

BROOKLINE COMMISSION FOR WOMEN
WEDNESDAY FEBRUARY 3RD, 2021 AT 7 PM
(ONLINE VIA ZOOM)

DRAFT MINUTES

COMMISSIONERS PRESENT: REBECCA STONE, MEENAKSHI GARODIA, AILEEN LEE, NICOLE MCCLELLAND, CAROL CARO, HOMA SARABI, LUCY CHIE, HADASSAH MARGOLIS
COMMISSIONERS ABSENT: FELINA SILVER ROBINSON, GLORIA RUDISCH
OTHERS ATTENDING: CAITLIN STARR (STAFF)

1. Administrative details:

- i. Review of the Calendar: Ms. Stone asked for comments on the calendar format. The Legislation and Advocacy subcommittee meeting for May 19th conflicts with Town Meeting and needs to be rescheduled. The next Virtual Women's Get-together was rescheduled due to Lunar New Year to Wed. 2/10 at 7:30 p.m. The Community Supports subcommittee will host it. Poster is already posted, and Ms. Sarabi will forward it to Ms. Stone for further posting.
- ii. Vote to approve minutes from meeting of January 6th, 2021: Moved to approve by Ms. Caro, seconded by Ms. McClelland, passed unanimously.

2. Public Comment

Ms. Starr: Announced that ODICR has hired Carolina San Miguel as the new Community Outreach Specialist. She has been at work for two weeks. Carolina has just recently finished a graduate degree at Harvard in Design, with a specialty in planning and child-friendly community design. We are excited to have her on board. Ms. Stone has reached out and hopes to have her come to our March or April meeting.

Planning for Women of the Year: This year in light of covid, we are choosing Women of the Year. Discussed timing of call for nominations – hoping to post soon and take nominations through the middle of March. We used Survey Monkey last year, Ms. Stillman and Ms. Stone will work on mechanics of nomination process. Discussion on how many Women of the Year to choose? Ms. Garodia asked about having specific categories, but we are trying to leave it open to smaller stories about people who are not as known in the community. Ms. Garodia thinks 5 is better than 10. Ms. McClelland asked how many nominations we usually get. Ms. Stone believes in the past it has been 2-4. Ms. McClelland noted that the student essay entries are more numerous, with many winners (3 in each of three categories). Ms. McClelland suggests that advertising would make nominations better. Ms. Garodia suggests that this should have more gravitas than the women talked about in the student essays; a higher bar for level of impact. Someone “who has shown up for others” rather than someone who has shown up for an individual. Ms. Caro says it should be someone who has done something for the community. Ms. Sarabi suggests that our language should be clear about leadership and what we want to honor in this specific year. Discussion of publicity: We will put it in the Tab, email it to all the lists, big distribution, League of Women Voters and other organizations send it out as well. We will create a form for nominations.

Dr. Chie and Ms. Caro think that categories might be limiting. We need to be broader this year and still provide clarity. We need to let people who have “leaned in” in ways we don’t always recognize have a chance as well. We are thinking about a maximum of 5 women. Dr. Chie pointed out that the Boston Globe has 5 individuals plus “all frontline workers.” Ms. Stone explained that nominees cannot be currently campaigning for townwide elected office, be a member of our Commission, or a prior Woman of the Year. Ms. Margolis asked about nominating a group of women? Yes – we will just need to figure out how to reflect that in the nomination form. Ms. Sarabi offered to create a poster once the language is finalized.

Event planning: We will still be all-remote, so how will we honor winners? Ms. McClelland suggests we have an event and bring people together because it is more powerful. Ms. Stillman suggests a synchronous online event for all the winners together. Ms. Garodia says she can organize and coordinate. Dr. Chie and Ms. Garodia suggested it be a maximum of one hour in length. Ms. McClelland asked if we have a budget so we can give something to our winners? Ms. Stone says that the Commission for Diversity and Inclusion will reimburse us for allowed expenses; Ms. Starr says we have \$1,000 line item budget.

Ms. Stone asked for volunteers to work with Ms. Garodia to plan the event. Ms. Stillman, Ms. Sarabi, and Ms. McClelland all volunteer. Check Town calendar for dates. Event will be on Zoom later in the spring (April or later), but need to choose a date and work from there. Ideas suggested: ask BIG to help (someone said that Kathy Bisbee would be nominated for all the work she has done); maybe have the winners’ names on the Coolidge Corner Theater marquis; Ms. Lee asks who she should email if she has event ideas. All ideas to Ms. Garodia. She will organize a meeting of the planning team.

3. Subcommittee Reports:

i. Legislation & Advocacy (Nicole McClelland):

Ms. Clauson came to the last meeting for public comment and raised issues with Schools policies and procedures around sexual harassment. Her concern was within the K-8 area and there seemed to be less training. Discussed the work on Title IX spearheaded by Ms. Stillman. Lots more work to be done.

