

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

COMMISSION MEETING MINUTES

September 23, 2020 (Approved October 29, 2020)

Current Commissioners Present

Bruce Gibson (Chair)

SLO County Board of Supervisors

James Brescia, EdD

SLO County Office of Education

Devin Drake

Department of Social Services

Erica Ruvalcaba-Heredia, EdD

Community at Large

Melinda Sokolowski

Child Care Planning Council

James Tedford, MD

Medical Representative (FAAP)

Alison Ventura, PhD

Community at Large

Bob Watt

Community at Large

Penny Borenstein, MD (Vice Chair)

SLO County Public Health Department

Commissioners Absent/Excused

None

Staff Present

First 5 staff: Wendy Wendt, Jason Wells, Misty Livengood, Sarah Reinhart

Commission Evaluator: Tom Keifer

Commission Counsel: Natalie Frye-Laacke

Call to Order

Chair Gibson called the meeting to order at 3:01 PM.

ITEM 1 – Chair Comments

Chair Gibson welcomed Commissioners back to the first meeting of the fiscal year. He commented that the external audit is near completion and will be presented at the October 2020 meeting. He announced that Commissioner Borenstein will be honored by the Central Coast Medical Association as Physician of the Year along with her counterpart in Santa Barbara County. Executive Director Wendy Wendt added that Commissioner Borenstein expressed gratitude to the Commissioners for considering a day/time change for future meetings in order to enable her to resume attendance/participation. (Note: Commissioner Borenstein was present at this meeting, but arrived during the final agenda item).

ITEM 2 – Commissioner Announcements and Updates

Commissioner Sokolowski announced that CAPSLO's Head Start programs are enrolling in all 10 counties. A 58-page COVID health and safety protocol has been developed for program staff.

Commissioner Brescia thanked Commissioner Gibson for supportive comments re: child care and the workforce at a recent Board of Supervisors meeting.

Commissioner Gibson added that he is focused on elements of growing the economy that provide community benefits and ensure quality of life for everyone. He underscored the work of We Are the Care and crossover policy work on housing elements. Ms. Wendt added that staffer Kris Roudebush has been spearheading communication with each city and county planning commission on this effort.

A moment of silence was observed in memory of Supervisor Adam Hill, who passed away recently. Mr. Hill had briefly served as a First 5 Commissioner and was a long-time champion of supports for children and families in our community.

ITEM 3 - Public Comment – Items not on the agenda

Dr. Doug Major, of Optometric Care Associates and a First 5 grantee under the Vision Screening program, updated the Commission on advocacy efforts to educate state leaders on the importance of vision health as a part of early childhood health and development. He underscored the importance of children entering kindergarten with glasses needed, a crucial assistive benefit that is unrealized in over 45,000 of California's children. San Luis Obispo County does better than most. It is a low-cost investment, and kudos to First 5 SLO County for sustaining it over many years.

Shana Paulson, manager at CAPSLO's Child Care Resource Connection, provided an update on child care capacity. 280 programs are currently operating, working with required adjustments to staffing and COVID cleaning protocols. There is a 50% decrease compared to last year in the numbers of families seeking care through CCRC. Programs are struggling to stay afloat, while they adapt to virtual and/or distanced program models. Several waves of donated supplies have been greatly appreciated, including an allotment through First 5 CA.

Raechelle Bowlay, SLO County Child Care Planning Council Coordinator, thanked First 5 for positioning us well as a county during this crisis.

ITEM 4 (ACTION ITEM) - Consent Agenda

- a. Approve June 24, 2020 minutes
- b. Approve July 13, 2020 Special Meeting Minutes
- c. Approve Q4 19-20 Financial Report
- d. Approve 2020-21 Amendment to MHSA Contract with County of San Luis Obispo Department of Behavioral Health
- e. Approve Administrative Budget Adjustment to Cover CalPERS 2020-21 long-term pension liability payment

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): Commission Approval of Contract with CAPSLO/Local Child Care Planning Council for COVID Recovery Stipends for local child care providers

First 5 Associate Director Jason Wells introduced this item. First 5 CA has allocated “incentive layer” funds as a final appropriation from the 2016-20 IMPACT program. These funds are to be used toward COVID recovery efforts within the Quality Counts system. First 5 SLO County has received \$77,000 through this allocation. Staff recommends contracting with CAPSLO Child Care Planning Council to distribute these funds as stipends for local child care providers to maintain health and safety standards.

Public Comment:

Raechelle Bowlay (Child Care Planning Council) articulated that this funding will provide welcome assistance and augment a stipend program that has been maintained over the prior year.

Commissioner Brescia made a motion to approve the Consent Agenda. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Ventura. Motion passed 7:0 (Sokolowski abstained; Borenstein absent for vote).

