

State of Vermont
Vermont Commission on Women
126 State Street
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Vermont Commission on Women
Meeting minutes
October 18, 2024 | 9:00 a.m. to 11:45 p.m.
Virtual meeting only

Commissioners present: Hazel Brewster, Kellie Campbell, Brenda Churchill, Nancy Kaplan, Kelly-Rue Riso, and Aleta Sprague

Commissioners absent: Chair Esther Charlestin, Heather Bouchey, Annie Mackin, Alex Hilliard, Ashley Messier, Sophia Rabe, Linda Joy Sullivan and Susan Sussman

Advisors present: Logan Snow, PPNNE

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

Presiding: Nancy Kaplan

Recording: Ellie Lane

1. Meeting called to order

Meeting called to order at **9:00 a.m.**

2. Approve Agenda

Postponed due to lack of quorum.

3. Approve minutes of September 20, 2024

Postponed due to lack of quorum.

4. Welcome & Introductions

The group introduced themselves and welcomed new Commissioner Aleta Sprague.

5. Committee meetings in breakout rooms

The committees went into breakout rooms and discussed their work.

6. Committee reports

Reproductive Health/Reproductive Justice Committee

Aleta shared that the group discussed the committee's name, reproductive rights, reproductive justice and also Logan shared PPNNE's approach which was very helpful. The group discussed which policies to begin updating, and the Committee is going to begin with an overall statement on reproductive rights that clarifies our overall approach, which will provide framework for more specific policy statements. The committee will have a rotating chair.

Workplace Equity Committee

Kellie shared that they discussed the Equal Pay Compact and the LEEP (leaders for equity and equal pay) toolkit. The group talked through a spreadsheet of Equal Pay Compact signers, and historic efforts to reengage Equal Pay Compact signers. Cary and Ellie are going to talk about the spreadsheet. The group

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would like to continue to work on this. The group discussed, “what does it mean to sign on to the EPC?” It’s hard to know where to get started. Can we make smaller bites, clearer action steps. The group will meet twice per month, once in between our VCW meetings. Brenda and Kellie are co-chairing the group.

Criminal Legal System Committee

No members of the committee were present today. Em shared that last week the Criminal Legal System committee met and in that meeting the group discussed drafting paragraphs to contribute to a legislative report being put together by the stakeholder group convened by the Department of Corrections about the replacement of the Chittenden Regional Correctional Facility. The group also discussed visiting the prison and having an opportunity to talk to people who are currently incarcerated.

7. VCW Advisory Council

Cary shared that staff have been looking at the overall composition of the advisory council. We have contacted potential new members. Cary shared a list of organizations we have talked to who are interested in joining the Advisory Council. We would like to vote to add them in the future. We would love to hear thoughts about other organizations we are missing or other thoughts about Advisory Council members.

- Law Enforcement presence is missing – maybe Department of Public Safety?
- Is there an opportunity to reinvite advisory council members to engage with our work and the committees?
 - Yes, advisors can join Committees on an ongoing basis. We can also invite advisors to join specific discussions they might be particularly interested in or can bring expertise to.
- Do we want to have a legislative agenda focused meeting in December?
 - The group liked this idea, and there was discussion about what the follow-up would be. We should discuss this more at our next meeting.
- Are Commissioners serving as a liaison to Advisory Council members?

8. DEI work

We need to continue to do internal education, and we also need to think about how we embed DEI in our policies and procedures. Esther would like to do this educational activity in November, and then we will continue to discuss the policies and procedures after that.

Ellie talked a little bit about having Commissioner engagement in the process of including DEI framework in our policies and procedures.

Brenda shared about how including the public should be part of that process.

9. Legislative welcoming event

Cary shared the history of the Legislative Lunch, and opened the discussion to Commissioners about whether we would like to have a legislative welcoming event this biennium and what it would look like. We do have the state house cafeteria coffee reserved on April 8 for unequal pay. Ideas included:

- Partnering with others on the April 8 event, maybe focusing on unpaid caregiving.

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10. Updates and announcements

- Nancy mentors medical students on their public health rotations, and this year they are studying the impact of the requirement for schools to include menstrual products. They are surveying school nurses to find out if they know about the law and what they are doing. It would be great if they could come to present the work they have done to VCW. They have found out that the nurses have almost nothing to do with the provisioning of these products, that's the custodial staff.
 - Logan shared about an event that ACT had with high school students about this law and how it's going. It was very powerful. Nancy should connect with ACT about this work.
- Kellie is interested in AI and its impact on women. VCW should be talking about this, including equity considerations, concerns, and opportunities.
 - Brian Cina might have an update about whether the legislature made progress on this issue last year.

Meeting adjourned at 11:21 a.m.