

First 5 Solano Children and Families Commission

Minutes of Meeting – Tuesday, January 10, 2012, 5:30 PM
601 Texas Street, Conference Room A, Fairfield, CA

Attendance

Commissioners: Linda Seifert, Chair; Dana Dean, Vice-Chair; Dan Ayala, Stephan Betz, Sheryl Fairchild, Debbie Gossell, Jay Speck, Norma Thigpen.

Staff/Public: Commission staff and approximately 5 members of the public were present.

Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 5:30 PM by Chairperson Seifert.

I. Public Comment

Commissioner Seifert presented Commissioner Ayala with a plaque from First 5 Solano in appreciation for his outstanding service as the 2011 Commission Chair and for his work in making sure that the children being represented and the families being supported receive the services that are so important to them. Commissioner Ayala thanked the Commission for the plaque and the Staff for their excellent support during the past year in keeping him informed and answering his questions.

Commissioner Seifert presented a certificate from First 5 Solano to Aimee Durfee in appreciation for her work during the past four years with United Way in the Bay Area and her dedication and commitment to reducing poverty. Ms. Durfee thanked the Commission and stated that she has learned much working with First 5 and the County. She noted it was a difficult decision to resign, but she is looking forward to her new job with the Foundation of Contra Costa County working on poverty issues.

Commissioner Seifert presented a certificate from First 5 Solano to Kim Thomas for her service and commitment in Solano County to reducing child poverty. Ms. Thomas thanked the Commission for its recognition and noted that there has never been a more important time than now to focus on child poverty.

II. Consent Calendar

- A. Approve the Commission Meeting Agenda for January 10, 2012
- B. Approve Minutes of the December 6, 2011 Commission Meeting

Motion: Commissioner Betz moved to approve the Commission Meeting Agenda for January 10, 2012, and approve Minutes of the December 6, 2011 Commission meeting with the stipulation that Item 5.A.2 be corrected to reflect that Commissioner Gossell, not Commissioner Thigpen, made the motion to approve. The motion passed unanimously.

III. Introduction of 2012 Officers; Appointment of Committee Chairs

Commissioner Seifert thanked the Commission for electing her as the Chair for 2012. She noted that she was challenged and excited to have been appointed Chair of the Board of Supervisors as of January 10, 2012, and did not believe that she should continue this year as Chair also of the Commission. She asked, therefore, that the Nominating Committee reconvene

to release her as Chair of the Commission and indicated that she would welcome the current Vice-Chair being made Chair and she herself being appointed Vice-Chair.

Commissioner Seifert then reviewed the 2012 Officers and Committee Chairs appointments:

- Commission Vice-Chair/Internal Systems Committee Chair – Commissioner Dean
- Program and Community Engagement Committee Chair – Commissioner Thigpen

Commissioner Seifert also suggested the following assignments for other duties in 2012:
Program and Community Engagement Member (replacing Commissioner Dean) – Commissioner Speck;
First 5 Association Commissioner Liaison – Commissioner Gossell;
First 5 Futures Strategy Team Liaison – Commissioner Fairchild;
First 5 Futures Grant Development Liaison – Commissioner Betz

Commissioners indicated that they agreed with these Committee member and Liaison assignments.

IV. Resolution #2012-01 Commending Sherry Novick, Executive Director, First 5 Association of California

Motion: Resolution #2012-01 of the First 5 Solano Children and Families Commission honoring Sherry Novick for her outstanding service to Californians as Executive Director of First 5 Association of California

Discussion: Commissioner Seifert read the resolution from First 5 Solano honoring Sherry Novick for her outstanding service to all Californians as Executive Director of the First 5 Association of California from 2002-2011. Christina Arrostuto, Executive Director First 5 Solano, noted that Ms. Novick's hard work has made the First 5 movement a reality and that she will be missed as she leaves to accept a position with Kaiser Permanente to work on Health Care Reform.

Executive Director Novick thanked the Commission and stated that First 5 has been a remarkable Commission with great success in leveraging funds and in succeeding to increase the health of the children in Solano County.

Commissioner Gossell moved to approve this motion. The motion passed unanimously.

V. FY2012-2015 Funding Cycle

A. Receive an update on the implementation of the FY2012-2015 Funding Cycle

Michele Harris, Deputy Director, briefed the Commission on the progress being made in implementing the 2012-2015 funding cycle. She noted they are in the process of preparing contracts for services for early childhood mental health, children's health, child care slots and child care professional development, and they are also working on solicitations for information technology-related services and pre-kindergarten academies. They plan to issue a solicitation for services for collaboration/coordination in April 2012 with the input of new and/or returning First 5 grantees.

