

Vermont Commission on Women December 8, 2010 Meeting Minutes

Commissioners Present: Marcia Merrill, Chair; Gretchen Bailey; Eileen Boland; Cary Brown; Carol Buchdahl; Ann Cardinal; Laine Dunham; Retta Dunlap; Ruth Finn; and Peg Martin.

Commissioners Absent: Sharon Baade, Cathy Frey, Karen Henry, Anne McClaughry, and Marion Milne. (Note: Linda Fogg has resigned and the Republican Party has not made a new appointment.)

Advisors Present: Joanna Cole and Kate Rader representing the Vermont League of Women Voters, Linda Ingold representing the Vermont Women's Business Center, Carmel Quinn representing the Girl Scouts of the Green and White Mountains.

Guests: Sanjukta Ghosh, Professor Communications Department, Women's and Gender Studies, Castleton State College and Tess Taylor, Director of Education, Vermont Historical Society.

Presiding: Marcia Merrill

Recording: Janet Bullard

Meeting called to order at 9:34 a.m.

Welcome, Introductions, Announcements and Minutes

Update from Tess Taylor, Director of Education Vermont Historical Society about the Vermont Women's History Project including plans for Women's History Month March 2011. Tess reported that she, Brenda Cruikshank, and Janet met recently to continue planning for the event recognizing and honoring Vermont women veterans which is scheduled for Wednesday, March 23rd, 2011. The day will start with at the Snelling Room at the Vermont History Museum at the Pavilion Building in Montpelier, followed by a State House Resolution recognizing Vermont women veterans. Tours of the State House and Vermont History Museum will be provided. The event will close with an informational benefit session at the Montpelier VFW post. Tess is working on getting the Vermont Folklife Center to set up a booth to gather names for oral histories at a later date. Many women veterans have come forward wanting to share their stories.

Marcia introduced and welcomed new Commissioner Peg Martin and then asked everyone to introduce themselves to Peg.

Minutes of the November 10, 2010 Commission Meeting were not acted on.

Process Committee Report

Carol reported that the process committee met recently and voted unanimously to try the following process in order for Commissioners to bring up issues about which they feel strongly.

The Commissioner will write a one- page or less description of an issue in which she/he would like to see the Commission involved. The written description is sent to the Executive Director and the Chair to make sure it fits the mission and criteria for taking up issues.

Mission: The Vermont Commission on Women engages partnerships and networks with diverse groups to consider issues of interest to women and take action; provides information to the legislature and

other policy makers on issues affecting women; provides the most local and most appropriate information and referrals to individuals on matters related to women and families; conducts research, produces reports, publications, and maintains comprehensive resource directory. The Vermont Commission on Women, as a state agency, works to shape policy by educating and informing the public. The Commission works to find long-term solutions to the problems that confront women and their families by increasing educational, economic, social, and health-related opportunities.

Criteria for taking up an issue: (1) The issue must be closely related to the Commission's mission, strategic plan or existing public policy; (2) The issue must have a direct and broad impact on women in Vermont; (3) The issue must have at least one commissioner willing to take a public lead; (4) The Commission must have resources to effectively make an impact.

Once it is determined that the subject fits the Commission's mission and criteria for taking up issues, the written page is sent to all Commissioners. At the next Commission meeting, there is a "yea or nay" vote taken to determine if the subject is something that the Commissioners wish to take up. If Commissioners have questions, the author of the paper can answer them at this time.

Commissioners agreed via consensus to use this process to bring up an issue that is of particular interest to a commissioner and has not been identified through other avenues.

Facebook, Visibility and VCW

Ann Cardinal gave a very thorough educational presentation about Facebook. She stated that it is an incredibly valuable tool for reaching beyond your community and, as marketing director of Vermont College of Fine Arts, she uses it to connect with other writers and for work with alumni of the college. You can have a personal or professional brand on Facebook and therefore it is necessary to be very careful what you post. Only post what you would put on a grocery store bulletin board!

Ann discussed how the Commission could have an 'institutional page'. With this type of page, the owner decides who can initiate posts to the page (i.e. be an administrator). If you are the administrator and post: "VCW thinks cookies are great, everyone who has indicated that they are a fan of the Vermont Commission on Women will see that post. If a fan responds that she agrees cookies are great, that response will show up on the wall of the VCW Facebook page. Only fans that have posted a comment to that post will see other comments. However, if you visit the VCW Facebook page, you would see all posts and comments. There is no initial control over comments that a fan can make, although the administrator may choose to erase a comment that is offensive. She noted that you could create an institutional page where fans are not allowed to comment, although this eliminates interaction. For example we could post VIEW messages on Facebook and direct folk to visit our website. To be effective, an organization needs to post on a regular basis and the site should also be monitored on a regular basis.

She feels that Facebook would be a good way to get the word out about the Commission. Issues to be explored: what would the Commission accomplish by having a Facebook page; what are the logistics of maintaining a Facebook presence?

A discussion ensued. Facebook is pro-active, going to the Commission's website is reactive. Facebook can be used as a "push out" for information and can also refer back to our website. Limiting who can post could make it more labor intensive for the staff. One goal might be to get Commission information out to a wider group of people and to have a finger on the pulse of the larger community of women and girls in Vermont. It could also increase the level of engagement with our constituents and increase their ability to comment on, and react to, issues raised by the commission

Sanjukta offered to have her students work as interns maintaining the Commission's facebook page, she said she could oversee the interns' work, but ultimately Lilly would supervise the interns. Marcia asked Sanjukta to talk to Wendy.

Marcia asked that the staff meet and discuss the possibility of having a facebook page and what that would look like, including how we would manage it, and report back to the full Commission in January or February. Wendy asked interested folk to join the staff discussion: Carol, Laine, Joanna, Eileen, Cary, Retta, and Ann volunteered.

Resource Guide Update

This item was postponed to another Commission meeting.

Lilly informed the commission that belly shackling is still an issue for law enforcement personnel who are not regulated by Vermont Law such as county sheriffs. She said that the Commission may have an opportunity to discuss this issue with the sheriffs association at an upcoming meeting.

Legislative Luncheon Update

Carol gave an update on the plans for the legislative luncheon as follows: Marcia will welcome everyone to the luncheon, make some introductory remarks, introduce Governor-elect Shumlin, if he is in attendance. Carol will conduct a quiz about the Commission's history and resources as a fun way to educate legislators about our history of accomplishments and services. Quiz prizes include Cabot Cheese and Talbert Maple Syrup. Wendy will talk about how we can help them with data for policy decisions and help them when their constituents come to them with problems—more specifically the Commission's resource guide and *Legal Rights of Women in Vermont* publication update. Goal is to have legislators out by 12:50 so they can return to the State House. Carol noted that the Commission's foundation is fundraising in order to pay for the luncheon and distributed pledge cards to everyone. Any and all donations are welcome.

Janet reported that invitations have gone out to all legislators and that follow up is now needed. She explained the follow up process and stated that commissioners and many advisors would be getting an email from her with specific legislators for them to contact.

New Business

Carmel announced that the Girl Scouts Survey conducted by the Commission and the Girl Scouts is scheduled to be unveiled on January 1 and will continue until March 1. Any and all help getting girls to

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complete the survey would be greatly appreciated. Survey is for girls grades 6 – 12. Also Carmel is thrilled to announce that the constitutional amendment that the Girls Rock the Capitol interns originated has passed and that there is a ceremony for them taking place in the Cedar Creek Room at the State House on December 21st at 3:30 p.m.

Meeting adjourned at 12:26 p.m.