

**Vermont Commission on Women**  
**Meeting Minutes**  
**Wednesday, June 13, 2018 | 9:30 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.**  
**32 College St, Montpelier VT**

**Commissioners present:**

Marcia Merrill (Chair), Gretchen Bailey, Carol Buchdahl, Charlotte Dennett, Deborah Bucknam, Mary Daly, Ruth Finn, Emilie Kornheiser, Danielle Martel, Melinda Moulton, Marybeth Christie Redmond, Colin Ryan, Lisa Senecal

**Commissioners absent:**

Eileen Boland, Nancy LaVarnway, Kerry Secrest

**Advisors present:**

Jen Horwitz of Building Bright Futures (by Skype)  
Ashley Michelle Fowler of Mercy Connections  
Diane Derby of U.S. Senator Leahy's Office

**Guests:** Denise MacMartin, Candidate for State Rep, Washington-1, Edisa Muller,

**Staff:** Cary Brown, Hannah Lane, Lilly Talbert, Victoria Foster (intern)

**Presiding:** Marcia Merrill

**Recording:** Hannah Lane

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

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

**Meeting Agenda Approval Process:**

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

To approve the meeting agenda with the addition of approving our FY19 meeting schedule after the meeting minutes and 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 and to share a book recommendation.

Colin and Nancy have both tendered their resignations from the Commission. Commissioners and staff thanked them for their contributions to VCW over the years and for offering their wonderful and helpful perspectives.

Commissioners wondered about the diversity of Commissioners, and Marcia explained that she and Cary do talk with appointing authorities and let indicate that we would like to see increased diversity in all ways, but ultimately the decision is up to the appointing authority.

Marcia thanked Commissioners for their ongoing work, including especially:

Melinda, Emilie, Gretchen, Danielle for distributing surveys and ballot boxes to Planned Parenthood offices in their areas.

Carol & Emilie for attending and distributing surveys at the Strolling of the Heifers in Brattleboro.

Lisa for her contributions to the Vermont Attorney General's Office as they are planning an education video on H.707 and sexual harassment to be produced by WCAX. Lisa is also planning and facilitating a workshop with Julio Thompson at Senator Leahy's Women's Economic Opportunity Conference called *One Year after #Me Too: Progress, Pushback, and What's on the Horizon*. Diane added that's one of 24 great workshops, and they are delighted to be partnering with Change The Story again this year. The conference is free and will take place at Vermont Tech on Saturday, October 13<sup>th</sup>.

### **3. Approval of May 2018 Meeting Minutes**

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#### **Approval of May 2018 Minutes**

**MOTION** made by Gretchen, seconded by Ruth:  
To approve the May 2018 minutes as submitted.

**MOTION APPROVED. Adopted as presented.**

### **4. Approval of FY2019 Meeting Schedule**

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#### **Approval of FY2019 Meeting Schedule**

**MOTION** made by Marybeth, seconded by Lisa:  
To approve the FY2019 meeting schedule as submitted.

**MOTION APPROVED. Adopted subject to changes as necessary.**

### **5. Staff & Legislative Updates**

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Cary updated Commissioners about H.8, a bill that would change VCW appointing authorities by eliminating party appointments and allowing the Speaker of the House and Senate Committee on Committees to each appoint an additional Commissioner. It also would add per diem language into our statute.

The New England Women's Policy Initiative (NEWPI) Conference will take place Friday, November 16<sup>th</sup> at the JFK Library in Boston. It is a regional conference for anyone around New England with a focus on women's economic security. Tracks will include pay equity, among others, and there will be a post-conference reception for Women Who Dared to Run. Commissioners are encouraged to attend.

Change The Story is updating the data from their first two reports, Women Work & Wages and Where Women Work.

Hannah updated Commissioners about progress planning our 2019 biennial legislative lunch scheduled on Wednesday, January 9<sup>th</sup> at the Capital Plaza Hotel in Montpelier.

Lilly informed Commissioners that 2020 will mark the 100<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the 19<sup>th</sup> amendment which secured women’s right to vote. We are thinking about celebratory events and wondering if groups in the states have plans for events.

Lilly has been working hard developing informational videos about the new pregnancy accommodations laws, which are finalized and now available online on our website and on our YouTube channel. If folks want to share them, that would be great.

