

Commissioners Present: Marcia Merrill, Chair; Gretchen Bailey; Eileen Boland; Cary Brown; Carol Buchdahl; Ann Cardinal; Ruth Finn; Cathy Frey; Laine Dunham; Retta Dunlap; Karen Henry; and Marion Milne.

Commissioners Absent: Sharon Baade, Anne McClaughry. (Note both Linda Fogg and Vicky Young have resigned. The respective appointing authorities have not named their replacements)

Advisors Present: Maggie Gendron from Senator Leahy's office, Linda Ingold representing Vermont Women's Business Center, Margaret Luce representing Vermont State Nurses' Association, and Carmel Quinn representing Girl Scouts of the Green and White Mountains.

Guest: Dr. Sanjukta Ghosh professor of Women and Gender Studies at Castleton State College.

Presiding: Marcia Merrill

Recording: Janet Bullard

Welcome/Reconnect/Minutes

Marcia welcomed everyone and folks shared highlights of their summers.

Motion made by Carol Buchdahl to approve the minutes of the May 12, 2010 Commission Meeting as submitted. Seconded by Ruth Finn and voted unanimously.

Announcements

Marcia announced that three commissioners have been reappointed, Cary, Karen and Eileen. Congratulations! She noted that we are waiting for two more appointments and we hope to have those shortly. Also Marcia recognized Eileen and Gretchen for making every Commission meeting during the past year. She stated that she is looking forward to a new year and hopes that commissioners will be able to make all meetings, herself included.

Janet announced that the Commission will be observing and volunteering at Women Can Do! for the October 13th Commission meeting. Originally there was a business meeting planned for the afternoon and over the summer with changes made for the Women Can Do! Conference it was decided that the business meeting would be cancelled. She encouraged everyone that can to come for the day or a part of the day and volunteer or observe as approximately 400 girls have a chance to try their hand at a non-traditional career. Janet circulated a sign up sheet to those present and said that she would be following up via email with specific tasks once the conference gets closer. She will also email commissioners and advisors not here today to let them know about the changes and the opportunity to volunteer at Women Can Do!

Marion announced that the Coalition of Vermont Elders (COVE) is hosting a Gubernatorial Candidates' Forum on Friday, October 1, 2010 at the Aldrich Public Library in Barre. All are invited to attend.

Celebrate our History

Eileen gave an overview of the Commission's history/accomplishments, structure and functions since our inception in 1964. She noted that it is often hard to see the path forward without knowing where you have been. The history time line is available on the website. She also noted that the Commission has accomplished much by partnering with other groups and/or bringing groups together to work on a common issue. This has been a common thread throughout our history.

Wendy, Lilly, and Janet did a review of the past year highlighting various work projects, such as:

- Women's Prison Project – Many things happened as the result of the three listening forums that VCW staff and Commissioners conducted last year on Vermont women in the correctional system. VCW facilitated contact between the WIC program and officials at NWCF. WIC will be going into the prison twice a month with education and helpful links/resources for inmates when they return to the community; there is now a brochure on maternity care; more food and snacks for pregnant women; work is being done on the clothing and property directive; legislation was passed to gather data on children with incarcerated parents; phone calls will be made cheaper and more accessible as a result of the passed legislation as well.
- History Project- Successfully transitioned to the Vermont Historical Society summer of 2009 with a formal announcement in January of 2010.
- Girls Activities – Fifth Annual “What Vermont Teen Girls Say about employment and education” survey was done with the Girl Scouts of the Green and White Mountains. VCW participated in conference planning for annual Vermont Works for Women, Women Can Do! Conference (a non-traditional careers conference for high school students). We participated in the Vermont Girls Collaborative along with other agencies who provide services to girls. We sponsored an afternoon discussion with Rosalind Wiseman, author of Queen Bees and Wannabees, with about 125 high school personnel (guidance counselors, teachers and principals).
- Website Redo and Information and Referral Program – Commission's website redone to conform with the State of Vermont's new guidelines re: look and feel, this now includes a counter so we know how many folk are going to our website along with what pages they are visiting. The Resource Directory has been updated and we are now working on editing the *Legal Rights of Women in Vermont*. The resource directory is the backbone of our Information and Referral program and contains 165 pages of useful resource information.
- Women's Business Development and Partnering – We participated in planning and hosting the first Central Vermont Career/Job Fair last May along with the

Central Vermont Workforce Investment Board and Central Vermont Economic Development Corporation. We served on the conference planning committee for the annual Women's Economic Opportunity Conference, and also on the planning committee celebrating Vermont Entrepreneurship Week.

- And we worked with/partnered with many organizations, such as: the Governor's Workforce Equity and Diversity Council, Coalition for Workforce Solutions, Task Force on Domestic Violence in the Workplace, Task Force on Human Trafficking, Paid Sick Days Coalition, Vermont Women's Business Center, Daycare Subsidy workgroup, and American Legion Auxiliary just to name a few.

