

**Vermont Commission on Women
Meeting Minutes**

Wednesday, June 8, 2016

Pavilion Office Building, 4th floor conference room, 109 State Street, Montpelier, VT

Commissioners present:

Marcia Merrill (Chair), Gretchen Bailey, Charlotte Dennett,
Laine Dunham (by phone), Ruth Finn, Cathy Frey, Danielle
Martel, Melinda Moulton, Colin Ryan, Kerry Secrest

Commissioners absent:

Lynn Batchelor, Carol Buchdahl
Eileen Boland, Nancy LaVarnway,
Jennie Gartner, Susie Hudson

Advisors present:

Louise Luring of American Association of University Women
Becky Raymond of Building Bright Futures
Anne Gallivan (by phone) of Evolve Rutland
Ashley Michelle Fowler of Mercy Connections
Michelle Beam of Girl Scouts of the Green and White Mountains
Anne Burmeister of Planned Parenthood of Northern New England
Kevin Veller (by phone) of U.S. Congressman Welch's Office
Katarina Lisaius of U.S. Senator Sanders' Office
Danielle Martel of Vermont Federation of Business & Professional Women
Auburn Watersong of Vermont Network Against Domestic & Sexual Violence
Marybeth Redmond of Vermont Works for Women
Laura Lind-Blum of Women Business Owners' Network

Guests:

Tiff Bluemle of Change The Story Vermont
Caroline Keller, intern at the Vermont Department of Labor

Staff: Cary Brown, Hannah Myers, Lilly Talbert

Presiding: Marcia Merrill

Recording: Hannah Myers

Meeting called to order at 9:40 a.m.

Welcome/Introductions: Marcia welcomed everyone and asked them to introduce themselves.

Approval of May 2016 Minutes

MOTION made by Melinda Moulton, seconded by Ruth Finn:
To approve the minutes as submitted.

MOTION APPROVED

Pay equity data research project at VT Department of Labor:

Caroline Keller, VT DOL intern

The Labor Market Division of the Vermont Department of Labor is taking on a project to do research on the gender wage gap. VCW's former Intern Caroline Keller has been hired as an intern to work on this research. She has been looking at various databases' existing research, and is examining the unadjusted wage gap and adjusted wage gap. The adjusted wage gap attempts to compare workers with the same educational background, work history, job, etc. in an effort to understand how much of the wage gap is due to discrimination or bias. Some reports still put the adjusted wage gap at 7-12%. Commissioners expressed interest in considering the data by age. Commissioners requested that Caroline share her analysis of what data is missing with the Commission.

Staff/event updates:

Cary gave the following updates:

VCW Priority Issues: Cary handed out a document reflecting proposed changes to VCW Priority Issues compiled from the work commissioners did at the May meeting. The Commission can discuss and vote on these changes in the fall.

Women in Corrections: Cary committed the Commission to taking the lead on bringing people together to talk about women in corrections. A meeting will take place on June 17th in 4th floor conference room at the Pavilion Office Building from 12:30 – 1:30 to have an initial conversation about priorities, and who else should be at the table. The direction of the group is not yet set. This is an opportunity for Commissioners to be involved. All are welcome to attend this or future meetings.

Paid Family and Medical Leave: We are very close to signing with a contractor to perform our Paid Family and Medical Leave Feasibility Study; we are waiting for final approval from the Attorney General's office. We will also be calling a meeting to get people together to discuss Paid Family Leave further. Cary will let Commissioners know when that meeting will take place and Commissioners are welcome to attend. This will likely be in July.

Equal Pay Compact: Kelly Walsh has been working on the Equal Pay Compact, reaching out to employers and signing them up. We have 90 businesses signed onto the Compact. Kelly's work ends June 30th, and this is another opportunity for Commissioners to participate. We will need people to check back in with businesses who have signed on to discuss their progress, offer support and resources, and to get some information from businesses to go up on our website. Commissioners requested specific guidance about next steps, tasks to be done, and we could send those out to Commissioners who could pick a task or two to work on. Lilly noted that we are considering attending an HR Association event in the fall. Commissioners expressed the desire to re-convene the commissioner committee that Kerry and Colin have been heading. Melinda and Cathy will join them on this committee.

