

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

**COMMISSION MEETING MINUTES**  
May 27, 2021 (Approved June 24, 2021)

**Current Commissioners Present**

Bruce Gibson	SLO County Board of Supervisors
Penny Borenstein, M.D.	SLO County Public Health Department
James Brescia	SLO County Office of Education
Erica Ruvalcaba-Heredia	Community at Large
Melinda Sokolowski	Child Care Planning Council
James Tedford	Medical Representative (AAP Chapter 2)
Alison Ventura	Community at Large
Bob Watt	Community at Large

**Commissioners Absent/Excused --**

Devin Drake	Department of Social Services
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**Staff Present**

Commission staff: Wendy Wendt, Jason Wells, Misty Livengood, Sarah Montes Reinhart, Kris Roudebush

Commission Counsel: Natalie Frye-Laacke

**Call to Order**

Chair Gibson called the meeting to order at 11:31 a.m.

**ITEM 1 –Chair Comments**

Commissioner Gibson commented that the June 2021 will be via Zoom; possibly in-person meetings will resume starting at the next regularly scheduled date in September. Remaining dates in 2022 are September 23, October 28, and December 2. Dates and times in 2022 are likely to change from the current year; First 5 staff will submit options via a doodle poll.

**ITEM 2 - Public Comment – Items not on the agenda**

Lauren Handley, Preschool Coordinator with the Paso Robles Public Schools, updated the Commission on a new Marie Bauer Early Education Center, scheduled to open in the coming months. The preschool program is an inclusion model, and applications are being accepted for a start date of August 19.

### **ITEM 3 – Commissioner Comments/Announcements**

Commissioner Borenstein commented that Public Health COVID briefings are likely to continue on Wednesday afternoons, and requested a different day/time for 2022 meetings.

Commissioner Brescia expressed that Thursday afternoons are typically heavy meeting days/times for school district personnel.

### **ITEM 4 - Consent Agenda**

- a. Approval of the March 25, 2021 Minutes
- b. Approval of the FY 2020-21 Third Quarterly Financial Report

*Public Comment: None*

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

### **ITEM 5 – Staff Reports**

Misty Livengood, Outreach and Communications Officer, provided an update on various First 5 activities:

- Various Month of the Child drive-by and virtual events showcased by First 5
- Advocacy Day visits with Senator Laird and Assemblymember Cunningham – Cunningham decided to co-author AB123 (Paid Family Leave) and submit a letter of support for one-time funding toward early childhood systems support.
- Staff is working on developing a We Are The Care public profile
- Two Hands-on Heroes: Laura Ottrando (Martha's Place); Alison Borgsmiller (Bravo Pediatrics)
- Bridges to Resilience ACES conference upcoming on June 9<sup>th</sup>. KCBX Central Coast Voices episode during this Commission meeting is providing further details.
- Various early literacy updates: Monday Club donating books to Raising a Reader; CA First Partner is teaming up with local libraries for a Summer Book Club.
- First 5 intern\* video project – First 5 in Focus Partner profiles to be rolled out in the coming months. (\*Angela Spinelli, Andrea Uribe)

Ms. Wendt provided the following updates:

- Acknowledgement of Andrea Uribe's stellar performance as First 5 intern over two quarters.
- Note of gratitude for First 5's long working relationship with Evaluator Tom Keifer. Mr. Keifer opted not to respond to the recent Request for Qualifications (RFQ) for evaluation services.
- 3 applications submitted in response to the RFQ; selection committee is being formed; a contract proposal will be submitted for Commissioner approval at the June meeting.

- UndocuSupport update – has been formalized as a Field of Interest Fund with the Community Foundation of SLO County; will use a capacity building grant to expand focus as permanent platform for both support, advocacy and empowerment with and by immigrant communities in SLO County.
- Collaborative Public Sector Child Care Study – scheduled for a formal presentation in June and update on parallel efforts related to child care innovation.
- First 5 Annual Update scheduled for June 8, 2021 at the Board of Supervisors Meeting. Ms. Wendt will present, along with Commissioner Ruvalcaba-Heredia and Child Care Planning Council Coordinator Raechelle Bowlay.

*Public Comment:* Raechelle Bowlay, Child Care Planning Council Coordinator, expressed appreciation for the partnership with First 5.

### **ITEM 6 -- American Rescue Plan Act: Local Proposal for Investment in Children and Families**

Executive Director Wendy Wendt introduced this item. She explained the anticipated American Rescue Plan appropriation of \$55 million to the County and \$30 million across the seven Cities. A coalition of local child serving agencies is working with First 5 staff to draft a proposal for investment of up to 5% of these funds toward early childhood supports. These are one-time funds, to be expended by December 2024. The early childhood coalition is building a list of proposed strategies in the areas of child care, family resource centers, mental/behavioral health, and housing stabilization. Some of the proposal endorsers include the Child Care Planning Council, CAPSLO Child Care Resource Connection, SLO County Office of Education, and the Center for Family Strengthening. Ms. Wendt will anticipate including reference to the ARPA funding proposal during her annual update to the Board of Supervisors on June 8.

