

Commission Meeting Minutes
May 14, 2008

Commissioners Present: Marcia Merrill, Chair; Laine Akiyama, Sharon Baade, Gretchen Bailey, Cary Brown, Carol Buchdahl, Mary Claire Carroll, Retta Dunlap, Linda Fogg, Ruth Finn, Anne McClaughry, Marion Milne, and Vicky Young.

Commissioners Absent: Eileen Boland, Cathy Frey, and Karen Henry.

Advisory Council Members Present: Ed Booth representing American Civil Liberties Union, Joanna Cole representing the League of Women Voters, Barbara Hannon representing the Older Women's League, Linda Ingold representing Vermont Women's Business Center, Sarah Kenney representing Vermont Network Against Domestic and Sexual Violence, Jayne Sheridan representing Vermont Works for Women, and Carol Story representing the Girl Scout Council of Vermont.

Staff and Intern: Janet Bullard, Surbhi Godsay, Wendy Love, and Lilly Talbert.

Presiding: Marcia Merrill

Recording: Janet Bullard

Meeting called to order at 9:30 a.m. by Chair Marcia Merrill.

Minutes

Motion made by Anne McClaughry to accept the minutes as submitted. Seconded by Ruth Finn and voted unanimously.

Showing of *The Motherhood Manifesto* – a DVD produced by Moms Rising

“The Motherhood Manifesto shares the heartfelt stories of mothers in America who dream of jobs with flexibility and benefits, mothers who can't afford their children's health and childcare expenses, mothers who are time and time again penalized for raising a new generation. From professional women who hit the maternal wall, to childcare workers who can't afford quality care for their own children, this book captures what it means to be a mother in America today. This groundbreaking book also celebrates the successes of companies that have discovered the value of good family policies, families who are making it work, model childcare programs, and legislation that supports families.”

After viewing the video, folk discussed various aspects of the video.

Panel Discussion on the Legislative Session

Wendy informed everyone that this panel was designed to have experts in their fields talk about the various legislative issues of interest to their organizations and also a heads up about what might be coming down the road next session.

Sheila Reed, Voices for Vermont's Children, reported that the school breakfast bill passed this session and also there was progress on the childcare subsidy (tuition assistance) program. Up until this legislative session the income limits were at 1999 levels, the bill raised them to the 2000 levels and appropriated an additional \$850,000 to accommodate this change. Sheila noted that funding for the Building Bright Futures program was restored as well as funding for the Reach Ahead Program. Because the federal government increased work participation requirements, The Reach Ahead program takes working families out of the mix and puts them in a separate program. Also, several lead abatement bills were enacted. Sheila regretfully informed folk that some of the premiums for the Dr. Dynasaur program were increased and that a bill calling for paid sick days did not advance, even though there was a public hearing with good testimony supporting this initiative.

Sarah Kenney, Vermont Network Against Domestic and Sexual Violence, reported that an Omnibus Domestic Violence bill passed creating many changes in the way our state responds to domestic violence and directs over \$880,000 in new funding to provide prevention programs and direct services to victims of domestic and sexual violence statewide. Also a bill formally establishing Vermont's existing Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner (SANE) program is now in statute. In addition to establishing SANE in statute, a formal SANE advisory board was created with the authority to certify and decertify sexual assault nurse examiners and formally create the position of SANE clinical coordinator, which will be a contracted position through the Vermont Network Against Domestic and Sexual Violence. Another bill that makes significant changes to the way Vermont's Department of Children and Families responds to reports of child abuse and neglect was passed. The bill establishes a "differential response" for the department to employ when someone calls about suspected abuse. This new system will allow the department to have two tracks for working with families, an investigation track, and an assessment track. This new system should help the Department of Children and Families work more effectively with families in this situation.

Wendy reported that the health insurance post divorce bill passed the house, but did not pass the senate due to monetary concerns. Lilly reported that H.641 Nursing Mothers in the Workplace passed and there will be a bill signing tomorrow at 11:00 a.m in the Governor's Ceremonial Office. For an employee who is a nursing mother for up to three years after the birth of a child, the employer shall: provide reasonable time, either compensated or uncompensated, throughout the day to express breast milk for her nursing child.

Mary Claire Carroll, of Carroll and Vitzthum LLP, reported on a couple of initiatives of interest to the commission, including continued funding for a teen parent education program offered by the state network of Parent Child Centers. The Teen Parent

Education Program provides opportunities for parenting and pregnant teens to work toward getting their high school diploma and provides some courses on how to be better parents. Continued funding was also given for the job readiness program that is offered by the Parent Child Centers as well. There was also a re-write of the child abuse and neglect statute to include extending the period of child support for endangered children who are in danger of being homeless to age 22. And lastly, there was a legislative study ordered on end of life care and pain management.

Jayne Sheridan representing Vermont Works for Women reported on the bill that moves all incarcerated women to the St. Albans Correctional Facility, making it an all female facility and closing the Dale facility in Waterbury. The savings garnered from these moves is supposed to stay within the corrections budget for programming. Jayne stated that there are issues with the move for both genders. There are some issues with the current correctional staff in St. Albans who are used to working with men, as well as the various service providers and volunteers that are currently located in the greater Windsor area who have developed programs specifically for the women. Inmates. The work opportunities on the St. Albans campus, such as the print job are not ideally suited for women who tend to have much shorter sentences than the previous male inmates. The transfer of the modular home building program is up in the air right now. Renovations start in November and should be done by March. Jayne thanked the women's legislative caucus for all of their hard work on these issues during the legislative session. Jayne also thanked Wendy for her work and support on these issues. Also, Jayne reported that the workforce development funding was on the chopping block but passed with funding a little lower than last year.

June Meeting Process

Carol explained that the June meeting would be held at Langevin House, part of the Vermont Technical College Campus, from 9:30 a.m. – 2:30 p.m. She asked everyone to bring a potluck item to share for either breakfast or lunch. Carol explained that we will use the World Café process at the planning meeting, if anyone wants to know more about World Café, check it out online: www.theworldcafe.com Carol asked folk what their expectations were for the June meeting, responses were as follows:

- time for everyone to speak
- conversation
- looking forward to a new year on the commission having just been appointed
- sense of where we are headed in the year ahead, idea of the type of legislation that we might want to be introduced in the biennium.
- setting priorities for work areas
- a chance to connect and unite
- good food!, and
- what is said that day is more important than the actual outcome -- would like to hear about what we all think about these issues and let the legislature set our agenda because they do anyway.

Updates/Announcements/Plus Delta

Wendy informed everyone that the commission staffs the women's legislative caucus and at the urging of Marion Milne, when she was a legislator, the women's caucus reinstated the woman legislator of the year award in 2005. Rep. Donna Sweaney is this biennium's winner. Wendy thanked her wonderful staff for all of their hard work on this event and others. Mary Claire Carroll thanked Wendy for her hard work at the state house.

Ed Booth informed everyone that Curtiss Reed, the director of ALANA, contacted him because they lost funding this year and Ed is on the board of Haymarket Foundation and was able to garner some funding for ALANA's work. Curtiss is also still looking for additional funding, so if anyone has funding ideas, please contact Curtiss.

Carol reported that the harassment/bullying forum that she and Karen are planning is being put off for a while and it will either be held in June or early fall.

Gretchen asked staff to develop an office supply and equipment wish list and email it out to commissioners and advisors to see if anyone can help with the wish list items.

Plus

Legislative panel presentation was great, really informative.
Mothers Manifesto video was great
More substantive presentations and discussions, appreciate them

Delta –what can be changed

Would appreciate having the legislative panel discussion sooner – an update

Meeting adjourned at 12:32p.m.