

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

Commissioners Absent: Ann Cardinal, Cathy Frey, Karen Henry, Susie Hudson, and Peg Martin.

Advisors Present: Sandra Bettis representing Central Vermont Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, Dr. Felicia Kornbluh representing Women's and Gender Studies at UVM, and Diane Derby from Senator Leahy's Office.

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

Guests: Roberta Garrand, Andy Pallito, and Rubin Jennings.

Presiding: Marcia Merrill

Recording: Janet Bullard

Meeting called to order at 9:30 a.m.

### Updates

Marcia informed everyone that Congressman Welch signed onto the ERA deadline extension bill.

Lilly asked Commissioners to review their bio information on the website and make changes as necessary.

Lilly gave updates on two task forces that she serves on – the Governor's Prevention of Domestic and Sexual Violence Task Force and also the Domestic Violence in the Workplace Group. The Prevention Task Force recently completed a Prevention Practitioner Survey. Lilly is also participating in a Social Change Media Campaign review for the task force.

The Domestic Violence in the Workplace Group has completed their work on a Domestic Violence in the Workplace policy. Governor Shumlin has adopted this policy for state government agencies. It will be announced at a press conference on May 15<sup>th</sup> at 10:45 a.m. at Women Helping Battered Women in Burlington. Lastly, Lilly informed everyone that she wrote a letter to the Manager of the Green Mountain Mall in St. Johnsbury offering Commission resources since there have been several incidences of domestic violence at the site.

Laine distributed a draft stakeholder invitation letter for the upcoming Listening Forum in September in Bennington. She reported that she is working with local folk in coordinating a location for the listening forum as well as timing. After reaching out to a few select stakeholders it was determined that an early afternoon (1-3 p.m.) listening forum works best for them. So the time is set, and we are still working on a location. Laine hopes to get the invitation letters out shortly to key folk at schools so they have a heads up before returning to their schools in late August.

Anne reported that she developed an outline for the brochure on "doing time well" for women inmates with the goal of successful reintegration into the community and a reduction in recidivism. Anne

selected three formerly incarcerated women to help author this brochure and after their initial meeting, unfortunately, all three of them said that they couldn't do the work after all. Anne noted that she isn't going to give up on this effort and will approach other former inmates to assist her. Wendy offered to assist Anne with this process.

#### Update on Chittenden County Correctional Facility

Commissioner Pallito introduced Roberta Garrand, his guest, and stated that they are participating in an Agency of Human Services job shadow program and that's why Roberta is with him at this meeting. Roberta works for the Division of Children and Families within the agency.

Andy reported that the Chittenden facility is currently in transition and that there is now a 15-year vision for the facility. Major construction is being done to one end of the building currently in the booking and medical areas and that he hopes that this phase of construction will be done by November. The facility needs day-to-day maintenance as well as major renovations. The facility is looking at adding skylights wherever possible; a walking path is now under construction as well as garden space for the summer months. For several months now and currently, there are 130 women at the facility and the community and transitional housing facilities are 90 percent full. Andy stated that they have moved women into the Tapestry and Transitional housing programs and that over time with these programs in place, the number of incarcerated women should continue to drop.

Andy reported that the Department received a small grant from the National Institute of Corrections and that a former corrections commissioner from Connecticut and a specialist on women's programming will be visiting the Chittenden facility in the near future to look at programming and conduct a re-entry flow analysis to make sure that we are doing the very best we can. Andy said that he hopes that the team will be able to identify training gaps and look at how to implement programs. He reported that the team will be meeting with inmates, staff and members of the White Paper group and that he hopes to have a report from them in June of this year.

The search for a new superintendent is ongoing, Two members of the White Paper group have been invited to participate in the interview process. He also stated he now has monthly meetings with the authors of the White Paper to check in on programming needs and hopes to have much better programming in place in the next two years. Wendy noted that although the Commission was part of the White Paper group, we had not been invited to participate in those meetings. Andy stated that that was an oversight and invited Wendy to the next meeting. More correctional officers have been hired to enable more women to go off campus for work and/or programming.

Then Andy turned it over to Rubin and asked him if he'd like to comment on what he's seen at the facility recently. Rubin stated that there is a lot of construction going on; a new drain cleaning protocol has been established. He noted that he has been working with Janet, Lilly and Linda Ingold on clothing and transition needs for women inmates. Rubin noted that some of the women have medical concerns and that he has been communicating directly with the medical personnel at the facility and that has seemed to expedite care and treatment.

Commissioners asked Andy what the Commission could do to help out. Andy stated that the Commission could look at the factors that tend to land women under the supervision of corrections, such as: the high school drop out rate, the mental health system, the substance abuse system, and the need for continued economic services. Andy noted that he is recruiting a casework director to review these items and work on making sure that systems are in place with the goal of serving folk before they make it to the Department of Corrections.

Executive Session

Motion made by Carol Buchdahl to go into Executive Session. Seconded by Laine Dunham and voted unanimously.

Motion made by Laine Dunham to come out of executive session. Seconded by Carol Buchdahl and voted unanimously.

Meeting adjourned at 12:30 p.m.