

**FIRST 5 SAN LUIS OBISPO COUNTY
CHILDREN AND FAMILIES COMMISSION**

COMMISSION MEETING MINUTES
February 20, 2020 (Approved March 25, 2020)

Current Commissioners Present

Bruce Gibson	SLO County Board of Supervisors (Chair)
Penny Borenstein, M.D.	SLO County Public Health Department
James Brescia	SLO County Office of Education
Devin Drake	SLO County Department of Social Services
Erica Ruvalcaba-Heredia	Promotores Network
Melinda Sokolowski	Child Care Planning Council
Alison Ventura	Community at Large
Bob Watt	Community at Large

Commissioners Absent/Excused

James Tedford	Community At Large
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Staff Present

First 5 staff: Wendy Wendt, Jason Wells, Misty Livengood
Commission Counsel: Natalie Frye-Laacke

Call to Order

Chair Gibson called the meeting to order at 3:04 p.m.

ITEM 1 –Chair Comments

None

ITEM 2 -- Commissioner Comments and Announcements

None

ITEM 3 - Public Comment

Shana Paulson, staff at CAPSLO Child Care Resource Connection, announced that the 2019 :
Child Care Portfolio was released earlier this month. Commissioner Gibson requested a

regular report on data related to the Portfolio and current child care needs.

Commissioner Borenstein inquired about the lower-than-state-average cost for care. “Is this a good or bad thing?” Ms. Paulson responded “both” – good because slightly more affordable, bad because it indicates lower wages in a county with low affordability.

Commissioner Brescia added that the 6% drop in infant toddler care is steeper than the drop in child population size.

ITEM 4 – Authorize Executive Director to Exercise First Right of Refusal related to IMPACT 2020 Lead Agency Status

Executive Director Wendy Wendt explained that IMPACT 2020 is being joined with two other funding sources (CSPP Block Grant and QCC-PDGR funds) in a single application. Local Consortia are encouraged to streamline program design, and a maximum of two lead funders are allowed on the joint application. First 5 agencies have been given first right of refusal to serve as lead on the IMPACT portion of the program. Local Education Agencies are required to be leads on the CSPP Block Grant.

Local Quality Counts Consortium partners are currently in discussion about the possible merits of streamlining the overall initiative in a variety of ways, notably to identify a single lead agency for all three funding streams. If this option is exercised, then SLO County Office of Education would serve in this capacity and First 5 would exercise its right of first refusal.

Public Comment: None

Commissioner Borenstein made a motion to authorize the First 5 Executive Director to determine whether to exercise the Right of First Refusal regarding lead agency status for IMPACT 2020, contingent on further discussion and decision among local Consortium partners. Commissioner Drake seconded the motion. Motion passed 7-0 (Brescia recused).

ITEM 5 – Strategic Planning Workshop and Approval – Service Areas for New and Continuing Investment

First 5 Counsel Natalie Frye-Laacke provided guidance on on conflict of interest and the need to recuse if there is a possibility a Commissioner’s agency may apply for that funding. In these cases, limit involvement in the discussion, though providing education/information is allowable.

Mr. Wells introduced the item, reminding Commissioners that they had committed an annual \$718,000 in continuing contracts at the January meeting, leaving just under \$700,000 remaining in the program budget for additional “new” investments. Among the categories for consideration are: Early Intervention, Early Learning Groups, Parent Groups, Early Childhood Family Advocacy, Perinatal Support, We Are the Care.

Commissioner Brescia inquired if in such cases Commissioners should leave the room. Counsel Laacke responded that she believes that to be too strict an interpretation and not necessary.

Commissioner Gibson commented that Section 1090 of the Code the way he was trained to interpret is that recusal is required if one has a personal interest in the decision. He acknowledged that “we are being cautious within a gray area.”

Several Commissioners commented that the focus groups in particular elicited powerful input from community members, and recommended that this could be an annual exercise to remain connected to emerging community needs.

Commissioner Ruvalcaba-Heredia asked about the anticipated sunset of existing School Readiness contracts in December. She emphasized the importance of continued services such as early literacy and parenting classes. She inquired if there will be opportunities moving forward to continue funding this type of work.

Mr. Wells responded that the new Strategic Plan allows First 5 and its community partners to re-envision how program supports are offered moving forward.

Commissioner Gibson asked to consider whether we want to build our programs on the foundation of work that has already been done?

Commissioner Brescia indicated a hope that other school districts could develop First 5 funded programming.

Commissioner Borenstein questioned whether the approximate \$700,000 in unallocated “new programs” funding is too small to parse out to multiple programs and runs the risk of staying broad and shallow. Perhaps it is time to go “narrow and deep.” Should the Commission consider focusing its funds on one core effort?

Commissioner Gibson proposed designing RFPs that do not presuppose specific program models, but instead act as a broad call for innovative ideas in each of the Priority Pillars that are part of the new Strategic Plan.

Commissioner Sokolowski suggested including a four-year sustainability plan for whatever programs are funded.

Commissioner Ventura offered the concept of creating seed grant opportunities.

Several Commissioners commented on the importance of school involvement in future First 5-funded programs.

Susan Warren (representative of the County Health Commission) offered concern about ability/willingness of schools to pick up and institutionalize seeded programs. She gave the example of Healthy Start.

Marilu Gomez (First 5 School Readiness Coordinator with Paso Public Schools) added an additional word of caution – The schools' mission and mandate and orientation is advocacy for children TK-12. One of the barriers that she has experienced working with schools is that families with children 0-5 are less on schools' radar.

Mr. Wells concurred, commenting that over the years there has often been a large disconnect between the F5 funded program staff and the partnering School Districts themselves.

Commissioner Borenstein commented that this is challenging work. In her view, schools should be adhering to the concept that they "will inherit the kids." From a couple of standpoints, we are doing a disservice to rely on schools exclusively.

Commissioner Brescia emphasized that any RFP First 5 develops should include the questions: Who are you partnering with and what is your sustainability strategy?

Commissioner Gibson proposed dividing available funds evenly among all three Priority Pillars and developing RFPs for each.

Commissioner Borenstein proposed using three criteria for determining future funding:

- 1) What are we already advocating for that needs to be continued/invested in?
- 2) What are "the people" saying?"
- 3) Where does the data bear out?

Commissioner Ventura commented that the areas identified for new funding connect well with the data.

PUBLIC COMMENT:

Raechelle Bowlay, Local Child Care Planning Council Coordinator, expressed support for the idea of putting it out to the community through a broad-based RFP process. It puts more onus of responsibility on community partners to be innovative.

Margaret Kensinger-Klopfer, Youth Services Librarian with County Libraries, commented that this is a timely moment, with more opportunity to partner with public libraries.

Susan Warren, County Health Commission, appreciates the emphasis on long-term sustainability.

Commissioner Drake expressed support for the process.

Commissioner Ventura expressed support for the idea of a required established partnership among multiple organizations.

Commissioners directed staff to develop a plan for RFPs based on today's discussion, to be submitted for consideration at future Commission meetings.

Meeting Adjourned at 5:06 p.m.

NOTE: May Commission Meeting is being rescheduled from May 27th to May 14th, 3:00-5:30 p.m., at SLO County Office of Education.