We plan to have an advisory organization focused meeting on Wednesday, November 14<sup>th</sup>.

## 6. VCW Policy Document Updates

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### **Approval of Proposed Changes to VCW’s Public Policies on Education**

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

To adopt the proposed changes to VCW’s public policies on education as presented, replacing our current policy statements on education.

Discussion:

Danielle outlined the major changes the Education and Human Development Committee is proposing, which included removing “whereas” and reformatting the policy statements, updating the statistics with current information, adding footnotes for future reference, adding to the harassment section, and addressing hazing and bullying which was not addressed before. Jen Horwitz worked hard to expand and update the early childhood education section, which was in the economic security section previously. The Committee also expanded on the teen pregnancy section. Danielle solicited feedback from Brenda Churchill, who helped to ensure the section was inclusive. Danielle especially thanked Eileen and Jen for all their work.

**MOTION APPROVED. Proposed changes to VCW’s Public Policies on Education adopted as presented.**

### **Approval of Proposed Changes to VCW’s Public Policies on Health, Safety, Civil, and Legal Rights**

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

To adopt the proposed Health & Safety policies as presented.

Discussion:

Carol outlined the Committee’s proposed updates, including updating the statistics. The Committee added some additional information about CEDAW and proposed eliminating the section on same-sex marriage since that is the law of the land.

The discussion included the following suggestions:

- Remove “whereas” in this section
- Add footnotes
- A commissioner would like to see the text of CEDAW, Hannah sent that to her directly, but footnotes would solve that problem going forward.
- Update the language to be consistent with our new parentage laws.

- Objection to the words “family dissolution”.
- Eliminate the section about the Contract with Women USA, as it seems outdated.
- Include THC in the substance abuse section, and whether that is stating a position on marijuana use, which will be legal July 1.

The Committee will make changes and submit a new draft for approval in September.

**Motion withdrawn.**

Marcia suggested Committee chairs work on a draft job description for future chairs.

**7. H.707 Prevention of Sexual Harassment**

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H.707, a bill aimed at preventing and responding to sexual harassment in the workplace, has been signed into law and includes \$125,000 for VCW to do an education and outreach campaign. We need to have a plan by December, 2018 and to carry out that the plan during the 2019 calendar year. We’d like to have a brainstorming session about starting this work. Cary asked for feedback about who else should be included other than the Attorney General’s Office and the Human Rights Commission. Education is necessary both about the new elements of the law and also about sexual harassment in general. The relevant section of the law reads:

- (a) On or before December 15, 2018, the Vermont Commission on Women, in consultation with the Attorney General and the Human Rights Commission, shall develop a public education and outreach program that is designed to make Vermont employees, employers, businesses, and members of the public aware of:
- (1) methods for reporting employment and work-related discrimination and sexual harassment;
  - (2) where to find information regarding:
    - (A) the laws related to employment and work-related discrimination and sexual harassment; and
    - (B) best practices for preventing employment and work-related discrimination and sexual harassment; and
  - (3) methods for preventing and addressing sexual harassment in the workplace.
- (b) The sum of \$125,000.00 is appropriated to the Vermont Commission on Women from the General Fund in fiscal year 2018 to carry forward to fiscal year 2019 for the purpose of creating and implementing the public education and outreach program.
- (c) The program may include:
- (1) public service announcements;
  - (2) print and electronic advertisements;
  - (3) web-based and electronic training materials;
  - (4) printed informational and training materials;
  - (5) model educational programs and curricula; and
  - (6) in-person seminars and workshops.

Commissioners offered the following questions, comments, and suggestions:

