

# Vermont Commission on Women

## Meeting minutes

January 9, 2013

Capitol Plaza Hotel, Board Room 335, Montpelier VT

### Commissioners present:

Marcia Merrill, Chair; Gretchen Bailey, Eileen Boland, Carol Buchdahl, Charlotte Dennett, Laine Dunham, Ruth Finn, Susie Hudson, Dr. Felicia Kornbluh, and Shambulia Gadsden Sams.

### Commissioners absent:

Cathy Frey, Jennie Gartner, Anne McClaughry, Peg Martin, and Marion Milne.

### Advisors present:

Sandra Bettis representing Central Vermont Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, Diane Derby from Senator Leahy's office, Kate Rader representing the League of Women Voters, Laura Lind-Blum representing the Vermont Women's Business Center, and Sarah Kenney representing the Vermont Network Against Domestic and Sexual Violence.

**Guests:** Lindsay DesLauriers from Voices for Vermont's Children and Julio Thompson from the VT Attorney General's Office, Civil Rights Division

**Staff:** Cary Brown, Janet Bullard and Lilly Talbert.

**Presiding:** Marcia Merrill

**Recording:** Janet Bullard

The meeting was called to order at 9:30 a.m.

## 1. Welcome/Introductions

## 2. Minutes of December 2012

**MOTION** made by Carol Buchdahl and seconded by Laine Dunham:

**To amend the minutes to delete Carol's name from the Plus/Delta Exercise.**

**MOTION APPROVED**

## 3. Announcements

Cary announced that she had received an email from Rep. Suzi Wizowaty regarding the commission's statute.

## 4. Paid Sick Leave legislation

Lindsay DesLauriers from Voices for Vermont's Children, the lead on the Paid Sick Days Coalition, called everyone's attention to the paid sick days draft legislation and the fact sheet. One substantive change from earlier bills is that any type of combined time off policy that allows employees to use paid leave for the same purposes and that accrues at at least the same rate will meet the requirements of this proposed legislation. Lindsay continued by saying that many businesses offer time off, but don't offer paid health care time, businesses offer paid vacation time. Typically when employees call in sick, they are usually not paid for that time off. In the new draft, if a business currently offers any time off equivalent to the 56 hours per year that the bill requires but doesn't offer health care time, they could change their policy to combined time off in order to meet the requirements in the legislation. For those segments of the population that don't have any paid time off, the businesses would be advised to have a health care time off policy, not a combined time off

policy. Straight health care time tends not to be used by the end of the year, typically between 3-5 days get used.

**MOTION** made by Dr. Felicia Kornbluh and seconded by Charlotte Dennett:

**That the Commission continue to participate in the paid sick days coalition and lend the Commission's support to the legislation as it moves through the session.**

**Friendly amendment** offered by Carol Buchdahl and accepted by Felicia and Charlotte:

**That the Commission continue to work with the paid sick days coalition.**

**MOTION APPROVED** as amended.

## **5. Equal Pay Legislation**

Julio Thompson from the Vermont Attorney General's office spoke about the Equal Pay legislation that came out of the Equal Employment Opportunity Conference which was held in June 2012. The bill proposes to amend the Equal Pay Act in several areas including clarifying Vermont's unequal pay law, equal pay certification by state contractors, flexible working arrangements ("Right to Ask, Duty to Consider"), consistent protections against retaliation and consistent remedies, consistent protections against retaliation in public accommodations and housing, and paid family leave study committee.

**MOTION** made by Carol Buchdahl and seconded by Laine Dunham:

**That the Commission continue to support the drafting of a bill to address equal pay and workplace protection concerns.**

**MOTION APPROVED**

## **6. Follow-up to December meeting planning**

Carol and Laine talked about the committee structure going forward and proposed the following committee structure recommendation: Each of the existing standing committees (Health & Safety, Education & Human Development, and Economic Security & Equity) will: 1) Act as a staff sounding board on relative issues; 2) Proactively identify key players and stakeholders relative to its specific focus; 3) Identify current and pending issues relative to its specific focus; 4) Provide research on related issues and report back to the commission as a whole; 5) Involve commissioners, advisors and others on an issues based interest vs. long term committee assignment. In addition, the chairs of the three standing committees will act as a Chairs' Committee in support of the chair. Other committees may be formed as needed on an ad hoc basis. This recommendation will be discussed at the next Commission meeting.

## **7. Legislative Luncheon preparation**

Janet gave an overview of the luncheon logistics.

Meeting adjourned at 11:33 a.m.