



CITY OF BROCKTON WOMEN'S COMMISSION

Annual Report

June 2023

The Brockton Commission on Women's Issues was formed in 1993 to provide information and education to city residents about issues that affect women. During the pandemic the Commission languished so in August 2022 the Commission was reformed and the following Commissioners were appointed:

- Oluwatoyin Adewumi
- Karlene Derozier-Brizard
- Sonja Dixon
- Janice Johnson-Plumer
- Ruth Moore
- Rita Spinola
- Martha Testa

Janice Johnson-Plumer, who had served on a previous Women's Commission and the Plymouth County Commission on the Status of Women, was appointed as Chair. The following individuals were elected as officers:

- Karlene Derozier-Brizard—Vice-Chair (She had also served on a previous Brockton Women's Commission.)
- Martha Testa—Secretary

Our meetings began via Zoom in September 2022. We familiarized ourselves with the Commission By-laws and with each other. We discussed goals and plans and agreed that a listening session with the women of Brockton would be our first step so that we could understand better the issues that women were currently facing as the pandemic faded and to provide a resource list of available services along with a brochure that publicizes the Commission on Women's Issues.

We scheduled a Meet and Greet session to be held on March 25, 2023 (during Women's History Month) at Brockton Community Access and planned all the details, including refreshments, a banner, name tags, business cards, and brochures. Despite our best efforts, the response rate was low—too low to warrant the expenses we had projected—so we decided to postpone the event until there

was enough lead time to adequately market the event. Plans will be developed to reschedule the Meet and Greet at Massasoit Community College (MCC) Women's Resource Center

Marketing our activities was discussed and we considered a student intern from Bridgewater State University (BSU) Women's and Gender Studies Program or Massasoit Community College (MCC) Women's Resource Center. We learned that there are specific requirements to obtain an intern, such as a job description, supervisor, and evaluation procedure, which we did not have in place at the time, so we decided to collaborate with BSU and MCC to develop a working relationship due to our mutual interests.

Commissioners were active with networking:

- Sonja Dixon, Ruth Moore, and Linda Teixeira-Reyes attended an event at the Brockton Public Library in March to inform others about the work of the Women's Commission. The guest speaker was Khalilah Camacho-Ali, wife of Mohammed Ali. Both Commissioners received an invitation from Ms. Ali to attend her birthday party.
- Oluwatoyin Adewumi attended the United Nations General Women's Assembly in New York City in March where she listened to a panel discussion about digital equity across races related to gender. Emphasis was on the need to close the digital literacy gap, which leads to a financial wealth gap since it is predominantly men who are building technology.
- Oluwatoyin Adewumi also participated in a panel as a speaker on how digital equity can help increase survival rates for women experiencing chronic diseases in low to middle income countries.
- Ruth Moore, Oluwatoyin Adewumi, and Martha Testa attended Advocacy Day 2023 at the Massachusetts Statehouse in May. The event is sponsored by the Massachusetts Commission on the Status of Women and is held each May when hundreds of community activists are welcomed at the Statehouse to rally behind legislation that increases women's access to opportunities and equality.
- An introduction letter was written and will be sent to relevant agencies in Brockton.
- A letter was sent to Mayor Sullivan to invite him to a Women's Commission meeting to share efforts targeted to housing and stabilization.

Several Commissioners attended the United Way Women United Breakfast on May 3rd at Thorny Lea Golf Club where they learned of important concerns faced by the women of Brockton. Based on that event, the Commission is preparing to address the following women's issues in the fall:

- Homelessness/housing insecurity/housing sustainability for women

The topic of housing was chosen because housing insecurity disproportionately affects women due to wage disparity, caregiver responsibilities, financial illiteracy, mental health, food scarcity, and other concerns.

The Women's Commission was allocated \$3400 for our budget, and we spent as follows:

- \$625 for tickets to United Way fundraising breakfast
- \$690 custom table covering for events
- \$500 business cards and name plaques

Balance = \$1585

In-person meetings have been held at City Hall since April and the Commission has welcomed guests to those meetings. Our meetings will be held by Zoom in July and August to plan a Meet and Greet session for September at the Brockton Public Library with plans to offer quarterly workshops to empower women. The Commission is also planning an awards ceremony to be offered later. In-person meetings will resume in September.

Going forward, the Commission will seek specialists in homelessness and housing sustainability to guide us in our efforts and to collaborate with relevant groups in the city. The Commission looks forward to a successful upcoming year.

Respectfully Submitted,
Martha H. Testa
Secretary