

**BROOKLINE COMMISSION FOR WOMEN**

**WEDNESDAY JULY 7TH, 2021 AT 7 PM**

**(ONLINE VIA ZOOM)**

Annual Organizational & Planning Meeting

Commissioners Attending: Rebecca Stone, Liz Stillman, Homa Sarabi, Felina Silver Robinson, Hadassah Margolis, Lucy Chie, Aileen Lee, Nicole McClelland (joined late; see minutes)

Commissioners Absent: Carol Caro

Others Present: Caitlin Starr (staff)

**MINUTES**

1. Administrative details: Vote to approve minutes of meeting of May 5, 2021. Moved by Ms. Silver Robinson, Seconded by Dr. Chie, passes unanimously.

2. Public Comment - no members of the public appeared for public comment

3. Re-organization: Election of Officers for FY22

For Chair: Ms. Garodia nominated Ms. Stone, with second by Dr. Chie. There were no other nominations; no discussion. All members in attendance voted yes, with Ms. Stone abstaining.

For Vice Chair: Ms. Stone nominated Ms. Silver Robinson, with second by Ms. Lee. There were no other nominations; no discussion. All members in attendance voted yes, with Ms. Silver Robinson abstaining.

For Secretary: Ms. Stone nominated Liz Stillman, with second by Ms. Sarabi. There were no other nominations; no discussion. All members in attendance voted yes, with Ms. Stillman abstaining.

Ms. Stone thanked commissioners for their vote of confidence and thanked Ms. Silver Robinson and Ms. Stillman for their willingness to serve again in their positions. She reminded commissioners that this will be her second consecutive year and, per our by-laws, her final year as Chair.

4. Planning Discussion for FY22

i. Discussion & vote to request that the Select Board appoint Gloria Rudisch as Commissioner Emeritus: Ms. Stone said that Dr. Rudisch has been a dedicated member of this commission and the community. We hope the Select Board will consider this new seat honorific so that we can add it to our 11-person

commission without a by-law change. Ms. Stone moved and Ms. Stillman seconded the request to the SB. There was no discussion. All those present voted yes. Ms. Stone will forward that request to the Select Board. She added to general agreement that we should think about some way of honoring Dr. Rudisch in the future. She said the executive team would address this in their follow-up discussion.

ii. BCW Structure, Priorities, & Preliminary Calendar for FY22: see appended documents provided by Ms. Stone

a. Subcommittee structure (work burden and management). Based on conversations with individual commissioners that indicated that the subcommittee structure added a time/effort burden without really expanding productive time used, Ms. Stone proposed ending standing subcommittees and creating working groups as needed instead. If we are careful about our priorities for the year, we can create working groups to share the workload and give opportunities for leadership on issues. Discussion: Dr. Chie stated that Ms. Stone had summarized the issues, benefits, and drawbacks well. Meetings under a new structure would happen more organically. Ms. Sarabi asked about how OML might impact working groups. Ms. Stone said she did not believe ad hoc groups are subject to OML. Ms. Starr confirmed that because there is no expectation of a scheduled meeting, working groups could function more flexibly. Ms. Sarabi agreed that the current scheduling is difficult. Ms. Silver Robinson asked if the working groups would report back to the whole commission on decision-making and Ms. Stone responded working groups can come back to the full commission about decisions as needed. Ms. Stone thanked Ms. Margolis and Ms. McClelland for chairing the subcommittees in the past year. They contributed to the good will and positive feelings of the commissioners overall.

b. Focus on Brookline: Ms. Stone suggested that another way to manage our time commitment for BCW work was to stay very focused on Brookline. While we can lend our voice to larger (state, national) issues, the bulk of our work should be focused here. Discussion: Ms. Garodia asked if we should cut back on doing things on a state level. Ms. Stone responded that there are some issues that require state level work, but we would only work at the state level where there is a Brookline focus for us, as with the remote meeting laws. Ms. Stillman suggested that it may be limiting to be too local and talked about the networking with other commissions in the state as an important part of our work. Ms. Margolis said she thought of that as partnering, and we would continue to do that. *[Ms. McClelland joined the meeting at this point.]* Ms. Stone clarified that focusing on Brookline is not a rigidly exclusive focus, rather a lens that could help the BCW

decide how to prioritize work. Commissioners agreed that with this clarification it makes sense.

