

Vermont Commission on Women
Meeting Minutes
Wednesday, May 9th, 2018 | 9:30 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.
32 College St, Montpelier VT

Commissioners present:

Gretchen Bailey, Eileen Boland, Mary Daly, Ruth Finn, Emilie Kornheiser, Danielle Martel, Melinda Moulton, Marybeth Christie Redmond, Kerry Secrest, Lisa Senecal

Commissioners absent:

Marcia Merrill (Chair), Carol Buchdahl, Deborah Bucknam, Charlotte Dennett, Nancy LaVarnway, Colin Ryan

Advisors present:

Jen Horwitz of Let's Grow Kids
Ashley Michelle Fowler of Mercy Connections
Kevin Veller of Congressman Peter Welch's office

Guests: Edisa Muller

Staff: Cary Brown, Hannah Lane, Lilly Talbert

Presiding: Danielle Martel

Recording: Hannah Lane

1. Call to order and approval of agenda

Meeting called to order at 9:31 a.m.

Meeting Agenda Approval Process:

MOTION made by Marybeth and seconded by Lisa

To approve the meeting agenda, giving discretion to the chair to deviate from the agenda as necessary.

MOTION APPROVED. Agenda adopted.

2. Welcome/Introductions

Danielle welcomed everyone and asked them to introduce themselves.

3. Approval of April 2018 Minutes

Approval of April 2018 Minutes

MOTION made by Melinda, seconded by Kerry:

To approve the April 2018 minutes as submitted.

MOTION APPROVED. Adopted as presented.

4. Staff and Legislative Updates

- The Sexual Harassment Prevention bill, H.707, passed in the Senate and is headed back to the House for concurrence on changes made by the Senate.
- The minimum wage bill, S.40, passed in the House.
- Paid Family Leave, H.196, passed in a 2nd reading in the Senate.
- Gov. Scott will have a bill signing ceremony for H.294, the Salary History Ban bill on Friday at 1 p.m. and Commissioners are invited to attend.

- The Systemic racism bill, S.281, has morphed, and now creates an Executive Director of Racial Equity position along with an advisory panel.
- There has been press about increased rates of infant and maternal mortality among black women nationally. Cary asked the VT Department of Health about this, they weren't able to tell us about that rate by race because it is too small of a population.
- A commissioner reported that she heard from a representative of the VT Department of Health this week that while VT is doing better on maternal health overall, we should assume that the disparity is the same as it is nationally, as we have no reason to think it isn't.
- We were contacted by a student requesting legislation that would require colleges and universities to indicate on a transcript when someone had been disciplined or expelled for sexual assault. In response, we've asked the VT colleges about their current practices to get a sense of how this works currently.
- An advisor added that Gary Margolis is a consultant in Burlington who used to or still does teach at Harvard and collects a lot of data. He used to be Chief of UVM Police and also worked for South Burlington, and might be helpful on this topic.
- We expect child marriage to come up again next year in the legislature.
- A commissioner mentioned that the toxics bill focused on toxins in children's products was passed by the legislature and vetoed by the governor.

5. Sexual Harassment Prevention Bill (H.707)

This bill asks us to do Education & Outreach and gives VCW \$125,000 to do that project. It requires us to work with the Human Rights Commission and the Vermont Attorney General's Office. The bill tasks VCW with developing and implementing an outreach and education program designed to make Vermont employees, employers, businesses, and members of the public aware of:

- (1) the methods for reporting employment and work-related discrimination and sexual harassment; and
- (2) where to find information regarding:
 - (A) the laws related to employment and work-related discrimination and sexual harassment; and
 - (B) best practices for preventing employment and work-related discrimination and sexual harassment.

Commissioners and advisors shared thoughts about ways to proceed:

- Rep. Sarah Copeland Hanzas has some ideas about how to get matching money to be able to help fund what we do.
- In regards to training, there is lack of awareness of identifying what sexual harassment is, what you do when you see it, and how to report it. There should be a training for the general workforce and a separate training for managers. We should be thinking about helping human resources professionals move towards a more effective kind of training program.
- SHERM is a key partner. Focusing on training the trainer would be an efficient and effective use of resources.
- scenario training is key.
- We should talk to the state about what is and isn't working with their employee trainings.
- There are very different populations and attitudes that we need to address here.