Ms. Harris noted that the draft solicitations being presented to the Commission in this item are for prenatal services, family support services and parent education services. The solicitations call for up to 36 months of services at the levels of funding approved by the Commission at its December meeting. Applicant conferences have been set for January 27 and January 30, and proposals will be due March 5.

Ms. Harris explained that they are requesting the Commission delegate to the Program and Community Engagement Committee the authority to approve the solicitation for pre-kindergarten academies. This will enable this smaller and less complex solicitation which will be ready before the others to be issued more quickly.

Ms. Arrostuto thanked the First 5 staff for their hard work in meeting the goals of simplifying the process and streamlining the solicitations, which are about half the length of the 2007 solicitations.

Commissioner Seifert asked if the RFPs should be considered one at a time, and Ms. Harris responded that it would be easiest to take them together.

- B. Approve RFP #2012-01: Prenatal Services
- C. Approve RFP #2012-02: Family Support Services
- D. Approve RFP #2012-03: Parent Education Services
- E. Delegate authority to the Program and Community Engagement Committee to approve RFP #2012-04: Pre-Kindergarten Academy Services

Discussion: Commissioner Ayala asked why the Pre-Kindergarten Academy Services RFP #2012-04 was not being considered on the timeline with the other RFPs. Ms. Harris responded that the Program and Community Engagement Committee is scheduled to meet on February 9 and will be able to craft the RFP and Application since they will be not as complex as the others. The start date is still expected to be July 1, 2012.

Commissioner Betz expressed concerns with the definition of "Promising Programs" found in item 6.4. of the RFPs. Ms. Arrostuto noted that this language was supplied by the Commission's evaluator, LFA Group, and that they should be consulted on any changes. Commissioner Dean observed that, rather than adopting something the Commission is not comfortable with and then reconsidering it later, it would be better to have the language changed. Commissioner Seifert suggested that Commissioner Betz be requested to work with LFA and First 5 staff to revise the language as appropriate.

***Motion: Approve RFP #2012-01, RFP #2012-02, RFP #2012-03.
Commissioner Betz moved to approve this motion. The motion passed unanimously.***

***Motion: Delegate authority to the Program and Community Engagement Committee to approve RFP #2012-04.
Commissioner Gossell moved to approve this motion. The motion passed unanimously.***

VI. Committee Reports

- A. Systems and Policy Committee (no meeting)
- B. Program and Community Engagement Committee

Discussion: Cherelyn Ellington, School Readiness-Community Programs Manager, presented the 2011 Pre-Kindergarten Academies Report. The program's goal is to help children prepare for kindergarten and narrow the gaps in kindergarten readiness by giving the children the skills they need to enter kindergarten. The program is still accessing children at the four school readiness sites: Dixon USD/Anderson, Fairfield-Suisun USD/Anna Kyle, Vallejo City USD/Loma Vista, and Vacaville USD/Markham, but this year's report only includes data from children attending Pre-K Academies. Of the 329 students

who completed the pre- and post-assessments, 309 had their parent's consent to participate in the study; and 15 teachers completed the survey. The goal of increasing school readiness is being met in that Pre-K Academy children demonstrated gains of more than 30 percentage points in both the social/emotional and cognitive domains from entry to exit.

Commissioner Betz noted this gain is highly significant and shows that the Pre-K Academies are having an important impact on the children's entrance into kindergarten.

Ms. Ellington agreed that it makes a huge difference and noted that by program exit 86-93% of the children had mastered or almost mastered each social/emotion item, and between 81-93% had mastered or almost mastered each cognitive item. Commissioner Gossell observed that sometimes the social/emotional skills are more important. Ms. Ellington responded that a key finding with the teacher survey was that emotional well-being was rated as the most important skill for children at both kindergarten entry and exit because they need students to "sit still" and take care of their own personal needs in order to effectively teach those students.

Ms. Ellington noted that 58% of the children had some form of prior school experience and that the percentages of those children who had received previous school experience varied greatly by district: Fairfield 88%, Dixon 80%, Vacaville 33%, and Vallejo 4%. She noted that each of the schools has a different way of recruiting students and this is something they are looking at standardizing in order to ensure the best outreach to children with little or no prior preschool experience.

