

Commissioners Present: Marcia Merrill, Chair; Gretchen Bailey, Eileen Boland, Laine Dunham, Ruth Finn, Cathy Frey, Anne McClaughry, Peg Martin, Marion Milne, and Shambulia Gadsden-Sams.

Absent: Cary Brown, Carol Buchdahl, Ann Cardinal, Jennie Gartner, Karen Henry, and Susie Hudson.

Advisors: Sandy Bettis representing Central Vermont Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, Joanna Cole representing the League of Women Voters, Laura Lind-Blum representing Vermont Women's Business Center, Diane Derby from Senator Leahy's Office, and Dr. Felicia Kornbluh representing Women's and Gender Studies at UVM.

Staff and Intern: Janet Bullard, Wendy Love, Colleen Owen, and Lilly Talbert.

Friends: Bill Gosh, former chair of the Commission

Presiding: Marcia Merrill

Recording: Janet Bullard

Marcia called the meeting to order at 9:30 a.m., and introduced Laura Lind-Blum a new advisor representing the Vermont Women's Business Center, and also Colleen Owen, a former high school intern that has come back to intern with us again.

Minutes

Motion made by Eileen Boland to accept the minutes of the February 8th, 2012 Commission Meeting as submitted. Seconded by Peg Martin and voted unanimously.

Women in Prison Discussion

Wendy reported that the Commission helped to produce a white paper entitled, *Reclaiming Lost Ground for Vermont's Incarcerated Women: The Disturbing Conditions at Chittenden Regional Correctional Facility*. The white paper is a collaborative effort of a consortium of organizations that work with women prisoners, and state and community leaders, many of whom have labored in the field of corrections for more than 20 years. The white paper is intended as an invitation to work in collaborative partnership to improve current conditions at the facility and to forge a new approach to working with women in corrections.

In addition to the white paper, a group has been formed to deal with the lack of adequate mental health programming for Vermont inmates. The Commission has also signed on as a participant in in this groups work. A committee bill (H. 765) has been introduced calling for a workgroup to essentially case manage individuals in need of mental health services including discussing alternatives with the Judiciary, and reporting back to the legislature, based on their experiences, how to better address their needs and reduce recidivism. The bill also calls for separate and better tracking of individuals with mental

illness and a review of training procedures for a correctional officer in dealing with individuals with a serious functional impairment or mental illness.

Wendy distributed a draft statement calling attention to the various mental health needs and conditions of our incarcerated women and reported that the Senate Judiciary committee is scheduled to take testimony on H.765 tomorrow.

After discussion and edits to the statement, motion made by Peg Martin after statement edits are made, to submit our request that the data collected and recommendations proposed be gender-specific and trauma-informed. Furthermore, the review of correctional officer training also should be gender-specific and trauma-informed. Seconded by Ruth Finn and voted unanimously.

Due to time constraints, Diane Derby volunteered to collect comments for the draft statement, put it in its final form and get it to Wendy for testimony before the Senate Judiciary committee. Diane also volunteered to reach out to Senator Snelling and Sarah Kenney and let them know about the Commission's position on H.765.

Prison Pamphlet

Anne McClaughry gave an update on the prison pamphlet that she is working on with three former inmates as well as an editorial board of commissioners and advisors. The three writers are meeting this weekend and will be reviewing the 53-page book of rules published by the Department of Corrections and trying to explain the rules in inmate terms with the objective of helping them avoid pitfalls and helping them keep the end of their sentence in mind. Once the writers have finished the editorial board will be reviewing their work after the April Commission Meeting.

Everyone thanked Anne for her work on this pamphlet.

Commission Meeting Schedule September 2012 – June 2013

Marcia presented the draft commission meeting schedule for September 2012 – June 2013. After review and discussion the meeting schedule was approved as printed.

Equal Pay Day

Laine reported that she has asked several commissioners in different regions of the state to write letters to newspaper editors calling attention to equal pay day on April 17th, 2012. She thanked Lilly for her work on this and asked that folk who write letters please cc her and Lilly on the letters.

Legal Rights of Women in Vermont

Lilly informed everyone that she had a few copies of the publication printed and bound for distribution and has copies with her today if anyone wants a bound copy. She

highlighted the various media efforts, including Wendy's appearances on The :30, VPR-Vermont edition and WDEV. She also stated that we are working with a radio station to produce a public service announcement that would be distributed statewide and that there will be other marketing initiatives undertaken in the near future to continue spreading the word about the 6th edition of the publication. Lilly also thanked commissioners, advisors and staff for their continued persistence in getting the word out about the book.

Recognition of 25th Anniversary of Janet Bullard's Service to the Commission

Wendy and Lilly organized a card shower in recognition of Janet's 25th anniversary with the Commission and commissioners and advisors, past and present, celebrated her accomplishment with a cake and stories of her 25 years at VCW.

Meeting adjourned at 11:30 a.m.