Ms. Caro seconded these nominations. No additional nomination. Commissioners unanimously voted for Ms. Levay-Arnfeld and Ms. Khazan for co-secretaries.
 - iv. Ms. Stone formally recognized Ms. Silver-Robinson leadership for the past year. She was grateful for her participation and sad to see her leave BCW.
 - v. Ms. Julia Khazan introduced herself as this was her first meeting as a commissioner.
 - b. Vote to approve minutes from meeting of June 2023.

- i. Minutes moved by Ms. Garodia, seconded by Ms. Caro. All minutes are posted on the Town's website, and on the BCW's web page.

II. Public Comment – No public comment.

III. Discussion of goals for upcoming year –

- i. Ms. Stillman shared that BCW can focus our attention on advocacy work – topics to be attentive to were protections on Women's rights, domestic violence cases, sex education in schools, and discrimination against same sex couples. Especially since the Supreme Court ruled on the 303 Creative Rights ruling had violated the Freedom of Speech rights. This case may eventually trickle down to discrimination against gender identity issues. Ms. Stillman talked about how MA has an all-female governance and this does provide a level of safety for women. This MA leadership team shall continue to inspire and encourage BCW to find more ways to support individuals identified as female, especially those who are even more vulnerable to the political climate against women's rights and gender identity rights.
- ii. Ms. Levay-Arnfeld inquired about what advocacy work looks like for BCW. She provided an example / inquiry about whether BCW can do tabling at events, like Brookline Day in September, to promote BCW and its mission. Many people in Brookline were unlikely to know what BCW does. All Town entities can have a table and can just verbally request a table from Ms. Starr. Ms. Stone shared that BCW did in the past have a table at Brookline Day prior to the pandemic. BCW commissioners handed out flyers, bookmarks, and someone was at the table answering questions about what we do and how we do things. Tabling is also a nice way to network with other groups in Brookline.
- iii. Ms. Garodia talked about wanting to make sure that the commission stay on top of the conversation around sex education curriculum; to continue to build and maintain a strong relationship with the school committee and be able to further this conversation, especially since this is now a topic at the State's legislative level. Ms. Garodia also wanted to continue to focus on the topic of women's pay equity report. Ms. Stone wanted to continue to work on sending a letter to the Select Board in advocating for &/or supportive to following up on the study from this pay equity report; more in-depth look into pay disparity.
- iv. Ms. Caro – completing the project with BIG to interviews women employed by the town of Brookline. The goal is to be able to highlight the importance of women in the municipal government; helping to promote their efforts, their work and also allowing individuals to feel valued.
- v. Ms. Kaushik was interested in providing outreach efforts; sharing resources with other departments within the Town governance / other commissions. Having a better connection with other departments that may share our goals and agendas, being able to support each other in pushing for causes that can help individuals identified as women. Or, providing

educational materials that can help the community advance advocacy for women. Ms. Kaushik was also interested in outreach work to dispense helpful information to women in the community; i.e. resources for those struggling with DV or discrimination based on gender identity. Ms. Stone shared that the outreach work to educate the community about causes and issues, or to share resources with the community, was typically done through working with town departments. If BCW identified a lack of support in any of the above-mentioned topics, we can go to the governance or town departments that provide the service or support, help understand what was lacking and then support the departments to better serve the identified population. It was also important to be clear about what BCW can provide and is able to do given with the limited bandwidth of commissioners who are all volunteers. We can do a lot, but we don't provide direct services. And examples is BCW liaisons with other community partners: Ms. Silver Robinson was BCW's representative at the Domestic Violence Roundtable, while Ms. Caro worked closely with the Brookline's senior groups such as Brookline Community Aging Network. Ms. Garodia expressed interest in working on topics related to DV because of her work with Sahali. Dr. Chie suggested that BCW's priority should be to reassess which groups that BCW should have a stronger connection, and build out from there. Ms. Caro suggested that we establish a relationship with Brookline.news where they may be able to help BCW amplified messages / causes / our meeting dates.

- vi. Ms. Levay-Arnfeld was interested in doing a coat drive, something that we should start planning this soon. Groups that we can partner with are Brookline Senior Rec. center, Brookline Housing Authority, or Women Thriving. Ms. Stone emphasized that it was important for the BCW to have a partner that could distribute contributions. Our role in the past has mostly been to collect coats, but we always had a partner with an established ability/network to distribute.

IV. The Childcare list-discussion of placement/distribution with or without disclaimer (circulated separately).

- i. Ms. Stone pointed out that the list seemed to lack pertinent detailed information about what the programs offered. Ms. Stillman also noticed that there was no information on whether the listed programs accepted government vouchers. Ms. Garodia and Ms. Stillman believed that this list should be owned by a department in the Town, not by the BCW. Child care is not just a "women's" issue. Agreement that at this time, the document was not complete, so will not be posted or distributed. Ms. Levay-Arnfeld may be interested in looking into completing this document. She also asked whether any private in-home daycares on this list might accept child care vouchers.
- ii. Ms. Stone shared that there had been some conversations between some TMMs who had brought up, and are working on, the issue of how to increase the number of childcare centers that will accept government

vouchers. Maybe this can be tied into the childcare licensing application or renewal. It will be helpful to know more about how these government vouchers work. This will be a worthy conversation to have with the Select Board and be an advocacy effort.

- V. Decision on whether or not to invite Jo-Anne L. Ochalla, LICSW from the Center for Violence Prevention and Recovery Beth Israel Deaconess Hospital to come and give a community driven presentation.
 - i. Ms. Stone asked about whether this event may be something Domestic Violence Roundtable may be interested in running and BCW can be a partner in supporting them in doing this event. Ms. Stillman will attend the next Domestic Violence Roundtable meeting to see whether they are interested in doing this event, and to establish continuing partnership.
 - ii. This agenda item will be held off until more information can be obtained.

- VI. Discussion of possible actions on stronger MA Domestic Violence Bill-H1547 (Bill is located here: <https://malegislature.gov/Bills/193/H1547/BillHistory>) for Massachusetts. The main point of this Bill was to redefine what abuse is; also included coercive control and technological abuse. These abuses are added into the Chapter 209A Order that is used to protect somebody. This was a Bill that was sponsored by the House Representative and the last time anyone talked about this topic was in February 2023 and it went up to the Judiciary committee of the House, however no additional conversation had been had since then. It may be helpful to invite State Representative Tommy Vitolo, who is one of the sponsors of this Bill, to come to our next meeting to talk about what may be the reason(s) for this Bill to be stalled and what we could do to help it move forward. Ms. Caro also suggested that Brookline's other state representatives should be invited since Rep. Vitolo does not represent the whole town. Ms. Stillman will reach out to all the State Rep. sponsors of this Bill to come to one of BCW's next meetings.

- VII. Updates on New and Continuing Commissioners – No new updates.

- VIII. Old & New Business – 2023. There were typically no meetings in Augusts, however there may be a social outing for this month. BCW's next meeting will be on **Wednesday, September 6th, 7pm.**

Meeting Adjourned at 8:21pm.