- Are the new labor posters an avenue for low-cost distribution?
- We need to focus on new Americans and cultural differences.
- Focus on our human resources personnel and our small business in Vermont. There are Employee Assistance Programs, and also some communities have essentially HR for hire. They provide training where we could focus our efforts on training the trainers. Also, meeting of HR professionals.
- Look to VBSR, Human Resource organization conferences and other for workshop delivery opportunities.
- The first step is defining the audience. Our outreach should include statewide offerings, be scenario-based and hands-on so participants understand in a visceral way what this means.
- We should be getting input from people about what the problems are and the solutions.
- Train the union trainers.
- A social media campaign that targets people at the lowest end of the economic ladder, service industry.
- Form a VCW working group.
  - Carol, Deb, Charlotte, Lisa, and Danielle
  - Marybeth on communication support
  - Melinda for an event
- Handbook on sexual harassment.
- Work with OSHA trainers.
- Host a Champions for Change event about Sexual Harassment.
- Dive into what works for training. The training that's being used doesn't work and is often focused on reducing liability and not on protecting employees.
- How do we get to people before they are even in the job? We could reach out to career centers, VDOL, job seekers, workforce development, etc. This is an incredibly important piece to integrate into the workforce development, which has a lot of money and momentum.
- Girls and women need to have the support to stand up for themselves so they don't have to file a lawsuit.
- Leverage partners that are in place, like Women's Fund events, male CEOs at the top end, and other leadership. Have them in a public setting making a commitment and talking about implementation.
- Look for positive male role models like Terry Cruise, Anthony Bourdain.
- Focus on small, real, concrete steps that people can take to protect themselves.
- Culture change is necessary and possible by supporting young women.
- South Africa did a national campaign about men standing up and speaking out about sexual violence, and that was very powerful.
- We need to focus on stopping the behavior. It's exhausting to be empowered all of the time. Girls shouldn't need to be empowered to be strong, this shouldn't happen.
- Event with men that would be willing to help.
- Women are more economically vulnerable, we need to hold people responsible and accountable. Get out our bystander document further. Men need to realize this isn't a women's issue, this is an everyone issue.

Cary would like anyone who would like to be part of a smaller group to let us know and to be thinking about and to e-mail Cary about who else we should bring in for this project.

## **8. VCW Listening Project**

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VCW's summer intern, Victoria Foster, discussed her work getting the survey out to those we don't have well covered. She's focused on geographic areas we aren't hearing much from, our aging population, the younger 18-24 aged population. She is thinking about how we can best process this data at the end. Victoria passed around some interesting quotes that have emerged, as well as a list of farmers' markets around the state with contact information and encouraged commissioners to contact and attend those with surveys and rack cards in hand. Commissioners suggested that Senior Solutions would be a great statewide access point, and it would be great to get this at the DCF offices. Melinda offered to help sit down and identify organizations that would send this out in their newsletters. Commissioners suggested she ask universities to share the survey and to focus on their affinity centers.

Community forum updates:

- The Newport group is aiming for an event the 2<sup>nd</sup> – 3<sup>rd</sup> week of September.
- St. Albans group needs to meet. Danielle & Melinda will connect.
- Brattleboro group will have an event on September 26<sup>th</sup> at the library and a planning meeting on June 22<sup>nd</sup>.

Community Conversations:

Melinda reported a great conversation with her school principal.

Lisa reported a conversation with the elementary principal in Stowe and thinks we have a tendency of not seeing the poverty in our communities.

Marcia echoed that sentiment.

The VT Department of Health identifies priorities each year, and this year they are focused on getting information about food security. The number of women who will not eat to make sure their children and husbands have enough to eat is concerning.

Mary would like to see some education about eating healthy for less; she observes other peoples grocery carts and thinks this is a problem.

We won't be meeting until September, and we all need to be working on this over the summer.

We should distribute the survey to the Poor People's Campaign, Charlotte will do that.

Commissioners suggested that staff send Commissioners & Advisors periodic emails about what they committed to do, the blurb for sharing the survey on social media, and send calendar invites as reminders instead of meeting reminders when we don't meet.

## **9. September Planning Meeting**

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Marcia would like to propose a longer planning meeting in September with a potluck lunch, and requests Commissioners send ideas for future planning to Cary over the summer. A brainstorm of long-term future plans/priority/focus areas identified:

- Women in prison
- Champions for Change and engaging men
- Sisters Unite project proposed by Mary & Deb, who made the following comments:
  - Families have been broken up, and that is part of the problem that causes poverty and food security.
  - Developing a program that empowers women to take back their families. Hookup culture isn't working very well for women. 75% of children born to black women are single mothers, 60 or 70 years ago that was reversed. If the rate of marriage was the same as it was in 1980, people would be 44% wealthier.
  - Encourage and empower women not to have children without being married, and to be empowered to choose the right guy.
- Equal Rights Amendment
- Women Business Owners Network, increasing the conversations around obstacles to entrepreneurship and focus on growing women's economic power.
- Something positive about women.

Meeting Adjourned at **12:32 p.m.**