

**Vermont Commission on Women
Meeting Minutes**

Wednesday, January 11th, 2017

Capitol Plaza Hotel, Governor's Ballroom, 100 State Street, Montpelier, VT

Commissioners present:

Marcia Merrill (Chair), Gretchen Bailey, Carol Buchdahl, Laine Dunham, Ruth Finn, Danielle Martel, Melinda Moulton, Colin Ryan, Kerry Secrest

Commissioners absent:

Lynn Batchelor, Eileen Boland, Charlotte Dennett, Cathy Frey, Jennie Gartner, Susie Hudson, Nancy LaVarnway

Advisors present:

Christine Ryan of ANA-Vermont
Kevin Veller of U.S. Congressman Welch's Office
Diane Derby of U.S. Senator Leahy's Office
Katarina Lisaius of U.S. Senator Sanders' Office
Wendy Rice & Amy Caldwell of Vermont Works for Women

Guests:

Staff: Cary Brown, Hannah Myers, Lilly Talbert

Presiding: Marcia Merrill

Recording: Hannah Myers

Meeting called to order at 9:35 a.m.

Welcome: Marcia welcomed everyone.

A staff update was sent via e-mail. Staff will continue to provide monthly written updates.

CHANGE THE STORY LEADERSHIP REPORT – UPDATE AND OPPORTUNITY FOR FEEDBACK

Cary informed Commissioners that Change The Story (CTS) will be releasing a Leadership report in March, and releasing a sneak preview today at our lunch. She passed around a list of the statistics the Change The Story team is collecting and asked for feedback. Some comments received were:

- the VT Business Roundtable has 100 members and 14 only women.
- wondered whether the number of female legislators we have is a result of our legislature being part-time and low paid. If they were paid better, would we have more men and fewer women?
- suggested looking at the gender of deans in higher education.
- suggested that CTS could look at look at prison leadership and guards, as well as student leaders on colleges, and even at high schools.
- we should look at healthcare, and healthcare in prisons.
- we should look at the gender balance of paid and unpaid boards and commissions.

- wondered about looking at the economic development, for instance in seeking credit, leadership and decision making positions are often held by men.
- CTS could evaluate leadership in medical institutions.
- suggested that we use this data for a social media campaign, and also was pleased we'll look at police chiefs and deputies, as her experience has demonstrated these positions are mostly or entirely held by men.

Commissioners requested to add to next month's agenda a discussion about our statute, and status as an unpaid Commission.

ADVISORY COUNCIL MEMBERSHIP REQUESTS

Let's Grow Kids

Vermont Early Childhood Alliance

Approval of Additional Advisory Council Members

MOTION made by Marcia, seconded by Carol

To add Let's Grow Kids and the Vermont Early Childhood Alliance to VCW's Advisory Council

MOTION APPROVED

GOAL SETTING FOR 2017

Marcia and Cary led a discussion about goal setting for 2017, and to provide directions to Committees to continue this work in the coming months. This should be considered in the context of our incoming president, and the request for us to sign on to a letter to oppose Senator Jeff Sessions as U.S. Attorney General.

Marcia would like to make a list of what we could be working on. Ideas suggested included:

- Paid Family and Medical Leave
- Pay Equity
- Corrections
- Reproductive Rights
- Economic Security
- Nat'l level issues that impact Vermonters
- Women in Leadership
- Becoming and information source of VT Organizations that can lobby whom individuals could consider contributing financially to.
- Protect rights that women in Vermont already have
- Lead the way to Change The Story for women in Vermont
- Gender Balance at every level of State Government
- Internal issues for the Commission:
- New structure consideration around the lobbying piece of our statute
- CTS response consideration

- Revisiting the meeting structure, and whether it meets the needs of youth

Additional discussion included:

