

Vermont Commission on Women
Meeting Minutes
Wednesday, December 11th, 2019 | 9:30 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.
Waterbury State Office Complex, Cherry B

Commissioners present:

Lisa Senecal (Chair), Ed Adrian, Kellie Campbell, Charlotte Dennett, Emilie Kornheiser, Kim Nolan, Marybeth Christie Redmond, Lisa Ryan, Kerry Secrest, Heidi Tringe

Commissioners absent:

Nancy Brooks, Lisa Carlson, Mary Daly, Erica Hare, Marcia Merrill

Advisors present:

Lisa Falcone of Mercy Connections
Diane Derby of U.S. Senator Leahy's Office
Karen Tronsgard-Scott of Vermont Network Against Domestic & Sexual Violence
Rhoni Basden, Alison Lamagna of Vermont Works for Women
Amy Brady of Voices for Vermont's Children
Katherine Vose of WILPF Burlington

Guests: Tiffany Bluemle, Change The Story VT

Staff: Anna Brouillette, Cary Brown, Hannah Lane, Lilly Talbert

Presiding: Lisa Senecal

Recording: Hannah Lane

1. Welcome/Introductions

Meeting called to order at 9:43 a.m.

Lisa welcomed everyone and asked them to introduce themselves.

2. Approval of November 2019 Meeting Minutes

Approval of November 2019 Minutes

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

To approve the November 2019 minutes as submitted.

MOTION APPROVED. Adopted as presented.

3. Sneak peak of new Change the Story VT report

- Tiff Bluemle, Director of Change the Story VT presented preliminary findings and recommendations from the final report from Change The Story.

This report serves as an update of the first two reports, Women, Work, and Wages, and Where Women Work and Why it Matters, and combines them into one document.

There are large data gaps around women of color in Vermont. The report ends with recommendations, rather than questions, as in the past.

Data Highlights:

Full time work is up among women, but four out of ten don't earn enough to meet their basics needs.

81% of tipped workers in Vermont are women.

The average age for low wage workers is 38.

The wage gap especially pronounced for women with disabilities and for women of color.

Elder care is becoming an increasing responsibility for families, especially given the cultural resistance to living outside home and desire to support parents in living independently.

Women carry 2/3rd of the student loan debt, this is higher for women for color.

Recommendations:

Data collection – city of Boston as example.

Enact paid family leave and boost childcare subsidies

Honor work with full-time wages that support basic needs.

Recognize and reduce the impact of bias and discrimination.

DISCUSSION

- What are you most proud, hopeful, and embarrassed about VT?
 - Proud of the accomplishments listed, VT laws, impatient about data, lack a workforce development strategy for women.
- Lack of data is the crux of the problem; human services IT system is really old, there will be a push to update it. This is a critical piece for data management. Currently, we cannot pull information from the system in a meaningful way.
- Pay grades and pay classifications within larger institutions still fall along traditional gender lines.
- Money is the largest obstacle; how are we going to pay for this? We need to face the demographics right now.
- We need to start with girls younger; what are we doing to prevent them from going into high paying fields?
- What about getting more men into female dominated fields – do we look at that?

- We need to call on adult women to also address our own gender bias.
- Men need to make this a priority, and we need to engage men in new ways.
- There is problematic use of “Temporary positions” by State Agencies to fill positions that should be permanent, full-time. Workers don’t receive benefits when temporary.
- The non-profit sector is filled with women, is doing a good job, - we should look at how they operate, what they contribute to the society.

4. VCW response to news of sexual harassment and assault at Chittenden Regional Correctional Facility

Mike Smith, Secretary of the Agency of Human Services

Acknowledged problem, cultural problem within the facilities. Accountability, and systems change. AG’s office and State Police have pledged their support.

Need an independent, third party investigation of CRCF and the entire corrections system.

New mechanism outside of AHS for employees and inmates to report misconduct, retaliation, etc. to an independent agency. Hotline for employees to go right to DHR, that is not connected to DOC/AHS, giving multiple avenues for people to report.

Short-term, temporary basis, facility will report to secretary’s office.

Continue the work with our partners.
Expanding diversity among corrections officers.

Mandatory sexual harassment training, reimplemented system-wide. Cultural training at the same time.

Need to look at recruiting of employees. Struggling with finding people to take positions.

Met with Joint Justice Committee yesterday.

Comments from commissioners and advisors:

In situations with profound power imbalances, these things happen. We need to assume that this is going to happen as we keep going forward and designing systems.

Hoping to continue the reform effort and culture change, and making sure we don’t throw everything out to make things anew.

VCW and the people around the table here have been working on this issue for years, and we support your effort, and can help. We've worked very hard to create trauma informed, gender informed practices aren't being implemented on the ground, even though they are in the

Many of the inmates have significant trauma, what is being thought of to create a culture of healing?

What are the correctional officers paid? Starting 17-18 per hour. That's been increased in the last year. Correctional officer academy, six weeks long before in the facility.

We would love it if the compassion shown this week became the standard for everyone.

What is the impact of the union in the process?

Discussion of VCW Statement in Response to Reporting Regarding Chittenden Regional Correctional Facility

Lisa Ryan – Civil and Legal Rights Committee started a draft, the hope is to look at that and weigh in on how we feel. We'd like to get it out soon, as it's already been a week since this news was published.

Empowering the Civil and Legal Rights Committee to create and publish a statement

MOTION made by **Marybeth**, seconded by **Charlotte**:

To empower the Civil and Legal Rights Committee to create a statement, and that Commissioners will be in touch if they have a piece they absolutely do not want included.

MOTION APPROVED.

5. Update from Anna Brouillette, VCW Data Management Coordinator

Working on listening project survey data and anecdotal pieces, it's wonderful, rich data, and it's been a project to code and analyze it. It's going to be an interesting look at women's experiences in Vermont.

Getting into the nuances about how people's experiences really differ by area of the state, age, race, etc. Hoping to have a draft out in January.

Education & Human development committee very interested in getting their hands on this.

Age and geography are quite representative, but the vast majority who took the survey are women.

6. Staff Updates

Workplaces for All website has been sent to ADS, will be live in a few days, Monday or Tuesday.

Public campaign will be set into motion.

7. Announcements

Elevate Her holiday party next Thursday, the 19th at Barr Hill in Montpelier.

Lisa Falcone – Mercy Connections is recruiting for training for VT women’s mentoring program, 5-week training, yearlong commitment. Recruiting for next Start Up, a 150-hour class to bring an idea to a business plan.

Marybeth – CTS report launch next Wednesday at Old Labor Hall, Barre, 9-11.

Meeting Adjourned at 12:28 p.m.