

Commissioners Present: Marcia Merrill, Chair; Gretchen Bailey, Eileen Boland, Cary Brown, Carol Buchdahl, Laine Dunham, Ruth Finn, Jennie Gartner, Dr. Felicia Kornbluh, Anne McClaughry, Peg Martin, Marion Milne, and Shambulia Gadsden-Sams.

Commissioners Absent: Cathy Frey and Susie Hudson. Note – one vacancy

Advisors Present: Sandy Bettis representing Central Vermont Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, Joanna Cole representing League of Women Voters, Diane Derby from Senator Leahy's office, Sanjukta Ghosh from Women's and Gender Studies Program-Castleton State College, Sarah Kenney representing Vermont Network Against Domestic and Sexual Violence, and Margaret Luce representing Vermont State Nurses Association.

Staff: Janet Bullard, Wendy Love, and Janet Bullard.

Presiding: Marcia Merrill

Recording: Janet Bullard

The meeting was called to order at 9:30 a.m.

Welcome/Introductions/Commissioner Resignations/Appointments/Minutes

Marcia announced that both Karen Henry and Ann Cardinal have regretfully resigned as Commissioners citing work and family commitments making it impossible for them to continue serving.

Marcia welcomed new Commissioner Dr. Felicia Kornbluh, appointed by the Speaker of the house to fill Ann Cardinal's unexpired term, and presented her with a Commission logo pin. She also noted that Cathy Frey was reappointed to the Commission for a four year term by the Speaker of the House. Also Marcia has been reappointed to the Commission for a four year term by the Senate Committee on Committees.

Marcia asked everyone to introduce themselves and reflect on Wendy's time with us using three words. Everyone shared thoughts, words, and memories of Wendy's nine-year tenure as Executive Director.

Motion made by Carol Buchdahl to amend the minutes of the May 9, 2012 Commission Meeting as follows: Advisors Present - add Dr. Felicia Kornbluh representing Women and Gender Studies at UVM. Seconded by Marion Milne and voted unanimously.

Announcements

Joanna announced that the League of Women Voters, along with the State of Vermont, has produced a video promoting voting rights in Vermont.

Felicia announced that there is a new Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences at UVM and that she will be meeting with him soon to acquaint him with the work of the Commission.

Lilly circulated two new media pieces mentioning the Commission. Lilly then discussed the request to join the Victims Rights Committee as she outlined in her email to commissioners on June 7th. Commissioners agreed via consensus to have Lilly serve on this committee.

Executive Director Job Description

Eileen explained that a very basic Executive Director job description was included in the Commission's Orientation Manual, voted in 2005, and since we are now about to search for a new Executive Director that it was time to revisit the job description. Based on discussions from previous commission meetings, she presented a revised job description to be used in the search process. Motion made by Dr. Felicia Kornbluh to accept the revised Executive Director job description as distributed. Seconded by Marion Milne.

Friendly amendment made by Gretchen Bailey to strike the words 'non-profit' in bullet #2 under Required Qualifications and Skills. Amendment accepted by Felicia and Marion.

Friendly amendment made by Anne McClaughry to strike the words 'similar to' in bullet #2 under Community and Public Relations and insert in lieu of, 'parallel to those of'. Amendment accepted by Felicia and Marion. The amended motion passed unanimously.

Executive Director Search Process

Marcia stated that she will chair the Executive Director Search Committee. She asked for volunteers who will commit to the entire search process. Search committee members are Marcia Merrill, Marion Milne, Carol Buchdahl, Laine Dunham, Felicia Kornbulh, Shambulia Gadsen-Sams, and Anne McClaughry. The first job of the search committee will be to develop a resume review/rating matrix and to develop interview questions.

Marcia also asked for volunteers to read resumes and rank them using the matrix that is developed. Volunteers: Eileen, Peg, Ruth, Marion, Jennie, Sanjukta, and Cary.

Marcia announced that Janet and Lilly would review all resumes and pull out those that do not meet the job criteria.

Motion made by Laine Dunham to empower the committee to refine the process and make the decision for final selection of an executive director. Seconded by Dr. Felicia Kornbluh and voted unanimously.

Marcia stressed that the search process is on a tight schedule. Input on interview questions, rankings of qualifications, and any thoughts need to be sent to her Monday, June 18th.

