

BROOKLINE COMMISSION FOR WOMEN
WEDNESDAY OCT 6TH, 2021 AT 7 PM
(ONLINE VIA ZOOM)

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

COMMISSIONERS ABSENT: NICOLE MCCLELLAND, HADASSAH MARGOLIS, HOMA SARABI-DAUNAIS

OTHERS PRESENT: CAITLIN STARR (STAFF), JULIE YOUDOVIN (DVR)

AGENDA

1. Administrative details:
 - i. Vote to approve minutes from meeting of Sept. 1, 2021:
Moved by Carol Caro, seconded by Aileen Lee; passes unanimously
 - ii. Additions to BCW list of colleague institutions/organizations: Ms. Stone reminded commissioners that the BCW is trying to create an ongoing list of organizations we might either partner with or amplify. We are planning to institutionalize examining and adding to the list, although additions can be suggested at any time. We will try to continue to review in each meeting, as suggested by Ms. Margolis.
2. Public Comment: No one appeared for public comment, but Ms. Stone noted we were ahead of schedule and said if anyone signed in at the announced time we would allow them to speak.

Ms. Starr reminded us of a Warrant Article that had passed Town Meeting requiring any documents circulated to commissioners (the docket “packet”) to be publicly posted with the agenda as of November 2021. In the event a document is circulated after the agenda has been posted, Ms. Starr can link it to the agenda on the public calendar.

3. Presentation/Discussion re: Domestic (Intimate Partner) Violence Resources in Brookline with invited speaker, Julie Youdovin, Outreach & Program Coordinator at Journey to Safety, the domestic abuse program of Jewish Family & Children’s Service, and member of the Brookline Domestic Violence Roundtable and Women Thriving board. Ms. Stone introduced Ms. Youdovin. Ms. Stone asked if the roundtable has discussed gun violence in relation to domestic partner violence and asked Ms. Youdovin to comment if they had because of one of the warrant articles we would be discussing later in the agenda for possible BCW consideration.

Ms. Youdovin said Newton had recently grappled about firearm sales and that their debate had become focused on legal issues and risk prevention. She suggested Jane Doe in Massachusetts would have good information and policy people on this subject.

Ms. Youdovin thanked the BCW for asking her to come speak and strengthen our connections. Abuse is misunderstood in the community as physical or verbal violence but that definition is not complete. Somewhere between 1 in 3 or 1 in 4 women have been abused by a domestic partner or someone they know well. Men and gender non-conforming people have been abused. She noted that the prevalence of abuse means that a conversation about it may resonate with anyone in a meeting, and anyone at the meeting should feel free to reach out at the end if you have feelings or take breaks and feel free to walk away if you need to for self-care.

Ms. Youdovin showed a powerful video about domestic violence regarding girls and women: [JF&CS Journey to Safety: Love Should Be Safe](#). It provides definitions and statistical information about domestic abuse that is not commonly known or understood, for example:

- 40% of women killed worldwide are killed by an intimate partner;
- 1 in 4 U.S. women are victims of domestic abuse;
- 15.5 million U.S. children live in violent or abusive homes;
- 1 in 3 adolescent girls in the U.S. are victims of physical, emotional, or verbal abuse from a dating partner; and
- Most incidents are never reported.

Ms. Caro and Ms. Garodia agree that the information was not surprising. Ms. Garodia noted that she has taken the 40-hour training for individuals working with domestic violence organizations (she is on the board of Saheli).

The remainder of her presentation was supported with PP slides that can be obtained by contacting Ms. Youdovin.

The presentation covered topics such as: 1) Abuse is about control and power. It is more than physical violence. It also emotional, financial/educational/sexual, digital/tech related, identity/spiritual/cultural. People can have never been hit by a partner and have a lot of fear. Diminishing someone's world, making them feel isolated is also part of abuse, as is blame and shame-abusers who make their victims feel blame for the abusive behavior. Sometimes it involves ruining someone's credit, or invading and tracking all their phone and tech use. Abusive individuals weaponize things.

