

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

COMMISSION MEETING MINUTES

October 28, 2021 (APPROVED December 2, 2021)

Current Commissioners Present

Bruce Gibson (Chair)
Penny Borenstein, MD (Vice Chair)

SLO County Board of Supervisors
SLO County Public Health Department

Linda Belch
James Brescia, EdD
Melinda Sokolowski
James Tedford, MD
Alison Ventura, PhD
Bob Watt

SLO County Dept. of Social Services
SLO County Office of Education
Child Care Planning Council
Medical Representative (FAAP)
Community at Large
Community at Large

Commissioners Absent/Excused

Erica Ruvalcaba-Heredia, EdD

Community at Large

Staff Present

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

Call to Order

Chair Gibson called the meeting to order at 11:32 a.m.

ITEM 1 – Chair Comments

None

ITEM 2 – Commissioner Announcements and Updates

Commissioner Borenstein announced organizational changes within the Public Health Department, specifically two new Divisions (formerly one Division – Family Health Services) – 1) Clinical and Communicable Disease Services, and 2) Maternal and Child Health.

Commissioner Watt praised educators – and special education professionals in particular - as they have mobilized and launched the school year within the continuing context of COVID.

ITEM 3 - Public Comment – Items not on the agenda

None.

ITEM 4 (ACTION ITEM) - Consent Agenda

- a. Approve September 23, 2021 minutes
- b. Approve September 30, 2021 Special Meeting minutes
- c. Approve Q1 21-22 Financial Report
- d. Approve Contract Amendment – Parents Helping Parents

Public Comment: None

Commissioner Sokolowski made a motion to approve the Consent Agenda. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Watt and passed 7-0 (Commissioner Brescia was not present for the vote).

ITEM 5: Staff Reports

Misty Livengood, Communications and Outreach Officer, provided an update on the following activities:

- The Family Friendly Workplace Accelerator Program at the SLO Chamber launched on October 4, with Christina LeFevre Latner taking the full-time role of Workforce Development Manager (funding by First 5 and the County of San Luis Obispo). Media coverage has been extensive, and the community response immediate and extremely positive.
- We Are the Care has capped off a social media campaign. Public Comment is focused on the Cuesta College Economic Impact Report. Upcoming Public Comment will spotlight the Family Friendly Workplace Accelerator Program.
- The Hands on Heroes Campaign is transitioning due to new ownership of the Central Coast Journal. Our November Hero – Tri-Counties staffer Kristin Gautrey – will appear in the December issue (there will be no November issue).
- First 5 Intern Lily Goldstein has launched a new Talk.Read.Sing segment called “Silly Lily.”

Sarah Montes Reinhart, Special Projects Administrator with the 3 by 3 Project, provided the following highlights on the project:

- Over 1,200 screenings were performed during FY 20-21. 340 hours in one-on-one educational encounters with parents. 181 children were identified as needing referrals for early intervention services.

Commissioner Watt asked if there have been outliers. Ms. Reinhart responded that a full evaluation is in process. She pointed out that there is a clear increase in the number of parents wanting information, and sharing of parenting resources.

Executive Director Wendy Wendt provided the following updates:

- First 5 SLO County’s new evaluation team is diving into their work. They have provided an overall evaluation plan to the staff, and anticipate presenting at a First 5 Commission meeting early in 2022.

