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**Vermont Commission on Women**  
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**Vermont Commission on Women**  
**Meeting Minutes**

**Friday, October 8<sup>th</sup>, 2021 | 8:30 a.m. – 10:30 a.m.**

**Remote Meeting via video and teleconferencing, with physical access at 126 State St, Montpelier VT**

**Commissioners present:**

Kellie Campbell (Co-chair), Lisa Senecal (Co-chair),  
Delaney Courcelle, Kerin Durfee, Ashley Messier, Lisa  
Ryan

**Commissioners absent:**

Kiah Morris (Co-chair), Ed Adrian, Nancy Brooks,  
Lisa Carlson, Erica Hare, Wendy Knight, Sarah  
Mell, Kim Nolan, Heidi Tringe

**Advisors present:**

Meredith Roberts, ANA Vermont  
Taylor Hughey, Vermont Early Childhood Advocacy  
Alliance  
Katie Salina, Let's Grow Kids  
Jessica Barquist, Vermont Network Against Domestic  
& Sexual Violence  
Kaitie Armstrong, Vermont Women in Law  
Enforcement

**Guests:** Al Johnson-Kurts, Change The Story VT

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

**Presiding:** Kellie Campbell & Lisa Senecal

**Recording:** Hannah Lane

**1. Welcome and Opening**

Meeting called to order at 8:30 a.m.

Kellie Campbell welcomed everyone and asked folks to introduce themselves.

**2. Approval of Minutes of June 9 and September 10, 2021**

Postponed due to lack of quorum.

**3. Racial Equity work**

Kellie let the group know that the co-chairs and Cary have been talking and plan to continue the racial equity conversation in November, and that will be facilitated by Kiah, who couldn't be here today.

**4. Staff Updates**

VCW budget

Cary gave a brief update about our FY23 budget, including our decision request for a full-time data management coordinator in light of the Change The Story partnership winding down in March. Lisa S. asked for talking points for Commissioners in advocacy for this position.

Change The Story VT

AI shared that Change The Story has been in an evaluation process for the last six months. They have held interviews, reviewed records of their work, and are wrapping up. Change The Story will host a stakeholder event in the spring. AI will share winddown talking points when they are ready as well.

#### Women veterans

Cary updated VCW about a woman veteran who was experiencing homelessness, who Lisa Senecal and Lisa Carlson were able to help find housing with their advocacy, and through collaboration with a member of the California Commission on the Status of Women and Girls. We learned from that process how poorly we are supporting women veterans.

#### #makeworkworkforus

#MakeWorkWorkForUs is a joint campaign of the Change The Story organizations & Let's Grow Kids to call attention to supports needed for working women. It kicked off on the Labor Day holiday and featured the stories of Vermonters, as well as resources and tools. It got a lot of traction on social media and resulted in media attention. We continued the partnership in getting out the UMass Survey results.

Cary is thinking about the opportunity for future collaboration on issues around women in the workplace and wondered if Commissioners or advisors have thoughts about how we might make use of these partnerships.

#### Women in Leadership and Public Life report

VCW had wonderful interns this summer working on this report, which we hope to release in January.

#### Sexual assault in the National Guard

Cary is hoping VCW can continue to discuss how to bring accountability to the National Guard.

#### Women's correctional facility planning

The legislature is looking at building a new facility and/or a reentry or step-down facility. VCW has a small subgroup that's been working on thinking about and facilitating conversations about hearing from the folks most impacted by that and imagining other alternatives. It would be great to expand that group to include more Commissioners.

#### Discussion points raised included:

- Commissioner Baker told Joint Justice Oversight that he's changing directions and feeling like they only need to build a reentry facility. 5-10 women who need to be in an incarcerative setting. If the Commissioner of Corrections just said publically that only 5 -10 women need to be in prison, why are we spending 80 million dollars on building anything? We could invest those resources into community programs and resources.
- There is a push about reform and decarceration measures, as well as funding a study committee about alternatives to incarceration. Programs lose 25% of effectiveness when delivered in a facility. If we centralize programming and supports, more people will be incarcerated to access those services, rather than having those programs in communities and really address the safety needs of Vermonters.
- It was asked if the COSAs are involved in these conversations.

