



State of Vermont

Vermont Commission on Women

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Vermont Commission on Women

Meeting Minutes

Wednesday, March 10th, 2020 | 9:30 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.

Remote Meeting via video and teleconferencing

Commissioners present:

Lisa Senecal (Chair), Ed Adrian, Kellie Campbell, Lisa Carlson, Mary Daly, Kerin Durfee, Erica Hare, Wendy Knight (Panton), Sarah Mell, Ashley Messier, Kiah Morris, Heidi Tringe, Lisa Ryan

Commissioners absent:

Nancy Brooks, Kim Nolan

Advisors present:

Meredith Roberts of ANA Vermont
Kaitie Armstrong of Vermont Women in Law Enforcement
Heather Newcomb of Vermont Works for Women
Amanda Hoffman of Girls on the Run VT
Katherine Long of Senator Leahy's office

Guests:

MG Greg Knight, Adjutant General, Vermont National Guard
Jen?, Vermont National Guard
Jill Stein, Vermont National Guard
Tracy Foyer, Vermont National Guard
Diane Roberts, Vermont National Guard
Major Scott Detweiler, Vermont National Guard
Duffy Jamieson, State Equal Employment Manager, Vermont National Guard
Capt Candice McClure, Vermont National Guard
Chief Sargent Shara Holbrook, Vermont National Guard
Master Sargent Stephanie Riegler, Vermont National Guard
Major Meghan Smith, Vermont National Guard
Lt. Molly Webster, Equal Opportunity Officer, Vermont National Guard
Serena Furnari, Vermont National Guard
Jill Hamilton, Harford County Commission for Women, Maryland
Mary Hastler, Harford County Commission for Women, Maryland
Bonnie J. Miranda, Harford County Commission for Women, Maryland
Doris Sumner, former member of Vermont National Guard
Jessica Nordhaus of Change The Story Vermont

Staff: Cary Brown, Hannah Lane, Lilly Talbert

Presiding: Lisa Senecal

Recording: Hannah Lane

1. Welcome and Opening

Meeting called to order at 9:32 a.m.

Lisa welcomed everyone.

Lisa Ryan led grounding and convening, putting us into breakout rooms with prompts.

Kiah Morris shared about her recent trip to Central America with Oxfam America and read one of her poems, *I saw the places they died*.

2. VT National Guard with guest MG Knight, Adjutant General, Vermont National Guard

In the past two years, making inclusion a priority. Making lasting change, to take the Guard in the right direction.

Filled VT National Guard Equity Position

Reviewed strategic plan, asked Xusana Davis to join council

Taskforce focused on diversity and inclusion, received Air national guard team award

Set an expectation about professional conduct.

First Battalion size combat unit to open recruiting to women.

Infantry battalion request to recruit women sent to national last week.

Understands that coming forward is hard, it's a small state, and there is still a stigma.

Asked for a violence prevention specialist.

Has new Legislative Caucus on National Guard.

Working with Aly Richards at LGK to address childcare challenges for members.

100% of facilities have lactation stations.

Professional development session on ethical leadership. Future professional development will be focused on leadership and mentorship.

Regarding gender equity & opportunity, has made progress, shared some updated statistics about the percentages of women and people of color in the National Guard.

Retention of women is high, the attrition rate is 12.5% which is slightly lower than male attrition.

Vermont is leading the way in creating opportunities for women.

Q: asked about the numbers around women of color in the national guard. What is the status of those women, and what are their experiences like?

Over 2% people of color.

Knight – I see VCW as helpful in increasing the number of women and people of color in the National Guard. We aren't going to improve these numbers just drawing on Vermont's population. We need to get folks who come off of active duty and convince them to come here to Vermont and serve in the Guard. We did three forums last summer on racial injustice, with over 200 attendees. That is not over. I can't share their experience, I would need to defer to them. If they face challenges, they can come forward.

BIPOC Guard members have created a new podcast, talking about uncomfortable topics. The first episode educates listeners on the term "BIPOC".