Ms. Ellington reported that Latino students performed significantly lower than their African-American and White peers on the cognitive domain at program exit. Fifty-five percent of Latino, 80% of African-American, and 84% of Caucasian/White students almost or fully mastered the cognitive domain at program exit. Sixty-seven percent of the teachers spoke a language in addition to English (usually Spanish), and 87% of the teachers reported that Spanish is used in their classroom by either themselves or an aide. Spanish-speaking teachers assessed a significantly higher percentage of Spanish-speaking students as almost or fully mastered in the cognitive domain (59%) as compared to teachers who do not speak Spanish (36%).

There are two recommendations from this Pre-K Academy Evaluation Report: (1) Continue conducting outreach to fill additional slots with children who do not have preschool experience; and (2) Focus special efforts on supporting Pre-K students whose home language is Spanish.

Commissioner Fairchild asked if the 2012-04 RFP should be amended to make design changes in the program to recruit more children from the Vallejo area into the program. Ms. Ellington responded that they have begun looking at the recruitment practices being used in Vallejo to bring children into the program who have had no prior schooling. She noted there are best practices that need to be implemented to make sure that Spanish-speaking students are receiving additional support.

Commissioner Dean wanted to echo Commissioner Fairchild's concern that staff review the current model, noting that this program has an incredible impact on young lives and she is very concerned that we are not adequately supporting the Spanish-speaking students. She observed that with the growing Latino population in California, we need to address the needs of the Spanish-speaking students.

Commissioner Gossell noted that since the cognitive assessment results of Spanish-speaking teachers were significantly higher (59% vs. 36%) for their Spanish-speaking

students than those of the non-Spanish-speaking teachers and suggested the model include more emphasis on recruiting Spanish-speaking teachers.

Ms. Arrostuto suggested that it might be helpful to go back to the teachers who completed the survey for their feedback and insights on the survey results.

Commissioner Seifert noted that we also need to determine why Spanish-speaking children are not doing as well as the others; e.g., is it the teaching methods, is it the material being taught, is the material being taught in the right way. She suggested this will probably require going back to the teachers for additional information.

Commissioner Speck suggested we go back to the Districts and find out how they explain the differences in test results.

Commissioner Thigpen noted that she would be interested in knowing (1) what percentage of the teachers are “new” and (2) what are the differences in teacher training.

Commissioner Betz asked what training the teachers receive to evaluate the children, and Ms. Ellington responded they receive a 1½- to 2-hour training at which time they review the information and definitions.

Commissioner Gossell noted that in homes where English is a second language, there are cultural differences; for example how much time the parents spend with the children helping them with their studies.

Commissioner Fairfield, citing the difference between 4% of the children in Vallejo having had prior school experience versus the 88% in Fairfield, asked if a priority should be placed on those children who have not had pre-K schooling. Commissioner Gossell noted that recruitment lists could be secured from Head Start waiting lists. Commissioner Seifert indicated that targeting those who have not had pre-K schooling would be consistent with the goal of using limited funds the most effectively.

VII. Executive Director’s Report

Ms. Arrostuto reported that the Solano County 2011 Annual Report presented to the Board of Supervisors on January 10 includes a picture on page five of First 5 participating at the Health and Nutrition Fair held at the Westfield shopping mall which reached 300 families and children in teaching them how to make healthy snacks, limit their intake of sugary drinks, increase their physical activity and receive health-related screenings.

VIII. Commissioner Remarks

Commissioner Speck has been invited to present at an upcoming “Graduation Nation” summit sponsored by America’s Promise Alliance in Washington, D.C. in March and will speak about the First 5 Solano-funded Pre-Kindergarten Academies. He asked that Ms. Arrostuto be allowed to attend and serve as co-presenter with him. This is an honor for Solano County and excellent exposure for First 5 Solano as there are expected to be 1000 attendees from all over the United States. Commissioners discussed and agreed that it would be an appropriate and beneficial use of First 5 Futures funds to also send Ms. Arrostuto to Washington D.C. for this purpose.

Commissioner Dean noted that Commissioner Seifert’s election as Chair of the Board of Supervisors bodes well for the County and for First 5 and is a thrilling event. Commissioner Seifert expressed her excitement at this new opportunity to serve and noted that the best

interests of First 5 are served if she does not Chair both the BOS and the Commission at the same time so she is looking forward to working with everyone in a different capacity.

IX. Future Agenda Items, Meeting time/Date/Location

The next regularly-scheduled Commission meeting will be held on Tuesday, March 6, 2012 at 5:30 PM, 601 Texas Street, Fairfield, CA 94533. Future agenda items include: FY2012/13 Budget.

The meeting was adjourned at 6:52 PM.

Yvonne Liid, Administrative Secretary

Approved: March 6, 2012 _____