

**State of Vermont**  
**Vermont Commission on Women**  
126 State Street  
Montpelier, Vermont 05633-6801  
[women.vermont.gov](http://women.vermont.gov)

[phone]  
[toll free]

802-828-2851  
800-881-1561

## **Vermont Commission on Women Meeting Minutes**

**Friday, April 14, 2023 | 9:30 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.**

**Pavilion Building, 4<sup>th</sup> floor conference room, 109 State St, Montpelier, VT**

### **Commissioners present:**

Lisa Senecal (Co-chair), Sophia Rabe,  
Sarah Mell, Esther Charlestin, Brenda Churchill,  
Alex Hilliard in person.  
Wendy Knight, Hazel Brewster, Sarah Lang, Heidi  
Tringe, Nancy Kaplan, Ashley Messier online.

### **Commissioners absent:**

Kiah Morris (Co-chair), Kellie Campbell

### **Advisors present:**

Jessica Barquist, Vermont Network Against Domestic &  
Sexual Violence in person.  
Katie Salina, Let's Grow Kids, online.

### **Guests:** Rep. Brian Cina

**Staff:** Cary Brown, Karen Cygnarowicz, Ellie Lane

**Presiding:** Lisa Senecal

**Recording:** Karen Cygnarowicz

### **1. Meeting Called to Order**

Meeting called to order at 9:36am.

### **2. Approval of Meeting Agenda**

Motion made by Sarah Mell, seconded by Sophia Rabe.  
To approve the meeting agenda as submitted.  
Unanimously approved, agenda approved.

### **3. Review Group Agreements**

The group took a minute to review the group agreements. No comments.

### **4. Approval of meeting minutes of March 2023**

Motion made by Ashley Messier, seconded by Sophia Rabe.  
To approve the March 2023 meeting minutes as submitted.  
Unanimously approved with Esther Charlestin abstaining. Minutes approved.

### **5. Introductions**

Lisa Senecal asked the group to introduce themselves.

### **6. Announcements**

Sarah Lang announced Brattleboro won the "Strongest Town" contest put on by the non-profit, Strong Towns.

Ashley Messier shared her upcoming speaking engagements.

Jessica Barquist of VT Network shared their in person conference at the end of May, themed: What is restoration? Workshops will be on individual and collective restoration. They're currently hiring assistance with fairs; "if you have a youth interested in working with us, send my way."

## 7. Equal Pay Campaign and Equal Pay Compact

Ellie updated on behalf of the Workplace Equity and Security committee. The Equal Pay Visibility Campaign has been a month-long campaign on social media, including Cary Brown's op-ed, educational posts, and efforts to promote the Equal Pay Compact.

Contacts for the Equal Pay Compact signers need to be updated, and the committee is asking for volunteer commissioners to make calls to EPC signers. Ellie will email Commissioners a script and the EPC spreadsheet with an added field to initial and make calls.

## 8. Staff Updates

Cary announced Senator Representative Brian Cina will visit later on in the meeting to speak about incarcerated women.

Legislative updates:

- Paid family and medical leave insurance (H.66) has passed the House and been sent to the Senate.
- Childcare (S.56) passed the Senate and is now in the House.
- S.103: Senate passed, now in the house. Missing piece: education, students are not protected – but there are conversations happening that may result in it being added to this bill, or to another one.
- Representative Brian Cina arrived and shared updates on his work around incarcerated women. He and/or representatives from the National Council on Incarcerated and Formerly Incarcerated Women and Girls will be invited to a longer discussion at our May meeting.
- The prohibition against child marriage, H148, has passed both the House and the Senate and is awaiting the Governor's signatures.
- H125, a miscellaneous boards and commissions bill is in the Senate. Cary has asked the Senate Government Operations committee for a small change to our statute, by changing the definition of a quorum from nine members to a majority of members.

Election of VCW chair:

Every two years we elect a chair of the commission. Both Lisa and Kiah have indicated that they are ready to step back and make space for others to assume leadership.

The process, as outlined in our Operating Guidelines, is as follows:

The position of chair may be held by one person or by co-chairs.

No later than the April commission meeting, the executive director will remind commissioners of the election process and issue a call for nominees.

Commission members who wish to be considered for the office of chair shall place their name in nomination with the executive director before the May meeting. The executive director will report the

names of the candidates at the May commission meeting and distribute their names to all commission members at least two weeks before the June commission meeting.

The executive director will conduct the election for chair at the June commission meeting. The chair will be elected by majority vote. In the event that there is more than one candidate, votes will be cast by paper ballot. If no candidate receives a majority of votes, the vote will be repeated for the top two candidates.

Alex Hilliard nominated Sarah Mell for chair.

Meeting times, format, and location were discussed, with the following points among those raised:

- Benefits to hybrid-meetings: accessibility, weather safety.
- suggested one meeting per year in person.
- suggested a residency, “attend 50% of meetings in person,”
- asked for hybrid technology training, and best practices.
- Alternative places? National Life?
- suggested rotating businesses.
- ease in parking.
- Hold some meetings hybrid and some fully online?
- suggested conference room at Waterbury State Complex.
- suggested Middlebury
- suggested VT Network conference room

## **9. Racial Equity Work**

A discussion reflecting on our work so far was held.

**Meeting Adjourned at 12:31 pm.**