

**Vermont Commission on Women
Meeting Minutes**

Tuesday, April 4th, 2017

Vermont State House, Room 10, 115 State Street, Montpelier, VT

Commissioners present:

Marcia Merrill (Chair), Gretchen Bailey, Eileen Boland,
Charlotte Dennett, Ruth Finn, Danielle Martel, Melinda
Moulton, Colin Ryan

Commissioners absent:

Lynn Batchelor, Carol Buchdahl,
Laine Dunham, Cathy Frey, Jennie
Gartner, Susie Hudson, Nancy
LaVarnway, Kerry Secret

Advisors present:

Katarina Lisaius of U.S. Senator Sanders' Office
Matt Levin & Kelly Ault of Vermont Early Childhood Alliance
Meg Smith of the Vermont Women's Fund
Wendy Rice of Vermont Works for Women

Guests: Tiff Bluemle, Kelly Walsh

Staff: Cary Brown, Hannah Myers, Lilly Talbert

Presiding: Marcia Merrill

Recording: Hannah Myers

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

Welcome/Introductions: Marcia welcomed everyone.

Commissioner Kudos

Marcia acknowledged the following Commissioners for their recent activities supporting our work:

- Nancy: for inviting VCW to have a display table at the South Burlington High School Career and Job Expo, and for stuffing Compact information into participating business packets.
- Cathy: for attending the South Burlington High School Career and Job Expo on VCW's behalf and working with VT Works for Women staff to staff the table, and help with an Equal Pay Day social media campaign with the students.
- Melinda: for sharing her Back to the Land story on the panel at our women's history month event; and for offering to share her table with VCW at VBSR's conference – so we can sign up more businesses to the Equal Pay Compact.
- Danielle: for giving an address to the entire Bellows Free Academy study body at their first gender equity day.
- Kerry: for helping to plan and execute an Equal Pay Compact event in partnership with the federal Dept. of Labor's Women's Bureau in Brattleboro in May.

- Ruth: for participating as a judge at Vermont History Day on April 8th. On behalf of the Vermont Commission on Women Education & Research Foundation, she'll award the Deborah Pickman Clifford Vermont Women's History Prize to the lucky winner out of 5 nominated projects.

Legislative Updates

Accommodations for Pregnant Employees (H.136) – The bill passed on the floor of the house, and is now in the Senate Economic Development Committee awaiting hearings and attention.

Paid Family Leave (H.196) – The House General and Military Affairs Committee made a major amendment, changing the bill to 100% employee funded before moving it out of committee. Employers can opt to pay part or all their employees share of the deduction. It's now in the House Ways and Means Committee, where they are taking testimony.

Charlotte suggested that we highlight employers who do pay for their employees.

Legislators are asking about what legislation would be helpful considering the Change The Story VT data. Cary and Tiff have made some proposals about data collection around workforce development.

Staff Updates

- We have an upcoming event May 16th at 3:00 p.m. at duo restaurant in Brattleboro. The U.S. DOL Women's Bureau got in touch with us and wanted to do an *Equal Pay Compact round table*. Kelly Walsh and Kerry Secret have been working very actively on the Equal Pay Compact in Windham County, and are helping to plan the event. This event will have a program to discuss the Equal Pay Compact and is an opportunity for signers to help recruit new businesses, with a social hour to follow.
- Our *FY2018 budget proposal* was unchanged in House Appropriations.
- The *New England Women's Policy Initiative (NEWPI)* committee has proposed a coordinated regional effort to track federal proposals, particularly around budget issues, with a little grant money available from NEWPI to pay to do some research. Massachusetts is working with Mass Budget, an equivalent of the Public Assets Institute here in Vermont, Kristin Smith at the University of New Hampshire may work on this there. We could look for some partners at UVM such as a graduate student or professor who might want to do this research. Katarina suggested that we might look to their offices for support. The week of April 24th Congress will start working on the budget proposal for remainder of FY17, and then FY18. It was suggested that we could work with other partners, for example, we could work with VSAC on College Loan Assistance, and there might be other partners who are also working on some of this.
- *The Vermont Racial Justice Reform Coalition* has requested that VCW sign on to the coalition. It is currently focused on legislation creating a Racial Justice Advisory Board, that would provide some accountability to fair and impartial policing, recommendations, oversight, and would have a fair amount of authority.

- *Vermonters for Criminal Justice Reform “For the Sake of the Children” policy proposal* - Suzi Wizowaty presented this proposal last month, but we did not have an opportunity to discuss it. Suzi will be at the [Greater Burlington Women’s Forum Lunch on April 20th](#), which is another opportunity to learn more about this proposal. Comments included:
 - A commissioner recently read that UVM is talking about offering college classes in the prison.
 - one of the biggest barriers to the success of CCV in the VT women’s prison is that women’s sentences are short, they cycle in and out, and so it can be difficult.
 - access to mental health, transportation are very important, and that talented, skilled, trained people are in short supply.
 - likes that mental health is addressed in the proposal.

Announcements

Marcia announced that the Chairs decided to hold our June meeting as a retreat, on our usual day, but a few hours longer. If anyone has suggestions for a venue or for a facilitator, please let Hannah know.

Meeting adjourned at 11:16 p.m.