c. Women of the Year event. Ms. Stone reported that all commissioners felt this year was a wonderful event. She asked if BCW should consider having more than one honoree in the future as well because it really added to this year's event. Discussion: Ms. Silver Robinson said we should because the event was special and shows what the community is all about. Ms. Garodia was concerned we might run out of candidates/nominees. Ms. Sarabi said multiple recipients is a good plan going forward because it made this year's events more enjoyable. Ms. Stone suggests we frame it as we will award *up to* a certain number each year, so if there is only one, that is fine. Ms. Lee believes multiple awards makes it easier for Commissioners if we do not have to make just one choice and we can honor people we really feel deserve it. With no one advocating for a single award, we will proceed this year as discussed. Also, Ms. Stone said that there was consensus among members about continuing the pause on other past annual events such as the student essay contest and the Dress for Success coat drive and asked if anyone felt strongly about continuing those. Commissioners agreed on pausing those other events.

d. Agenda Priorities for FY22: Ms. Stone thanked Dr. Chie for expressing a way to think about how the BCW can approach its work on an issue. Once we decide a priority agenda item, BCW has 3 options: Lead (which could be a WA, report, event, etc.), Partner with another organization to address an issue, and/or Amplify. In order to Lead, we need a BCW commissioner to own an issue (if no commissioner, we don't choose this path). In order to Partner, we need to know who else is out there and what they do, and that suggests continuing to work on creating a dynamic and updatable list of organizations.

Ms. Stone asked if there could be a working group to develop a list of Brookline organizations with a mission or work focus that intersected with the BCW mission? She then asked Ms. Starr if the Office of Diversity and Inclusion already is doing this or can do this? Ms. Starr says the ODICR has begun an effort to identify local service and advocacy organizations; it is public and shareable. Ms. Stone asked if any present commissioners (besides the chair) would be interested in following up on this? Ms. Silver Robinson volunteered. Ms. Margolis added that the subcommittee had discussed this but not created a list. She suggested that the entire commission could add identifying new potential partner organizations as a regular agenda item at each meeting instead of having one point person. Ms. Stone agreed to add that to the monthly agenda, but asked commissioners to make a mental note or email her if they came across an organization in between meetings. Ms. Lee asked about how leading and partnering work together and Ms. Stone clarified the difference.

In order to Amplify, we need to have a system for maintaining and growing email lists, updating the website, and keeping the FB page active, calculating metrics, etc. Ms. Stone said it would be ideal to have a working group on communications to discuss and guide that work because it is too much to be just one commissioner's responsibility. She asked for volunteers for such a working group, asking especially if anyone has the time to take the lead? No present commissioners stated that they did. Ms. Stone said that if we do not have the bandwidth to do this, that's also a decision of sorts about times when we talk about "how to get the word out" about something. Ms. Margolis wanted to know what all the options for working groups are before committing to do any one project yet. That conversation continued as the next agenda item.

Ongoing/Annual Agenda Items:

i) Warrant Article Review (Nov. and May TM): This will require a working group to review the warrant and bring to the Commission anything relevant to our by-laws, mission, etc. To be assigned at the time.

ii) Woman of the Year – discussed earlier in the meeting.

Agenda Priorities for FY22:

i) Deepen relationship with Women Thriving; Ms. Silver Robinson is on the Board and Ms. Starr is the President of the Board. Ms. Stone said that our 2021 Women of the Year Ann Brackett and Andrea Johnson were enthusiastic about working with us. Ms. Stone suggested we talk w/them about partnering on a Dec. Brookline coat drive to replace the Dress for Success drive of the past – focusing just on local need. Ms. Starr said Women Thriving is engaged in programming, so this is a good start due to their connections with the Brookline Housing Authority; a natural partnership. Ms. Silver Robinson will bring it up to the Women Thriving board.

ii) Sexual Health Education work with SHARP Warriors & School Committee (ongoing working group). Dr. Chie, Ms. Stone, Ms. Garodia, and Ms. Stillman will be that working group.

iii) Brookline Women and BIPOC-owned businesses (DBEs): Both town staff and the CDICR have been active on the issue of DBEs (Disadvantaged Business Enterprises), so work in this area is a little fluid. We have guests coming in September to discuss with us. If a warrant article is called for, it will have to be for next May as the November warrant is open mostly in the month of August. Ms. Starr shared that Kara Brewton put together an analysis of procurement in terms of DBEs currently and set goals for the future. She believes this is what will be shared with the BCW at our meeting in September. Joan Lancourt has retired from the CDICR; there is an interim chair (Bob Lepson) for that

committee. Ms. Stone will reach out to Mr. Lepson. She suggested that given all the activity the BCW role is more of monitoring rather than leading, and she will continue to do that to make sure that women-owned businesses continue to be a focus of the work.