Did the commissioner say where he thought all the women who are currently incarcerated, who

wouldn't be in the "reentry facility," should be? I hope back in their communities, was funding that mentioned?

- this conversation is happening nationally, and other communities are doing this differently successfully. Vermont has the opportunity to become a model for other places.

Cary will put another call out to Commissioners to join that group.

#### Additional items

Lilly shared that this month coming up, the Suffragist Reenactment play is happening at 10 venues, and Commissioner Sarah Mell is in it.

The Vermont Women's Funds annual event is happening on October 20 and is looking for volunteers to host virtual table conversations.

Senator Leahy's Economic Opportunity Conference is coming up on October 23, virtually this year.

#### 5. Committee structure proposal

Cary shared a written committee structure proposal in advance of the meeting (appended to these minutes).

Discussion points included:

- it has been extremely difficult to get folks to meet. Can we have workgroups that people can flow in and out of?
- suggestion that the group consider having a second standing meeting time where folks say hi and head into breakout rooms for this work.
- Folks liked the idea of scheduling these meetings at our regular VCW meetings.
- Commissioners also liked the idea of being able to flow in and out of topic areas.
- Kellie shared Sarah Mell's thoughts on committees, sent in advance:  
"As I am unable to attend the meeting I wanted to reach out and let you know that I am in support of the new committee structure as outlined in the shared document and believe that a committee should be devoted to the intersections of the criminal/legal system and gender as a means of addressing the pending closer of CRCF and building of a new facility, as well as to tackle issues related to racial harms within policing, opportunities for expansive responses to harms outside the criminal/legal system, and fiscal priorities that get the needs of Vermonters met as a means of reducing harm in our communities."

At least one "admin" type of committee seems necessary, as well, as we continue the work of redefining our purpose and values. The duality of needing to "do the work" of addressing and uplifting the needs of women and minoritized genders in VT alongside the work of re-manifesting what VCW is and can be feels like a lot to lift together. Maybe we downsize to fewer committees/priorities? I'm just thinking out loud via my fingers now - but maybe two admin committees (purpose/values/operations & onboarding processes), and three topics committees (racial equity, incarcerated VTers, economic justice)? Just an idea."

- Kellie suggested that the co-chairs will take this back and refine the structure.

## 6. VCW principles/values

In continuation of the planning process at the September 10, 2021 meeting. Cary proposed a timeline for our process:

- We have this discussion today.
- We create a small working group that compiles and refines our notes from these conversations.
- Discuss this again next month.
- The group does more refining for approval in December.

The group worked on a [shared google doc](#), sharing their thoughts and questions about the values generated in September.

## 7. Announcements

Burlington High School will be offering the Equal Pay shirts and will be available at their game on October 16.

**Meeting Adjourned at 10:30 a.m.**

**VCW COMMITTEE STRUCTURE  
DRAFT PROPOSAL FROM STAFF  
September 30, 2021**

The staff would like to propose the following committee structure for FY2022 (and beyond, if it works well):

At the beginning of the fiscal year (September), we create committees based around our known areas of focus for the coming year. These committees stay active until the beginning of the next fiscal year, when we create new committees. Some of the committees will likely remain the same, as we will continue to focus on those areas, but people will have the opportunity to shift to a new committee if they feel drawn to do so.

Examples of possible areas of focus that committees could form around:

Women involved in the criminal legal system  
Racial justice  
Equal pay  
Sexual assault in the National Guard  
COVID recovery  
Etc.

We could also consider forming administrative committees that focus on things such as onboarding new commissioners, updating our operating guidelines, facilitating connections with advisors, etc.

The committees will meet between the monthly VCW meetings. They will:

- Review VCW policy positions and recommend updates and changes to the full commission
- Provide information and research to contribute to policy briefs and other educational materials developed by staff
- Bring new issues to the attention of staff and commissioners
- Review emerging issues and identify information, resources, guest speakers, questions, etc. that the commission may need
- Recommend action for the commission to take in response to information presented and discussions happening at commission meetings
- Identify key issues and questions relating to proposed or pending legislation
- Act on any emergent issues, tasks, or requests from the full Commission

Each committee will have a point person for staff to communicate with, but each committee will decide for itself if it wants a formal chair or not.