ITEM 6 (ACTION ITEM): Commission Approval of Contract with SLOCOE for First 5 staffing in support of Quality Counts

Mr. Wells introduced this item. As of July 1, 2020, IMPACT funds are now received through the County Office of Education as one part of a multi-grant Quality Counts program. As a transition strategy, local Quality Counts Consortium partners are recommending a one-year contract with First 5 to maintain the IMPACT Administrator role for one additional year. This will enable First 5 staff Kris Roudebush to continue with her duties to coordinate/facilitate Consortium member communication, monitor progress, and engage Consortium members in ongoing advocacy efforts related to quality early care and education in SLO County. The total contract amount, which covers Ms. Roudebush’s .5 position (salary and benefits) is \$37,571.65.

Commissioner Drake made a motion to approve the Consent Agenda. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Ruvalcaba-Heredia. Motion passed 7:0 (Brescia abstained; Borenstein absent for vote).

ITEM 7 (ACTION ITEM): Commission Approval of Updated Plan for First 5 Emergency Response Funding Plan 2020-21

Executive Director Wendy Wendt introduced this item. She reviewed 1) Commission action taken in March 2020 to activate up to \$75,000 Emergency Response funding outside-of-budget in response to the COVID pandemic, 2) decision to partner with the Community Foundation to distribute the bulk of these funds through the Foundation's Disaster Support Fund, and 3) addition of an annual budget allocation for Emergency Response Funding for FY20-21 and all future years included in the long-range financial plan.

During the final months of FY2019-20, \$60,000 in Emergency Response funds helped fund a variety of organizations who submitted proposals to the Foundation, including Loaves and Fishes, the Food Bank, Center for Family Strengthening, Boys and Girls Clubs, CAPSLO, Link, Noor Foundation, and Restorative Partners among others.

As the severe impacts of COVID continue, staff recommends staying the course on continued partnership with the Community Foundation over the coming Fiscal Year. This relationship is working well, with Mr. Wells serving on weekly grant selection committee calls. It is proving to be an efficient, timely, nimble, accountable strategy. A total of \$75,000 in First 5 Emergency Response funds has been authorized by the Commission for FY20-21.

Commissioners Ventura and Brescia expressed appreciation for the update, and the work. Commissioner Brescia underscored the importance of First 5 staff involvement in the Foundation's decision-making process.

Public Comment:

Marilu Gomez, School Readiness Coordinator in Paso Robles, thanked First 5 for its support of families, especially basic needs support.

First 5 Legal Counsel Natalie Frye-Laacke advised that Commissioner direction to staff would be sufficient and a roll call vote not necessary.

ITEM 8 (ACTION ITEM): Commission Approval of Updated Plan for First 5 New Program RFPs

Mr. Wells introduced this item. The 2020 Strategic Plan identifies two new program investments – one in Early Learning and one in Family Resiliency priority areas. The focus of these programs was formulated prior to COVID. Given the long-term nature of the pandemic crisis and its multiple impacts on children and families, staff recommends that the two new investment initiatives be modified to address the specific and emergent needs of the current landscape. Within the Early Learning priority area, a short-term (i.e. 7 month) time frame is recommended, with a targeted focus on access to child care. Within the Family Resiliency

priority area, an eighteen-month time frame is recommended, with a focus on addressing family challenges brought on and/or made more extreme by the pandemic.

In the interest of getting funds out into the community as quickly as possible, the proposed timeline for issuing/receiving/deciding on Requests for Proposals is very tight. Deadline for submission will be October 15, 2020, with a goal of convening a selection committee, determining funding recommendations, and bringing contract drafts back to the Commission by its October 2020 meeting; contract start dates would be set at November 1, 2020.

First 5 Legal Counsel Natalie Frye-Laacke reminded Commissioners to limit their participation in discussion if they anticipate that their agency may respond to one or both of the RFPs.

Discussion:

Commissioner Gibson expressed appreciation for the narrowing of focus to child care for the early learning RFP. He also sees the shift as one of “refinement” of the existing strategic plan, not a major alteration.

Commissioner Ventura asked if this will be the only RFP to go out in the Early Learning priority area for this year. Mr. Wells responded that it only goes until June 2021, and the full annual amount from the strategic plan (\$295,000) has not been committed to this RFP (\$200,000), so there are possibilities to release future RFPs in the next year. Ms. Ventura expressed that the COVID era is not linear, and it will be good not to commit all of our funds to it; there are other areas that could be prioritized as well.

Public Comment:

Lisa Fraser, Executive Director of Center for Family Strengthening asked for clarification on minimum and maximum amounts in RFPs. Early Learning: Annual - Min \$50,000 Max \$200,000. Family Resiliency: Annual - Max \$100,000 Max \$250,000.

Mr. Wells also emphasized the importance of agencies’ ability to act quickly, identify a strong lead, and build on existing efforts (as opposed to creating something new).

Commissioner Comments:

Commissioner Brescia expressed confidence in the staff to develop details for the RFP process and timeline.

Commissioner Gibson confirmed with fellow Commissioners that they direct staff to proceed with releasing two RFPs as described. Ms. Wendt encouraged Commissioners to spread the word regarding these opportunities.