iv) Women employed by Brookline: This work includes continuing to look at paid family leave and pay equality in Brookline. We have begun that with Dir. of HR, and Ms. Stone believes it important to continue, saying that without our input this will not be addressed and it is within our mission. Ms. Stone, Ms. Stillman, and Ms. Garodia will continue the work on this.

v) Women's Civic Participation: This work, within the broader context of civic participation, focuses on barriers for women, especially looking at what makes participation more feasible for women with family caregiving or other constraints; it includes the remote participation advocacy that the BCW has done to date. Ms. Sarabi suggested that we might partner with Community Engagement Strategist Carolina San Miguel. She said the discussion in the subcommittee had concluded that successful engagement needs staff to do the work (not commissioners) in order to make an impact. Ms. Sarabi is interested in working on this but not alone. Ms. Lee is curious and interested as well-but wondered where do we start? Ms. Lee suggested that this is a partnering venture more than a BCW agenda item. Ms. Silver Robinson suggests we should partner with the League for Women Voters as a place to start. Ms. Margolis mentioned the recent discussion on the Town Meeting listserv about in-person vs. remote participation (where several posts had downplayed or ignored the barriers for many women of in-person meeting requirements) and suggested we invite our first female Town Moderator to one of our meetings to discuss. Ms. Sarabi noted that talking about TM keeps us in the town government bubble and civic engagement would involve getting outside the bubble, maybe partnering with someone who can bring us a little further out. We can help facilitate and connect with Carolina if she has time. Ms. Stone agreed to invite the Moderator to a meeting and to work with Ms. Lee and Ms. Sarabi on the issues.

vi) Focus on Older Women. Ms. Stone explained that Ms. Caro (not present at the meeting) has already offered to lead efforts in this area and to build our partnership with BCAN in particular. Dr. Chie offered to partner with Ms. Caro in this area.

vii) Title IX as a matter of public health. Ms. Stone explained that Ms. Stillman had raised this and asked her to speak to it. Ms. Stillman said that sexual harassment and assault are not just school-related issues, that women's safety is a question of public health. She suggests reaching out to partner with the DPH to explore this. Ms. Starr recommended contacting the Director of Community health, Lynn Carston, and also

Mary Minott in the Public Schools. Ms. Silver Robinson, Ms. Lee, and Dr. Chie all will help Ms. Stillman with this work.

Ms. Stone said these working groups should find each other and meet to begin conversations about what they might do. Commissioners agreed this is a comfortable starting agenda for this upcoming year.

5. Calendar: Ms. Stone explained that we can meet remotely until April 2022. She proposes Zoom meetings at least through Dec.1 given that staff is not yet returning full time to buildings. There were no objections to remote meetings. (See calendar distributed by Ms. Stone in appendix.)

6. Liaisons and Other Updates:

Ms. Stone told commissioners that passage of WA12 by TM now requires boards/commissions that make Warrant Article recommendations to list by name how each member voted on that recommendation. We will comply with this, but Ms. Stone wanted commissioners to be aware since many commissioners are not members of Town Meeting and may not have anticipated having their names/positions on BCW-voted articles published.

Informal gathering in August: Ms. Stone will send a doodle poll about a July or an August informal get together and the executive team would discuss that next week.

7. New & Old Business: none.

Meeting adjourned at 8:59 p.m.

*The BCW does not meet in August. The next meeting of the Commission will be Wednesday, Sept. 1, 2021 at 7 pm via Zoom.*

Appendix (2 documents)**For Discussion 7/7/2021****From Rebecca's Discussions with commissioners**

- **Reduce the time burden by eliminating standing subcommittees; use working groups as needed to share the workload and give opportunities for leadership on issues**
- **Keep the focus on Brookline in order to keep agenda manageable**
- **Keep Woman of the Year as annual event; pause all others**
- **Once we decide a priority agenda item, BCW has 3 options: Lead (which could be a WA, report, event, etc.), Partner, and/or Amplify (thanks to Lucy for this insight)**

In order to **LEAD**, we need a BCW commissioner to own an issue (if no commissioner, we don't choose this path)

In order to **PARTNER**, we need to know who else is out there and what they do (working group on developing a list of organizations?)

