

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

COMMISSION MEETING MINUTES

June 28, 2023 (APPROVED September 27, 2023)

Current Commissioners Present

Penny Borenstein, M.D. (Vice-Chair) SLO County Public Health Department

Linda Belch	Department of Social Services
James Tedford, M.D.	Medical Representative (AAP Chapter 2)
Alison Ventura, Ph.D.	Community at Large
Bob Watt	Community at Large

Commissioners Absent/Excused

James Brescia, Ed.D (Chair)	SLO County Office of Education
Dawn Ortiz-Legg	SLO County Board of Supervisors
Erica Ruvalcaba-Heredia, Ed.D	Community at Large
Melinda Sokolowski	Early Care and Education Planning Council

Staff Present

Commission staff: Wendy Wendt, Jason Wells, Misty Livengood, Kris Roudebush
Commission Counsel: Natalie Frye-Laacke

Call to Order

Vice Chair Borenstein called the meeting to order at 3:00 PM.

ITEM 1 –Public Comment – Items not on the agenda

None

ITEM 2 – Commissioner Comments/Announcements

Commissioner Borenstein updated on several new hires at the County Department of Public Health; notably, Linda McClure is back temporarily to oversee WIC while permanent Director Rachel Veith-Rossetti is on maternity leave.

Commissioner Watt reminded of the upcoming Community Foundation picnic on July 14th celebrating its 25th anniversary.

Commissioner Borenstein underscored that this is the last meeting of the fiscal year, and encouraged Commissioners to stay connected with First 5 activities and staff during the summer.

ITEM 3 - Consent Agenda

- a) Approve May 24, 2023 minutes
- b) Approve Contract Amendment with MP Health for FY23-24

Public Comment: None

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

ITEM 4 – Partner Presentation – South County Youth Coalition Learning Pods

Nicola Glanville (South County SAFE Coordinator) and Megan Cielatka (Learning Pod Coordinator) introduced the Commission to the creation and development of the South County Learning Pods, funded through a First 5 Thrive grant and launched in Spring 2021 during the Pandemic. During the initial year, the team had to work creatively to offer safe-distanced pod experiences for families.

The Learning Pods are providing an important first opportunity to communicate/socialize with other parents (the Pod was an English-speaking group). Feedback surveys helped reshape the program from an 8-week series to 6 weeks. 4 pods per week were offered to different age groups. The program entered into a partnership with Grover Beach Parks and Rec to advertise and offer spaces for Pod meetups. In 2021 they offered an 8-week series in the Spring and Fall which consisted of 4 individual pods based on age with about 10 families in each pod. A sample of topics covered includes gross motor skills, play, yoga, art, music. The underlying focus is on attachment and bonding with your child.

Spanish-language pods also developed over time. At first the team offered programming exactly like the English pod, but that model didn't work, so the model was adjusted to include multi-age groups, varying instructors each week (sometimes bilingual/bicultural, sometimes with an interpreter). This series was offered at Oceano Community Center. A third bilingual version was then offered at Nipomo Library. A bilingual therapist did a bilingual pod one/week. 10 families attended the first session. The second pod included 12-15 families.

Some highlights of the project going forward include:

- English pod meeting at Ramona Gardens in Grover Beach
- New Partnership with the Exploration Discovery Center to have a field trip
- The Bilingual series will continue, and either move back to the Oceano Community Center or Library

Parent quotes:

- Community building/confidence
- Amazing educators, great place for children and parents to socialize and learn

- Relating to other parents
- Slowing down and scheduling time to spend time with my child.
- “I’m not alone on the parenting journey”

Commissioner Questions/Comments

Commissioner Ventura inquired about time of day when pods are offered. Are there options for working parents? Answer – pods are offered on weekday mornings at the moment. Going forward, there is a possible plan for evening pods and/or weekends.

Commissioner Sokolowski suggested that for South County locations, CAPSLO may have some sites to offer up for pod gatherings.

Commissioner Watt praised the evolution of the program. He commented that it is important to recognize that a program needs to have the ability to change/evolve over time. He asked to what extent dads are involved. Answer: at least one dad has participated in the bilingual pod, and also several grandparents.

Commissioner Borenstein asked if word-of-mouth has helped with marketing the program. Answer – a LOT. Pod participants regularly post on social media; even people have been coming from Santa Maria to participate.

Public Comment: None

ITEM 5 – Staff Reports

Communications and Outreach Coordinator Misty Livengood provided the following updates:

- Congressman Salud Carbajal is co-authoring a federal bill: The Child Care Investment Act, designed to expand employer-provided child care credit, increase maximums for child care spending accounts, and increase child and dependent care tax credit rates. The Congressman is hoping for First 5 and Chamber support of this legislation.
- The SLO Chamber is hosting a series of Working Lunch segments on KCBX’s Issues and Ideas series with a focus on Family-Friendly Workplaces.
- First 5 seasonal sponsorships include summer concerts in multiple local cities, Movies in the Park in Atascadero, and other outdoor festivities in communities throughout the county.
- Print Media communications this summer highlights a First 5 informational ad in the Mid-State Fair program.
- A 2023 ad campaign titled First 5 in Focus will spotlight funded partner programs and will be featured in the Paso Robles and Atascadero magazines (Central Coast Journal is pausing production).
- The First 5 family is sad to say goodbye to their own Kris Roudebush, Special Projects Coordinator who has spearheaded many of the agency’s most valued initiatives in recent years – including We Are the Care, Help Me Grow, and the Pediatric Town Hall series. Commissioners and staff added accolades and best wishes. Ms. Roudebush

commented on how valuable the First 5 experience has been for her.