Work now in the Incubator

Wendy reviewed the following list of projects that are in the incubator as follows:

- Legislative Luncheon January 2011
- Divorce Project – New Mexico Commission on Women is doing educational workshops for women who are contemplating divorce. We are discussing the possibility of doing educational vignettes on our website on the various aspects of divorce.
- Girls Financial Literacy Project – Business and Professional Women (BPW) has a program entitled, “Reality Store” which is a one-day program where girls choose a career, are given pay money to “shop for the necessities of life—food, fuel, rent, car payments, etc. It also includes a “fish pond” where real-life experiences are thrown at them (good and bad) that will impact their income and expenses.
- Rosalind Wiseman – talks are underway to bring Rosalind Wiseman, author of *Queenbees and Wannabees Helping Your Daughter Survive Cliques, Gossip, Boyfriends and Other Realities of Adolescence* to southern Vermont during the 2011-12 school year.
- 6th annual Girl Scouts Survey: this year's focus is on relationships.
- Status Report – streamlined version focusing on the economic status of women and leadership.
- Editing and distribution of newly revised *Legal Rights of Women*.

Envision Our Future: Gather Input, Gauge Interest, Identify Paths Forward

Laine asked everyone to imagine a clear blue sky in front of us and think about what you would like to see in that clear blue sky all the while keeping in mind the “Public Policy (project) and Legislative Process Criteria:

- 1) The issue must be closely related to the Commission's mission, strategic plan, or existing public policy and legislative positions.
- 2) The issue in question must have a direct and broad impact on women in Vermont.
- 3) At least one Commissioner must be willing to take the public lead and collaborate with staff and others on the issue.

- 4) The Commission must have the resources to effectively make an impact.

Commissions and advisors broke up into small groups to brainstorm.

Retta shared that she would like to see issues that might not make it through the small group process brought up before the whole commission and is suggesting that every commissioner be given a half hour during a meeting once a year to bring forward issues of concern/interest to them. Karen agreed and said that she would like to see the Commission as a whole discuss Retta's suggestion.

Marcia asked everyone to break up into small groups and talk about projects, issues and process.

Reports from Small Group Work

Group 1

- ❖ Women in prison – continue work
- ❖ Bullying in schools – still an issue, but time to move on?
- ❖ Prevention – shift Commission focus from response to prevention
- ❖ Philosophical question – what is our role? Are we doing what we should be doing?
- ❖ Publicize our accomplishments and what we are doing, maybe establish a Facebook page, get our minutes to the press, prepare Commissioners to be our faces with their local news outlets so that they are known as a resource on women's issues.
- ❖ More connections with colleges, be seen as a resource for students, connection with gender studies programs.
- ❖ Immigration issues – religion and other issues coming up before the U.S. Civil Rights Commission.

Group 2

- ❖ Appreciation and admiration that the Commission staff models good work life balance and that the staff of the Commission is sought out by other state government agencies/departments.
- ❖ Keep tracking issues related to women in prison – lack of housing and continued focus on children and men when women are incarcerated.
- ❖ Support legislative luncheon; pleased with good reputation/rapport with legislators.
- ❖ Financial literacy tools for girls.
- ❖ Support Girl Scout survey – relationships fabulous idea for the survey.

Group 3

- ❖ Process – look at various issues facing Vermont women, need process to incorporate more issues and a broader range of issues before commission.
- ❖ Cause vs. symptom – focus on cause of why instead of symptom. Proactive vs. reactive.
- ❖ Diversity within the commission-- how we deal with issues in our lives and share
- ❖ Longer Commission meetings to address issues in order to broaden the conversation.

Group 4

- ❖ Political education for women – what do you do with elections? Why aren't we publishing voting records on women's issues?
- ❖ Financial literacy – need girls and women educated on financial safety – need to understand finances.
- ❖ Decrease barriers for women at work – more than childcare, educate women about ROWE (results only work environment).
- ❖ Universal Health Care/Universal Child Care

Marcia asked that this list be prepared in draft form separate from the minutes and distributed to everyone as soon as possible. She then stated that she would form a Process Committee to review the process suggestions mentioned above and suggest others if any. Marcia would like to have a report from this committee at the November Commission meeting.

Commissioners discussed and agreed to have the Legislative Luncheon in January. Marion, Carol and Eileen volunteered to serve on the program committee. Marcia is looking for people to help fundraise for the luncheon. If you are interested in either the program committee, or the fundraising committee please let Marcia know.

Wendy announced that there are several women's organizations, including the Commission, discussing hosting a possible Gubernatorial Debate on either September 27th or 29th at Main Street Landing in Burlington. Each participating organization has been asked to generate two questions. She will email commissioners if she hears more about the event.

Meeting adjourned at 12:38 p.m.