

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

COMMISSION MEETING MINUTES

December 2, 2021 (Approved January 26, 2022)

Current Commissioners Present

Penny Borenstein, MD (Vice Chair)	SLO County Public Health Department
Linda Belch	Department of Social Services
James Brescia, EdD	SLO County Office of Education
James Tedford, MD	Medical Representative
Alison Ventura, PhD	Community at Large
Bob Watt	Community at Large

Commissioners Absent/Excused

Bruce Gibson (Chair)	SLO County Board of Supervisors
Erica Ruvalcaba-Heredia, EdD	Community at Large
Melinda Sokolowski	Child Care Planning Council

Staff Present

First 5 staff: Wendy Wendt, Jason Wells, Misty Livengood, Sarah Montes Reinhart, Kris Roudebush
Commission Counsel: Natalie Frye-Laacke

Call to Order

Vice Chair Borenstein called the meeting to order at 11:32 AM.

ITEM 1 – Vice Chair Comments

Vice Chair Gibson reminded Commissioners that upcoming meetings will be on Wednesdays from 3-5:30 p.m. The next meeting is January 26, 2022.

She commented on new Omicron variant, predicted to be less symptom heavy but more transmissible. She is heartened to be getting back to more “normal” non COVID public health work.

ITEM 2 – Commissioner Announcements and Updates

Commissioner Watt met with the new Evaluation team.

Commissioner Brescia announced the upcoming transition of the Child Care Planning Council from Community Action Partnership SLO County (CAPSLO) to SLO County Office of Education (SLOCOE), officially July 1, 2022.

ITEM 3 - Public Comment – Items not on the agenda

Krista Jeffries, Lead Organizer with Yes in My Back Yard (YIMBY) in SLO County, highlighted the group and its focus on housing/transportation/land use issues. First 5 priorities related to child care and family housing stability are clearly related. She is interested in boosting the coalition and seeking ways to work together in the future.

Rachel Mann, also of YIMBY, described the exodus of families from San Luis Obispo County due to the high cost of living. Commissioner Borenstein offered appreciation for the group's presence at today's meeting.

ITEM 4 (ACTION ITEM) - Consent Agenda

- a) Approve October 28, 2021 minutes
- b) Approve November 17, 2021 minutes

Public Comment: NONE

Commissioner Watt made a motion to approve the Consent Agenda. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Tedford and passed unanimously.

ITEM 5 (ACTION ITEM) – Approval of Contract with SLO Botanical Garden

Associate Director Jason Wells introduced this item. The San Luis Obispo Botanical Garden (SLOBG) represents a new funding partnership opportunity. The nonprofit had submitted a proposal in response to the First 5 Thrive RFP. While the Commission took action at a prior meeting to fund a Home Visiting Coordination initiative (SLO County Public Health), the proposal review committee recognized the value of the SLOBG proposal, and requested that the Commission consider them for a contract and scope of work. The resulting proposal for review and approval by the Commission is for \$100,000 over an 18 month period (January 1, 2022 through June 30, 2024). The focus will be on expanding the SLOBG capacity to serve young children and their families, in English and in Spanish, and with a focus on the social-emotional benefits of outdoor experiences. The funding will help support the hiring of a part time staff person to coordinate the work – including outreach to families who would benefit from the experience. This initiative would be part of the Early Learning priority area of the First 5 SLO County Strategic Plan.

Public Comment:

SLOBG Executive Director Chenda Lor and Operations Director Ruta Saliklis, were on hand to express their excitement about the opportunity. They have already developed a job description for the new staff position. They commented that Dr. Nisha AbdulCader, Medical Director at Martha's Place, is on the SLOBG board and also heads the Youth Program Committee (note: First 5 Executive Director Wendy Wendt also serves on this committee).

Commissioner Borenstein expressed strong support for the initiative.

Commissioner Belch made a motion to approve a contract with the SLO Botanical Garden for \$100,000 in funds to support outdoor experiences for young children and their families. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Watt and passed unanimously.

ITEM 6 – Commission Approval: Updates to Personnel Policy/Benefits (Café Contribution for Health Plans)

Executive Director Wendy Wendt introduced this item. Over the coming months, Ms. Wendt will be working with the Ad Hoc Personnel committee (Commissioners Brescia and Belch) to update several elements of the agency's personnel policies. Item 6 involves a recommendation to update First 5 SLO County café cash allotments toward health/vision/dental premiums. The updated amounts as listed below will bring the agency into alignment with current County of San Luis Obispo amounts, notably by offering multiple levels for Employee Only, Employee +1, and Employee +2.

