



Maine's Permanent Commission on the Status of Women

MePCSW Meeting Minutes

June 13, 10:00am-1:30pm
Safe Voices, 484 Main Street, Lewiston

Facilitated by Elise Johansen

Elise is the former Director of Equality Maine and is the current Executive Director of Safe Voices, the DV agency that covers Androscoggin, Oxford and Franklin counties.

In attendance: Amy Gallant, Holly Stover, Jill Randall, Samantha Lott Hale, Kelly Bentley, Marianne Moore, Meredith Strang-Burgess

Absent: Cara Courchesne, Regina Rooney, Fatuma Hussein, Ruth Kermish-Allen

Guests: Megan Hannan-Maine Women's Fund, Gilda Nardone- State Workforce Board Women's Employment, Eliza Townsend-Maine Women's Lobby and Policy Center

Welcome and introductions

Discussion of similar organizations

Megan Hannan, Maine Women's Fund

Policy advocacy – Find out what women's agencies doing and how can they help financially. Suggested creating a list of when organizations are doing fundraising.

Eliza Townsend, Maine Women's Lobby and Policy Center

Two different organizations:

The Lobby is celebrating its 40th year. Only organization with a full-time presence on a state level, working on a full range of issues. One advocate covers all of it. Priorities in 2019 continue to advocate for Paid Family Leave, cost and quality of child care, weigh in at the request of allies on federal level. Supported increase of minimum wage in Portland and the ability for all Portland workers to earn paid overtime.

The Policy center organizes public education, candidate education, produces a policy guide, uses foundation funds, and hosts a candidate forum focused on economic security.

Holly- Suggests focusing on saving VOCA funds together

Gilda Nardone, State Workforce Board Women's Employment Committee

New Ventures Maine (name change from Women Work and Community) 40 year anniversary. Four program areas – career planning, small business management, financial education & planning and leadership management. Organizes Totally Trades conferences for high school girls to explore trades in trades & technology.

Chair of Women's Employment Committee of the State Workforce Board – Target groups: women, older, youth, veterans, apprenticeship and people with disabilities. Inform workforce board as they are creating policies. Bridge to self-sufficiency model looks at career tracks and intersectionality of issues and how to help individual women and families move forward.

Alliance for Maine Women – Coalition of organizations working on issues related to women. Looking more broadly of all of the issues. Stronger advocacy and public education voice. Voter education. Started a communications calendar/strategy tracking different agencies taking a lead on an issue.

Suggested area of concern - women with substance abuse issues (opiates). Also seen as a tactic for abuse. Opportunity to collaborate for the NEWPI conference.

Assistance needed to request co-chairs for NEWPI. Holly will get the letter out this week. Meredith will assist.

Moderator from Maine? Hannah Pingree? Emily Cain, Olympia Snowe, Jennifer Rooks, Ellie Espling? Women Who Dared to Run (film). Producer from Maine. Contact Marianne or Holly if you'd like to be involved.

Discussion of legislative engagement (11:20)

Commissioners who are current/former legislators or legislative candidates share how PCSW could contribute in a helpful, positive and nonpartisan manner

Equal Rights Amendment discussion with special guests Senator Eloise Vitelli and Senator Lisa Keim (invited – did not attend Senate Chair of the Judiciary Committee)

Eloise Vitelli recent retiree from New Ventures Maine (38 yrs) was also the chair of the Women's Commission for a couple of years. Lois Reckitt introduced Equal Rights Amendment last session and Eloise signed on. Fell short of the 2/3rds vote as it requires a constitutional amendment. Will bring back next session as an amendment to the State's constitution to ban discrimination based on gender. The federal amendment has not yet been ratified. The time-frame to get it ratified expired. Trying to extend the deadline at the federal level.

What is the opposition? Only able to garner 2 republican votes (Roger Katz & Dana Dow)-We don't need it women have made progress, we have the 14th amendment. Laws can change and be reinterpreted in ways a constitutional amendment can't. The last time this came up to ratify the federal, the Commission paid a key role. It will have to go to the people for a vote when it gets out of the legislature. Educating the public and promoting the equal rights amendment. Has not been on the state ballot before.

Can't imply that PCSW will show up on every bill and will not be perceived that the commission is partisan. Not a big enough bi-partisan coalition. Commission could have conversations with legislators about why this is important and help to pull out what their objections and fears might be. Commission can provide an umbrella for issues around an equal rights amendment.

21st Century Work Force Task Force- equity in STEM discussion led by Ruth and Jay McCreight

New England Women's Policy Initiative, discussion led by Holly
Review details of **upcoming webinar**- Friday, June 22nd 3:00-4:00pm at Nash School in Augusta
Feedback wanted for Power Point. Kelly volunteered to help but the webinar together.

Infant Mortality Project Update, discussion led by Kelly (12:00)

Infant mortality and women's health are tied together. Applied for NEWPI funds. At first NEWPI said no. Then we argued and they agreed. Then hurdle of NEWPI transferring the funds - took about 6 months to get \$5000. Got in Feb. Most students hired by then. Used Vital Statistics. Took 4 months to get basic info. At federal level, can't get info as they are still working on data around Zika, not substance abuse

and women. Very challenging. DHHS is not cooperative. Couldn't use county data. 85 deaths, if you move by county and towns, you could identify individuals. Nothing really insightful except substance use is a problem early on. Have WIC, but not pre-pregnancy data. Federal data: Infant mortality – death of a baby within the first year. Maine Care gone at 21 years, no care until someone tells you that you are WIC eligible. Distance (access) 500% increase in number of drug affected babies – Maine can't process the data and feds can't give us the data because of funding and positions too tight.

Mortality rate maps: As a commission, we could make recommendations around it, but not complete. Or consider asking NEWPI to approve using the rest of the leftover money \$4000. Not enough data to use up the money. Are there ways that the commission can talk about some of this data? Maine compares itself to Mississippi because of population numbers and experiences. Bill UMF for the transfer of funds.

Final remarks and conclude

- Webinar – Friday, June 22nd 3:00-4:00pm at Nash School in Augusta
- Next Commission meeting
- August meeting is cancelled due to summer.
- October 10th 9:00am-11:00am at Nash School in Augusta