

State of Vermont
Vermont Commission on Women
126 State Street
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Vermont Commission on Women
Meeting minutes

Tuesday, January 14, 2025 | 6:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m.
Virtual meeting only

Commissioners present: Chair Esther Charlestin, Hazel Brewster, Kellie Campbell, Kate Lucier, Sophia Rabe, Aleta Sprague, Linda Joy Sullivan, and Susan Sussman.

Commissioners absent: Heather Bouchey, Ashley Messier, Alex Hilliard, and Kelly-Rue Riso

Advisors present: Charlie Gliserman on behalf of the Vermont Network Against Domestic & Sexual Violence, Pat Heffernan on behalf of Women Business Owner's Network Vermont (WBON VT)

Staff: Cary Brown, Ellie Lane, and Emily O'Hara

Presiding: Esther Charlestin

Recording: Ellie Lane

1. Meeting called to order

Meeting called to order at **6:05 p.m.**

2. Approve Agenda

MOTION made by Linda, seconded by Susan

To approve the agenda as presented.

Approved unanimously.

3. Approve minutes of September 20, October 18, and November 15, 2024

MOTION made by Linda, seconded by Susan

To approve the meeting minutes of September 20, 2024, October 18, 2024 and November 15, 2024.

Approved unanimously.

4. Welcome & Introductions

Esther welcomed everyone and created space for people to answer a few introductory questions:

What day in your life would you like to relive?

What piece of advice would you give your 16-year-old self?

What song brings back childhood memories?

5. Committee reports

Workplace Equity Committee

The Committee is working on the Equal Pay Compact, reconnecting with signers, and also planning an event. The group is thinking about a short virtual event this spring that is geared toward giving updates about some of the new laws, including the new law that requires salary information to be provided in job postings. The group would like to invite a legislator to speak, in addition to an employer who could talk about implementation. VCW has issued an RFP for updates to the Workplaces for All website. Cary will be sending that by email and asking you to share it with your networks. The deadline for submissions is Monday, February 3rd. Suggestions from the group included:

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- that it be sent to the employment law committee at the VT Bar Association
- that the Equal Pay Compact event be framed as a celebration as a major accomplishment

Reproductive Justice & Sexual Health Committee

Aleta shared that the committee has come up with a reproductive justice policy statement and worked to make the draft more accessible. That was shared with everyone by email in advance of the meeting. We received some feedback from the Department of Health and the group discussed that. We will add the footnote to SisterSong back to the draft that was in the original version. Cary asked for feedback on the draft. The feedback was positive, and the committee will discuss the Department of Health feedback more at our next committee meeting and bring the draft back to the full commission in February.

Women in the Criminal Legal System Committee

The group recently visited the Chittenden Regional Correctional Facility (CRCF). Some of the attendees shared thoughts from the visit that included:

- seeing the Kids-a-part program and the impact of that program
- meeting some of the staff
- the visit was powerful, and heart-wrenching
- the impact of getting to see what daily life is like in the facility
- some of the things women mentioned wanting in the new facility

Em shared a draft of the questions that the committee is thinking of asking at focus groups with incarcerated individuals at CRCF and invited feedback. Feedback included ensuring that we do some connecting with folks in addition to asking these questions, and suggestions to include a question about barriers to accessing community support, in addition to an open-ended question.

6. VCW Advisory Council

Cary shared that we have three organizations before us to consider adding to our advisory council. We have generated a number of possible new members, and some of them are still thinking about that. Three have said yes, and they are the Vermont Human Rights Commission, Vermont Attorney General's Office Civil Rights Unit, and ACT Bennington.

MOTION made by Susan, seconded by Hazel

To add the Vermont Human Rights Commission, Vermont Attorney General's Office Civil Rights Unit, and ACT Bennington to our advisory council.

Approved Unanimously.

Staff invited other ideas for other advisory council members as well. If you know of an organization we should consider, please let us know.

7. Service Projects

Esther is planning possible service projects for Commissioners to participate in outside of meetings. There is an annual Women's Build event, to raise awareness about the lack of housing and the

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disproportionate impact on women. This is one example. She is also thinking about a nursing home in the Northeast Kingdom, Central Vermont Home, Health, & Hospice. Another opportunity would be to prepare meals for the Ronald McDonald house, and finally Feeding Champlain Valley, also to help with meals in two-hour shifts. Esther will be emailing about the opportunities and hopes people will participate.

If anyone wants to help or has a specific idea or wants to coordinate something in their community, reach out to Esther.

8. Updates

Cary shared a legislative update and shared our legislative tracking sheet and calendar with the Commissioners. We are welcoming Brooke Dietrich as an intern this semester through a program called Semester of Impact. She will be with us for 30 hours per week. She is going to be focusing on legislative work, a special project, and day-to-day operations.

The Paid Family Leave Coalition is hiring a campaign manager and conducting interviews now.

Em shared that we'll be at the State House on April 8th in the morning in the cafeteria to talk about pay equity. Equal Pay Day for all women is March 25th, but we'll be using that time to talk about pay equity broadly and to highlight the different equal pay days. The more Commissioners who can be there, the better.

Cary asked about the meeting time. We have a quorum, and also, we are missing a lot of folks. Linda likes this time. Kellie thinks there is value in making our meetings more accessible to community members. Cary suggested reaching out to people who are not here to see why they couldn't make it. Susan also asked about advisory council members who usually attend as part of their workday. Esther will make a decision and let folks know about the future meeting times.

Kellie suggested alternating over the next couple of months to see if this works for everybody. March & May evenings. Some concern was expressed about making scheduling too complicated. Who is most important to have at the meetings?

We have three Commissioner openings right now, two to be appointed by the Governor, and one to be appointed by the Speaker of the House. It would be great for you all to spread the word and put them in touch with us.

VBSR is starting a search for a new executive director.

Charlie shared the [VT Network's legislative agenda](#).

Meeting adjourned at 7:45 p.m.