State of Vermont
Vermont Commission on Women [phone] 802-828-2851
126 State Street [toll free] 800-881-1561
Montpelier, Vermont 05633-6801
women.vermont.gov

Vermont Commission on Women Meeting Minutes
Friday, June 9, 2023 | 9:30 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.
Pavilion Building, 4th floor conference room, 109 State St, Montpelier, VT

Commissioners present: Nancy Kaplan, Sarah Mell, Esther Charlestin, Hazel Brewster, Brenda Churchill, Ashley Messier, and Alex Hilliard in person. Lisa Senecal, Sarah Lang, Wendy Knight, and Kellie Campbell online.

Commissioners absent: Kiah Morris, Sophia Rabe, Annie Mackin, and Heidi Tringe.

Advisors present: Alison Lamagna (VT Works for Women) and Jessica Barquist (VT Network) in person.

Guests: Jayna Ahsaf (National Council for Incarcerated and Formerly Incarcerated Women and Girls) in person, Amelia Glickman (National Council for Incarcerated and Formerly Incarcerated Women and Girls) online.
Staff: Cary Brown, Karen Cygnarowicz, Ellie Lane
Presiding: Lisa Senecal
Recording: Karen Cygnarowicz

1. Meeting Called to Order
Meeting called to order at 9:35 a.m.

2. Approval of Meeting Agenda
Motion made by Nancy, seconded by Hazel to approve the meeting agenda as submitted.
Unanimously approved, agenda approved.

3. Review Group Agreements
The group took a minute to review the group agreements.

4. Approval of meeting minutes of May 2023
Motion made by Hazel, seconded by Nancy to approve the May 2023 meeting minutes as submitted.
Unanimously approved, minutes approved.

5. Introductions
The group introduced themselves by name and region.

6. Staff Updates
Cary shared that VCW is planning public education around the passage of the bill to prohibit child marriage.
Jessica share that S.103 was not passed but is on the calendar for the upcoming veto session.

Karen shared an update on the Health Equity Committee and presented a draft of the Transgender Individuals Policy. The group offered suggested edits and expressed the preference for a strong, broad statement over one that includes details that could end up being limiting in the future. Alex shared statistics with the group about how transgender youth are doing and shared personal experiences to underscore the importance of adopting a policy as soon as possible. The group agreed that adopting a policy this month is important and asked about the process. A special meeting would need to be called to vote on the final draft of the proposed policy. The Health Equity Committee will finalize the updated language and bring it back to the full Commission for approval.

Lisa called a special meeting end of June. A date will be scheduled by email.

Ellie shared an update from the Workplace Equity Committee and asked for help from commissioners to reach out to those organizations that signed the Equal Pay Compact.

7. FreeHer Campaign

Guest Jayna Ahsaf of the National Council for Incarcerated and Formerly Incarcerated Women and Girls presented information on their **FreeHer Campaign**. Policy, reimagining communities: providing basic income, and shifting the narrative: events, canvasses, and phonebanks, in attempts to "bring the power back to the people."
- Covered subjects such as de-incarceration, second-chance legislation for older populations, abolitionist alternatives, and offered the example of Hawaii which ended youth incarceration by offering indigenous programming.
- Asked for support in advocating for bills H. 445 and alternatives to incarceration H. 438.

Ashley elaborated on the cost of prisons, and offered a personal perspective of furlough.

8. Election of VCW Chair
Motion to begin the election of the VCW Chair made by Nancy. Brenda seconded.

Sarah Mell and Esther Charlestin were nominated at the previous meeting and ran as co-chairs. They presented some thoughts on how they would fill the role of co-chairs.

Unanimously approved.

9. **Meeting schedules for FY2024**

Cary proposed a meeting schedule for FY2024. The group discussed several changes and Nancy moved to approve the proposed schedule as amended:

Friday, September 8, 2023
IN PERSON with remote access
9:30 – 12:30
Location: Montpelier

Friday, October 20, 2023
IN PERSON with remote access and PUBLIC FORUM included

9:30 – 12:30
Location: Rutland

Friday, November 17, 2023
IN PERSON with remote access and PUBLIC FORUM included
9:30 – 12:30
Location: Newport

Friday, December 15, 2023
REMOTE ONLY and PUBLIC FORUM included
9:30 – 12:30

Friday, January 19, 2024
REMOTE ONLY
9:30 – 12:30

Friday, February 16, 2024
REMOTE ONLY
9:30 – 12:30

Friday, March 15, 2024
REMOTE ONLY
9:30 – 12:30

Friday, April 19, 2024
IN PERSON with remote access and PUBLIC FORUM included
9:30 – 12:30
Location: Bennington (tentative)

Friday, May 17, 2024
IN PERSON with remote access and PUBLIC FORUM included
9:30 – 12:30
Location: Brattleboro

Friday, June 21, 2024
IN PERSON with remote access and PUBLIC FORUM included
9:30 – 12:30
Location: St Albans

Alex seconded. Motion unanimously approved.

10. **Operationalizing DEI in VCW's work**

Cary returned to the Lotus Blossom Diagram offered by May's guest, Shalini Surayanarayana.

The group brainstormed "How might we advance the diversity mission in our daily work?" Some of the items in the discussion included:

- Giving space to stories and impact
- How are we including the communities we are representing?
- How do we center accessibility?
- Who are our advisors? Intentionally knowing.
- By reducing barriers
- Community engagement: who is not here because they cannot afford to be here?
- Hard of hearing, visually impaired?
- Inviting youth (be in touch with education admin/educators)
- Pier diems increased?
- "We have not yet talked about race"
- Appointment process: diversity in race, age, SES
- Consider our advisors
- Outreach efforts: introduce ourselves.
- Offering Public Forum
- Look to outside organizations that could fundraise for stipends, whether it be advisors attending meetings, or youth.
- Collaboration

Meeting Adjourned at 12:35 p.m. Motion made by Nancy, seconded by Brenda.