Executive Director Wendy Wendt added the following updates:

- A search for a new Special Projects Coordinator will be launched later in the summer or early fall.
- The First 5 Association is working on network-wide advocacy related to First 5 sustainability. Staff plans to pay counties a visit before the end of 2023.

Public Comment: None

ITEM 6 – Impact LEGACY

Ms. Wendt introduced this item. She provided a brief summary of First 5 CA IMPACT funding. First 5 SLO County administered the first round of funding from 2016-20; the second round of funding was administered by the SLO County Office of Education with backup support by First 5 SLO County staff. This third round (IMPACT Legacy) is required to be structured as a regional effort with the three “IMPACT Region 7” counties – SLO, Santa Barbara and Ventura. One of the three First 5 agencies is required to serve as “Fiscal Lead Agency (FLA)”. First 5 San Luis Obispo County staff are willing to step into this role as long as the majority of the daily operational functions of the FLA can be contracted out to the Ventura County Office of Education (a longstanding partner and lead on IMPACT activities, both region-wide and locally). First 5 CA is aware of and in support of this plan.

Staff requests the First 5 SLO County Commission take action to:

1. Ratify First 5 SLO’s response to a First 5 CA Request for Application (RFA) No. LEGACY 2023 IMPACT Legacy Regional Grant submitted on June 9, 2023.
2. Enter into an Agreement with First 5 California to Serve as Region 7* Fiscal Lead Agency (FLA) for IMPACT Legacy Regional Grant to enhance the quality of early learning and care (ELC) environments (*San Luis Obispo, Santa Barbara and Ventura Counties), and
3. Authorize approval of a related agreement with Ventura County Office of Education (VCOE) for operational elements of the Fiscal Lead Agency Role.

Commissioner Questions/Comments:

Commissioner Watt asked about administrative costs. Ms. Wendt explained that \$12,000 will go to First 5 SLO County to offset initial start-up and planning related to the project, as well as to carry out minimal administrative pass-through activities throughout the life of the grant (at least through June 30, 2025).

Commissioner Watt also asked what staff feel is the biggest burden associated with this role. Staff answered that the burden feels minimal, with the exception of a large sum being passed through the agency and the associated accounting implications. First 5 Legal Counsel Natalie Frye-Laacke commented that risks are low, and liability protections will be built into the contract between First 5 SLO County and the Ventura County Office of Education.

Commissioner Belch asked about subcontracts for the work to be carried out across the region. Ms. Wendt explained that each of the three County Offices of Education will subcontract with the Ventura County Office of Education.

Commissioner Ventura asked if there will be an opportunity to renegotiate administrative costs if the burden is higher than anticipated. Ms. Frye-Laacke anticipated that this is unlikely. Commissioner Borenstein pointed out that facilitating access to funding for early childhood supports is one of First 5's core functions and we should feel comfortable with this type of role even if it takes staff time to administer.

Ms. Wendt alerted Commissioners to an upcoming need for a budget adjustment, but that given the timeline this funding will not be included in the current version of the Financial Plan and administrative budget up for approval in Items 8 and 9 today.

Public Comment: None

Commissioner Belch made a motion to approve the following:

1. Ratify First 5 SLO's response to a First 5 CA Request for Application (RFA) No. LEGACY 2023 IMPACT Legacy Regional Grant submitted on June 9, 2023.
2. Enter into an Agreement with First 5 California to Serve as Region 7* Fiscal Lead Agency (FLA) for IMPACT Legacy Regional Grant to enhance the quality of early learning and care (ELC) environments (*San Luis Obispo, Santa Barbara and Ventura Counties), and
3. Authorize approval of a related agreement with Ventura County Office of Education (VCOE) for operational elements of the Fiscal Lead Agency Role.

The motion was seconded by Commissioner Ventura and passed unanimously.

ITEM 7 – Strategic Plan Update: Approve Long-Range Financial Plan

Executive Director Wendy Wendt introduced this item. First reading of the long-range financial plan took place at the May Commission meeting. The draft presented for approval today is identical to the May draft.

Public Comment: none

Commissioner Watt moved to approve the Long-Range Financial Plan Update. Motion seconded by Commissioner Tedford. Motion passed unanimously.

ITEM 5 – Approve FY 2023-24 Administrative Budget

Ms. Wendt introduced the final draft of the FY 2023-24 Administrative Budget. A first reading was conducted at the May 2023 Commission meeting. No changes since the May reading.