- First 5 staff are participating in a series of workshops hosted by the First 5 Association on the topic/s of Race, Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (“REDI”). The consulting team is top-notch, and the experience is highly valuable.
- First 5 Association Director Melissa Stafford Jones is stepping down to take a new position heading up the CA Youth Behavioral Health Initiative (a Governor-appointed role).
- UndocuSupport is poised to bring on its first paid staff person, with funding from a health equity grant through the County Public Health Department.
- American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds have been appropriated to support child care initiatives in three South County cities – Pismo Beach, Grover Beach, and Arroyo Grande. First 5 and early childhood partners are still waiting for additional information from the County of San Luis Obispo regarding hopeful opportunity to secure county-level ARPA funding toward child care. Ms. Wendt noted that the County of Santa Barbara Board of Supervisors recently voted to allocate \$2 million in ARPA funds toward child care recovery/resilience/expansion.
- The City of San Luis Obispo has mobilized a small pilot program to invest in expansion of licensed family child care homes within the city limits. This is a partnership between the City and CAPSLO’s Child Care Resource Connection.
- The Public Sector Child Care Study has continued to its next phase, with Consultant Fran McIntyre shepherding a four-agency survey of working families’ dependent care needs.
- Ms. Wendt is scheduled to give several presentations of note in the near future, including the Community Foundation’s annual Professional Advisors’ Luncheon, and the County Workforce Development Board.
- AB 361 requires that public entities approve 30-day resolutions allowing for virtual public meetings in the face of continuing public health emergencies. Ms. Wendt will schedule a special meeting for this purpose in November. Commissioner Brescia suggested looking into more efficient ways to comply with AB 361.

Discussion:

Commissioner Sokolowski pointed out that First 5 contributions coupled with generous donations from throughout the community have been invaluable to supporting vulnerable families during the pandemic.

Commissioner Belch asked if We Are the Care also focuses on child care needs for school-aged children. Pre-teens are especially vulnerable. Ms. Wendt responded that the child care conversation both within We Are the Care, the Child Care Planning Council and the Family Friendly Workplace Accelerator Program do not limit focus to only the 0-5 set. An additional population of concern is that of children – any age – with special developmental and/or physical needs.

Public Comment: None

ITEM 6 (ACTION ITEM): Commission Review and Accept FY2020-21 Annual External Audit

Ms. Wendt introduced this item. First 5 SLO County has contracted for a second year with Moss Levy Hartzheim (MLH). A three-person team from MLH was on-site at First 5 for 1 ½ days. Firm partner Alex Hom was in attendance at the Commission meeting to make a brief report and answer questions. Ms. Wendt shared that the audit included no compliance findings and flagged one finding related to internal controls – “In a test of 25 payroll transactions, it was noted that one employee did not get the advancement in vacation accrual when the employee reached four years of active service” (Audit document p. 35). Ms. Wendt acknowledged missing this timing; she explained that a corrective action plan had been immediately implemented upon discovery of the error – including updating vacation accrual calculators within the contracted Paychex payroll system as well as internal tracking procedures, and adjusting the accrued vacation total for the employee in question.

She briefly summarized the agency’s financial position at the end of FY 20-21, including an increase in revenue from the prior year largely due in part to underspending by several funded programs that were forced to contract, alter or pause services in the midst of COVID.

Mr. Hom concurred with Ms. Wendt’s summary, and commented that the audit process was straightforward and clean with the one finding listed above. He commended Ms. Wendt and her staff for their thoroughness, helpfulness and overall accuracy.

No Discussion. No Public Comment.

Commissioner Belch made a motion to accept the External Audit. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Sokolowski. Motion passed unanimously.

ITEM 7 (ACTION ITEM): Public Hearing: Commission Review and Approval of FY2020-21 Annual Report to First 5 California

Mr. Wells outlined programmatic and fiscal data to be submitted to First 5 CA by October 30, 2021 in compliance with state Annual Report requirements. He emphasized that the Report exercise gives us a chance to celebrate the work of the staff, families, children in our community. In addition, our numbers contribute to a state report, part of telling a statewide story.

Commissioner Belch appreciated seeing the data the way the First 5 California requests it. She asked if it is possible to compare the funding priority mix (Health, Early Learning, Family Support, Systems) in SLO County versus other county First 5s. Ms. Wendt responded that this is possible, with the caveat that each county First 5 defines which of its program investments to assign to these First 5 CA categories somewhat differently.

Public Comment: None

Commissioner Watt made a motion to approve First 5 SLO County’s FY2020-21 State Annual Report submission. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Tedford and passed unanimously.