In order to **AMPLIFY**, we need to have a system for maintaining email lists, updating the website, and keeping FB page active (working group on communications?)

Possible Agenda Items for FY22: We need to choose our priorities and focus efforts**Ongoing/Annual:**

- 1) **Warrant Article Review (Nov. and May TM)**
- 2) **Woman of the Year (decide: multiple women of the year in perpetuity?)**

## Other Possible Items:

- Deepen relationship with Women Thriving; talk w/them about partnering on a Dec. Brookline coat drive?
- Sexual Health Education work with SHARP Warriors & School Committee (ongoing working group)
- Brookline Women and BIPOC-owned businesses: WA co-sponsorship with CDICR on DBEs? Note: Town is developing a list of Brookline DBEs to inform this work.
- Women employed by Brookline: tracking stats, looking at pay (have begun that with Dir. Of HR)
- Civic Participation: Making civic participation more do-able for women with families/other constraints; includes remote participation advocacy
- Focus on Older Women; partner with BCAN (Carol)
- Title IX as a matter of public health; it's not just school-related (Liz); event with DPH?
- Continue work on women in town meeting and other boards/commissions
- Re: Partnering ... Central resource list of Brookline services for women (collab with Women Thriving, other women orgs?); includes issue of child care vouchers

What's missing? What are priorities for FY22? What's do-able? For each we decide to do: do we Lead, Partner, or Amplify?



**BROOKLINE**  
**COMMISSION FOR**  
**WOMEN**

## **Fiscal Year 2022 Calendar (proposed)**

*Monthly meetings of the BCW are typically on the first Wednesday in the month at 7 p.m. The BCW does not meet in August. In FY22, the BCW will meet virtually on Zoom or in person as indicated on the following dates:*

JULY 7<sup>th</sup> FY22 Organizational Meeting – via Zoom  
 SEPT 1<sup>st</sup> – via Zoom  
 OCT 6<sup>th</sup> – via Zoom  
 NOV 3<sup>rd</sup> – via Zoom  
 DEC 1<sup>st</sup> – via Zoom  
 JAN 5<sup>th</sup> – tbd  
 FEB 2<sup>nd</sup> – tbd  
 MAR 2<sup>nd</sup> – tbd  
 APR 6<sup>th</sup> – tbd  
 MAY 4<sup>th</sup> – in Person (assuming no change in the law)  
 JUNE 1<sup>st</sup> – in Person (assuming no change in the law)

### **JULY**

#### **ANNUAL PLANNING/ORGANIZATIONAL MEETING**

- Election of Exec. Officers
- Calendar for next fiscal year
- Discussion of BCW structure & agenda

### **AUGUST**

*Informal get-together tbd/no meeting*

### **SEPTEMBER**

Invited: Mel Kleckner, Kara Brewton, Deb Brown to discuss DBEs and Brookline priority procurement program

### **OCTOBER**

Review of Warrant for articles related to mission/of interest to BCW (decide which to hear in Nov)  
 Presentation from Roundtable on Domestic Violence

### **NOVEMBER**

**Fall SPECIAL TOWN MEETING Nov. 16, 17, 18, 30; Dec. 1, 2**

Public Hearing and votes (if needed) on Warrant Articles considered for BCW Position

### **DECEMBER**

Planning for Woman/Women of the Year begins (working group formed)

BCW Meeting Minutes 7.7.21 Appendices

**JANUARY 2022**

Nominations open for Woman/Women of the Year  
Event planning (choose date)

**FEBRUARY 2022**

Decision process for Woman/Women of the Year (end of month)

**MARCH 2022 [Women's History Month]**

Announce Woman/Women of the Year  
HOLD EVENT

**APRIL 2022**

Review of Warrant for articles related to mission/of interest to BCW (decide which to hear in May)

*NB: Open Meeting Law allowances for virtual meetings expires 4/22/22*

**MAY 2022**

**Brookline Town Election Tuesday May 3**

**ANNUAL TOWN MEETING** (likely) May 17, 18, 19, 24, 25, 26

Public Hearing (if needed) on Warrant Articles considered for BCW Position

*BCW Members with terms expiring need to notify SB re: re-appointment*

**JUNE 2022**