Events:

NEWPI Conference, Friday November 18th, 2016 at UMASS Boston

The New England Women's Policy Initiative is a consortium of Women's Commissions and Funds around New England. We had our first bi-annual conference in 2014, the second conference is this November. Cary passed out a draft proposal for workshops. Cary asked for thoughts about how we could feature work in Vermont in these categories.

Our next VCW meeting is September 22nd. That day we will have our Gubernatorial Forum in the State House from 12:00 p.m. – 1:30 p.m. Lilly passed out index cards for potential questions.

Hannah is working on our January Legislative Lunch; we're considering the theme of leadership. The event coincides with the day of our January meeting (Wednesday, January 11, 2017).

Our October meeting will be at Vermont Tech for Women Can Do. Marybeth added that about 500 high school girls come for a chance to try (hands on) different Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (STEM) and technical trades. Participants have an opportunity to find out how to get into those trades, make connections, learn about earnings, etc. They usually feature a young woman keynote speaker. The goal is to expose young women to high-paying, high-growth careers.

Lilly is working with new interns on our leadership report data research.

The Women Business Owner's Network's fall conference will be in October at the state house. and we will keep you posted on coming details.

Gretchen mentioned that at the Business Expo and WEOC, Gretchen was at the VCW table, and she was happy to hear that people from other places have been so impressed by our publications and how much we have to offer.

Advisory Council Members' Discussion Facilitated by Kerry Secret:

Goals:

- To create synergy between organizations within the Advisory Council-learn more about one another.
- To provide an opportunity for VCW Commissioners to learn more about the work of Advisory Council organizations and their impact in Vermont.
- To offer an opportunity for greater learning by bringing diverse groups of people together to discuss important topics that face women in our state

The group broke into small groups of 5-7, and spent 45 minutes hearing from Advisors about their organizations: opportunities for the Commission and the public to engage with them, projects or events they are particularly proud of, highlights about their recent work, and upcoming events. Highlights from this discussion included:

The Women Business Owner’s Network (WBON): WBON is an all-volunteer organization, their goals of WBON are to encourage entrepreneurship, foster economic stability, offers peer mentoring program. One major legislative issue they are interested in is independent contractor classification.

Evolve Rutland: The goal of Evolve Rutland is to foster women’s leadership. They had a successful Women’s History celebration of Rutland women, have started collaborating with the Center for Women in Enterprise and are exploring the creation of a local mentoring program. Challenges they are facing include push-back from a portion of the population regarding Syrian refugees. They are hoping to reach out to refugees to assist women in employment training and security. They are holding a business conference in October in partnership with Far Vision and UBS.

The Office of U.S. Senator Bernie Sanders: Sen. Sanders serves on a number of senate committees. His office participates in town meetings, and offers a State of the Union Essay Contest. His office has a team of case workers who offer assistance in dealing with federal agencies. Vermonters should call anytime for assistance, as Sen. Sanders represents all Vermonters.

Change The Story Vermont (CTS): CTS is an Initiative (not an organization) fueled by the Vermont Commission on Women, Vermont Works for Women and the Women’s Fund. Their goal is to change the economic well-being for women and girls, and they are looking for big allies, like employers. They are meeting with State Auditor, Leg. Council, and others to ask what follow-up information they should be working on. They organize a business peer exchange which meets monthly to provide employers with a safe place to discuss issues and how they’re making changes in their companies to improve culture and equity.

VT Network Against Domestic and Sexual Violence: The VT Network Against Domestic and Sexual Violence is working to create a world free of oppression where actions, beliefs, and systems support all people to thrive. They have 14 member programs that provide victims services. Their network programs provide hotlines, legal assistance, and offer 10 shelters across the state. Challenges including funding, lack of affordable housing for women, and political will to protect marginalized populations. They are proud of the recent stalking legislation in 2016. This year, they are celebrating their 30th year, and are having a celebration in September.

Mercy Connections: Mercy Connections offers three main programs: Justice & Mentoring; Education & Transition Programs; and the Women’s Small Business Program. They are celebrating their 15th Anniversary this year. Mercy Connections is proud of funding, releasing their new website in fall, and that 400 people attended their May luncheon. Their mentoring programs are looking for mentors; Commissioners should talk with Ashely Michelle Fowler if interested.

