

Commissioners Present: Marcia Merrill, Chair; Gretchen Bailey, Eileen Boland, Charlotte Dennett, Laine Dunham, Cathy Frey, Dr. Felicia Kornbluh, Marion Milne, and Shambulia Gadsden Sams.

Commissioners Absent: Carol Buchdahl, Ruth Finn, Susie Hudson, Jennie Gartner, Margaret Martin, and Anne McLaughry.

Advisors Present: Laura Lind-Blum representing Vermont Women's Business Center, Patricia Coates from Congressman Welch's Office, Joanne Cole representing the League of Women Voters, Diane Derby from Senator Leahy's Office, and Sarah Kenney representing the Vermont Network Against Domestic and Sexual Violence.

Guest: Katina Cummings.

Staff: Cary Brown, Janet Bullard (with grandson Bryson), and Lilly Talbert.

Presiding: Marcia Merrill

Recording: Janet Bullard

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

Introductions/Announcements

Sarah Kenney reported that the funding for the domestic and sexual violence programs is provided by the Federal Violence Against Women Act. The funding expired quite a while ago and the funding has not been reauthorized. She explained that today had been declared a day of action because there are 30 days left in this session to pass the Violence Against Women Act. There is a Facebook Photo Campaign happening today, Sarah explained. People all over the country are being encouraged to make a sign with a message stating why the Violence Against Women Act funding is important. Anyone who wants to participate can, once you've made your sign, Sarah will take a picture of you and your sign and post it on Facebook.

Diane Derby reported on the recently held Women's Economic Opportunity Conference. There were just under 400 folks registered for the conference. The keynoter, Janet Bombardier from IBM, was a huge success. Diane thanked Marion Milne for Milne Travel's generous donation of two Red Sox tickets and round trip transportation to Fenway.

Marcia announced that Joanna Cole is now a Representative –elect to the Vermont House of Representatives. Everyone congratulated Joanna!

Felicia informed everyone that she is working with Lilly on a possible Women's History Month event co-sponsored by the UVM Women's Center, as well as the Race, Class and Gender Department and the Commission at UVM. If plans materialize, the March Commission Meeting will most likely be held at

UVM. Felicia also reported that she has been working on raising an endowment in the name of former Governor Madeleine Kunin for race, class and gender studies and would like ideas for possible funders, so please get any ideas to Felicia. Lastly, Felicia reported that she is working on a project regarding gender, class and food systems and that she will be reaching out to folk for information.

Minutes

Motion made by Marion Milne to accept the minutes of the October 11, 2012 Commission meeting as submitted. Seconded by Eileen Boland and approved unanimously.

Legislative Luncheon Update

Janet reported that almost all of the invitations have been mailed out, waiting to hear about two possible recounts (one in the House and one in the Senate) and the results of a couple other House races. The fundraising has begun. It costs approximately \$3,000 for the Commission's foundation to host this luncheon. Janet then gave an update on the ad hoc program committee that was set up to plan the program for the luncheon and stated that Jennie Gartner did a lot of research on different themes in women's history and is in the process of putting together a Jeopardy game to do at the luncheon. Janet stated that she is concerned that we may not have time to get through the Jeopardy game at the luncheon and that she discussed this with Jennie. Jennie suggested that we might use some of her research to formulate questions for the quiz. Janet thought that this was a good idea and suggested that we include some questions on the Amicus brief/pay equity and also maybe some questions on women and work since we are leaning towards having our women's history month theme center around women and work. Marcia asked the staff to go ahead and put together a quiz for the luncheon since that seems to work the best given the short amount of time we have with legislators.

Amicus Brief: Next Steps

Lilly informed everyone that Vermont Law School Professor Cheryl Hanna filed the Amicus Brief on Friday, November 2nd, and explained that the defendant has twenty days to file their brief. Three Vermont Law School students provided research assistance for the brief. Lilly circulated a thank you letter to the President of Vermont School for folk to sign. Cary explained that while there were many amici that signed onto the brief, there were others that would have liked to, but they did not have a process for making a decision on whether or not to sign onto the brief. She said that she is in conversation with Cheryl Hanna about the possibility of the Commission and Vermont Law School partnering to offer training on following litigation to nonprofit organizations in the state.

