

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

**COMMISSION MEETING MINUTES - DRAFT**  
October 24, 2018 (Approved December 5, 2018)

**Current Commissioners Present**

Bruce Gibson (Chair)	SLO County Board of Supervisors
Penny Borenstein, M.D. (Vice Chair)	SLO County Public Health Department
James Brescia	SLO County Office of Education
Devin Drake	Department of Social Services
James Forester, DDS	Medical Representative (Central Coast Dental Society)
Janet Murphy	Community at Large
Tracy Schiro	Children's Services Network
Melinda Sokolowski	Child Care Planning Council
Bob Watt	Community at Large

**Commissioners Absent/Excused: None**

**Staff Present**

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

**Call to Order**

Chair Gibson called the meeting to order at 3:03 PM.

**ITEM 1 –Chair Comments**

Chairman Gibson pointed out that the September meeting had a bare quorum and reiterated the importance for Commissioners to calendar and prioritize attendance at First 5 meetings.

He expressed appreciation for the special location for the meeting, and suggested that occasionally meetings be held at different locations around the county.

## **ITEM 2 – Commissioner Announcements and Updates**

Each Commissioner expressed appreciation for people in the community making a difference in the lives of young children.

Commissioner Sokolowski: Doug Jenison is a recently retired principal from Baywood Elementary School in Los Osos. Throughout his career, he has been an amazing leader, very engaging with parents.

Commissioner Brescia: Michael Specchierla, Director of College and Career Pathways at SLOCOE. Michael has been leading efforts to move forward with an ECE Pathway as part of the county Career Technical Education plan.

Commissioner Watt: His daughter Olivia is making a difference as a teacher in a special day class in South County.

Commissioner Drake: Commissioner Tracy Schiro, who is always focused on what is in the best interests of the child.

Commissioner Schiro: Marie Hughes from Family Care Network. She does a phenomenal job of truly knowing the youth she works with; has a tradition of sending them hand-written notes; is a role model for them.

Commissioner Gibson: Dr. Nisha AbdulCader. In her role as Medical Director of Martha's Place, she has carried on the legacy started by Commissioner Gibson's predecessor on the Board of Supervisors, Shirley Bianchi. Commissioner Gibson also commented on a recent lunch he was a part of with Dr. Ira Chasnoff when the latter was visiting San Luis Obispo to deliver a talk on the effects of cannabis, what we know and don't know about effects of cannabis on fetal development.

Commissioner Forester: Pediatrician and former First 5 Commissioner Dr. Bravo is an ideal colleague, is very effective at coordinating efforts especially on difficult cases. He has the art of always making each colleague and patient feel special.

Commissioner Murphy: Parent Participation staff who work with the youngest children's parents. Prime examples over the years have been Melissa Rochte, Sally Ames. The program gives parents new insight; this is where they make friends for life.

Jason Wells (Associate Director): Site visits with First 5 funded partners. So much of their work demonstrates intimate and caring relationships the families and children they serve.

Wendy Wendt (Executive Director): Phone calls from community members who reach out to First 5 seeking resources for their children.

Misty Livengood (Communications and Outreach Officer): Angela Rico, Early Head Start Area Manager with CAPSLO. Ms. Livengood worked with her to organize a parent engagement

event with families from Head Start in Nipomo as part of Talk.Read.Sing. She exudes warmth with the families she serves.

Natalie (First 5 Legal Counsel): Family nanny, Karma VanRock, who provides every day care for her 1 and 3 year old.

**ITEM 3 - Public Comment – Items not on the agenda**

None.

**ITEM 4 (ACTION ITEM) - Consent Agenda**

- a. Approval of the September 26, 2018 Minutes
- b. Approval of Q1 2018-19 Financials

*Public Comment: None*

Commissioner Gibson asked for explanation regarding a noted lag in Prop 10 tax appropriation payment for the month of September. Ms. Wendt responded that there had been a hold up at the state level, and all counties were told to expect delayed distribution of funds.