Following the vote, Ms. Wendt drew Commissioners' attention to the Annual Report slide that shows multi-year revenue-to-expense trends. For the past several years, First 5 SLO County revenues have been higher than expenses. Ms. Wendt encouraged "brave planning and bold investment" by the Commission moving into the second half of the Strategic Plan.

ITEM 8 (ACTION ITEM): Contract with County of San Luis Obispo (Public Health Department) for Home Visiting Coordination

Mr. Wells presented on this item. A Request for Proposals titled "First 5 Thrive" was released. Five applications were submitted by the deadline. A Review committee comprised of Mr. Wells, and Commissioners Ventura and Gibson assessed all submitted proposals, and are submitting a recommendation to the full Commission for approval of a proposal submitted by the County Public Health Department for \$900,000 to support a Home Visiting Coordination initiative. The project will include implementation of a case management data system, and development of a unified screening/assessment and referral system across and among home visiting services in the county. A long-term vision embedded in this work is a universal home visiting option for all newly parenting families in San Luis Obispo County. Enhanced collaboration and coordination among existing programs offer a major step in this direction. Mr. Wells added that CAPSLO is a key partner in the home visiting work. An additional \$35,000 for a subcontract with CAPSLO is included in the recommendation, bringing the total contract to \$935,000. Contract duration is November 1, 2021 – June 30, 2024.

Cherie Fields and Karina Silva Garcia, both Public Health Department staffers involved with the Home Visiting program, were on hand for questions. They expressed gratitude and excitement about the proposed opportunity.

Discussion:

Commissioner Brescia inquired regarding the long-term funding plan for the initiative; what is First 5's exit strategy? Mr. Wells responded that the RFP required a 25% match and this was met within the proposed budget. In addition, it is important to point out that the First 5 investment is in part assisting with one-time costs that help build on existing programs (e.g. data system). Commissioner Brescia cautioned that the Commission needs to always confirm supplementation – not supplantation – when adding investments to existing programs.

Commissioner Gibson commented that based on his participation on the Review Committee, he sees this investment as assisting with better coordination, creation of efficiencies, and leveraging resources to achieve stronger outcomes for families. The results of this work could propel future investment by others, including the County.

Commissioner Brescia pointed out the importance of ensuring sustainability. Commissioner Gibson called out the example of Martha's Place, where initial First 5 investment allowed for "proof of concept" and results. Now Martha's Place is a permanent funded feature of the County Behavioral Health Department. Commissioner Borenstein added her conviction that this is a scalable effort, and that there are already significant additional resources going into county home visiting programs.

Ms. Wendt voiced her strong support for this direction. This is the first time that First 5 SLO County has invested significantly in home visiting, and is joining many other county First 5s in their support for this work. There is also strong interest at the state level in home visiting as a family strengthening modality. This local investment is ideally timed.

Commissioners Watt and Gibson acknowledged that it will be important to watch the rollout of this important new investment, its impact on the community, and its potential for lasting sustainability.

Public Comment: NONE

Commissioner Watt made a motion to approve a multi-year contract in the amount of \$935,000 with County Public Health for the purposes of Home Visiting Coordination. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Belch and passed 5-0 (Borenstein recused; Brescia had left the meeting before the vote).

As a follow-up, Mr. Wells announced that the Review Committee had taken note of the merits of another proposal that had been submitted from the SLO Botanical Garden for a trauma-informed nature-based experience initiative. The Committee is proposing a First 5 investment of \$100,000 over three years in support of this work. The idea is to contribute to building “islands of resilience” in the community. Some of the funding would support staffing, and some would support professional development trainings. A contract draft will be brought to the Commission at its December 2, 2021 meeting.

Commissioner Ventura added that this project felt like something fresh, and supports the idea of supporting the effort.

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Prior to adjourning, Ms. Wendt reminded Commissioners of the need to schedule another Special Meeting to update the Resolution allowing for the option to hold virtual public meetings. She will send out a poll to identify and ideal date.

ITEM 9 -- Adjourn
1:17 p.m.