

State of Vermont
Vermont Commission on Women
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Vermont Commission on Women Meeting Minutes
Friday, December 10, 2021 | 8:30 a.m. – 10:30 a.m.
Remote meeting via video conference

Commissioners present:

Kellie Campbell (Co-chair), Kiah Morris (Co-chair),
Ed Adrian, Nancy Brooks, Delaney Courcelle,
Wendy Knight, Sarah Mell, Ashley Messier, Kim
Nolan, Lisa Ryan

Commissioners absent:

Lisa Senecal (Co-chair), Lisa Carlson, Kerin Durfee,
Heidi Tringe

Advisors present:

Meredith Roberts, ANA Vermont
Taylor Hughey, VT Early Childhood Advocacy Alliance
Katie Salina, Let's Grow Kids
Jessica Barquist, VT Network Against Domestic &
Sexual Violence
Maisie Howard, VT Works for Women

Guests:

Al Johnson-Kurts, Change The Story VT
Staff: Cary Brown, Ellie Lane, Lilly Talbert
Presiding: Kellie Campbell, Kiah Morris
Recording: Lilly Talbert

1. Welcome and Opening

Meeting called to order at 8:33 a.m.

2. Announcements

Al is starting their post-CTS job hunt and Nancy requested they send Commissioners a resume and what they're looking for. Kim participated in CTS RELC work, and has facilitated three Bearing Witness retreats in Vermont. Early next year, Kim will facilitate a retreat, Bearing Witness To Injustice, in Montgomery Alabama. Sarah Mell took a new position at UVM: Educator & Trainer for Inclusive Excellence in the Office of the Vice Provost for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion. Hannah will now go by Ellie. Delaney will graduate from UVM this week and starts work at a financial firm in Colchester in January. Kiah in her work with the Vermont Climate Council developed an equity screening tool and other states have expressed interest in using the Council's guiding principles and the equity tool.

3. Committee updates

Cary introduced the work of VCW's two new committees. Cary stated the topic of holding the National Guard accountable will be addressed by specific Commissioners, rather than a committee. That discussion, a focus on a VCW response, will consider the new report which included not only sexual assault but also promotion and equal employment opportunity issues impacting the experiences of women in the Guard.

Women in the criminal legal system committee

Ashley gave a brief summary of this committee's first meeting. The committee voted on its leadership structure: Ashley and Lisa Ryan will Co-chair, Sarah will provide support with minutes and strategic planning. Leadership wants commissioners on this committee to take active roles, doing the work, rather than staff. The committee

set meeting times, more often to start as this work (facility construction planning) is time sensitive, anticipating once a month, standing meeting time as progress allows.

Meeting times are posted on our page and all are welcome – public meetings.

Economic equity and security committee

Proposed child marriage policy recommendation:

Cary introduced the materials emailed prior to the meeting: including the two data documents, the Age of Marriage draft policy, and the child marriage bill equity impact assessment draft using the State of Vermont Equity Impact Assessment Tool.

The group discussed the proposed policy and the equity impact assessment, and the following points were raised:

- thought Cary did a good job applying this tool to the policy, but a stronger tool was needed.
- noted if individuals or groups would like VCW to consider an issue, they should apply the tool for us, and supply the detailed outcome
- flagged a concern that this issue for us might engender public misperception, implied endorsement of, or have the unintended consequence of feeding or increasing Islamophobia in VT. Many would identify just the title, child marriage, as applying to the Muslim community
- the question was asked, there is data but are we pulling on anecdotes, and are we talking to migrant groups and other populations impacted?
- we should be listening to people whom a bill is affecting and that nothing is broad enough that it would not require collecting this information
- There is a concern of imposing white, Christian views
- Was the push for this legislation external to Vermont? Cary said the discussion started the session before last for Rep. Ode – it's been on the burner for a while. This year, the national group brought more attention to this
- concerns about the age of consent, particularly now with Prop 5 in the balance and attention to parental consent
- not clear that VCW is ready for this and doesn't feel we're informed enough
- suggested reaching out to "not the usual" suspects: King St. Youth Ctr., Sarah Holbrook Ctr., service programs for New Americans
- need to hear both sides. What's the negative impact of banning child marriage?
- under current law, parents can sign away their kids to marriage. Why not require consent by the people involved
- the data across the US indicates that the outcomes are poor, and there are negative risks. Is there a reason to believe it's different in VT, or do we need to hear from Vermonters before we believe it?
- What has been the net result for other states who've passed this? Are there better ways to protect communities impacted? How is this going to feel to folks in Winooski?
- commissioners can try to reach out, qualitatively on this issue, within their communities
- suggested changing the opening statement: from "that ensure marriage may only be entered by consenting adults" to "that ensure marriage may only be entered by consenting adults who've reached the age of majority." Ed pointed out we had no quorum. Cary explained we started with one at the

beginning of the meeting, so by law, we're all set. Ashley said, "Think about smoking – now it's 21. Thinking about military folks, we do need to articulate what adult means."

Cary asked for a motion. No motion made.

4. Staff updates

Change The Story Vt sunset plans:

Change The Story Vt is scheduled to come to a close at the end of March. Conceived as temporary and time-limited, it will have been an almost 7-year long project. VCW will take on data and policy-related work; VWW will focus on the Let's Talk Gender and Harassment cards; and the Vermont Women's Fund will take on Male Champs for Change.

Al thanked VWW and spoke about the development of the Let's Talk Race cards in progress, a collaborative project with HRC, PJC, ACLU, The Network, CTS, and spearheaded by Chris Gaynor.

Kellie thanked Al, and asked if they'd share that assessment slideshow from this week's Change The Story event with the VCW? Al will check with the evaluation team.

Lilly said that she will convene the communications team quarterly, and may expand the group, depending on the issue or need.

Al offered to share the CTS communications sunset plan.

Website

Lilly spoke about continued work on the new VCW website. We've reorganized and streamlined the site material, rethinking accessibility, efficiency, and effectiveness, for the general public and for our Commissioners and Advisors. It's a labor-intensive process, and Nancy, and Kellie provided some guidance.

5. Operational overview

Cary presented a slide show featuring a description of Commissioner roles for discussion.

Cary reviewed the slides which described the actions/work that Commissioners could do, under the headings: Legislative, Collaborative; Communications; Events; Research; and Publications.

5. VCW principles/values

Small groups discussed the draft values and then continued the discussion in the full group.

Cary will make a draft of the outcomes to further this discussion in the next meeting.

6. Approval minutes of November 12, 2021

Kellie led, Lisa Ryan made the motion, and Ashley seconded. Kellie clarified the motion, minutes passed with no objection.

Meeting Adjourned at 10:27 a.m.