Planned Parenthood Northern New England (PPNNE): PPNNE’s mission is to ensure health care and provide education for Vermonters. They offer a Women’s Wellness program, 12 health care centers in VT, and advocate for changes in legislation, including on the Paid Sick Days bill, and Family Leave. They are proud of the Birth Control Bill passed this session, which codifies the birth control benefit in the Affordable Care Act, ensuring no copays for birth control, and extending no copays to vasectomy procedures. The new law enables women to pick up a year’s supply of birth control at one time, rather than requiring return visits to health centers each month for a supply; and increases access to long acting reversible contraceptive (LARC) methods (like IUDs or implants), among the most effective birth control methods on the market.) PPNNE has a separate 501c4, the Vermont Action Fund focusing on elections this fall. If you’re interested, sign up on their website.

Division of Maternal Child Health, Vermont Department of Health: Their main program is funded by the Maternal and Child Block Grant Program, under which they provide well women/preconception care, breastfeeding support, prenatal care, developmental screening, oral health, resiliency, and maternal depression programming. They also have sexual violence prevention programs, offer family planning, and adolescent sexual health education and teen pregnancy prevention programming. They are serving on a planning committee for a women and opioids symposium to be held in the fall, and are collaborating with Blueprint on a new initiative to build capacity related to health and psycho-social screening for women’s health specialty providers.

Building Bright Futures: Commissioners and advisors should call anytime with questions related to child care, including the VT Alliance for Early Childhood Education which does legislative work. Building Bright Futures brings organizations together related to education, health, and childcare, and helps bridge gaps between organizations. They discussed the VT Insights site, which is hosted by BBF and contains a variety of data for reference.

Girl Scouts of Green and White Mountains: The Girl Scouts’ goal is building girls of courage, confidence, and character to make the world a better place. They offer programs for girls in kindergarten through high school, including STEAM, financial literacy, entrepreneurship, outdoor, leadership, and camp programs. Girls build and do the coding for their digital cookie website component. Challenges they face include that 33,000 girls on a waitlist for programming nationally, and they don’t have enough volunteers to provide programming to meet demand.

American Association for University Women (AAUW): AAUW is a national organization with three VT chapters that advocates for the equity of women in education. They are a philanthropic organization, conduct research, provide education. AAUW is interested in pay equity, offers StartSmart and WorkSmart salary negotiation workshop curriculum, scholarships for women, and are interested in women in leadership. Their Bennington & Brattleboro chapters are celebrating 90th years.

Vermont Works for Women: Their goal is to get women into non-traditional fields. They offer Rosie's Girls and Dirt Divas programs. They are focused on STEM fields, and their Women Can Do conference is coming up in the fall. VWW is currently working with VTC to increase female enrollment. They have a new program, Step Into Work, offering on-the-job, hands-on training of professional work.

The group rejoined, and Commissioners each reported out to the large group about the work of one or two advisory organizations.

Announcements

Danielle announced that two medical providers from her pediatrics practice went to a training last week about how to insert long-acting, reversible contraceptives (LARCs).

Danielle also announced that she was recently inducted as President of the Vermont and New York Federation of Business & Professional Women.

Colin announced that he has been working on directly inviting men to events with "Women" in the title. He attended Senator Leahy's Women's Economic Opportunity Conference (WEOC) last weekend, and he thought more men attended this year compared to last.

Laura Lind-Blum asked folks to Save the Date for the Women Business Owner's Network conference, which will take place October 19th at the Statehouse and will focus on advocacy, both with local representatives and in marketing.

Michelle Beam announced that the Girl Scouts of White and Green Mountains will be hosting their first fundraising event in the State of Vermont since 2009, Cookies & Cocktails, which will take place September 15th at the Burlington Airport.

Auburn announced that Becca Stevens, founder of Thistle Farms, which supports women who have transitioned from human trafficking to making bath and body products, will be speaking in Vermont the first weekend in November, and she will give us further details when she has them.

Meeting adjourned at 12:25 p.m.