The Personnel Committee and Executive Director propose updating First 5 Personnel Benefits to align with current County Café Contribution categories and amounts as follows:

Category 1*: \$975 (EE); \$1,025 (EE+1); \$1250 (EE+2); \$836 w/out med coverage)
Category 2**: \$750 (EE); \$1075 (EE+1); \$1,310 (EE+2); \$631 w/out med coverage)

*Executive Director, Associate Director, Communications Officer, Special Projects Administrators

**Administrative Assistant (currently unfilled)

This policy change would go into effect January 1, 2022.

Commissioner Borenstein thanked the Ad Hoc for their work on this policy recommendation.

Public Comment: None

Commissioner Ventura moved to approve the updated Café Cash contribution amounts and start date as presented. Commissioner Tedford seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

ITEM 7 – Presentation on Children and Family Supports through Department of Social Services

Commissioner Linda Belch provided an overview of the structure and work of the County Department of Social Services. Core functions include CalWorks, CalFresh (SNAP), MediCal enrollment, Housing and Homeless Services, Workforce Development. Adult and Children's Services, including Child Welfare, falls under Commissioner Belch's leadership.

Commissioner Belch spotlighted concern related to the number of homeless children. Recent estimates count over 700 homeless youth under the age of 18 (23% of the homeless population), and over 250 children aged 0-5. She also noted that over 30% of referrals to Child Welfare Services are children 0-5. Lack of housing in SLO County is one of the reasons

children stay in foster care as long as they do. She spotlighted the “Bringing Families Home “program” that is helping to address this issue.

Commissioners Watt and Borenstein thanked Commissioner Belch for the wealth of information. Commissioner Watt commented on the value of partnerships between DSS and local community-based non profit organizations.

Public Comment: NONE

[Vice chair Borenstein moved to Items 10 and 11 to ensure a quorum for the remaining Action items.]

ITEM 10 -- CLOSED SESSION: Conference on Labor Negotiations (Government Code 54957.6)

Commissioners, Legal Counsel Natalie Frye-Laacke and Executive Director Wendy Wendt adjourned to Closed Session.

Commissioners returned from Closed Session. Legal Counsel Frye-Laacke reported out that the Commission approved a 3% cost of living increase for all existing staff positions, to commence January 1, 2022.

ITEM 11 -- Commissioner Approval: Budget Adjustment - \$7,000 from Contingency to Salary/Benefits

Ms. Wendt introduced this item, requesting Commission approval to move \$7,000 from Contingency to Salary/Benefits (\$5,000 to Salary, \$2,000 to Benefits) to cover the anticipated increase due to COLA increases (see Item 10).

Public Comment: none

Commissioner Watt moved to approve the Budget adjustment; the motion was seconded by Commissioner Ventura and passed unanimously.

ITEM 8 -- First 5 and Race-Equity-Diversity-Inclusion (REDI) Work

Ms. Wendt presented on this item, with an update on First Association and local attention being paid to “REDI” as it relates to First 5 work. First 5 SLO County staff have been engaging in conversation and reflection, including participation in several Association-hosted workshops. A “curbside consulting” opportunity is upcoming that will allow staff to take a deeper look at ways to be build awareness and responsiveness as an agency around race, equity, diversity and inclusion.

Commissioner Watt thanked staff for dedicating time and thought to this work. Commissioner Borenstein commented that this is a focus in Public Health.

Public Comment: none.

ITEM 9 – Staff Updates

Outreach and Communications Officer Misty Livengood provided updates on various activities at First 5:

- We Are the Care – Hopeful plans for an in-person gathering in January. Public comment continues. Child care is top-of-mind in many local conversations – was a theme at the recent Economic Forecast. Local municipalities are committing funds to support child care (e.g. Pismo Beach, SLO, Arroyo Grande). The County of SLO is still considering allocating ARPA funds toward child care. The City of Atascadero is scheduling an upcoming study session on child care.
- Hands on Hero 2022 will focus on “Hands on Heroes @ Work.” January’s hero will be Christina Lefevre Latner in her new staff role with the SLO Chamber of Commerce’s Family Friendly Workplace Accelerator Program. The remainder of the year will spotlight innovative businesses that have put family friendly workplace practices into action.
- Partner Events: Health Access Training Project Trauma Informed Practices Training (12/6/21); Child Care Planning Council State of Early Learning (1/27/22); ongoing PPE supply distributions through Child Care Resource Connection
- First 5 Association Virtual Summit

Associate Director Jason Wells announced that the January 2022 Commission meeting will include consideration of ongoing funding for several current programs.

Executive Director Wendy Wendt announced that Commission Chair and Vice Chair assignments for 2022 will also be on the January agenda. She encourage Commissioners to participate in upcoming events (e.g. Association Summit, SLO Chamber Insight Studio on Diversity/Equity/Inclusion). She urged Commissioners and staff to stay healthy, and looks forward to 2022.

Commissioner Borenstein thanked the staff for their hard work.

Public Comment: NONE

ITEM 12 – Adjourn

1:15 p.m.