State of the Commission – Wendy Love

Please see next page for the State of the Commission address, Wendy delivered.

Meeting adjourned at 11:50 a.m.

State of the Vermont Commission on Women

Wendy S. Love, Executive Director

When I arrived at the Vermont Commission on Women in June of 2003, it was in the state of flux:

- The commission had been put into statute the previous May. Although it was now the Vermont Commission on Women, people referred to it as THE Governor's commission (They still do)
- The executive director had resigned in November, leaving the commission with no executive director for the entire legislative session of 2003 and no paid lobbyist.
- Governor Dean's recommended budget reduced Lilly's position to three-fourth's time... a cut that was sustained by the legislature.
- James Douglas was six months into his first term as governor and the Republicans held the majority in the house.
- Commissioners were wary of each other. The effect of the mandated diversity both in the appointing authorities and in their appointees was just beginning to be felt,
- The public perception of the commission was either a group of "ladies who lunched" or a wild eyed group of Birkenstock-wearing feminists.

Given the above, I want to share with you my perspective of what has happened in the ensuing nine years and where I think opportunities exist for the commission in the future.

Public Advocacy and Commission Governance

When I arrived, the impact of the political diversity was just beginning to be felt. The new commissioners were uneasy supporting the existing 40 plus policies that covered a wide variety of issues. They wanted all the policies to be reviewed, revised and reaffirmed if appropriate.

During the first few years, the commissioners worked hard to revise policies on virtually every piece of legislation the commission had ever supported and to update its strategic plan. They finally decided that it was not a productive exercise to update every policy. Instead they revised and adopted the four broad policy statements we have today.

Commissioners also developed the Operating Guidelines which brought together the statute, procedures for supporting legislation, roles and responsibilities of commissioners and advisors, job descriptions and duties of the Executive Director and Board Chair into one document.

Everyone wanted to be on the legislative committee, which previously had researched proposed legislation and presented recommendations for support to the full commission. Instead, the three committees we have today were created. The committee chairs were

responsible for looking at upcoming legislation in their areas and working with the chair to plan the meeting agendas. The committees have not been active in several years... mainly because no one wants to be limited to one area.

The commission has become much more deliberate and selective about supporting legislation. Individuals and organizations supporting both sides of an issue are brought in for discussion and debate. The tension between the ability to move nimbly and yet allow the time for a full understanding and debate on the issue has been an ongoing unresolved issue for the commission.

I believe that our political diversity and our selectivity in supporting issues has been our greatest strength at the legislature.

I am particularly proud of our role in the following pieces of legislation:

- Non-retaliation for wage disclosure
- Universal PreK for three and four year olds
- Making sexual assault of an inmate a felony
- Increasing the minimum and tipped minimum wage
- Emergency contraception without a prescription for women 18 years and older
- A workers comp “look alike” for victims of domestic violence who are forced to leave their job for their personal safety
- Harassment and bullying legislation
- Increasing subsidies for child care
- Expressing breast milk in the workplace

With Marion Milne’s guidance, I helped reactivate the Women Legislator’s caucus; I have staffed it for the past 9 years. Its first action was to unanimously endorse the non-retaliation for wage disclosure bill. The caucus has remained extremely interested in women’s prison issues over the years. I have arranged for many of the prison services providers and DOC folk to talk with the caucus.

Time and space is at a premium in the state house...especially in the past few years. Interest and time to discuss women’s issues has not been a priority. However, the commission has helped with the “woman legislator of the biennium” awards and several HPV awareness dinners. The caucus has been trying to recruit newer and younger members of the legislature to lead the caucus.

The commission has also been an active voice in women’s prison issues and we were largely responsible for saving the “women and families” coordinator position in DOC and advocating for the “white paper” produced by a group of advocates including the commission this past

February. (2012) The white paper led to a renewed commitment by the DOC commissioner to work more closely with providers at the women's facility and for legislature to call for a report about prison space in the northwest quadrant of the state.

Public Education

Part of our enabling legislation mandated that we produce a status report every year. Because statistics don't change very rapidly in Vermont, it was not useful to report on the same set of data every year so I chose to highlight issues that I thought would be relevant to the public/legislative debate that year.

Over the years the status report grew into a very professional document that was used by a number of organizations. However it was time-consuming. The January due date conflicted with a number of staff activities: getting the legislature breakdown by gender couldn't be done until after the election; our biennial legislative lunch invitations couldn't be done until after the election,, the final budget submission was always around the holidays, and staff wanted to spend holiday time with their families. All in all, it was very stressful for staff.

