

BROOKLINE COMMISSION FOR WOMEN
MEETING WEDNESDAY, MARCH 2, 2022
(ONLINE VIA ZOOM)

COMMISSIONERS PRESENT: REBECCA STONE, FELINA SILVER ROBINSON, LIZ STILLMAN, CAROL CARO, AILEEN LEE, NICOLE MCCLELLAND, LUCY CHIE

OTHERS PRESENT: CAITLIN STARR (STAFF), DOREEN GALLAGHER

MINUTES

1. Administrative details:
 - a. **Remote participation:** Ms. Stone and Ms. Starr did not know whether the legislature's extension of remote meetings for Town Meeting also applies to OML boards/commissions. If it does not, we retain the option of having some commissioners attend remotely (a quorum plus the chair must be in person) after the April 6th meeting, but all-remote meetings would cease on April 15th. Ms. Stone will get more information from the Town and report to commissioners.
 - b. **Minutes:** Vote to approve minutes from meeting of Jan. 5, 2022. Motion by Ms. Silver Robinson, seconded by Ms. Caro. Passes unanimously without amendment.
 - c. Ms. Stone acknowledged that there is a lot going on in everyone's lives and in the world and emphasized that service on this commission should be a "yes, and" part of your life. Any commissioner for whom participation is not that, please talk to her.
 - d. Ms. Starr informed the commission that she will be going on maternity leave after this meeting and Sarah Kaplan will provide staff support to the commission in her absence.

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

3. Invited Guest: Doreen Gallagher, Domestic Violence specialist with the BPD
Discuss Brookline resources for women at risk and BCW efforts to improve curricula on consent in social/emotional/sexual health education in the schools:

Ms. Stone welcomed Ms. Gallagher to our second BCW discussion of Domestic/Intimate Partner Violence. She mentioned the recent Brookline disparities report and said the BCW is also interested in hearing about Ms. Gallagher's work re: health education in the schools K-12 given the BCW's work on Title IX and how to create a curriculum continuum around the idea of consent from an early age.

Ms. Gallagher: Appreciates the work of the BCW on these issues. She has been 20 years in her BPD position. It started with the domestic violence roundtable 20 years ago when there was an uptick in restraining orders but no capacity to respond in the town. Grant money subsequently

funded staff to address teen violence, peer leaders at BHS, violence prevention, male facilitators etc. Ms. Gallagher considered that a robust set-up but the grant money ended after about four years. Subsequently, Ms. Gallagher was solo in her role, working with the BPD going out to the schools, including an educational program to identify healthy/unhealthy relationships. More grant funding from various places kept those programs and D.A.R.E. going for some years, with the goal to keep the programs in the schools with parent outreach.

When D.A.R.E. ended, the BPD adopted the AWARE curriculum. School Resource Officers (SROs) and Ms. Gallagher were funded-for 10+ years through this program and through various school safety initiatives. Ms. Gallagher feels being in the schools was helpful: students sometimes approached Ms. Gallagher or the SROs about issues that came up in their presentations. She noted that there is a mandatory report if a student reports abuse at home or teen dating violence (51A). Unsafe at home would mean DCF would follow up and the child could not go home until cleared. After March 2020, COVID shut the program down; they were not allowed to work with classes remotely, and the program was dissolved.

During COVID when the country grappled with police violence, there was a vote by the School Committee to eliminate SROs, effectively also eliminating the educational programming they had run (mostly AWARE). Ms. Gallagher says although she is not a uniformed officer, she has not been in the schools or met with students since March 2020. She said she has offered to come in to schools without uniformed officers but has been rebuffed. Ms. Gallagher believes she is capable of doing the program without the SROs, but believes the officers are better able to talk about the legal issues and that it made it a more solid team. They are open to ideas for making it better and, if invited, to present to a classroom. She said the BPD supports the idea, but the request needs to come from the schools.

Dr. Chie asked if the AWARE program was taught along with health and wellness educators in the schools. Ms. Gallagher responded that health (and sometimes science) teachers were often present for the classes. She worked with all the principals, Guidance Counselors and Health curriculum coordinator Carlyn Uyenoyama to keep the program going but it has not restarted yet. She continues to work at the High School with the student group SHARPS Warriors. Ms. Stillman added that tomorrow is the Day of Change at BHS dedicated to discussing consent and using the FRIES curriculum. SHARP Warriors students put together the Day of Change.