ITEM 9: Help Me Grow Program Updates

Sarah Reinhart, Special Projects Administrator, provided an update on the MHPA-funded 3 by 3 project. She highlighted the project’s goals – to increase developmental screening and referral within pediatric practices, and to increase a focus and social-emotional/mental health

in young children. Bravo Pediatrics and CHC are the two pediatric partners. Ms. Reinhart also reported on the launch of the Help Me Grow Steering Committee, which is charged with providing overall strategic guidance regarding the county's Help Me Grow system. First 5 is serving as the Help Me Grow Organizing Entity. The Steering Committee is currently working toward designing a second Pediatric Town Hall. The group is also focused on connecting efforts with an emerging state-wide ACES Aware initiative.

Discussion:

Commissioners Brescia and Sokolowski expressed appreciation for Ms. Reinhart's work on this project.

Commissioner Tedford asked for an explanation as to the challenges of incorporating child care into the 3 by 3 project. Ms. Reinhart explained that many child care providers have long been trained in and administer developmental screenings; it is the connection between child care providers and pediatric providers that needs strengthening.

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Jamie McGillis, Coordinator of the Help Me Grow (HMG) Centralized Access Point at CAPSLO, presented on the project. She showed a video of the newly-opened HMG Family Resource Center, as well as the new SLO HMG website. She also introduced Maddie Torrey, Project Specialist with Help Me Grow.

Commissioner Ruvalcaba-Heredia asked how the Centralized Access Point is making materials available in Spanish; Ms. McGillis explained that all printed materials are available in both languages, and the website has an easy-to-navigate Google Translate option.

Ms. Wendt credited Department of Social Services and Public Health for their start-up contributions to the initiative.

Mr. Wells applauded the impressive work of the Centralized Access Point team. Ms. Reinhart echoed this and highlighted the social media posts.

ITEM 10: Staff Reports

Misty Livengood, Communications and Outreach Officer, presented highlights of recent First activities:

- The First 5 Association has been keeping locals up to date on state-level advocacy work, including the Vape Tax, Paid Family Leave, and Earned Income Tax Credit.
- Supply distributions through CAPSLO's Child Care Resource Connection have received media attention by KEYT & KCOY.
- "We Are the Care" Hands on Heroes have included SLOCOE's Nancy Norton (August), City of SLO Parks and Rec Staffer Meghan Burger (September), and Arroyo Grande Seventh Day Adventist Church Pastor Joshua Majors (October). Upcoming in November is a focus on the business community and family-friendly workplaces.

- First 5 has been working on a variety of efforts that expand our presence and partnership work, including census outreach, sponsorship of a screening and Director Q&A of the breastfeeding documentary Chocolate Milk, and participation in immigrant support efforts (UndocuSupport and Farmworker Outreach Task Force).
- Early literacy remains a focus in the COVID era. KSBY recently spotlighted Raising a Reader. Talk.Read.Sing. time is picking up again after a summer hiatus. School Readiness Coordinator Marilu Gomez will be hosting a weekly Spanish TRS time on Wednesdays; First 5 staff team members Jason Wells and Kris Roudebush will be hosting on Fridays. First 5 CA anticipates a statewide book distribution. Details to follow.

Ms. Wendt added the following highlights:

- Child Care Study is off and running. The LIIF team is interviewing community stakeholders as part of the Feasibility phase.
- CSAC has amended its Policy Platform to include more detail on partnership opportunities with First 5 and a commitment to prioritizing early childhood development.
- Ms. Wendt recently spoke with a donor group at the Community Foundation on the challenges that immigrant communities are facing during the pandemic.
- Ms. Wendt is working with Raechelle Bowlay and Shana Paulson at CAPSLO to record a workshop session for the upcoming Child Care Resource and Referral Network annual state conference.
- Ms. Wendt extended gratitude to First 5 staff team for tireless work during this challenging time.

DISCUSSION:

Commissioner Watt extended thanks to First 5 staff for their work to build and nurture partnerships in the community.

Commissioner Gibson welcomed Commissioner Borenstein to the meeting and publicly thanked her for her unwavering leadership as Public Health Director throughout the COVID crisis.

Commissioner Borenstein exclaimed that it's "great to see everyone's faces."

ITEM 11: Commission Meeting Calendar 2021 and October/December Meetings 2020

Commissioner Gibson introduced this item. There is a proposal to shift the time and day of Commission meetings from Wednesday to Thursday, and from 3:00p.m. to 11:30 a.m. This is to accommodate Commissioner Borenstein, who for the foreseeable future is committed to weekly press conferences during the current Commission meeting time.

Commissioners concurred that this change will work, and directed staff to lock in the new dates for Commission at the now-rescheduled October meeting – October 29 at 11:30 a.m. Commissioner Drake has somewhat of a conflict and will try to work with the new schedule.

Commissioner Brescia pointed out that mid-day meetings are sometimes call by state bodies, which could pose an additional challenge.

ITEM 12 -- Adjourn

5:37 p.m.