2) Abuse is 24/7. Abuse is a constant in the life of a victim even when incidents are spaced out over time. We should think of it not as a series of incidents but a way of being forced to live. It is a whole pattern of controlling behavior.

3) What is going on in Brookline: The Domestic Violence Roundtable brings together various individuals and institutional actors in Brookline to talk about data and resources in response to domestic abuse. The DVR is in transition right now because the former chair had to step away and Rita McNally stepped up to become chair but then COVID. Staffing is from of ODICR: Caitlin handled this for some time, and now Sarah Kaplan has stepped into the staff role. Regular participants include BPD (Doreen Gallagher) the public health department, and Cheryl Snyder from emergency management, and Felina Silver Robinson from the BCW. More sporadic attendance comes from the faith community, concerned residents, the public schools, service providers, and others. The DVR meets the 2nd Thursday of the month at 4:00 p.m. everyone is welcome. Meetings

have been on Zoom and will continue remotely for the time being, but in person meetings are typically in the Denny Room of the Department of Public Health. This is not a meeting that is task-oriented. Rather, it's an opportunity for networking across town efforts and departments. Ms. Caro asked if there is representation from the Brookline Senior Center. Ms. Youdovin thinks not, but isn't sure. Ms. Caro noted that senior abuse is an important domestic abuse issue. She offered to make connections to people at the Senior Center who should be involved.

Other DV resources in Brookline:

Ms. Youdovin shared Brookline Cares posters developed by Women Thriving/Ann Brackett that include information for victims about resources. It directs people to Safe-Link 877-785-2020. Ms. Starr said there are a lot of printed posters available. The group discussed ways to help distribute them more widely. Ms. Caro said that in each bathroom stall at Young Israel there was a DV poster. Ms. Youdovin says the posters are at Temples Israel and Sinai. Ms. Starr says they have been in every public bathroom in the past, but we need to repost. They had been in the libraries as well and some BHA buildings. Ms. Stone believes this a task we can help with per our goals around amplification.

Ms. Stone asked about the nature of supports at the Brookline PD and about where and how we collected Brookline-level data, but Ms. Youdovin said most data and most resources are regional (see below in minutes). There is a Youth Risk Behavior survey (YRB) fielded every two years in the public schools asking students (anonymously) about various behaviors from recreational drug use to sexual activity to dating violence. The uses of that data are limited for various reasons having to do with the design of the survey, but it is one indicator we have of Brookline intimate partner abuse.

Ms. Caro noted that the Brookline Mental Health Center was not named on the resources poster, but Ms. Youdovin explained the named sources were those who funded the posters.

Ms. Youdovin named a number of resources that serve Brookline, and said that very few communities have their own programs because they are so expensive. Except for large cities such as Boston and Worcester, most services are regional. Ms. Stone asked what someone would get if they called the Brookline PD number listed on the poster. Ms. Youdovin was not sure but said it would connect to Doreen Gallagher (a civilian with BPD) who is their Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault Advocate and Violence Prevention Coordinator.

Ms. Youdovin added that BIG has been amazing helping in all sorts of ways to get word out, and that Women Thriving, while it is not and doesn't sponsor a domestic violence program, its programs break down isolation and connect people, helping with job hunting and other supports that drive independence. She added that people cannot be safe until they are economically stable.

Ms. Youdovin announced that the Jennifer Lynch Committee (started by Pat Norling after her daughter, Jennifer, was murdered by her husband) will hold its Vigil Against Domestic Violence this year on October 21, 2021 from 4:30-5:30 p.m. Ms. Youdovin

will send a poster to Ms. Starr. Ms. Stone asked if possible for a JPEG of the poster so we can post on Facebook.

Ms. Youdovin emphasized that the work of the BCW matters and asked if the commission would want to host a workshop/education program to explain what abuse is- a smaller version of the 40-hour program discussed earlier. Members were interested in this idea.

