

**Vermont Commission on Women**  
**Meeting Minutes**  
**Wednesday, February 14, 2018 | 9:30 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.**  
**Pavilion Office Building, 4<sup>th</sup> Floor Conference Room, 109 State St., Montpelier VT**

**Commissioners present:**

Marcia Merrill (Chair), Eileen Boland, Carol Buchdahl, Mary Daly, Charlotte Dennett, Ruth Finn, Emilie Kornheiser, Danielle Martel, Melinda Moulton, Colin Ryan, Lisa Senecal

**Commissioners absent:**

Gretchen Bailey, Deborah Bucknam, Nancy LaVarnway, Marybeth Christie Redmond, Kerry Secrest

**Advisors present:**

Jen Horwitz of Building Bright Futures  
Ashley Michelle Fowler of Mercy Connections  
Diane Derby of U.S. Senator Leahys' Office  
Jennifer Oldham of Vermont Works for Women

**Guests:** Brenda Churchill of LGBTQIA Alliance, Ebony Nyoni of Black Lives Matter VT, Edisa Muller, Chloé White of ACLU VT

**Staff:** Cary Brown, Hannah Lane, Lilly Talbert

**Presiding:** Marcia Merrill

**Recording:** Hannah Lane

**1. Call to order and approval of agenda**

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Meeting called to order at 9:33 a.m.

**Meeting Agenda Approval Process:**

**MOTION** made by Carol and seconded by Ruth

To approve the meeting agenda, giving discretion to the chair to deviate from the agenda as necessary.

**MOTION APPROVED.** Agenda adopted.

**2. Welcome/Introductions**

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Marcia welcomed everyone and asked them to introduce themselves.

Marcia thanked:

- Charlotte & Emilie for attending and helping with Change The Story events
- Emilie for delivering new Legal Rights of Women in Vermont to Women's Freedom Center
- Lisa for her ongoing work around preventing and responding to sexual harassment; she's provided legislative testimony, attended the bill introduction press conference, and will be on VT Edition on Friday discussing the bill with Rep. Sarah Copeland-Hanzas.
- Colin & Marybeth for help with VCW's educational videos about the new pregnancy accommodations law.
- Emilie & Melinda for their ongoing work and involvement with the Vermont Equal Rights Amendment.

### 3. Approval of November 2017 & January 2018 Meeting Minutes

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#### Approval of November 2017 & January 2018 Minutes

**MOTION** made by Carol, seconded by Lisa:

To approve the November 2017 & January 2018 minutes as submitted, notwithstanding spelling or grammatical errors.

**MOTION APPROVED. Adopted as presented.**

### 4. Staff Update

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Cary gave Commissioners a brief legislative update:

- Sexual Harassment Bill, H.707
  - The House Committee on General, Housing and Military Affairs took testimony yesterday, we expect they will hear more.
  - The bill would step up reporting procedures, provide a right to inspection of policies and procedures by the Attorney General, prevent pre-employment NDAs from preventing Sexual Harassment disclosures, and provide some whistle-blower protections for victims who have entered into settlements containing NDAs.
- Minimum Wage (S.40)
  - Would raise the minimum wage to \$15 an hour by 2024, then it would continue to be tied to inflation. In the Senate.
- Paid Family Leave
  - In the Senate. They have not taken testimony, but may after crossover.
  - The version passed by the House last year is entirely funded by a payroll tax on employees, it would provide 6 weeks of paid leave at 80% wage replacement with a ceiling of twice the livable wage, and the program would be administered by VDOL similarly to unemployment.
- Equal Pay
  - Governor Scott urged the House and Senate to pass the Equal Pay Bills before Town Meeting Day.
    - H.294 would prevent employers from asking for a job applicant's salary history.
    - S.275 would expand beyond sex discrimination to all protected classes, would also prohibit employers from asking for salary history information, and would eliminate the "bona fide factor other than sex" defense for employers who pay similarly situated employees differently for non-discriminatory reasons. We are concerned about this because there are legitimate business reasons to pay differently that are not discriminatory that wouldn't be included.
- Remote Work & Flexible Work Arrangements, S.94
  - Encourage businesses to offer flexible work, childcare, job sharing, and remote work
  - Offers a tax credit to employers who offer the programs.

