



Cape Cod & Islands Commission on the Status of Women

Annual Report 2022

CCICSW Commissioners (*currently at full membership*)

Linda Cebula, Harwich – *Chair*
Sue Mynttinen, Nantucket – *Vice Chair*
Donna Rivers, Dennis – *Secretary*
Kate Parache, Hyannis – *Treasurer*
Helen Bresnahan, Bourne – *Emerita*

Terry Alves-Hunter, Falmouth
Lynne Barbee, Mashpee
Katia Dacunha, Hyannis
Rachel Devine, Nantucket
Anna Dunphy, Falmouth
Natalia Frois, Hyannis
Amy Peters, Mashpee
Lynda wan'n'Tani, Harwich
Mary Waygan, Mashpee

We welcomed new commissioners Terry Alves-Hunter, Lynne Barbee, Rachel Devine, and Amy Peters. And we extend our thanks to retiring commissioners Mary Johnson and Tara Wallace – and to Tina Games, who has moved on to work with MCSW as the Regional Commissions Director – for their efforts on behalf of women in Massachusetts.

Mission

The mission of the Cape Cod & Islands Commission on the Status of Women is to provide a permanent effective voice for women across the Cape & Islands. The Commission stands for fundamental freedoms, basic human rights, and the full enjoyment of life for all women throughout their lives.

Advocacy

The Cape Cod and Islands Commission has been supporting the following legislative priorities:

- An Act relative to inmate telephone calls (No Cost Calls)
- An Act to end Child marriage
- An Act prohibiting discrimination based on natural hairstyles (Crown Act)
- An Act to increase access to disposable menstrual products (I Am)
- An Act relative to virtual meetings of appointed statewide public bodies

- An Act providing affordable & accessible high quality early education & childcare to promote child development & well-being (Common Start)
- An Act relative to work and family mobility (Family Mobility)

Additionally, the Commission endorsed the priorities of the State Commission on the Status of Women.

The Commissioners followed the progress (or lack of) on these potential acts and kept updated through reports at our monthly meetings. Once the 192nd General Court ends, we will reassess the issues to support. We wrote letters of support for these priorities.

Programs Undertaken

Outreach- We emphasized our social media presence and focused in February on Black History Month and in March on Women's History. All commissioners provide material for these postings so that we could stay fresh and relevant. Our social media also promoted the GELI program held in April 2022.

Listening Circle on Nantucket, Fall 2021- Several commissioners traveled to Nantucket (which like Martha's Vineyard, is a separate island for those who do not know this) and met with members of the community. The full report, which was sent to all of our elected legislators, is attached to this report.

Since the Regional Commission was advised that the State Commission was now holding Advocacy Day every two years, we have planned for a regional advocacy day for June 10, 2022. The plan is for the Commissioners to interact and advise our elected legislators on issues and topics which will support women.

In the interest of better educating ourselves on topics and issues, we had guest speakers at our monthly meetings. These speakers included Margaret Drew, of the MA Coalition to End Child Marriage, and on the I Am act (menstrual access) from the YMCA of Southern Mass, Diane Reno and Leimary Llopiz.

Goals for Next Fiscal Year

The Commission is currently planning to hold a fall Listening Circle on the lower Cape, focusing on the women who live in the Harwich/Brewster/Chatham/Orleans and beyond towns. We are planning on having a guest speaker on a relevant topic and then hear those present as they speak about their issues and concerns.

Another Listening Circle may be held in the Spring 2023, area not yet defined.

The Commission is planning on expanding our social media presence by adding a periodic newsletter using the MailChimp platform. We find that too many people are not aware of our organization and the desire is to increase knowledge of our organization.

The Commission is fortunate to have two members from Nantucket and none from the lower Cape. We would like to expand awareness of the Commission by attending meetings of other

municipal and community organizations and presenting what we are, what we do, and our focus on current issues. We feel that this will increase participation at our events and help find commissioners to represent the lower Cape.

The Commission will continue to have our elected legislators and other members of the community as guest speakers.

*Submitted by Linda Cebula, Chair
May 13, 2022*

**Cape Cod & Islands Commission on the Status of Women
Report on Listening Circle held on Nantucket
October 23, 2021**

On October 23, 2021, The Commission held a listening circle on Nantucket courtesy of the Nantucket Community School. While extensive outreach was performed, there were only three Nantucket residents in attendance. The Commissioners in attendance were Sue Mynttinen, Kate Parache, Natalia Frois, Katia Dacunha, Linda Cebula and Helen Bresnahan, Emerita and Natalia's mother and daughter.

The purpose of a listening circle is to listen, to hear what woman face as issues and concerns, and to then bring those issues to our State Commission and to our legislators. To that end, there are no right or wrong opinions or concerns, only what the attendees feel comfortable sharing. Since the three participants self-identified and there were only three, the session was more about interactive conversation than straight testimony.

Introductions

Mynttinen as moderator for the session spoke about the purpose of the Commission, and each commissioner introduced herself. We noted that no names would be used in any written report to preserve anonymity of the attendees.