### **DISCUSSION**

- Commissioner Gibson provided further clarification on how the County is determining use of ARPA funds. A special Board of Supervisors budget hearing is scheduled for June 15 to decide an overall approach to fund prioritization.
- Commission Watt inquired if other Supervisors are currently part of the discussion regarding the early childhood proposal. Answer: As members of the ad hoc subcommittee on ARPA funds, Supervisors Gibson and Peschong are aware of the impending proposal. The upcoming Board presentation and proposal will open up this opportunity.
- Commissioner Brescia underscored the importance of emphasizing how this proposal supports economic revitalization.
- Commissioner Gibson added that equity is a critical theme to highlight as well.

*Public Comment:*

- Lisa Fraser, Executive Director at Center for Family Strengthening, expressed gratitude that family resource center supports are included in the proposal.

- Raechelle Bowlay commented that this is an incredible opportunity, and that collaboration is key.

Commissioner Sokolowski made a motion to authorize First 5 staff to finalize with signing partners and submit a proposal for local investment of American Rescue Plan funds to support COVID resilience/recovery of young children and families. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Watt and passed unanimously.

#### **ITEM 7 – Contract Amendment: Little Wings Preschool (ACTION ITEM)**

Associate Director Jason Wells introduced this item. Little Wings is currently contracted with First 5 to build on its existing preschool facility in Atascadero. The original contract is for \$75,000. They are requesting an additional \$25,000 to cover unanticipated costs – including city fees, premium supply costs, etc.. Owner Tony Burg and partners are working hard to finish the project. The program now has a growing waiting list of nearly 100 families.

Commissioner Sokolowski commended Mr. Burg and his wife Dani for not giving up in the face of challenge.

*Public Comment: None.*

Commissioner Ventura made a motion to approve a \$25,000 contract amendment to the Little Wings Preschool contract for completion of an expanded facility. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Borenstein and passed unanimously.

#### **ITEM 8 – Strategic Plan Review: Long-Range Financial Plan (First Reading)**

Ms. Wendt provided an overview of the annual Financial Plan update. Today is the first reading, with approval scheduled for June 2021. Updated multi-year tobacco tax revenue projections are expected to be submitted by First 5 California in early June. In outlying years, revenue decline is predicted at 5%, based on prior year declines (due to decrease in smoking rates).

A tradition of conservative budgeting combined with lower-than-average invoicing by some funded partners during COVID has allowed for a modest uptick in anticipated program allocation for the remaining three years of the current Strategic Plan (from \$1.4 million to \$1.5 million per year).

Ms. Wendt reminded the Commission that the annual administrative budget and program allocations are built from the Long-Range Financial Plan.

Commissioner Gibson commented that the long-range financial planning system is a good one, provides a detailed picture of how First 5 is faring and where the agency is headed in the future.

*Public Comment: None.*

**ITEM 9 – Strategic Partnership Proposal: SLO Chamber of Commerce Family Friendly Workplace Accelerator Program (ACTION ITEM)**

Ms. Wendt introduced this item. First 5 has for several years been working with partners in the business community and in particular at the SLO Chamber of Commerce to articulate and build connections between early childhood development and economic prosperity. She welcomed Chamber CEO Jim Dantona, who with his colleague Molly Kern (Chamber Director of Governmental Affairs), presented a proposal for a strategic partnership with First 5 and the County of San Luis Obispo to launch a Family Friendly Workplace Accelerator Program based at the Chamber. Following are highlights:

- The Chamber recognizes that child care is an essential component of overall economic well-being in the community. The pandemic has further highlighted this issue, especially for women. The We Are the Care Cross Sector Collaboration Task Force and Family Friendly Workplace Toolkit have laid critical groundwork that can now be reinforced/expanded on by the proposed program.
- The new program will provide free staffing consultation/resource and referral support to any employer in SLO County interested in exploring ways to be more family-friendly.
- The proposed contract with First 5 is \$75,000 per year for three years. The Chamber is also hoping to secure matching support from the County of San Luis Obispo.
- A new full-time position based at the Chamber will staff the initiative.
- Preliminary metrics include (by 6/30/2024): 1) At least 100 businesses in SLO County will adopt at least one new innovative workplace policy/practice intended to incentivize parents of young children to remain in the workforce; 2) at least 50 partners will have access to employer-sponsored child care.
- Strategies to be employed include: outreach, one-one-one assistance, self assessment tools, network-building, workshops, and a library of policies/practices/peer mentor contacts.
- Plans to partner with local business associations, including the Farm Bureau, Visit SLOCAL, Human Resources of the Central Coast, and others.