- it can help to support our federal reps on social media by retweeting, etc. This can also help inform the state legislators.
- Treasurer Beth Pearce is talking about creating a statewide retirement program for Vermonters.
- suggested creating an ad hoc committee about Community Outreach to help get the word out via. Social Media, radio, newspaper, etc.
- suggested that the Commission could help to provide quotes, statistics, etc. to our federal representatives to help them have an arsenal ready to go.
- if we have a strategic plan to work with other women’s commissions, we could use that to get in touch with legislators in other states who might be influential on specific topics.
- we could work as a Commission to process these CTS reports, and then decide where we need to go.
- it could be helpful to come present to Advisory Council members about the Change The Story reports and data
- suggested considering using an approach called Future Search, which is a community based approach, and holistic. This is similar to Collective Impact.
- suggested that the Commission could be the hosting organization for identifying partners around women’s issues in Vermont.
- PPNNE isn’t going to be able to sustain its budget, they may need to cut clinics.
- agreed that national bills do impact us. She is worried about women’s reproductive rights.
- talked about creating a framework about the year ahead; lots of senators and reps are on the same page, and that’s where, as a Commission, we could have more a collective voice with the New England consortium.
- it would be a big deal to get involved on the federal level, and if we do, it should be issue oriented. It should be pointed. She doesn’t think we need to sign on to a letter about Jeff Sessions.
- one problem for us is that the Commission can’t be nimble. The best impact is to be able to respond faster. We need some strategy to be able to respond quickly and effectively.
- there is still real potential for policies and programs to change, we shouldn’t lose sight of commonalities with incoming administrations, and instead should leverage our voice on those issues, like workforce development.
- sorting information is a great contribution we can make. He also added that at Women Can Do! Event, he was telling VT teen girls about the Commission, and reminded Commissioners of the power of telling citizens about us.
- it is important with outreach that we are very thoughtful about what’s going out.
- the Poverty Council does a great job of coming up with a year-end report, we should think about that, as well as asking for more meetings with the Governor, maybe once a year. Cary added that one of the most effective thing the Poverty Council issues are annual recommendations, what do we think about that?

- we could schedule a meeting with the Governor to give him a heads up about what we might recommend
- wondered if there is room for bringing in additional women of power and influence to sign onto our recommendations.
- there is a lot to gain from the intermingling of generations, of young energy and experience.
- Can we have some kind of system, if you are feeling dispirited, can we talk about that?

The Ad Hoc Community Outreach Committee membership so far is: Colin, Melinda, and Carol. They will send an e-mail out to see if others want to contribute, including the advisory council members. Amy offered to help from the outside. Colin was asked to chair the Community Outreach Committee, he will consider it and get back to us.

Marcia summarized that we have a lot of issues to discuss in Committees, and the three standing committees should meet over the next month to establish priorities and action items:

- Economic Equity and Security, Chaired by Melinda
- Health and Safety and Civil Rights, Chaired by Carol
- Education and Human Development chaired by Nancy, but Danielle to chair in Nancy's absence

The Chairs will have a phone meeting in next 10 days.

Diane had to leave but would like to have a future discussion about WEOC 2017 focusing on CTS.

Kerry posed a question about how RBA will intersect with committee work?

Wendy asked if we had any kind of document providing guidance for Advisory Council members. Cary offered some quick guidance and mentioned that we do, and we would send it to her.

Cary handed out a summary of legislation we're watching so far.

The office will send out an e-mail regarding Commissioners joining Committees. We will need a response from everyone.

LEGISLATIVE LUNCH

Hannah updated Commissioners about the Legislative Lunch:

- **141** people RSVP'd including
 - **86** Legislators
- **Governor is attending**
- **Volunteer Rolls:**
 - Registration Table: Christine, Laine
 - Gov. Host: Melinda
 - Traveling Mic Carriers: Melinda & Carol

- If you are able to take photos and share them with myself or Lilly, that would be great.
- Everyone else please help us greet and seat. Marcia will be beginning the event at 12:05, we need to get people seated quickly.
- If a few people are able to stay a little late and help us pack up, that would be very much appreciated.
- Marcia will ask that all Commissioners and advisors stand to be recognized after the Gov. speaks.

Approval of November and December, 2016 Minutes

MOTION made by Carol, seconded by Kerry
To approve the minutes as submitted.

MOTION APPROVED

Announcements

Melinda announced Women’s March from Montpelier High School 1/21 at 1pm

Meeting adjourned at 11:30 p.m.