Voices heard in summary

Nantucket, while experiencing many of the issues that concern those who reside on the mainland, has additional issues; it is an island, so to access many things means a not inexpensive trip on the ferry or a long wait for an appointment for specialized services. One of the attendees noted that there is a perception that living on Nantucket is "Nirvana" until one peels back to the reality.

Housing

Access to affordable housing is the number one issue: without a place to live year-round, one cannot easily remain employed on the island. Families are living in cars, basements, attics. The property costs for ownership (average is \$2.3 M) and rentals (average \$1,500 - \$1,800 for a room in a house) are out of reach for most residents.

The ability to secure housing is not limited to only the residents. As women age there are few options for them on island-will need to relocate off island. And the seasonal workers face even greater issues- what may be provided by the employer/business owner is not generally up to basic standards. Some employers are attempting to acquire properties to house employees, very costly to do based on the cost of the property. It becomes more dormitory living, or a family in one-bedroom, shared facilities.

However, Nantucket has made strides towards the housing issues. They have had a land bank tax of 2% on property sales. The voters have authorized \$25,000,000 (in 2019) and an additional \$15,000,000 recently, used to create year-round rentals and home ownership opportunities. The proposed Community Land Trust would buy property at market, then lease the land to the home buyer for 99 years. The buyer obtains a mortgage on the house at a subsidized rate. The entire property is deed restricted. Since there is only 4% of land that is not developed, they are focusing on reuse of existing properties.

Resistance to housing initiatives still exists but there has been greater acceptance of density. However, NIMBY still forces developers to rely on 40B. There are 2 projects currently in the possible works: a 64-unit development has received a positive vote at three town meetings, abutters appealed, and this has been in court for 4 years; and 156 units on 11 acres, very controversial but the application is under 40B.

Nantucket is again requesting a transfer fee on property sales, first requested in 1986 from State Legislature. There is now a statewide coalition attempting to get this onto the floor for a vote, has not happened yet. They are requesting our support for this endeavor.

Shelters

Homeless, domestic issues: women's and children's shelters - there are none. Even if there were shelters, the idea of a shelter is to be able to move a person into a more permanent housing situation. During the off season, some of the hospitality properties will let a woman stay for a couple of days, but then the woman needs to be ferried to the mainland, in many cases leaving children behind. There are few shelters on the mainland that are able to take children. In a divorce or separation issue, if the woman leaves the living situation and the children stay with the other spouse, she may not be able to have her children visit her or stay overnight, especially if she is off island.

Child Care

Access to childcare/daycare is another big concern. One of the attendees, upon learning that she was pregnant, was on the phone trying to find day care. She is on wait lists which average a year. Not enough licensed providers. The unlicensed providers tend to be inconsistent in availability. There is only one provider that takes infants and is only authorized for a maximum of 20 at a time. Women then find that they need to leave the work environment in order to care for a child, further impacting the ability to pay for living expenses. Lack of consistent care is another issue- women who cannot find every day, all day care cannot show up for work, thereby potentially becoming unemployed.

Health Care

Access to health care on an island is difficult at best. There is only one dentist who accepts MassHealth. No obstetrician. Only one pediatrician on island, does not take insurance. A pediatrician who takes insurance comes periodically from off island. No trauma center or beds, no ICU: cases needing more than basic surgery are put on a Med Flight to Boston. Persons needing a bed for mental health or substance issues are ferried to the mainland on an ambulance. Shortage of primary care physicians-constant turnover. Virtually all specialized health care is provided by periodic visits from the mainland. Nantucket Community Hospital has no ICU, no outpatient services for mental health and substance abuse, no detox services, no mental health beds. Some statistics on the ratio of a behavioral health provider to the population: Mass 1 to 150, Barnstable County 1 to 190, Nantucket 1 to 370

Immigrant Community

In the 1980's there were 5 people who spoke Spanish on the island: now the majority speak Spanish/additional languages. There was commentary that there is less interaction among the various communities. Although there are ongoing attempts to encourage more participation in the overall community, it is difficult and a slow process. Document status is an issue, ICE has been very active on the island. The elementary school has a majority of minority students.

The recent census has been impacted by the status of lack of documentation. The Census shows 14,000 in population with 9,000 registered voters (both approximately). The participants felt that the population is closer to 18,000.

The COVID vaccinations were given without asking for any identification- allowed for services to the undocumented: there is little insurance among this population, limited access to the medical system. Many are afraid to seek medical care due to immigration status. Pop up clinics were of great use to access this population.

Final Observations and Possible Action Steps by the Regional Commission

1. Vote to support the Housing Transfer Tax legislation
2. Vote to support funding for the transportation of family/support members to be able to accompany a person being transported for emergency purposes.
3. Call for a legislative task force for the review of rural areas and their specific issues

Submitted by:

Commissioners Mynttinen, Parache, Frois, Dacunha and Cebula, and Emeritia Bresnahan

**Approved by Cape & Islands Commission on the Status of Women 12/8/2021*