So it was with mixed emotions that we greeted the legislative decision to remove the annual report requirement from our statute and from many other departments, agencies and commissions.

After Sharon Baade left the Girl Scouts, we effectively "took over" the teen survey. For several years I worked to make it a teen-directed survey. When the teen age Scouting program disappeared in Vermont, we gave up the survey.

The Vermont Women's History Project grew out of my conviction that in order for women to "take their place at the table" in the workplace and in the state house, both boys and girls needed to appreciate that women were major players in the history of our state. Students, teachers and scholars needed easy access to materials about women's contributions to Vermont's history.

There were also many sites throughout Vermont where women's accomplishments were featured. I felt that VCW's promoting cultural tourism to women's sites would be seen as a plus to a "business-oriented" administration.

The new administration would not let agencies use our \$40,000 in vacancy savings to fund what they saw as an ongoing expense—Lilly's salary. Therefore, I proposed using the carryover money for the Vermont Women's History Project (called VWHP).

My plan was to do an end run about the administration's edict and hire Lilly 1/4 time (as a temp employee) to manage the project, effectively bringing her back to full time. Lilly did not

feel it was a good fit for her and declined. We were lucky to recruit Judith Irving, a seasoned professional who had just retired from Vermont Interactive Television who wanted a part-time job.) A steering committee of leading historians and folk from museums and institutions concerned with Vermont history and education was formed and a number of projects were instituted including of driving map of places to visit in Franklin Country that highlighted important women.

Serendipity is a wonderful thing. I was complaining to my neighbor, a computer guy in the Agency of Transportation about how clunky our project was and especially our map of Franklin County (lovingly drawn and totally inert)....and how it would be great to have an interactive database that could be used by school children, tourists and researchers.

It turned out that he was the project manager for "Connect Vermont" a federal grant that had money for cultural tourism as well as for fiber optic cables. Such a database had just been designed for the Arts Council. He invited us to apply and thus was born collaboration between the Commission, the Agency of Transportation and the Department of Tourism.

We received approximately \$120,000 in federal funds for technical help to build one of the most advanced Women's History databases in the US. It was fully integrated into the state "Vacation Planning" website and business directory. The grant also funded Judith ten hours a week for four years provided we "matched the federal funds.

The commission, the department of Education, and finally private donations "matched" the ten hour salary, while the department of tourism provided an in-kind match for the database development side. Our foundation successfully raised many dollars for special projects including a video of VT History Expo "Women in Vermont History" that is still used in classrooms today.

In 2009, when federal funding ended, VWHP successfully transitioned to the Vermont Historical Society which now maintains the database. The partnership between the historical society and the commission has continued. The VWHP oversight committee continues to meet and we have co-sponsored events during Women's History month for the past three years.

VCWERF also sponsors a Deborah Clifford prize for the best entry in the field of Vermont Women's History for Vermont History Day competition for middle and High School students.

Legal Rights of Women in Vermont: Updating the Legal Rights of Women in Vermont was a goal of mine practically from the day I arrived. Finally in the summer of 2009 Cheryl Hannah approached us with the idea of using summer "Work-Study" students to start the process. After their initial review it took almost two years to edit and revise the document and make it interactive on our website. It has had a most successful launch and we have an ambitious

marketing campaign still in early stages. Some carryover moneys will fund radio and print ads for next fiscal year.

Our Budget Although our initial attempt to use carryover dollars to reinstate Lilly to full time failed, we have developed an excellent working relationship with both the finance staff and the governor. Every year, our budget request was the last item to be brought to the governor for approval. I have worked very hard to maintain a cordial relationship with the administration.

It is an interesting tension to be part of the administration budget but not necessarily hold the administration's views on every issue. Despite many years of state wide budget decreases we have been able to maintain our non-allocated budget at around \$20-25,000. We have been able to survive through a careful and frugal management of our expenses.

This past summer, knowing that I was going to retire at the end of the year, I made it my goal to get Lilly's position restored to full time. Part of the strategy in doing so was the timing of the release of the *Legal Rights of Women in Vermont* first to the finance department at our budget development meeting and then to the House appropriations committee. I also stressed Lilly's role in producing and maintaining this document on the website.

