

**State of Vermont****Vermont Commission on Women**

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**Vermont Commission on Women Meeting Minutes****Friday, September 9, 2022 | 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), Hazel Brewster, Kellie Campbell, Alex Hilliard, Nancy Kaplan, Wendy Knight, Sarah Mell, Ashley Messier (remotely), Kim Nolan (remotely)

**Advisors present:**

Matt Levin, Vermont Early Childhood Advocacy Alliance  
Kaite Salina, Let's Grow Kids (remotely)  
Betsy Hassan, ANA-Vermont  
Rhoni Basden, Vermont Works for Women

**Commissioners absent:**

Kiah Morris (Co-chair), Heidi Tringe

**Guests:** Shalini Surayanarayana, VT Office of Racial Equity

**Staff:** Cary Brown, Ellie Lane, Lilly Talbert

**Presiding:** Lisa Senecal

**Recording:** Ellie Lane, Lilly Talbert

**1. Meeting Called to Order**

Meeting called to order at 9:38 a.m.

**2. Approval of Meeting Agenda**

Postponed, lack of quorum.

**3. Approval of meeting minutes of February 2022**

Postponed, lack of quorum.

**4. Introductions**

Lisa asked people to introduce themselves and share their names, where they are from, and a personal detail so we can get to know each other better.

**5. Group agreements**

Lisa introduced the group agreements, which Cary sent out by email in advance of the meeting. The idea is that we would revisit these every September.

Kellie added that some of the accountability is in the VCW Operating Guidelines, which refer to adhering to the group agreements as part of the role of Commissioners.

Vote tabled due to lack of quorum.

**6. Future of Incarceration for Women in Vermont**

Cary gave the group a quick update about the process of gathering stakeholder input about the Future of Incarceration for Vermont. She's had a number of conversations with stakeholders, legislators, the Vermont Network, and Ashley. VCW is thinking this fall, along with partners, we will hold a public virtual forum soon to open it up to people to provide thoughts about incarceration for women and what we should be considering. After the election, again with our partners, we'll hold an informational session for legislators to share context, history, best practices, what we've learned in conversations, and what questions they might want to ask. In between there, we'll plan to have informal conversations with people most impacted, including formerly and currently incarcerated people and their families as well as DOC staff. We hope that by January we'll have something in writing that could be presented.

### **7. Committee organization**

Last September, we created standing committees to work on our priority areas for the following year, and this year we would like to do the same.

Some points that were made in the discussion included:

- we need to have a committee focused on economic issues, as well as criminal justice
- there are issues we can work on outside of the committees
- a committee on violence against women- a recent uptick in violence against trans women, against young women
- the overlap between violence against women and all of our priority areas, and whether that should be a committee - it should be integrated throughout our work
- Health Equity is a broader umbrella that catches all of these
- One commissioner talked about a committee model she liked in another space she works in. They had specific committees, and then within each committee, they had specific people on committees tasked with helping to bring a specific lens to the committee work, and the Committees agreed to find intersectional issues to work on together, which helped bring the Committees together and create connections
- challenge with Committees in the past has been determining where the boundaries are
- what do staff and people who lobby for a living think are going to be legislative priorities?
  - Cary believes that a bill that would prohibit no-rehire clauses in employment settlement agreements, as well as important changes to workplace harassment and discrimination, child care, paid family leave will all come up. We've also been talking about making changes to policies that support women in the workforce, like fair and predictable work schedules, wage transparency, and others. Additionally, the Reproductive Liberty Amendment, and policies around protecting abortion access will get attention.
- One commissioner noted they are hearing a few categories: Health Equity, Economic Equity, Education and child care, anti-harassment, and suggested that every committee work on the incarceration in the state, and having folks bring these different lenses

The group wrote down their thoughts on sticky notes.

### **3. Approval of meeting minutes of May & June 2022 revisited**

Motion made to approve the May and June 2022 minutes as submitted.

No opposition, minutes approved.

### **5. Group agreements revisited**

Motion made by Nancy, seconded by Wendy: To approve the group agreements as presented.  
No opposition, group agreements approved.

### **8. Racial Equity Work with Shalini Surayanarayana, VT Office of Racial Equity**

Shalini Surayanarayana from the Office of Racial Equity, who will be supporting VCW this year with ongoing racial equity education, introduced herself. She asked for a quick round of introductions and then presented on the theme of allyship. Before the next session, Shalini asked the group to engage with the list of resources she provided as part of her presentation. She welcomes our questions, feedback, and suggestions for topics to cover. She will join us for another session in two months.

### **9. Updates and announcements**

Cary spoke about the conference of the New England Women’s Policy Initiative (NEWPI), a biennial gathering anticipated to take place in early December and a chance for Commissioners and Advisors to network with others working on similar issues in the New England region. VCW has participated in event planning since the conference’s inception in 2014. NEWPI is hosted by the Center for Women in Politics and Public Policy at UMASS Boston. The event includes youth leaders as well as those with more extensive public policy experience. Staff will provide details and date.

Lilly reported VCW had cosponsored a League of Women Voters of Vermont pre-primary U.S. House Of Representatives candidate forum in June and will again cosponsor two more forums: for Lt. Governor on Wednesday, September 21st, and for Attorney General on Thursday, September 29th. Both are public in-person events at the St. Johnsbury Athenaeum and start at 7 p.m. Cary will be the moderator for the Attorney General event. Commissioners and Advisors are cordially invited to attend. These forums will be both live-streamed and then available for on-demand viewing. Watch our site and social media for details, or feel free to contact Lilly for more information.

Lilly reported VCW will staff an exhibitor table at Vermont Works for Women’s Women Can Do career exploration conference for high school girls and gender-expansive youth on Thursday, October 6th at Vermont Technical College. This conference draws hundreds of students for a day of hands-on exploration of STEM and trades careers, and secondary education and career opportunity discovery. Lilly invited Commissioners to help staff the table (other volunteer opportunities are available). Please contact Lilly if interested. VCW’s foundation, the VCW Education and Research Foundation, is a sponsor of this event.

Lilly reported that Senator Leahy’s Women’s Economic Opportunity Conference (WEOC) is Saturday, October 1 and features keynote speaker Janet Yellen. Again we’ll be staffing an exhibitor table and would welcome extra help. Contact Lilly if interested.

Lilly also mentioned that the VWF Annual Celebration is next Thursday, September 15th at 5:30 at the Davis Center and in addition to the networking and other educational offerings, Alex Hilliard will be part of a Jane Lindholm-emceed panel of dynamic entrepreneurs talking about what it takes to build a business in Vermont.

Lilly reported VCW’s new website is in the final stages of preparation. She thanked Kellie and Wendy for their review of this work and invited others if interested to provide feedback and direction.

**Meeting Adjourned at 12:32 p.m.**