

**Vermont Commission on Women
Criminal Legal System Committee
Meeting Minutes
Monday, February 7, 2022, | 9:00 – 10:30 am
Teleconference**

Commissioners present: Ashley Messier (co-chair), Lisa Ryan (co-chair), Sarah Mell

Commissioners absent: Delaney Courcelle, Lisa Senecal

Advisors present: Jessica Barquist of Vermont Network Against Domestic and Sexual Violence, Rhoni Basden of Vermont Works for Women, and Meredith Roberts of ANA Vermont

Staff present: Cary Brown, Ellie Lane, Lilly Talbert

Recording: Ellie Lane, Sarah Mell

Presiding: Ashley Messier, Lisa Ryan

Meeting called to order at 9:05 am

Welcome & Introductions

Sarah led the introductions and shared that last week was the Chinese Lunar New Year, and this is the year of the tiger, which is faster moving than last year. Sarah asked the group to share how, in the last week, folks have felt tiger energy.

Update regarding the letter to House Judiciary on H.399 from Ashley and Cary

Ashley shared that this is about the primary caretaker bill, and that has been taken up, so Ashley has put together a witness list, and now Ashley would like to submit a letter of support of the bill. Ashley provided an overview of the bill and some of the language.

Cary is supportive of the Committee submitting written testimony in support.

Dartmouth will be presenting research on this issue this month.

Ashley suggested the letter would be generally supportive of the bill, talk about the impact on children and why this is important, as well as the alignment with other work that's happening in Vermont such as justice investment and programming at CRCF, child care, and should close with a collective statement about why we support it.

Cary will write the letter, using this input. People can email additional input directly to Cary.

Continuation of group discussion: CRCF replacement process

Rhoni updated the group about the testimony she was able to offer last week about the plans and facilities, and about the immediate needs for folks incarcerated now. She was also contacted about [H.534](#), a sealing and expungement bill, and is excited about the potential impact there.

Ashley shared that she testified about [H.488](#), the bill proposing to eliminate supervision fees, and talked about why that's important and the impact. She also talked about the CRCF replacement process and asked about the \$500,000 that was awarded last year for stakeholder engagement. She asked about exploring what else is possible, and about former Commissioner Baker's statement that there are only 5-10 women who need an incarcerative setting. Ashley shared concerns about investing in programming in prison but not in communities, and not addressing the culture issues at CRCF, that have been investigated, as well as the staffing problems.

Planning action steps, including scheduling public hearing(s)

Ashley and Lisa shared that they met to discuss plans for the committee hearing input.

Lisa R. shared a proposed outline of work:

Having evening Community Conversations in each region of the state, Northwest, Northeast, Southwest, Southeast, and Central, with prospective dates starting March 2, and continuing for consecutive weeks. Ellie shared that she loved the idea overall, but that it might be hard for staff to accomplish all of the logistical tasks in three weeks and have time to get the word out to facilitate a good turnout. The group agreed to push the first date back a few weeks to March 23. The tentative plan is:

- Orange, Windham, Windsor – March 23
- Orleans, Caledonia, Essex – March 30
- Addison, Rutland, Bennington – April 6
- Lamoille, Washington, Franklin – April 13
- Chittenden & Grand Isle – April 20

Staff will create a flyer, and the group to record an introductory podcast, and a podcast following each Community Conversation. The group will plan to issue a formal invitation to area legislators. Lilly asked about inviting community-based organizations.

Staff, Ashley, and Lisa will meet soon to finalize a plan.

Determining Next Meeting Date

Ellie mentioned that February 21st is President's Day and staff is unavailable. We have another meeting scheduled for March 7th. Lisa proposed meeting on February 28th instead and meeting on March 7th and 21st.

Approval of January 24, 2022 Meeting Minutes

MOTION made by Ashley, seconded by Meredith:
To approve the January 24, 2022 minutes as submitted.
Hearing no nays, the motion unanimously passed.

Meeting Closure

Meeting adjourned at 10:25 am

The next committee meeting is scheduled for Monday, February 28, 2022, from 9:00 – 10:30 a.m.