- How can we leverage existing resources; and what about folks who need this in the next year? Can we stretch the funds out?
- Social media will be a great way to get the word out.
- General liability insurance & workers compensation insurance often have value-added training online that can cover sexual harassment.
- Educating people that already do trainings about best practices, and restructuring the training programs. We should have different conversations and a different supervisor/instructor version.
- It would be great to have a video for employers, especially.
- One thing we've learned is that we have to make reporting as easy as possible.

6. Pregnant Employees Accommodations Video

Lilly discussed briefly and showed our pregnancy accommodations informational video for employees.

Attendees offered feedback:

- Add Captioning
- More information about what happens at the Attorney General's Office or Human Rights Commission. What are the easy takeaways for employers? What are best practices?
- Occupational health nurses would have some suggestions.
- Create a landing website with Q&A and maybe have it housed on the Human Rights Commission and Attorney General's websites also.
- Offer a working while pregnant document/handout.
- Mention more about Americans with Disabilities Act coverage.

7. VCW Listening Project

We have received nearly 500 surveys so far. Cary passed around and discussed responses to question, "What else do you want the Vermont Commission on Women to know?"

We have an intern coming this summer to help us with this project. We may need to bring in someone with some additional expertise in analyzing qualitative data. Our goal is to get 5000 surveys completed.

The staff has created support materials for Commissioners that are available today:

- Ballot Boxes
- Rack Cards
- Tear-off Posters

Cary asked Commissioners to divide into their small groups to plan public forums. Every Commissioner should take part in at least one forum. The groups came back together and reported what they discussed.

St. Albans (Danielle, Marcia, Melinda, Gretchen, Charlotte)– Thursday, August 16th or 23rd at 6:00 p.m. – 7:30 p.m. at the City Hall, with a focus on economic challenges for Franklin County. The group envisioned six people on a panel, including someone with experience with the prison system, a single parent, someone working on addiction issues, someone who can discuss

challenges elderly women face, a transgender woman, which each given three minutes to talk about challenges and overcoming them. They'd also like to show a short Change The Story video and plan to have white poster boards with different themes, and allow attendees to ask questions via post-its. They would advertise with business cards & posters and see if they can get pizza or sandwiches donated.

Brattleboro (Emilie, Kerry, Carol) –The last two weeks of September after back to school adjustment at the library for 90 minutes. They discussed a title of something like *The Dark/Hidden Side of Women in our Community*. They would have a small panel to talk about bills passed, including Sexual Harassment, Family and Medical Leave, someone from the police force, and someone from the Women's Freedom Center. The local feminist action team might be willing to sponsor and provide food. After the panel discussion, they could have a pair share and then index cards to fill out and stick on the wall. There would be time for people to chat one on one with panelists.

Newport (Eileen, Marybeth, Mary, Ruth, Lisa) – Second week of September in the evening, probably 7 p.m., maybe asking the tasting center for refreshments. Jen offered to help get volunteers for childcare. They identified the Community College of Vermont as a potential venue. There is also a park with a nice pavilion, but that's weather dependent and may be tricky. They will keep the forum broad and follow the survey for guidance.

They would bring in a panel, giving each panelist five minutes, and discussed inviting someone from the Area Agency on Aging, someone in health care, education, and the business community. They discussed then having breakouts like speed dating. They don't want to lose sight of the transportation and housing as issues.

Commissioners would like to have a reference/referral sheet to hand out about places to get support, as well as some language to bookend the event with why we're doing this.

Other than pair share, groups could also use the 1, 2, 4, all sharing system where two people talk, then four together, then as a large group.

8. Announcements

A commissioner brought up body shaming and dress codes that target young girls rather than teaching boys not to sexualize/be distracted by boys. Maybe VCW should be thinking about this

Kerry announced that she is recruiting for the Upper Valley Leadership Circle now through June.

Melinda mentioned that she attended the Planned Parenthood National Conference, Cecile Richards is stepping down. The conference was run by primarily young women (under 40) of color.

Meeting Adjourned at 12:23 p.m.