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

**ITEM 5 (ACTION ITEM) – Public Hearing: Commission Review and Approval of FY2017-18 Annual Report to First 5 California**

Mr. Wells outlined programmatic and fiscal data to be submitted to First 5 CA by October 31, 2018 in compliance with state Annual Report requirements.

Commissioner Gibson asked how First 5 CA defines a “small” county (small counties receive augmentation funds from First 5 CA. Ms. Wendt explained that counties with birth rates under 1,000 are considered small counties. San Luis Obispo County has a birth rate close to 2,500. Commissioner Gibson queried whether future funding might be distributed to regional clusters across the state.

*Public Comment: None*

Commissioner Drake made a motion to approve First 5 SLO County’s FY 2017-18 State Annual Report submission. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Forester and passed unanimously.

## **ITEM 6 – Proposed Federal Public Charge Policy – Presentation and Request for Direction from the Commission**

Joel Diring of Diring and Associates and the First 5 Health Access Training Project, presented on facts and potential effects related to pending Public Charge regulation changes.

Commission and staff discussion ensued.

Jason Wells asked for clarification on when the Public Charge rules would go into effect. Mr. Diring responded at the time the regulation goes into effect (if it goes into effect, following required responses to public comments), and the rule is not retroactive.

Commissioner Schiro pointed out that the anticipated change is already having a chilling effect based on fear, not fact -- parents whose children were born here aren't coming in for services at the Department of Social Services.

Commissioner Borenstein echoed this observation in the context of WIC, which has historically been excluded from Public Charge and will continue to be excluded. However, WIC staff are now seeing a 25% dip in users, though the birth cohort is down by only 7%.

Commissioner Sokolowski offered an example with teen parents. Her program is seeing a dramatic drop in access to services for immigrant teen parents, a particularly vulnerable population.

Mr. Diring emphasized the importance of trusted messengers to help families separate fact from fiction. Who *are* the best messengers? Promotores? Schools? It is very difficult to provide total certainty in uncertain times.

Commissioner Forester wondered what the chances are that even tougher restrictions would follow. This type of uncertainty gives families good reason for the distrust.

Mr. Diring concurred, saying that he used to be able to say with certainty that there are certain things you can trust. Now he is not confident to assure people in that way anymore.

Commissioner Drake emphasized encouraging families to continue accessing services until the change is in force?

Mr. Diring agreed -- If families are eligible for services now, use them now while they can.

Commissioner Gibson added that a relatively small number of individuals may actually be affected by the rules themselves; but a much larger number are already being affected by fear and resulting behavior.

*Public Comment:*

Marilu Gomez, First 5 School Readiness Coordinator with the Paso Robles Schools asked – If I am a parent and my kid was born here and needs SSI, can she continue to get it? Mr. Diringer responded yes.

Becca Carsel, First 5 Health Access Training Project, reported that she had interviewed 20 different providers around the county, who expressed different levels of concern being voiced by their stakeholders.

Commissioners discussed direction for First 5 staff to respond to the Public Charge issue.

Commissioner Gibson recommended signing on to the statement issued by Protecting Immigrant Families objecting to the change in Public Charge regulations.

He further suggested increasing public education for families on truth versus fiction.

Commissioners recommended that First 5 San Luis Obispo County craft a statement that is consistent with responses by other public agencies, including First 5 CA, Child Welfare Directors Association, schools and health agencies.

Additional direction from the Commission:

- Send information to local First 5 funded partners.
- Send Public Comment to the federal government.
- Inform state and federal legislative offices of First 5's position

**ITEM 7 – New Commissioner: Mark Haas**

Wendy Wendt introduced this item, reminding Commissioners of Tracy Schiro's impending retirement and Children's Services Network (CSN) decision to assign Mark Haas to finish out her term as the CSN representative on the Commission.