Ms. Stone will be sure that all commissioners have Ms. Youdovin's contact information so they can connect directly and make further connections and Ms. Stone and Ms. Starr will help with school committee members. Ms. Caro asked about getting the Zoom sign-on meeting information for the meetings of the Roundtable. Ms. Youdovin suggested getting in touch with Sarah Kaplan skaplan@brooklinema.gov to get on a distribution list and try to add it to the town website. Ms. Stone emphasized that Ms. Silver Robinson is our liaison to the Roundtable.

Ms. Stone thanked Ms. Youdovin for this important information and re-introduction to the topics and asked her please to tell Ms. Gallagher we would love to have her come to a future meeting as well.

4. Liaisons, Working Groups, Other Updates

- i. Report of the Working Group on fall Town Meeting warrant. Discussion of which articles to hear at BCW. Vote to invite petitioners of November Town Meeting articles chosen for review to the Nov. 3rd BCW meeting. Memo distributed lists the articles the working group identified as potentially of interest to the BCW. Ms. Stone reminded commissioners we have no official role on warrant articles, but this commission has undertaken a review of each warrant to be a voice for women and girls. Tonight we are only deciding *whether* we want to hear more and have proponents of the articles come and speak with us at a public hearing, which is required of any board considering a position on a warrant article. We are not deciding on endorsing articles tonight.

Ms. Stone pointed commissioners to our criteria for review as follows:
Articles that rise to the level of BCW review should meet at least one of the following criteria:

- 1) The article speaks directly to a gender justice/equity issue for women/girls (or a significant segment of women/girls) in Brookline, or at the state or national level;
- 2) The outcome of Town Meeting's vote on the article may indirectly or inadvertently impact (positively or negatively) a significant segment of women/girls in Brookline, and we want to make that impact clear;
- 3) The article speaks to rules, processes, or procedures that will affect the conduct, rules, structure, or obligations of the BCW as a public commission.

Discussion:

Warrant Article 6: strengthening rules and fines about hedges, low tree branches and other impediments to sidewalk access. On the list because it talks about those

with disabilities, impaired vision, wheelchair or a stroller as impeded people, many of whom are women.

Ms. Caro suggested that if this is a non-controversial article likely to pass, we should not spend our time on it. If it's not, then our voice would be more important. Ms. Stone said she doesn't imagine Town Meeting will vote this down. Ms. Caro asked if the cost of enforcement might make some vote against it. Ms. Stone believes that enforcement will likely be the same but fines will be increased. Ms. Caro also asked about whether sidewalk restaurant seating affected this, but Ms. Stone does not believe so since restaurants have variances specifically for outdoor seating. This article appears to be more about hedges and trees and large articles placed on the sidewalk by residents. Ms. Caro added that BCAN is supporting this article because of its impact on older residents. Dr. Chie thinks that our review may not be necessary. She believes we should not overload our hearing with non-controversial items. BCW vote not to hear Art. 6.

Warrant Article 7: The article, presented by the Select Board, would increase Marijuana retail licenses by two and specify those licenses for Disadvantaged Business Enterprises ("Equity Applicants"), primarily business owners of color, but DBEs include women-owned businesses. Dr. Chie pointed out that there are parents emailing about concerns over more retail marijuana. Commissioners wondered whether we can we separate the issue of equity from the merits of having more marijuana retail shops in town? Ms. Stone wondered whether we could decide to support the equity issue in this article but not take a position on whether we support more shops. She added that we could also decide it's too complicated to separate and decide not to make a recommendation on it. In response to a question from Ms. Lee, Ms. Stone said she thought it was a "fine line" that separates the two issues. BCW vote to hear Art. 7 on equity grounds and because of our work on DBEs.

Warrant Article 10: Asks the state legislature to allow Brookline Town Meeting to continue meeting remotely or "hybrid," extending rules put in place for COVID which have benefited women and others with domestic care responsibilities or inflexible work schedules or transportation issues. Although the WA is only for Town Meeting, this is an issue that aligns with the remote access agenda the BCW has been pursuing. Ms. Caro believes Ms. Margolis and Ms. McClelland (not in attendance) would support this as consistent with their work on civic participation. BCW vote to hear Article 10.