Updates:

Janet updated the Commission on the work of the Paid Sick Days Coalition, of which we are a member. The Coalition is still moving forward with plans to reintroduce Paid Sick Days legislation in January. The new bill will be based on the old bill, H.356, except that it will be re-drafted to include a provision for the

usage of combined time off or personal time off (CTO/PTO). The reason behind this change is that many employers give a package of combined time off or personal time off in lieu of annual leave, sick leave, and personal leave.

Lilly informed everyone that she is working with the Health Department to update the Vermont Workplaces Support Nursing Moms fact sheet and circulated a draft highlighting the suggested changes. Lilly reported that she is printing Spanish editions of the *Legal Rights of Women in Vermont* as well as the rack cards promoting the publication. Also, she is looking at purchasing an ad underwriting piece on the Vermont Public Radio website to promote the publication as well as continuing with radio ad and public service announcements around the state. She is also in the process of recruiting an intern to help her with promotion of *Legal Rights of Women in Vermont*.

The Equal Pay Conference work has really taken off and there are a lot of projects stemming from this conference Lilly reported. The group is working on amending the Vermont Equal Pay Act to conform to the Federal Paycheck Fairness Act as well as to allow for protection for employees who inquire about other employee's wages. The group is also involved in the Paid Sick Days Coalition. There is also a study committee of this group looking at employee-financed family leave. Lilly is continuing her work on the Governor's Prevention of Domestic and Sexual Violence Task Force by surveying all the Vermont colleges and universities about their violence prevention programs.

Prison Update

Cary reported that she attended a Prison Advisory Committee meeting yesterday and that she has been to several corrections meetings lately and is not sure about the continuance of the advisory group at this time. She reported that Jill Evans and Kim Bushey, both with the Department of Corrections, are establishing a Women's Prison Advisory Group which will meet quarterly. Cary stated that Jill will be travelling the state and making connections with Probation and Parole and working on a plan to provide gender responsive training to everyone employed in the correctional system. Cary reported that construction at the facility is almost complete and that the industrial sewing program will not happen after all, an alternative program hasn't been decided for that space yet. Cary informed folk about a program offered by Vermont Works for Women refurbishing barns. A crew of women just recently completed work on a barn in Shelburne, but the jury is still out about the success of this project and a similar project at the Intervale in Burlington.

Early Childhood Alliance

Cary reported that the Commission has a seat on the policy committee of Kids Are Priority One and that the organization is in the process of a major restructure and renaming to the Vermont Early Childhood Alliance. The committee met recently and is in the process of finalizing policy goals for the upcoming legislative session which include a raise in the childcare financial assistance (formerly known as the child care subsidy) to 50% of the market rate in 2010. There are also goals around professional development

for childcare workers, and the unionization of childcare workers initiative is expected to be active in the upcoming legislative session.

December Planning Session Brainstorming

Marcia reminded everyone that we didn't have a planning meeting in June because we were in the process of an Executive Director search. Now that we have a new Executive Director it's time to have a planning meeting. Marcia asked Cary to elaborate on the process. Cary stated that she would like direction around policy issues so she is sure when asked what the Commission's position is. She said she would like to start with a review of the Commission's Statute, Core Values, and Public Policy Process.

She would also like more specifics about how Commissioners would like to receive information at meetings. What process do we want to follow to make sure that information flows quickly and that there aren't feelings of rushing to make decisions because of outside pressures? How do we go about balancing the different aspects of the Commission's work, i.e.; education, advocacy, and the direct services we provide? Look at ways to more directly involve advisors and issue-oriented groups as our priority focus changes.

Suggestion was made to use a decision tree to track issues. Also, look to the role of our committee chairs, how they may help Cary determine the Commission's position on issues. The Commission tends to work on many issues whereas many nonprofits focus on a single issue. Marcia asked the staff to get together and pull documents that we have such as the strategic plan and other documents that may help with this process and get them to the committee chairs before our next chairs meeting and well in advance of the December meeting.

The meeting adjourned at 12:30 p.m.