Subcommittee is discussing data gathering on barriers to civic participation and running for office. We have time because we are going to be remote for some time yet to think about how to gather good data. Want to take a deeper dive into local government participation data. Ms. McClelland stressed that it’s not just about running for office, want to gather data on obstacles to women’s civic participation in general. Ms. Stone did some research on the issue of local candidacy and women; there is not much research at the local politics level. She circulated a one-page summary of relevant research from Canada (see Appendix A) that shows categories of obstacles for women; suspect they are the same in Brookline. Childcare is a key noted obstacle for campaigning. Ms. Stone is interested in actionable issues, such as paying for child care. MA does not allow candidates to pay for child care from campaign contributions. Ms. Stone believes Michelle Wu made that an issue in Boston when she ran for City Council. Ms.

Stone will look into what happened with that effort, if it's possible to act at the local level. Ms. McClelland wants to be sure we continue pursuing the issue of childcare for participation when we resume in-person meetings.

Discussion of what it would take to field a survey of our own. Responding to a question from Ms. Stone, Ms. Starr said that ODICR has had mixed success fielding surveys. Hard to reach audiences beyond the email list network. Ms. Stone is concerned that we do not have a robust infrastructure for disseminating a survey. Other ideas for collecting data: Ms. Caro said the LWV has Friday morning events with speakers and this could be one of those to talk about participation for women in civic activities. Ms. Caro says the LWV has a large distribution list. Ms. Sarabi said there are organizations helping women run for office (local and national): Run to Win and Emily's List. Maybe we can partner with them to gather information (and see what they have). We can look at Women's Studies departments at local universities to see if there are faculty or students who want to do research on this. Ms. Sarabi is willing to reach out. We can also look at public comments at virtual meetings and see how much participation there is from women. That data is there to be had. Ms. McClelland said that we are especially interested in the women in Brookline don't show up and why, even if they say they would like to. How do we reach these women? Ms. Sarabi stated that it isn't a matter of women not caring, it is structural injustice at every level that prevents participation. Ms. Sarabi suggests we might ask a statement question where we reach out to our networks and see if we can get people to work with us to take this on and see where we can go with it. Ms. Stone suggests that the subcommittee should frame the question and putting it out there to see what answers we get. We do not have the bandwidth or budget to get real surveys done and analyzed, so finding a partner with those things would be essential.

Ms. Stone noted that the BCW effort to get remote participation rules extended (in order to allow for greater civic participation) after COVID has support in Brookline committees and commissions, but our representatives on Beacon Hill are divided on this matter, with Sen. Cindy Creem offering support, but Rep. Vitolo not in favor.

Maybe we should partner with the League of Women Voters to have an event about how/why women can/should run for office in Brookline. The next general How/Why to Run event by BLWV is on Feb. 8th and that panel is all female. Ms. Caro suggests that we contact the panelists and ask them to discuss the obstacles are in that presentation. Ms. Stone will do that.

- ii. Community Supports (Hadassah Margolis): No new information at this time. Next meeting is next week. As discussed, the flyer was posted on a bunch of Facebook pages. Ms. Sarabi reported that someone commented about it saying that we "ghosted" her. Ms. Sarabi contacted her and discovered that Ms. Stone had responded multiple times, provided information, but that the requests for additional help continued. Ms. Stone said she was very sympathetic to the problem -- a condo board dispute -- but that we had reached the end of what we can do.

4. Liaison reports & Updates:

i. Working Group on Sex Education: Conversation with Dean Jenee Uttaro (SHARP Warriors and BHS @ OLS). SHARPS is now 30 students and we are hoping to loop them back into this effort since they brought the issues to us. Ms. Uttaro was excited that BCW had success on Title IX with the BSC policy committee and believes there will be students in SHARP Warriors eager to work with us on the sex education curriculum. Working group has looked at the current curriculum (Get Real from Planned Parenthood) but not clear how it is being used. Ms. Stone noted there is no BSC philosophy or articulated learning expectations for sexual health education as there is for other curricular areas. The working group wants to work with the School Committee on a philosophy statement that would then guide curriculum review. Curriculum revision is done by teaching/learning staff, not School Committee, and the policy manual is clear on how to introduce a need for curriculum review. Given COVID and the instability of PSB leadership (there is currently no Deputy Superintendent for Teaching and Learning, and a search on to hire a new Superintendent after 2 years with two different interims), we should start the conversation this year and hope to be able to do more next year when the current crisis has passed. We are scheduled to have a meeting with some students and Dean Uttaro next week with a number of interested parties from the district and try to kick this off.

ii. Other liaisons: No other reports this month.

5. New & Old Business: It is Black History Month and Ms. Stone is posting something every day on the BCW facebook page about a Black woman in history or making history. She would appreciate commissioners sending her ideas for these posts. Ms. Caro said we should post this month's quiz from the ODICR as it is about Black History Month. Ms. Stone will do that. Ms. Starr said that next month is Women's History month and any ideas will be appreciated for the quiz. Ms. Starr reminded us that the Lunar New Year celebration will be over this weekend: it will be online and BIG will cover it and it will be on channel 3. She will forward the flyer. Ms. Caro said that the Brookline library also has a great Lunar New Year event each year.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:28 p.m.