



RHODE ISLAND COMMISSION ON WOMEN

Full Commission Meeting
Monday, December 8, 2008, 5:00 PM
One Capitol Hill
2nd Floor, Conference Room C
Providence, RI 02908

Commissioners

Linda H. Newton, *Chair*

Corinne Calise Russo, *1st Vice Chair*

Carol Gibbons, Ph.D., *2nd Vice Chair*

Joanne M. Hill, *Treasurer*

Beverly Turner, *Secretary*

Carrie Bridges, MPH

Nancy Carriuolo, Ph.D.

Representative Joanne Giannini

Catherine Graziano, Ph.D.

Dawn L. Huntley

Victoria Johnson

Jacqueline B. Laguerre

Carol Malysz

Helene Martin, RNC, CAGS, NCC

Lela Morgan, M.A.

Representative Carol A. Mumford

Representative Eileen S. Naughton

Sarah H. Rockett, M.A.

Neena Savage, Esquire

Marilyn Coccozza Trillo

Camille Vollaro, M.A.

Staff

Shanna Wells, M.Ed., *Director*

MINUTES

Present: Carrie Bridges, , Carol Gibbons, Catherine Graziano, Joanne Hill, Lorraine Hynes, Victoria Johnson, Helene Martin, Linda Newton, Sarah Rockett, Corinne Calise Russo, Beverly Turner .

Excused, Absent: Nancy Carriuolo, Dawn Huntley, Neena Savage, Marilyn Coccozza Trillo.

Unexcused Absent: Rep. Joanne Giannini, Rep. Eileen Naughton.

Call to Order

Chair Linda Newton called the meeting to order at 5:05 PM.

Guest Speaker

Warden Carole Dwyer of RI Department of Correction Women's Division provided the Commissioners with an overview of programming at the Women's Correctional facilities and the challenges and limitations they face.

The buildings were built in the late 1930's and were originally designed as mental health facilities. They were subsequently retrofitted to serve corrections, but safety and security issues still remain. Maintaining the buildings is a problem. There are lots of leaking pipes, and asbestos still exists, so any remodeling work requires asbestos removal. One of the buildings is built on a swamp, so every spring the outdoor inmate exercise area floods, making it impossible to allow inmates to exercise. The facility has no place to separate sexually assaultive or aggressive inmates. There is no segregation unit and no mental health unit. There is not enough space for vocational training aside from culinary, no gym comparable to the men's program. The health area is so small that HIPAA regulations cannot be followed. There is no visiting room, nor nursery. There is no transitional housing for those inmates ready to leave .

The average inmate is 36 years old, with no job skills, 2 children with a history of childhood trauma, which led to drug use, which led to criminogenic behavior to support the drug habit. The women have many health problems and mental health issues. The average prison stay is 4 months, and the majority are non-violent crimes. Approximately 220 inmates were incarcerated in 2007 and the 2008 projection of 585 shows an increase of more than double from the previous year.

The commissioners and Warden Dwyer brainstormed ways the RICW can help:

- Educate legislators of the needs of women in prison
- Identify 2 senators and 2 representatives to educate about the prison issues and get them to advocate. Suggested were Senators Paiva Weed and Perry. Representatives suggested were Naughton and Giannini.
- Focusing on the equity/social justice issue of equitable treatment for the female inmates.
- Get a University to take on a project around the issue. Suggested was RWU—Liz Tobin Tyler.

Consent Agenda

Carrie Bridges made a motion to accept the consent agenda. Sarah Rockett seconded the motion.
Motion passed unanimously.

Chair's Report

Chair Linda Newton reported that The RICW Project Articles of Incorporation were filed with the state of RI on November 14th. Notification was sent to the executive branch attorney, Kerry King. Shanna was instructed to draft letters of invitation to potential board members.

Director's Report

Food Bank Fund Drive Update: Our second Op/Ed piece entitled "Hunger Takes No Holiday," was sent out for publication on November 18th. See attached copy. The *Cranston Herald* printed our first op/ed, "The Feminine Face of Hunger" on October 30th, and the *Warwick Beacon* published it on November 27th.

"Mrs. Claus" flyers were distributed in anticipation of the performance of the 19th. We originally tried to get the 200-seat auditorium at RIC, but it was unavailable. So we were given the 900+ seat auditorium instead. Commissioner Nancy Carriuolo is generously donating the room rental fee.

Advertisements for the show have been listed in all the local TV and newspaper calendar listings and in the theatre section of the *Providence Journal*. Emailings have gone out to our entire list serve, and to every woman in state service. The Food Bank included information about the show in their recently emailed newsletter. I was interviewed, along with the show's producer on the "Amazing Women" program, hosted by Deb Ruggiero. It aired Sunday, December 7th. A press release about the show was sent to all local news outlets, scheduled for release on December 7th.

Girls/Women in Non-Traditional Trades: The planning committee for the Girl's Forum met on December 2nd. Lots of new people have joined the planning committee. Save the Date forms for the event were distributed.

V Day Until the Violence Stops: Providence: The Commissioners decided not to participate in this event this year, but to attend some of the events to determine if they want to support in next year.

No Committee Reports, Old Business or Executive Session was held.

Adjournment

Carol Gibbons made a motion to adjourn. Joanne Hill seconded the motion. **Motion passed unanimously.** Meeting adjourned at 6:43 PM.

Next Meeting: Monday, January 12, 5:00 PM, One Capitol Hill, 2nd Floor, Conference Room B, Providence.

Approved on January 12, 2009.

Beverly Turner, Secretary