Molly said that there are a significant number of women and people from minority groups, and the future of the wing is more diverse. They will have a standdown day where we put aside the mission for the day and focus on these issues that have critical impacts on being able to be effective in the mission.

Q - about training vs. culture change. They work together but they are different. How are you seeing and measuring actual culture change? Often, organizations offer training that isn't fully integrated into what the leadership is constantly communicating. She also asked about whether there is a safe place to report. There is a stigma. What training is happening around welcoming transgender members?

Knight acknowledged that it's hard to communicate what's important consistently. The trainings aren't taken seriously, but I know they are checking the box. We are a metrics-driven organization. The social justice forums are helpful. I go, and I communicate that I think it's important. One of my female soldiers told me, you change the climate, the organization changes the culture. There are many junior leaders that are coming up in the organization that will husband that change.

Transgender members are allowed to serve and are welcomed.

Q - can you assure us that all relevant information is being shared and that people can speak openly without retaliation? Are you allowed to go to high schools to recruit?

We're working with VWW, and we need to start sustaining a recruitment effort outside of Vermont. Vermont's eligible population is very small. We have an education entitlement, and young women are more likely to utilize that benefit than men. We need a sustained message, and it needs to be a state effort. High school recruitment varies, some high schools are more open, but there is a perception in education that the military is a last resort. We need to address that.

Lisa C. has a friend in the Vermont National Guard, and she said she saw a need, but since your arrival the emphasis on sexual harassment and equal opportunity is evident.

Bonnie with Maryland Commission on Women asked about military sexual trauma.

Amy responded that with the annual periodic health assessment, that's another opportunity to screen for sexual violence. It doesn't impact women alone. I can't speak to cases of military sexual trauma, it's

infrequent. Most new patients are veterans that have had a full military career, and often the events they are being treated for happened 10 or more years ago.

Major Scott Detweiler, previous Sexual Assault Coordinator, and currently serves as RTI sexual assault coordinator shared that they have about 6 reports on average per year, some are current, and 2/3 are historical reports. The struggle has always been, there is no way to measure the prevalence of sexual harassment. Even with surveys at the national level, we can't drill down to Vermont and understand prevalence. What are the indicators that can serve as markers of prevalence? The Guard has close connections with civil services and do warm handoffs for additional supports.

The Guard has over 30 advocates across the organization to support survivors for as long as they require those services. Making efforts towards incorporating prevention.

Amy added there is a perception that people tend to care if the perpetrator is in the military, but there is less empathy when the perpetrator is a civilian, especially a boyfriend or husband. We're working to address this and ensure that we have a response that makes all survivors feel heard.

Knight said that their domestic violence response is an important piece. The request for a Violence Prevention Integrator is important for us. I grew up in a household with domestic violence, and I know it's an underreported violation. We're going to continue to work to get at that.

Col. Roberts shared that every organization has a strategic plan, and Adjutant General Knight's goal #3 is to foster a values-based culture. The Joint Diversity Council has created an operational approach, this is a living document. It's continually changing and being updated. The next step is for subject matter experts to create an action plan for each of the priorities. We want sustainable change, and we want this to be a focus for every leader. We're happy to continue the discussion, if you have more questions, you're welcome to reach out.

Q - how do we ensure that civil reports make it to someone who can take action and that civil reports are included in the statistics?

Knight shared that this is something he's aware of happening, and I'm pushing for an NCIS scrub so we can ensure this is captured. Working on facilitating a relationship with law enforcement, to ask people if they are a member of the guard, to ensure that they get that information and can take appropriate action.

Duffy Jamieson shared that they recently released a new harassment policy that covers everything, and includes the creation of an email hotline where members can report harassment and bullying, and then the report is passed it on to the correct responder. They will be training people about how to report harassment.

Serena is the Sexual Assault Response Coordinator (SARC) for the Air Guard. She said that there is mandated reporting for commanders regarding sexual assault, they must report anything that gets told to them about assault and harassment. I meet with new commanders to go over the expectations. Important that there is restricted reporting for members, which lets them get services, without having to go through command and an investigation. The more control a survivor can have, the better, but there is mandated reporting for supervisors.

