

**Vermont Commission on Women
Meeting Minutes
Wednesday, November 8, 2017 | 9:30 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.
32 College St, Montpelier VT**

Commissioners present: Marcia Merrill (Chair), Gretchen Bailey, Eileen Boland, Carol Buchdahl, Deborah Bucknam, Charlotte Dennett, Laine Dunham, Ruth Finn, Emilie Kornheiser, Melinda Moulton, Marybeth Christie Redmond, Kerry Secrest (by phone), Lisa Senecal

Commissioners absent: Nancy LaVarnway, Danielle Martel, Colin Ryan

Advisors present:

Joanne Brooking of Central Vermont Women’s International League For Peace and Freedom
Sarah Kenney of Let’s Grow Kids
Kim Swartz & Sara Chesbrough of Maternal & Child Health Division Vermont Department of Health
Lyn Blackwell of Planned Parenthood Of Northern New England
Matt Levin & Kelly Ault of Vermont Early Childhood Alliance
Auburn Watersong of Vermont Network Against Domestic & Sexual Violence

Guests: Edisa Muller

Staff: Cary Brown, Hannah Lane, Lilly Talbert

Presiding: Marcia Merrill

Recording: Hannah Lane

1. Call to order and approve agenda

Meeting called to order at 9:35 a.m.

MOTION made by Carol, seconded by Laine

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

MOTION APPROVED.

2. Welcome & Introductions

Marcia welcomed everyone and asked them to introduce themselves, and asked everyone to imagine the future they’d like to see for their great-great-granddaughters.

3. Approval of October 2017 Minutes

MOTION made by Melinda, seconded by Carol:

To approve the October 2017 minutes as submitted.

MOTION APPROVED. Adopted as presented.

4. Approval of Committee Times

MOTION made by Carol, seconded by Lisa:

To adopt the following on-going committee meeting times:

- The Health & Safety and Civil & Legal Rights Committee will meet via phone at 8:00 a.m. on the day (Tuesday) before the regularly scheduled VCW meeting.
- The Economic Equity and Security Committee will meet via phone at 8:00 a.m. on the first Thursday, of each month
- Education & Human Development Committee will meet via phone on the fourth Friday of each the month at 8:00 a.m.

Motion Approved.

5. Staff Updates

Change The Story is acting in an advisory capacity for a group applying for a grant to create a women's business hub in Burlington. Cary will update the Commission further in the coming months.

Lilly has been serving on the Vermont Intercollegiate Council on Sexual Violence. In September, they talked about the new direction from Education Secretary Betsy DeVos, rescinding Obama era guidance about Title IX on campus. The main impacts of the new direction are allowing colleges to use a higher standard of evidence in sexual assault matters, eliminating the 60-day investigation requirement, and allowing mediation in sexual assault cases where both parties agree. The general word from collegiate representatives was that they won't be changing policies in response to this new direction.

Commissioners had a few questions and comments in response:

Is there room for state policy changes here?

What's changing? Maybe this would be a good opportunity for a VPR Commentary piece explaining what they are and aren't doing and why?

The Association of Colleges & Universities might be a good place to go to encourage advocacy, as well as the Consortium of VT Colleges.

6. VCW Information-gathering project

Melinda reported on the status of the Economic Equity & Security Committee Listening Project. The idea is to hear directly from women about what they need to change their story. Meg Smith, Liz Gamache, and Jessica Nordhaus approached Melinda and are eager to provide support to ensure the success of this project. The Committee is looking at examples like the Legacy Project in 2000, the Poverty Council, the Agency of Human Services' reports, etc. They hope to train Commissioners & Advisors about how to have cross-class communications before undertaking this project, which they hope will focus on three big issues. The next steps are to review material, convene a committee meeting in preparation for a retreat in early January, and present a draft plan by February. The goal is for the listening to kick off in April.

Marcia acknowledged Commissioners for their work:

Eileen will be addressing the St. Johnsbury League of Women Voters to talk about our work.

Kerry Secret pitched our Equal Pay Compact to her leadership circle alumni retreat.

Carol testified on behalf of VCW on Monday evening at the Spousal Support & Maintenance Taskforce Public Hearing.

Lisa has been speaking out against sexual harassment and assault on national platforms including PBS, NPR, the Daily Beast, and USA Today.

7. Legislative priorities discussion with Advisory Council members

Cary asked advisors to tell us about their legislative priorities in 2018. Advisors represented their priorities including:

EXISTING BILLS

- Paid Family Leave - H.196
- Increasing the Minimum Wage (several bills currently introduced with varying plans laid out)
- Removal of Firearms at the Scene of a Domestic Assault - H. 422 (Passed in House, pending in Senate)
- Improvements to the 3 Squares (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program) - H.271
- Psychological Abuse as a basis for a civil abuse protection order – H.175
- Equal Pay – An act relating to inquiries about an applicant’s salary history – H.294

ISSUES

- Criminal justice reform
 - Policy Changes that would Affect DV Homicide Prevention
 - Risk Assessment
 - DV Accountability Programs – Improving and Funding
 - Restorative Justice Programs
 - Opiate Treatment Reform in Prisons
 - Eliminating Contracts with out-of-state prisons
 - Long-term vision, closure of CRCF
- Preventing Employment Discrimination against victims of domestic and sexual violence
- Housing & Homelessness – More Housing, Support, Rent
- Child Marriage/Age of Marriage
- Reach Up Caseload Savings Reinvested in Program, Increasing Grants
- Parent-Child Center Network Funding
- Children’s Integrated Services Funding
- Child Care Financial Assistance Program increased funding
- Workforce Supports for Child Care Workers including increased funding for TEACH program
- Support around Entrepreneurial Efforts for Women, Funding for Women’s Small Business, etc.
- Mental Health Access
- Suicide Prevention, and Youth Suicidality
- Sex Trafficking/Human Trafficking
- Rights and opportunities for people with disabilities
- Child Protection Registry reform
- Title 10 family planning funding
- Blueprint for Health including women’s reproductive health
- Economic development as a means to increase revenue

8. Announcements

Kelly Ault mentioned that the Early Childhood Day at the Legislature will be March 14th, 2018. Please spread the word.

Charlotte mentioned a film she saw at the International Film Festival, "It's Criminal", about women incarcerated in New Hampshire in Sullivan County, and how a small group of Dartmouth students went into the prison with a theatre project. The film tracks the lives of these women and shows the struggle of each of these groups to understand each other. It was very powerful, addressed class differences, and she'd like to share it with the Commission.

Emilie mentioned a screening of "Breaking the Silence" she attended in Brattleboro, which featured women telling their reproductive stories – it was very moving. They had a great turnout and raised a significant amount for Vermont Access for Reproductive Freedom.

9. Executive session

Motion to go into Executive Session

MOTION made by Melinda, seconded by Marybeth:

To approve go into executive session to discuss personnel issues.

MOTION APPROVED.

Meeting adjourned at 12:28 p.m.