

MINUTES

Attendees: Adrian Sandler, Al Whitesides, Carol Steen, Heather Zanzig (virtual), Linda McDaniel, Maia Sloan, Mark Taft, Martin Moore, Pam Holcombe, Pat Tuttle (virtual), Sara Lappe (virtual)

Staff in attendance: Rachael Sawyer, Tim Love, Angelyn Johnson, Sara Joss, Amy Broughton, Angelica Tyler

Welcome

Minutes

- Approval of minutes from September 3, 2024
 - Motion to approve by Al Whitesides. Seconded by Linda McDaniel. The minutes were unanimously approved.

Old Business

- There was no old business

New Business

- County Helene Updates
 - Staff presented information on the county's response including a review of the recovery support functions. The county has contracted with Tetra Tech to help manage the recovery process.
 - Impacts on local Early Childhood providers:
 - 8 out of the 91 licensed centers were severely impacted
 - 3 centers remain closed, 1 of which is operating at their other locations
 - Buncombe Partnership for Children convened providers regularly and the state has a team focused on child care
 - All centers lost revenue during closures
 - Some extra funding has been allocated from the General Assembly, Dogwood Health Trust and Community Foundation of WNC. Buncombe Partnership for Children is managing those funds.
 - Staff discussed the financial landscape of the County including loss of revenue associated with decreased sales tax and property taxes. All county departments are identifying areas where expenses can be reduced. This includes a hiring freeze where only critical positions are being filled.
 - Staff do not anticipate this impacting/reducing any existing Early Childhood FY25 contracts already in place. However, this fund generally has a 2% annual increase. Given the current budget circumstances, staff do not anticipate this fund increasing by 2% for FY26. There is a possibility that the budget reductions could potentially reduce the amount available to award in the Early Childhood fund. That will be determined as the county goes through the budget process in the coming months.
- Beginning of Year Provider Survey Results

- The beginning of year provider survey results were included in the meeting packet for Committee members' review. These responses were collected in September, prior to Helene.
- **FY26 Funding Cycle**
 - The application period is generally from mid-December until mid-February. Due to the impacts of Helene, we are off schedule for the FY26 grant cycle.
 - Due to Helene, the committee didn't get to complete defining their funding strategy for the year.
 - The committee discussed options for the FY26 funding cycle including opening an abbreviated funding application cycle or working with existing portfolio for another year.
 - Staff reviewed a potential timeline if the committee decided to open an application cycle. The applications could open next Friday, 1/17 with a due date of 2/28. This would give the committee the month of March to complete application review and scoring. With the condensed timeline, there would not be adequate time to allow for follow-up questions which has been included in previous cycles.
 - Carol Steen made a motion to stay the course with the current application and open the condensed application timeline for this cycle. Marin Moore seconded the motion. The motion was unanimously approved.
 - The committee identified some data they would like staff to gather for their review:
 - Current wait-list data post Helene
 - The number of Early Childhood Centers that applied for and/or received FEMA funds
 - Countywide system data for slots and demand post Helene
 - Percent of applications funded for the past 3 years. (Staff was able to provide this information during the meeting: FY23 = 75%, FY24 = 65.5%, FY25 = 51%)

Announcements

- The County's meeting platform no longer allows AI bots/notetakers to attend zoom meetings.
- Former Early Childhood Committee member Leslie Anderson passed away on December 27. A Celebration of Life is scheduled for January 25 at Trinity Episcopal Church.

Public Comment

- Amy Barry participated in public comment.

Next Meeting

Next meeting will be February 4, 2025, 1:00-2:30 pm, 200 College St, Ground Floor Conference Room.