

Commission Minutes  
May 9, 2007

Commissioners Present: Vicky Young, Chair; Sharon Baade, Gretchen Bailey, Eileen Boland, Cary Brown, Mary Claire Carroll, Retta Dunlap, Ruth Finn, Cathy Frey, Karen Henry, Anne McClaughry, and Marion Milne.

Commissioners Absent: Joyce Barbieri, Carol Buchdahl, and Marcia Merrill.

Advisory Council Members Present: Tina Glosser representing American Association of University Women, Lindy Hatcher representing Vermont Federation of Business and Professional Women, Barbara Hannon representing Older Women's League, Linda Ingold representing Vermont Women's Business Center, Margaret Luce representing Vermont State Nurses' Association, Jayne Sheridan representing Vermont Works for Women, and Carol Story representing Girl Scout Council of Vermont.

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

Presiding: Vicky Young

Recording: Janet Bullard

Guest: Joanna Cole from the League of Women Voters.

Meeting called to order at 9:36 a.m.

Introductions/Announcements

Vicky welcomed everyone to the meeting and reported that she is recovering well from her surgery. She thanked folk for the lovely plant. Vicky thanked Marcia for baking and frosting the Pie Chart cookies for Equal Pay Day and Lilly for crafting the equal payday message.

Vicky introduced two new Commissioners, Retta Dunlap and Cathy Frey. Retta is the Executive Director of the Vermonters for Better Education and also Executive Director of Vermont Home Education Network. Cathy teaches mathematics at Norwich University and last year was named the Dean of the School of Mathematics and Sciences at Norwich University. Everyone welcomed Retta and Cathy and introduced themselves. Retta and Cathy were presented with Commission logo pins. Vicky announced that Joyce Barbieri a Commissioner from Wallingford has recently resigned due to work conflicts. Vicky stated that we would really miss Joyce's contributions to the Commission.

### Minutes

Motion made by Marion Milne to accept the minutes of the March 28, 2007 and April 11, 2007 meetings as presented. Seconded by Ruth Finn and voted unanimously.

### Vermont Women's History Project Web site Demonstration

Judith gave an overview of the newly constructed women's history project website and noted that the site has been developed and that she has an excellent cadre of interns and volunteers doing research and validating the research in order to populate the website.

### Election of Commission Chair

Vicky reported that she has been chair of the Commission since 2001 assuming the role of chair from Maxine Grad when she was elected to the Legislature. She stated that she feels that it is time for her to step down as chair, but she will continue on as a Commissioner.

Wendy reported that according to the Commission's Operating Rules Wendy must receive all nominations for Commission Chair by the May Commission meeting. Marcia Merrill is the only commissioner to have submitted her name as a candidate for the chair's position. Wendy stated that the election for chair would be held at the June Commission Meeting.

### Legislative Status Update

Wendy reported that the session is fast coming to a close and updated folk on the status of specific bills of interest to the Commission.

Universal Pre K (H.534) a slightly different version passed in each house so the bill is now in conference committee. Wendy asked Retta to speak about the legislation since she has been following it at the State House. Retta stated that she expects that the Governor will sign the legislation. She reported that the big difference between the House and Senate passed version are nuances in the rule making authority. The bill also allows registered home day care providers to participate under the supervision of a licensed teacher. Wendy also asked Cary to speak about the bill since she is the Interim Director of a childcare center. Cary is hoping that this legislation will make it easier for parents who wish to place their child in a center outside of the school district. Wendy noted that the Commission has been involved in this debate since 2003.

Gender Identity (S.51) passed both houses and is awaiting the Governor's signature.

Tipped Minimum Wage (S.27) is due for a third reading in the House today. The Senate bill increases the tip threshold from \$30/month to \$120/month before an employer can pay the lower tipped wage of \$3.65/hour. A tipped minimum wage COLA would start in January of 2008 and would be calculated at the same rate as the COLA for minimum waged workers. Mary Claire reported that the bill passed the house very quickly yesterday and she anticipates that the bill will pass third reading today without issue and will most likely not have to go to a conference committee.

Child Care Subsidy The legislature approved a 3% rate increase in H.523 (Moving Families out of Poverty) Section 22 calls on the Vermont Department for Children and Families to report to the legislature by November 1, 2007 on a number of issues related to the increases to the subsidy rate.