Public comment: None.

Commissioner Ventura moved to approve the FY 2023-24 Administrative Budget; Commissioner Belch seconded. Motion passed unanimously.

ITEM 9 – Strategic Planning Discussion

Ms. Wendt introduced this item. Strategic Planning has been agendaized each meeting for the past several months. To date, Commissioners and staff have explored descriptive local data on early childhood; aligned plans and initiatives, and stakeholder feedback based on interviews, focus groups and surveys. Today's meeting will begin to focus attention on First 5's potential priorities/roles/strategies over the next strategic plan season (2024-2028). The Commission will also be asked to consider its Mission statement and to reflect on values/guiding principles.

Associate Director Jason Wells underscored the importance of ample time to provide current and potential funded partners with direction on First 5's investment direction.

Mission statement discussion confirmed an update to:

First 5 San Luis Obispo County allocates funds and advocates for quality programs and services, supporting children prenatal to five years old and their families, to ensure that every child is healthy, developing to their optimal potential, and ready to learn.

First 5 staff have worked with the evaluation team to create a strategy "map" that asks core questions:

- What are priority issues in the community?
- Who else is working on this issue?
- What strategies is First 5 currently using to address this issue?
- What impact are current strategies having?
- What disparities exist?
- Where is there opportunity – gap, momentum – for First 5 to contribute toward addressing county-identified issues over the next 4 years?

Commissioners were encouraged to peruse the map and to reflect on it, with a goal to build consensus that the map details are appropriate and anything "missing" gets included.

Commissioner Sokolowski suggested that in the case of early literacy, First 5 may be able to play a supporting but not a leading role in the future.

Commissioner Belch and Ventura addressed the identified issue of early childhood nutrition/obesity, and recommended focusing instead on early childhood “wellness” as a more apt term/concept than obesity. SNAP enrollment is a key local challenge to keep tabs on.

Commissioner Sokolowski suggested that parent education programs can be/are incorporating nutrition/wellness into topics-of-focus.

Commissioner Watt reminded of First 5’s role as an advocate, and asked how active the agency intends to be in this area. Ms. Wendt suggested two concrete ways to include advocacy into the Plan – first, as part of the Theory of Change model (three roles: funder, network builder, advocate), and second, as part of the Commission’s statement of values/guiding principles.

Commissioner Belch inquired if gender identity would fall into the newly identified “wellness” issue area, or as a category of its own. Ms. Wendt suggested that Race Equity Diversity and Inclusion (REDI) is an overarching theme in strategic planning across the First 5 network, and is meant to hold us accountable for elevating *all* children and families. This is a mindset and value we intend to help ourselves accountable to.

Commissioner Borenstein noted that “workforce development” is less a separate “issue” than a challenge that spreads across all other categories. Ms. Wendt pointed out that workforce is more of a systems level than population-level issue, but it came up so often in stakeholder feedback that it was called out separately in the strategic map. Commissioner Sokolowski suggested that First 5 funds might help support staff training within programs; workforce doesn’t need to be called out/funded on its own.

Commissioner Belch pointed out that the flip side of trauma is resiliency. How can we help families build capacity to manage stress. First 5 Evaluation Consultant, Becca Carsel commented that there are a number of intersecting issues that relate to trauma and resilience (e.g. mental health, basic needs, child care, social connections.....)

Commissioner Tedford highlighted developmental screening, and recommended focusing future attention across all pediatric providers (not just CHC and Bravo Pediatrics as part of the recent MHSA-funded 3 by 3 project). He also commented that Tolosa Children’s Dental Center is struggling to attract dentists, but still trying to expand given the demand.

Discussion ensued regarding VALUES. The working list includes:

Equity
Prevention
Whole Family
Upstream
Collective Impact
REDI/DEI
Advocacy
Evidence-based and/or Community-Defined Evidence and/or “Do What Works”
Innovation/Flexibility

* Commissioners engaged in a discussion regarding the challenges related to the importance of valuing “evidence-based” investments and also leaving room for local community engagement/buy-in/relevance, as well as a companion value around innovation and flexibility.

Mr. Wells noted that the Values/Guiding Principles is a work in progress, nothing is ruled in or out at this point, and that updated language will be presented to the Commission for further deliberation/approval at a later date.

Next steps include staff/Commissioner engagement in a deeper prioritization process based on information gathered to date, a mapping of current and future potential funding opportunities, and drafting of a Strategic Plan document draft. Two to three Commissioners were asked to self-identify to be part of a summer working group around some or all of these tasks.

Commissioners Watt, Belch and Ventura volunteered for this role.

Public comment: None.

ITEM 10 -- Future Agenda Items

- Children’s Advocacy Center Presentation –maybe in September

Public Comment: Lisa Fraser, Executive Director of Center for Family Strengthening/LINK, thanked Commissioners for anticipating including the CAC on a future agenda. She and her team are working with the District Attorney’s Office and the Sexual Abuse Response Team to build the program model, fundraise and maintain staff.

ITEM 11 – Adjourn

5:29 p.m.