Staff –I have been blessed to have a wonderful, self-starting, energetic creative staff in Janet and Lilly. We have gone through a lot together in the past nine years with major family illnesses and crises, babies and puppies and grandchildren etc. And of course we did it with Lilly only part-time.

When people hear what we do, they are always amazed how much we accomplish with such a small staff. I think it is partly because I have tried to practice what women's groups preach—real work/life family balance, flexible schedules and staff autonomy. We were all tele-commuting long before the state started to look at the issue. We were also always willing to jump in and help each other as needed. I would hope that the new Executive Director shares this view.

The commission has always been a rather "flat" organization. I think I speak for the staff when I say that we have always felt our views were listened to and that we have been supported but not micro-managed by the commissioners. We are very appreciative of the relationship that exists between the commissioners and staff.

Future Opportunities for the Commission

When Cheryl Hanna and I were on the Mark Johnson show introducing the 6th edition of *Legal Rights of Women in Vermont*, Mark asked what laws still needed to be changed in Vermont. Cheryl replied that "families" were the last "unprotected" category and there need to be some

thinking in that area.

In Madeleine Kunin's new book *The New Feminist Agenda* she also calls on the need to focus on family issues---paid sick days, work life balance, flexible work places, affordable child care and the need to build new partnerships. She also talks about the need for a cosmic shift in public thinking and the need to work across the political divide on this issue.

Take the leadership role on Women's Economic Security Advocacy: Since the demise of BPW and the livable wage campaign at the Peace and Justice Center there is not a strong coalition on issues that affect the economic security of women. Voices for Vermont Children has tried to lead the paid sick days effort with little success. The legislature and the current administration have not been interested in letting this issue out of committee. This is definitely an area of opportunity for the Commission.

Unfortunately anything that affects businesses is currently a third rail in Vermont politics. Paid Sick Days was on the agenda when I arrived.....it is still on the agenda as I leave.

Keep the Legal Rights of Women in Vermont updated and in front of the public. It is our niche. As Cheryl also remarked on the Mark Johnson Show, we have good laws in place, but women don't know their rights and neither do the organizations that are supposed to be upholding these rights. The commission needs to update the document yearly and continue to do an aggressive marketing campaign...particularly to low-income and underserved individuals. No one remembers an ad or resource until they need it. No one else regularly and clearly explains laws affecting women and families.

Continue to bring groups together to work on issues important to women and their families.

One of our greatest strengths is our ability to cross silos and bring single interest groups together on an issue. We usually provide expertise on marketing, publishing and event planning to these coalitions. The Executive Director needs to be "out there" in all the silos looking for opportunities and "right moments" to bring people together. It is something that is hard to plan for. In Vermont, timing is everything. Most organizations who also provide direct services to the community have little time and energy to do this kind of organizing and coalition building.

The white paper on the Chittenden Correctional Facility was such a moment.

Women in Public Safety: we have been approached independently by several different individuals concerned about discrimination and sexual harassment of women in police work and lack of advancement of women up the career ladder. I have already had a number of discussions with folk who are interested but felt I couldn't go further knowing that I was going to retire before I could finish the project.

Continue the conversation with communities: I think it is important to keep bringing issues of “discrimination against women and opportunities for women” in front of the public through listening forums, reports, forums, events etc.

Continue to explore ways to help young women develop confidence and explore career opportunities.....**Girls Collaborative** is a good forum.

In closing I want to say how much I have enjoyed working with the commissioners and advisors and staff and the wonderful folk in Vermont. Both Vicky and Marcia have been wonderful chairs. To paraphrase Calvin Coolidge, there is a real “generosity of spirit” in the people of Vermont that I have so appreciated.

Charlie and I plan on staying in Vermont. I plan to distance myself from women’s issues for a while to allow the new Executive Director to establish his/her presence as the face and voice of the Commission.

I will still be working on family issues. I have been accepted into the training program to become a guardian ad litem for children involved in the court system. Yesterday I was elected to the board of Prevent Child Abuse Vermont---an organization that works throughout the state to keep families together by eliminating attitudes and behaviors that lead to child abuse and neglect.

With great hope and best wishes for the future I want to present you with a signed copy of Madeleine’s new book, The New Feminist Agenda: Defining the Next Revolution for Women, Work and Family, inscribed to the Commission on Women.