Next Generation (H.433) Wendy asked Jayne Sheridan to give an overview of this bill. The bill made it out of the Senate Economic Development committee and is now in the Senate Appropriations Committee. The workforce development side of the bill has remained unchanged and the discussion is centering on scholarships and which agency should receive those funds. The study committee is still part of the bill and will be entirely composed of business folk and staffed by the Vermont Department of Labor. The Commissioner of the Vermont Department of Labor will be the champion as referred to in the Next Generation bill. There are many who do not qualify for TANF (Temporary Assistance to Needy Families). These folk therefore must access the WET (Workforce Education and Training) funds for needed education and training. Jayne noted that she would really like the Commission to look into the number of women who receive education and training through WET funds. She also informed folk that there is a huge need to do a study on women moving from welfare to work to see where they are in the workforce.

Wendy reported that there are some bills still on the agenda for next year.

- Health Insurance Post Divorce (S.62) is stalled in the Senate Finance Committee.
- Paid Sick Leave (H.337) is also stalled at this point. Several legislators have suggested that Family-Work Balance Council be created to look at ways to make the workplace friendlier for working families and that out of that Council might come support for Paid Sick Leave.
- HPV Vaccine (H.256) may be taken up next year.
- Harassment, Cyber bullying and bullying (H.486/S.131) establishes bullying as a civil violation and gives the Human Rights Commission the ability to monitor and enforce educational institutions' compliance with harassment, bullying legislation. The bill is currently in the House Judiciary Committee.

- Media Literacy in the Schools (H.350) this bill hasn't seen any action this year and is in the House Education Committee.
- S.97 Accommodations bill which proposes to make a number of changes to laws governing inmates in correctional facilities is still in the Senate.

Wendy noted that the Commission has already scheduled a panel of Girl Scouts to talk about harassment and cyber bullying at the October commission meeting.

Mary Claire reported that S.177, which creates a council on childhood poverty, passed both houses and is now awaiting the Governor's signature. The Council is to be comprised of the Speaker of the House, 5-6 committee chairs and folk from Voices for Vermont's Children, Vermont Low Income Advocacy Council, and the Commissioners of the Departments of Children and Families and Labor. The council will hold six meetings as a council and then a meeting in each of the 14 Vermont counties to create public awareness around childhood poverty. More and more pediatricians are seeing children who are failing to thrive.

Marion reported that the Coalition of Vermont Elders and the Vermont Direct Care Association lobbied for a \$100,000 appropriation comprised of state and federal funds to set up a registry of home care workers to help elders stay in their homes. (The appropriation stayed in the budget. The Department of Aging and Independent Living (DAIL) will hire a private vendor to set up the registry. DAIL would set up an advisor group made up of stakeholders.

#### Preparation for Annual Planning Meeting

Vicky stated that she has been thinking about the Commission's upcoming annual planning meeting. She suggested that we review our committee structure and the role of committees in the legislative process. What are the key issues we, as a commission want to work on next year.

Vicky asked if folk would like to have a facilitator for the meeting and all unanimously agreed that we would like to have former Commissioner Barbara Morrow come and facilitate this year's planning meeting since she did such an excellent job last year.

Marion suggested that we also revisit the Commission statute and see if we want to seek a change next legislative session. Anne requested that we review the Commission's mission statement as well.

#### New Business/Check In

Sharon reported that the Girl Scouts received grant funding from the Vermont Community Foundation to host a program for girls with incarcerated mothers to go and see them every three weeks and use video technology to tape their mother's stories.

Gretchen Bailey reported that former Commissioner Sandy Dooley is running unopposed for a seat on the South Burlington City Council. Gretchen also reported that she had heard from former advisory council member Gloria Salvanelli. Gloria is now living in Massachusetts and is taking classes to become an English as a second language instructor. Gloria is doing well.

Lilly announced that she would once again be working on the Commission's status report over the summer and is looking for topic ideas and data and asked folk to get thoughts to her. She also stated that she is compiling a list of folk who help women with negotiation skills for pay and flextime, etc. If anyone knows of people who provide these services, please let Lilly know.

Meeting adjourned at 11:45 a.m.