Warrant Articles 11 & 12: Also regarding remote access, these articles together would ask the legislature to extend, for Brookline, the right for OML boards/commissions to form a quorum remotely and hold "hybrid" meetings with some in person and some virtual attendance. The second article is a non-binding resolution asking the Town to ensure the technology is in place to allow hybrid meetings to occur. Ms. Stone had some issues with the formulation of the article in that it appears to mandate hybrid meetings, even for those boards without policy authority or staff, but hopes the petitioners may be open to amending it slightly. Overall, we have been a leading voice in Brookline for remote access, so it makes sense to hear the article. BCW vote to hear Articles 11&12 together.

Warrant Article 13: This article would require roll call votes of all OML-subject boards and commissions on any vote other than administrative issues. It would affect the BCW, so is on the list. Ms. Caro believes that hearing this is unnecessary. Ms. Stone agreed, but plans herself to ask that boards and commissions with no policy making authority be exempt. BCW vote not to hear Article 13.

Warrant Article 22: The article changes zoning by-laws to restrict retail gun and ammunition stores in ways similar to marijuana retail stores. It is on the list because of domestic violence and the disproportionate effect on women as the primary victims of domestic violence. See comments above about Newton's recent debate. BCW vote to hear Article 22 in order to highlight the issue of firearms in domestic violence.

[Roll call votes below]. The BCW will hear Articles 7, 10, 11&12, and 22. Ms. Stone will notify petitioners. She acknowledged that this is a long list and that our Nov. meeting may run overtime because of it. She asked commissioners to be prepared to go late.

Liaison updates: Ms. Silver Robinson met with Women Thriving to discuss them taking up the winter coat drive. They met on 9/30 as a group and decided that they needed to network more, possibly bringing in Brookline Mutual Aid. Ms. Silver Robinson has reached out to MAB's Bonnie Bastien and Lorna (a BU student) at Women Thriving to see if they can connect. Thriving also wants to include coats for children to be more inclusive. Ms. Caro and Ms. Stone said that Faith Michaels's Kids Coat Club still collects coats for children every winter (she pivoted to making masks during covid), but that may not be Brookline-specific anymore. Everyone agrees it would be nice to get something going for December but that someone needs to take the lead. Ms. Starr added that Thriving does not think they can do it alone. Ms. Stone believes the logistics re: reserving room, getting volunteers, and advertising are straightforward, but without Dress for Success taking the coats, the issue becomes what to do with the coats once we collect them? She is hopeful this is where Thriving and MAB can be most helpful because of their community connections. Ms. Caro added that United Parish has restarted their thrift shop outside, and Dr. Chie said she can ask about United Parish through a friend. Ms. Stone wants to be sure that the coats collected are donated, not re-sold. Ms. Silver Robinson will continue to keep us updated and will confer with Dr. Chie about United Parish.

5. New & Old Business

- i. Reminder of open BCW seat: Seeking new commissioner: please talk with friends, neighbors, women in Brookline who might be interested. Ms. Caro thinks we should get a younger person, perhaps a high school student. Ms. Stone agreed that would be great.

Vote table 10/6: Each vote is whether or not the BCW should include the warrant article in a public hearing for consideration of taking a public position. NB: These are not votes to support/not support the article.

<u>Commissioner</u>	<u>Warrant Article 6</u>	<u>Warrant Article 7</u>	<u>Warrant Article 10</u>	<u>Warrant Articles 11 & 12</u>	<u>Warrant Article 13</u>	<u>Warrant Article 22</u>
Stillman	N	Y	Y	Y	N	Y
Silver Robinson	N	N	Y	Y	N	N
Margolis	x	x	x	x	x	x
McClelland	x	x	x	x	x	x
Chie	N	N	Y	Y	N	A
Lee	N	Y	Y	Y	N	Y
Sarabi-Daunais	x	x	x	x	x	x
Caro	N	N	Y	Y	N	N
Garodia	N	Y	Y	Y	N	Y
Stone	N	Y	Y	Y	N	Y
<u>Result</u>	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes

Meeting adjourned at 8:59 p.m.