VCW Legislative Lunch is scheduled for January 9<sup>th</sup>, 2019, and staff needs Commissioner support with planning and most importantly, with fundraising. The luncheon is paid for by the Vermont Commission on Women Education and Research Foundation, no state dollars are used for the event. The foundation does not have the funds to pay for the event outright, which usually costs around \$4,000. Staff cannot

use their time to fundraise for the foundation; we rely on Commissioners to take that on. Calling for Commissioners to join a Committee to assist. The following Commissioners volunteered:

- Danielle
- Lisa
- Marcia
- Eileen
- Carol
- Ruth
- Emilie

The event also provides an opportunity for advisory council member organizations to display materials.

## **5. LGBTQIA Policy Updates**

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Brenda Churchill from the LGBTQIA (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender Queer, Intersex, and Asexual) Alliance discussed with Commissioners her organization and their policy priorities. The LGBTQIA Alliance's mission is to anticipate and respond to proposed and enacted laws, policies, and crises', provides advice on representing and protecting the rights of LGBTQIA community and achieves this through advocacy and education. Her organization is focused on intersectionality and considering both how policies affect the LGBTQIA community and people at large. Brenda serves as one of two liaisons. One primary bill they are working on is H.820, which proposes to prohibit photographing or recording people at a peer support group without consent. Their policy priorities also include:

H.196 – Paid Family Leave

H.294 – Equal Pay/Salary History

H.492 – Racial Justice Oversight Board

H.562 – Redefining Parentage, creating a de facto parent definition

H.794 – Ethnicity Studies Education

H.880 – Preventing involuntary sterilization for individuals with intellectual disabilities

H.333 – Requiring Single User Toilets in Public Accommodations to be Gender-Neutral

H.385 – Amending Human Rights Commission jurisdiction to include bullying in schools

H.422 – Allow a law enforcement officer to confiscate a firearm from a person arrested or cited for domestic assault if they believe it's necessary

S.53 – Universal Publicly Financed Primary Care

## **6. VT Equal Rights Amendment Proposal**

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Melinda & Emilie have been working on a Vermont Equal Rights Amendment. Sen. Ginny Lyons is introducing a resolution that calls on the next Senate to initiate the process; due to constitutional requirements, the process cannot begin this year. Melinda read the resolution out loud. Every Senator is sponsoring the resolution.

Emilie's community organized Brattleboro group is working on developing a ground game and energizing and pulling in youth and women and having summits and art and events.

## **7. Child Marriage Legislation**

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Currently, minors can get married at 16 and 17, the proposed bill would raise the age to 18. Emancipated minors would still be able to get married. Hannah discussed concerns about force, coercion, consent, and informed consent, and about allowing minors to enter into this significantly impactful contract when we don't allow minors to enter other contracts.

Staff passed around charts that illustrate the age difference between Vermont minors and their spouses, which indicate a large share of minors who marry, particularly minor girls who marry, are marrying adult men much older than themselves.

Chloe White shared ACLU concerns in other states, including agency and the stigma around single parenthood. She does like that this bill would allow marriage post-emancipation. She shared concerns about reactions concerning abortion access to minors. The bill is unlikely to be taken up this year.

## **8. VCW Listening Project**

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Cary passed around a document outlining Commissioner roles in our Listening Project. Marybeth will be offering training at next meeting about community engagement and interviewing, and Commissioners should think about cross-class/race/age before then. The Economic Equity and Security Committee identified Brattleboro/NEK/Bennington/Franklin County as target locations for large public forums. Emilie and Marcia can work on one in Bennington. Marcia & Danielle can work on an event in Franklin County. Eileen is willing to work on events in both Newport & St. Johnsbury with help. Carol and Emilie are interested in outreach in Bellows Falls & Brattleboro.

The survey will be issued online and via paper. Commissioners expressed interest in having that ready by Town Meeting Day. Cary wasn't sure that was feasible, as she's waiting for some expert assistance.

## **8. Committee Work**

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Commissioners broke out into their respective Committees.

## **8. Announcements**

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Ebony announced that the second part of the Black Lives Matter VT My Sister's Keeper Challenge Conference is happening at Green Mountain College on March 23<sup>rd</sup> – 25<sup>th</sup>.

Let's Grow Kids issued their [2018 Stalled at the Start report](#) yesterday about supply and demand for infant and toddler care.

Early Childhood Day at the Legislature is next month on March 14<sup>th</sup>.