*Public Comment: None.*

Commissioner Brescia pointed out a typo in the cover memo, that had used an old template regarding Commissioner turnover, and included Julian Crocker's name instead of Ms. Schiro's.

Commissioner Borenstein requested that in the future, CSN consider not assigning a DSS staffer as its delegate, as this results in double DSS representation on the First 5 Commission. Commissioner Drake responded that this may be adjusted at a later date.

Commissioner Borenstein made a motion to approve Mark Haas to serve as CSN representative on the Commission through the end of the current term (end date July 20, 2019), and forward his name to the Board of Supervisors for final approval. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Sokolowski and passed unanimously.

## **ITEM 8 – Staff Updates**

Staff provided misc. updates on activities at First 5 SLO County.

Misty Livengood presented on the following:

- Upcoming celebrations of First 5 at 20 years: November 15 KCBX interview with First 5 staff (Wendy Wendt, former Commissioner (Rene Bravo), and funded partner (Yecencia Silvas).
- Hands on Heroes for October (Amy Kardel, nominated by Rotary de Tolosa), November (Nate Potter, Nominated by 4H)
- First 5 Outreach at the Twin Cities Birth and Family Fair
- First 5 Sponsorship of the Central Coast Breastfeeding Coalition Donor Breastmilk Drive
- First 5 Express paid a visit to the Nipomo Head Start
- Latino Health Coalition health fair coming up on October 28<sup>th</sup> in Morro Bay
- Assemblymember Cunningham's office honored Building Blocks Homes Daycare as Small Business of the Month.
- Story hours are launching at ECHO homeless shelter and soon at 40Prado thanks to the work of the Early Literacy team at SLO County Office of Education.

*Public Comment: NONE*

## **ITEM 9 – Early Literacy Stories from Around the County**

Margaret Kensinger-Klopfer, Youth Librarian for County of San Luis Obispo Public Libraries, welcomed Commissioners to the Atascadero Library. She mentioned a recent article in the New York Times that included comments by 12 authors talking about why they love the public library.

The County Library's strategic plan includes a focus on parent engagement and early literacy, which is being activated in all fifteen 15 locations across the county. More bilingual story times are being incorporated; more baby and toddler time; digital services; parenting classes. Through a partnership between the libraries and the South County Youth Coalition, a new forum series called Curious Parenting is being offered at south county branches.

Shannon Pimentel, Early Literacy Specialist at SLO County Office of Education, provided a brief update on Raising a Reader, which is now at 41 sites around the county. The program offers great opportunities to team up with the local libraries. A new Raising a Reader website is close to launch. Shannon and colleague Lauren Thorne have been building relationships with local homeless services providers to bring more books, story zones, and reading activities into local shelters.

Wendy Lewis, Executive Director of ECHO homeless shelter in Atascadero, described the shelter's focus on families with children and the recent addition of the early literacy partnership. Every night the shelter has up to 15 children (total guests typically 50). Story hour is gaining in popularity.

Commissioner Gibson asked what it would take to get story hour going 7 days a week; it is such an obvious and simple thing to happen.

Lisa Bolivar-Cristerna, of CAPSLO, described a similar program in the making at the newly opened 40 Prado homeless services center in San Luis Obispo. Home based Early Head Start teachers will be assigned to the site to work with families with children. Enhanced story time space and volunteer opportunities are being organized in consultation with the County Office of Education.

*Public Comment: NONE*

### **ITEM 10 – Anticipating 2019: Strategic Planning, Commissioner Terms**

Wendy Wendt presented a draft timeline for 2019 that shows parallel processes for Commissioner selection and Strategic Planning. She proposed that the Commission identify an ad hoc advisory committee to help fine tune the strategic planning process and another ad hoc nominating committee to work toward Commissioner selection.

Commissioner Murphy expressed appreciation seeing the overlap of the two calendars.

Commissioner Gibson encouraged current Commissioners to consider continuing and reapply if they so choose.

*Public Comment: NONE*

### **ITEM 11 – Adjourn**

5:29 p.m.