**DISCUSSION:**

Commissioner Watt asked what other chambers and chamber leaders/members think of this idea. Mr. Dantona responded that there is much enthusiasm for it; many local businesses are already looking for role models (e.g. Trust Automation). This program provides a logical hub for support, resource sharing, and shared motivation. He predicts that the California Chamber of Commerce will be very interested in the model being developed here (which is in large part inspired by a similar model mobilized at the Santa Rosa Metro Chamber and funded by First 5 Sonoma County).

Ms. Kern added that the SLO Chamber is a perfect fit for this program, and that they have a great working relationship with the other local chambers.

Commissioner Ventura asked if there is a plan after the three-year contracted partnership period ends. Mr. Dantona responded that the chamber will evaluate the program's success after three years. One possible option at that time: the program becomes a permanent feature of the chamber, with ongoing support from chamber member sponsors or dues. Ms. Kern added that the Chamber sees this government investment (First 5 plus the County) as "seed funding," with the two agencies as "founders."

Commissioner Sokolowski praised the concept – we are now adding a "navigator" function to the toolkit; we are answering our community's call to action with this partnership.

Commissioner Gibson praised the project, commented that this present a great opportunity to invest in culture change.

Commissioner Watt encouraged the Chamber to include the schools on this one; Commissioner Brescia agreed and said he's working with the Chamber on the issue. Ms. Wendt pointed out that San Luis Coastal Unified School District is a partner on the Collaborative Public Sector Child Care Study – one feature of the study is focused on public agencies as major employers of working parents.

*Public Comment:*

Shana Paulson, Program Manager with CAPSLO's Child Care Resource Connection, expressed excitement for the proposed program, and pledged to support/participate in whatever way is helpful.

Commissioner Watt made a motion to approve a three-year contract with the SLO Chamber of Commerce as part of a strategic partnership to launch a Family Friendly Workplace Accelerator Program. The total contract is \$325,000 (\$75,000 per year). Contract start date July 1, 2021. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Sokolowski and passed unanimously.

**ITEM 10 – 2021-2 Program Funding Appropriation Overview**

Mr. Wells presented this item. Program funding for the coming fiscal year includes a combination of 1) existing allocations via current multi-year contracts, and 2) as-yet unallocated appropriations. The un-allocated portion for the upcoming year is approximately \$440,000. Mr. Wells offered up two options for use of these remaining funds:

- Budget "bumps" for select funded Partners currently in multi-year contracts, based on outcome evaluation data and anticipated need
- "Big Idea" investment in response to a community request for proposals.

Staff is looking for Commission direction on how to proceed along one and/or both of these paths.

**DISCUSSION:**

Commissioner Sokolowski asked First 5 Counsel Natalie Frye-Laacke re: requirement to recuse in the event of a discussion on funding strategies. Ms. Wendt pointed out that almost every Commission represents an agency associated with potential funding. Ms. Laacke responded that as the Commission is not being asked to vote on the item and the discussion is more at the conceptual level, it is appropriate to participate in high-level strategic guidance to staff.

Commissioner Gibson expressed support for the “big idea” concept. He also pushed for future First 5 investments to be matched with leveraged funds.

Commissioner Ventura supported the “budget bumps” idea, and emphasized the importance of being discerning about what can really have an impact for programs.

Commissioner Gibson suggested that depending on the outcome of American Rescue Plan funding decisions, First 5 dollars might become leverage.

Commissioner Borenstein suggested that the RFP language get developed in such a way that respondents could layer their proposals (i.e. fully funded versus pieces funded).

*Public Comment: None.*

#### **ITEM 11– FY 2021-22 Draft Administrative Budget**

Ms. Wendt introduced the draft Administrative Budget for FY 2021-22. This is the first reading and the final budget will be presented for Commission approval at its June 2021 meeting. She highlighted several changes from the prior year:

- Slight increase in salary/benefits due to STEP increases.
- A new professional services line item is included for facilitation of Race/Diversity/Equity/Inclusion work at the staff, Commission and partner levels.
- Bump in memberships to account for additional Chamber affiliations
- Slight drop in training budget, significant value purchases and travel

*Public Comment: NONE*

#### **ITEM 12 – Performance Evaluation: Executive Director (CLOSED SESSION)**

*Public Comment:* Raechelle Bowlay, Child Care Planning Council Coordinator, praised Ms. Wendt for her partnership and responsiveness, especially during COVID. Commissioners adjourned to Closed Session. Ms. Wendt was invited to join Closed Session. Commissioners returned from Closed Session.

Commission Counsel Natalie Frye-Laacke noted that at this point in the meeting a quorum had been lost. Agenda item will be continued until the June 24, 2021 meeting.

#### **ITEM 13 – Adjourn 11:30 a.m.**