

Commissioners Present: Laine Akiyama, Acting Chair; Gretchen Bailey; Eileen Boland; Cary Brown; Carol Buchdahl; Retta Dunlap; Cathy Frey; Ruth Finn; Karen Henry; and Marion Milne.

Commissioners Absent: Sharon Baade, Ann Cardinal; Anne McClaughry, Linda Fogg, Marcia Merrill, and Vicky Young.

Advisors Present: Joanne Brooking representing Central Vermont Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, Joanna Cole representing the Vermont League of Women Voters, Lindy Hatcher representing Vermont Federation of Business and Professional Women, Linda Ingold representing Vermont Women's Business Center, Barbara Saunders representing Building Bright Futures, Jayne Sheridan representing Vermont Works for Women, and Carol Story representing the Girl Scouts of the Green and White Mountains.

Guests: Jessica Backus, student, South Burlington High School; Mary Gauthier, Amanda Green, Katie Hango, Alison Hatch, and Brittany Weiland all *Girls Rock the Capitol* Interns; and Janet Francis, Carmel Quinn, Barbara Sirvis, Tory Soutiere of the Girl Scouts of the Green and White Mountains, and Cynthia Hatch.

Staff: Janet Bullard and Wendy Love.

Acting Chair: Laine Akiyama called the meeting to order at 9:30 a.m.

#### Welcome/Minutes

Laine welcomed everyone to the meeting explaining that Marcia had to go out of town unexpectedly and asked Laine to chair the meeting in her absence. Introductions were done. Laine read Linda Fogg's resignation letter. Linda is resigning because her family is moving back to Texas next month after her daughter graduates from high school.

Motion made by Carol Buchdahl to approve the minutes of the February 10, 2010 Commission Meeting as submitted. Seconded by Eileen Boland and voted unanimously.

Motion made by Carol Buchdahl to approve the minutes of the March 10, 2010 Commission Meeting Minutes as corrected on page two, last bullet change "powered" to "powdered." Seconded by Marion Milne and voted unanimously.

#### Women in the Correctional System

Folk shared their insights and thoughts from the Commission's visit in March to the Northwest State Correctional Facility. Many policies and procedures still reflect its former status as a maximum security facility for mostly violent male offenders and are not appropriate for its current mostly non-violent female population. There are not sufficient resources for women at the facility, especially post-secondary vocational and educational training. More domestic violence counseling and treatment, substance abuse counseling and treatment services are needed. In addition commissioners felt that there should be additional gender-responsive training and resources for the staff at the facility as well as the field staff.

Health care is still an issue, although the medical director is working with the commission to address our concerns. Also there is concern about the trauma that children go through when their parents are incarcerated and the impact that this has on their lives. Lack of appropriate housing in the community is a really big issue as well. Janet stated that she has obtained the clothing contracts for inmates and will be researching the clothing providers available and then will talk with the state's purchasing agent about the contracts and vendor options. Lilly is continuing to work on getting WIC in the facility for pregnant mothers. Another issue of

concern is that there isn't a place for visitors to go who are waiting for others or waiting for their visit time. Waiting in your car on the premises isn't allowed.

Wendy circulated copies of the relevant sections of S.292 a bill calling for reform in the correctional system. The bill would allow a woman to bring a valid prescription – something she is taking currently – into the facility and continue taking that medication until she is seen by the facility medical staff.

Other changes outlined in S. 292 include:

- Implementing a data collection system for children of incarcerated parents,
- Not using lack of housing as the sole factor in denying parole to inmates that have served their minimum.
- Removing barriers, such as unnecessary driving restrictions and changing workday-timed probation appointments and programs that inhibit regular employment.
- Promoting quality relations between inmates and their families by creating options for affordable telephone contact between their inmates and their families, and by not limiting telephone calls and visitation with minor children as a disciplinary measure.

#### Girls Rock the Capital and Results of the Girl Scout Survey

Carmel Quinn reported that *Girls Rock the Capital* is in its sixth year. This year fourteen girls started the program and eleven girls finished the program. Interns come from all corners of the state. There is an application process. Girls must have support from their school in order to attend and need to maintain their grade point average while interning. Legislators are already excited about having an intern next year. Legislators ask their interns about various pieces of legislation and have invited them to testify before legislative committees. Katie, Amanda, Mary, Brittany, and Alison all shared the various experiences they've had as *Girls Rock the Capitol* Interns, including visits to Washington, DC, and the United Nations. The girls talked about how their experiences through Girl Scouts have changed their lives and how they feel better prepared to succeed in their lives thanks to Carmel and the Girl Scouts.

Carmel and the girls also shared the results of the 5<sup>th</sup> annual survey, "What Vermont Teen Girls Say About Employment and Education", a collaboration between the Commission and the Girl Scouts. This year girls participated in the topic selection, survey creation, results analysis and generation of the executive summary of the report. The survey was conducted online via "Survey Monkey" to girls in 6<sup>th</sup> through 12<sup>th</sup> grades from New Year's Day to Valentine's Day 2010. Sixty-nine high school girls and 47 middle school girls filled out the 35-question survey. A continued frustration is how to promote the survey since schools do not permit outside groups such as the Girl Scouts to distribute literature to students. Information distributed via various principal, guidance and teacher groups does not seem to trickle down to students.

Girls made suggestions about next year's survey, including: shortening it, making the questions more pertinent to the age levels, and adding an incentive for completion of the survey, such as a coupon for a Ben and Jerry's Ice Cream Cone or a competition for who recruits the most students.

Everyone thanked the girls for coming to our meeting and sharing their experiences.

The meeting adjourned at 12:35 p.m.