

Commissioners Present: Marcia Merrill, Chair; Gretchen Bailey, Eileen Boland, Carol Buchdahl, Ann Cardinal, Retta Dunlap, Ruth Finn, Cathy Frey, Susie Hudson, Anne McClaughry, Peg Martin, and Marion Milne.

Commissioners Absent: Cary Brown, Laine Dunham, Jennie Gartner, and Karen Henry.

Advisors Present: Joanne Brooking representing Central Vermont Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, Joanna Cole representing League of Women Voters, Lindy Hatcher representing Vermont Federation of Business and Professional Women, Linda Ingold representing Vermont Women's Business Center, and Cecile Johnston representing Vermont Low Income Advocacy Council.

Staff and Intern: Janet Bullard, Wendy Love, and Morgan Peele.

Meeting was called to order at 9:32 a.m.

Presiding: Marcia Merrill

Recording: Janet Bullard and Morgan Peele.

Welcome/Introductions/Minutes of May 11, 2011 Meeting/Election of Chair

Marcia welcomed everyone and asked that we all introduce ourselves, share any big plans for the summer and also a summer reading recommendation. Everyone introduced themselves, shared summer plans and book recommendations. A list of books was compiled and emailed to all commissioners and advisors after the June meeting. Motion made by Carol Buchdahl to approve the minutes of the May 11, 2011 meeting as written. Seconded by Eileen Boland and voted unanimously.

Wendy conducted the election of the chair and Marcia was unanimously elected to a two-year term as Chair. Marcia then turned the meeting over to Carol. Carol started by explaining that Laine was involved in preparing for today's planning session, but unfortunately, due to work conflicts, couldn't attend. Carol asked Eileen and Anne if they would help with the last piece on the agenda and both agreed.

Carol then lead everyone through the exercise, "A Picture is Worth a Thousand Words" – talking amongst ourselves in small groups we discussed whom the Commission serves, whom we work with, whom we align with, what is our role, and what do we want to do at the end of the day.

Next "A Philosophical Choice" – Carol asked everyone to mark on one piece of paper where they were in the spectrum of "Under the Radar" or "In Your Face". The majority was on the "In Your Face" area although discussed illuminated that this depends on the audience, the issue and how we want to handle it.

Philosophical Discussion

- Staff makes decisions on whether to fly under the radar or how much to "be in your face"

- Depends on issue—strategic
- Commission is a “brand” –who do you support?
- Style—how ones goes about “being in one’s face,” the manner in which you ask questions—be diplomatic, but persistent.
- Research: have a solid foundation before asking questions
- Give staff more support
- Strength: VCW represents full spectrum of women
- Work behind scenes sometimes
- Is the Director alone?
- Double-edged sword b/c legislature approves VCW budget
- There is flexibility when it comes to advocacy
- The preemptive strike
- Vermont advantage: small state—notion of impact of demonstrations
- Chief Metaphor: we can use a “motorboat” or “sailboat” approach depending on the issue and atmosphere

What is the best practice for deciding which issues to undertake?

- Can’t move very fast—information constantly changing—how to deal?
- Committees meet by phone between VCW meetings
- Proactive vote to speak on strategically chosen issue
- Get educated on issues beforehand
- Strategic concerning what VCW decides to help
- Staff regularly informing Commission on trends
- Are all VCW members on good terms with local legislatures?
- Call coming into office as an “informal poll”—loop back approach
- Preemptive—not always reactionary
- Set priorities

Summary by Anne

Best practice – continue to develop VCW brand/style find a way to continue to be branding ourselves as judicious, deliberative and generally same voice.

Loop back to information and referral line calls as a way to take the pulse on issues of import to women.

Good practice to have relationships with legislators.

How set priorities and use filters: 1) affect women, 2) where can we (VCW) make a difference?

Goal not to be reactionary, but using filters get out in front of issues.

Motorboat vs. sailboat – how set priorities. Meetings are information based. Need motorboat process for fast voting in between regularly scheduled VCW meetings.

Discussion to be continued at September 2011 Commission meeting.

Meeting adjourned at 12:30 p.m.