Ms. Stone said that teaching consent in the high school is great but probably too late, that teaching what's lawful is just a small part. She noted that there is social/emotional learning curriculum from Pre-K onward that's about respectful interactions with others. Ms. Gallagher agrees that consent needs to be taught in the formative years. It can be age-appropriate and should flow like learning manners so it is common and natural. Consent is about more than sexual assault and needs to be taught in all its contexts early and often. Ms. Gallagher believes we are behind the 8-ball now and we had been ahead of it in the past. She asked how do we make the point to the decision-makers in town.

Ms. Stone responded that the BCW had started this conversation with the School Committee last year and would love to work with Ms. Gallagher to continue that conversation. This cannot wait until high school, and it should not be dependent on grant funding or a particular curriculum. Ms.

Gallagher would like to do this. Ms. McClelland wondered whether a curriculum coordinator could help link together curriculum from early grades, middle school and BHS. We need consistency in messaging. Ms. Stone said the Schools have a K-12 health and wellness curriculum coordinator, Carlyn Uyenoyama, and Dean Uttaro (now Senior Director of Equity) had worked well on this. We need to bring these people back together with us to make the connections here. Ms. Gallagher said maybe there could be a task force to move this forward as a collaborative effort. Ms. Stone noted the BCW working group on this as well and said she will circle back on getting this going.

Ms. Stone then mentioned the recent disparity report and noted there is no structure in Brookline to respond to reports of domestic violence or its victims. Ms. Gallagher confirmed that, saying she gets calls related to domestic violence (last year 81 cases, years past 125). Normally, she refers callers to local DV agencies and coordinates out – it's not necessary for it to be a police matter to fall under her umbrella. She was enthusiastic about the Family Justice Center in Boston where police, child care, Dress for Success all coordinate efforts for victims and families. etc. Brookline only has Ms. Gallagher's office with a lot of behind the scenes coordinating with organizations such as the Community Mental Health Center or a support group at Beth Israel. Brookline does not have a drop-in center, or a safe shelter space here, but Ms. Gallagher noted that victims of intimate partner violence are typically not housed in their own towns because of safety issues –it's best to leave your neighborhood when you need shelter.

Ms. Stone asked what the biggest gap/lapse in providing services is. Ms. Gallagher said that when a woman is ready to leave and there are children involved, there are very limited options for immediate response or funding to flee. She believes we need a 24-hour hotline of Brookline folks for people not ready to involve the police. Many people would trust community members more than police. Right now, it's just her and her cell phone, and Ms. Gallagher said that if she is away and doesn't have her cell phone, people are stuck if they do not want to call the police. Also, what will happen when Ms. Gallagher is no longer in this role? She added that information should be better disseminated, such as in hair salons etc. How do people in Brookline who are DV victims know who to call?

Ms. McClelland asked if most municipalities have their own hotlines. Ms. Gallagher responded that there are few town-specific ones. Larger cities like Quincy and Roslindale have one-stop centers. There are a lot of resources out there but we need better marketing, perhaps a campaign, article, posting. Send out one message, "If you are seeking help these are the resources and the agencies that are available..." Ms. Lee agreed that (as a therapist) she should know more about resources. She noted that Brookline is full of therapists and advertising the resources to them would be helpful since they do not know. How can the town do a better job of putting the word out there?

Ms. Gallagher says she doesn't mind being the person who gets the calls, but she's just one person. Once it gets difficult for victims of DV to get help, they stop trying. They shouldn't have to go to many places to get all the help they need since these are people who are already stressed and may lack the resources they need to get out of a bad situation. Ms. Caro asked about the DV info in all the bathroom stall doors that she had seen at a temple. She emphasized the information

needs to be in a private place. Dr. Chie agreed, adding we could have a QR code on a poster in bathrooms that listed resources.

The Commission thanked Ms. Gallagher for a great conversation. Ms. Stone reiterated that we should be following up re all the ideas. Ms. Gallagher thanks the commission for being so open and a thoughtful, productive conversation. Replying to a question, Ms. Gallagher clarified that her position is permanent staff of the Brookline PD (not grant funded) so the position should exist in the future even if/when she retires. Ms. Gallagher will forward her cell phone number and welcomes all calls.

4. Entered Closed Session to discuss Woman of the Year nominations

The meeting adjourned at 8:15 p.m. from its closed session without returning to public session.