Lt Molly Webster typed that “Team, I need to hop off for my next meeting but I am grateful to be on and speaking with all of you. I can't speak to why previous EO representatives may not feel comfortable sharing their opinion but I can assure you with Gen Knight on this call that I will speak my opinion fully and respectfully, and I will not sugar coat internally or externally because I'm proud of the work we do, I know we are making progress and value our members, and I know we have continued opportunities that we are stepping up to the plate to address. Please reach out to me any time for Air side data or questions. V/r, Molly Webster, 603-715-6452 or molly.webster@us.af.mil”

3. VT National Guard discussion

The group discussed what was heard from the VT National Guard team.

Cary captured suggestions of next steps:

- Thoughts about finding ways to support people whose voices are not being heard.
- Think about how we can provide resources, research, education to the Guard.

4. Approve minutes of February 2021

**MOTION made by Mary, seconded by Lisa R:
To approve the February 2021 minutes as submitted.
Hearing no nays, the motion is unanimously passed.**

5. Education & Human Development Committee

Kellie explained the context about the proposal to share our issues language for the Education & Human Development Committee. Kellie read the current language and shared [a draft of the proposed language](#). The current language isn't reflective of all the work the Committee wants to, and should be working on. This language has gone through a number of rounds of revision. The Committee voted to approve this language. The goal is to have a conversation with you all about this and eventually move it forward to a vote by the entire Commission.

Commissioners are invited to make comments on the shared document and the committee will bring a finalized version back to the full commission at a future meeting.

6. Staff updates

Cary provided an update about our budget, we have money in the budget for two partner emails, and those have been built into our budget, and though we've asked, we will not be getting money for additional Commissioner email addresses. This leads us into a bigger conversation about what we need to do our work at the Commission, and we are every year asked to submit a level-funded budget, and every year it's a stressful exercise. We're thinking about different ways to approach this. One of the things we've come up with is, understanding that we're under-resourced for the work we're currently doing, and there is so much more work we'd like to do. The staff structure doesn't represent the work that we're doing now and want to be doing. Job descriptions do not match the work we're doing. We'd

like to engage in a deliberative strategic planning process so that we can be clear about what we actually need to do the work, and to have for our own internal operations a clear picture of what we want to get done over the next 5 years so that we can use our limited public resources effectively and continue to provide the services we're mandated to provide.

Lisa Ryan – I am switching jobs right now, my last day at BROOC is Friday. I'll be starting on the 22nd at the Vermont Network Against Domestic & Sexual Violence, as director of DV response systems.

Cary – Make sure you share the inaugural podcast episode that came out yesterday, we had a fantastic conversation with Bor Yang and Kesha. Next up, Kellie will be hosting a conversation about the impact of COVID on women for the Equal Pay Day for all women.

Sarah – Upcoming events at UVM, the 2021 [Blackboard Jungle Symposium, March 23rd-26th](#). This is the brainchild of Wanda Heading-Grant, who is leaving at the end of the month.

Also, Building Radically Connected Community Conference will be happening in April, and Ashley will be speaking.

[Women's History Month Panel hosted by the Southern Vermont Young Professionals](#) will be led by Commissioner Wendy Knight on Thursday, March 25th at 7 pm.

Meredith – “Tomorrow- the anniversary of the pandemic declaration ANA-VT is remembering fallen nurses <https://anavermont.nursingnetwork.com/nursing-events/134465-honoring-500-fallen-nurses-in-the-u-s#!info>”

Kellie – “Vermont Women in Higher Education is looking for workshop presenters for our summer workshop series. If you, or anyone in your communities, might have interest - find the link on our website: <https://www.vwhe.org/>”

Ashley – There is a multi-organizational, No New Prison, campaign launch coming up next week, as well as a people's budget, to be as inclusive and honoring all of our people within our state. There is a gaps project, about existing gaps for people coming out of incarceration.

Meeting Adjourned at 12:35 p.m.