

**MINUTES OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS OF
SOUTH CAROLINA FIRST STEPS TO SCHOOL READINESS
BOARD OF TRUSTEES
A SOUTH CAROLINA NONPROFIT CORPORATION**

January 15, 2009
Via Conference Call

MINUTES

- Voting Directors Present: Mr. Lewis Smoak, Vice-Chair
The Honorable Rita Allison
Ms. Lisa Van Riper
Mr. Henry Parr, Jr.
Rev. Reece Yandle
Ms. Judith Aughtry
Ms. Nicky Wallace
Ms. Linda O'Quinn
Dr. Francis Rushton
- Voting Directors Absent: Representative Jimmy Neal, excused
Senator Michael Fair, excused
Superintendent Jim Rex
Governor Mark Sanford
Senator John Matthews
Ms. Katherine Davis
Ms. Kristin Hook
Ms. Marileen Chapman
Ms. Sabine Lang
Dr. Floyd Creech
Ms. Julia-Ellen Davis, excused
- Non-Voting Directors Present: Ms. Susan Jones (designee, SC DOT)
- Non- Voting Directors Absent: Ms. Jennifer Buster (designee for Mr. Stan Butkus, SC DDSN)
Ms. Kathleen Hayes, Director, SC DSS
Ms. Susan Jones (designee, SC DOT)
Ms. Angela Flowers (designee, for Ms. John McGill, SC DMH)
Ms. Emma Forkner, Director, SC DHHS
Mr. Lee Catoe, Director, DAODAS
Mr. Jim Griffith, Director, Transportation Assn. of SC
Dr. Paul Krohne, President, SC School Board Association
Mr. David Potter, SC Education Oversight Committee
Mr. Tim Ervolina, President/CEO, United Way of SC
Dr. Nancy Freeman, Regulatory Advisory Committee
Mr. Bobby Bowers, Director, SC B&CB/ORS
Ms. Lane Jeselnik (designee for Dr. Garrison Walters, SC Commission on Higher Education)
Ms. Cindy Sweigart (designee for Mr. C. Earl Hunter, Director, SC DHEC)
Dr. David Goble, Director, SC State Library
Mr. Tim Ervolina, President/CEO, United Way of SC
Ms. Jennifer Buster (designee for Mr. Stan Butkus, SC DDSN)

Ms. Stephanie Frazier (designee for Mr. Barry Russell, President, SC Tech College System)

Others Present: Ms. Susan DeVenny, SC First Steps
Mr. Rodney Jenkins, SC First Steps
Ms. Samantha Ingram, SC First Steps
Mr. Dan Wuori, SC First Steps

Call to Order

Mr. Lewis Smoak called the meeting to order.

Approval of Minutes

The December 22, 2008 minutes were approved as written. Rev. Reece Yandle suggested noting in the minutes when meetings are held via conference call. Mr. Lewis Smoak agreed.

Strategic Planning and Evaluation Committee

Ms. Lisa Van Riper stated that the committee did not have a report today but called on Ms. Susan DeVenny to provide a brief update on the VISION 2013 plan.

Ms. DeVenny informed the board that the Strategic Planning Subcommittee, chaired by Mr. Henry Parr, was well underway and had completed three meetings during the fall, and that three sub-groups had been formed to build recommendations from subcommittee ideas. Ms. DeVenny stated that the full board would be kept abreast of the work, and would work together on preliminary recommendations at a later date.

Ms. DeVenny provided an update on the 2009 external evaluation, noting that the agency had received Speaker Bobby Harrell's appointment to the three person external panel and is currently awaiting an appointment by President McConnell. Ms. Lisa Van Riper stated that she will be calling the new member of the external evaluation committee to welcome her.

Finance and Administration Committee

Ms. Judith Aughtry asked Ms. Susan DeVenny to inform the board of finance matters.

Ms. DeVenny informed the board that the state office continues to look across the agency for cost saving measures and noted that a detailed administrative analysis was being prepared for the committee's review. Ms. DeVenny said the Executive Director Leadership Council and TAFSED officers met in December to begin the discussion of agency changes in an era of declining resources. Ms. DeVenny thanked Ms. Aughtry and Ms. Hook for representing the Board at this preliminary meeting. Ms. DeVenny noted that an ad hoc committee of representatives from across the state would be formed to assist the committee in building administrative and collaboration recommendations for next year and beyond.

Mr. Lewis Smoak reminded the board that the Finance and Administration and Executive Committee had met on three different occasions to work on the budget issues at hand and will remain active in the budget reduction processes, as necessary.

Program and Grants Committee

Ms. DeVenny stated that the board should expect recommendations for changes in the program standards this year. Ms. DeVenny said to expect these recommendations in March.

Ms. DeVenny again mentioned the work of the Strategic Planning Subcommittee sub-groups, and noted that these interagency, statewide teams would also be vetting program standards.

Director's Report

Ms. DeVenny reviewed the three cuts the agency has faced since July, and asked Rep. Rita Allison to reflect on the budget climate.

Rep. Allison said the House Ways and Means Committee has been working very hard and noted the possibility of an additional mid-year cut, pending revenue projections. Rep. Allison stated that many agencies were requesting budget flexibility in order to keep services for citizens afloat during the state's budget deficit. Rep. Allison talked about the state's opportunity to look closely at programs to determine which ones are working and which ones are not.

Ms. DeVenny reviewed the total cuts to-date, and noted 24% of all cuts to First Steps' budget have been made at the state level and 76% at the county partnership level, for a total budget reduction of \$3.1M since July 1, 2008. Ms. DeVenny said it appears these cuts have been taken in four broad categories across the state: administrative expenses (sharing staff, reducing rent, reduction in hours, etc.), child care scholarships, quality child care enhancement programs and training, and parenting programs/contracts.

Dr. Francis Rushton asked about how these reductions had affected employees, noting the loss in workforce development and economic growth across the state. Mr. Rushton suggested Mr. Lewis Smoak or the Executive Committee offer a letter to the legislative leadership regarding the importance of investing in early childhood as a means to build the workforce of the future. After a discussion regarding the heightened importance of collaboration and shared resources, the board agreed to support the Executive Committee and staff in authoring a letter for use at their discretion during the legislative session.

Ms. DeVenny provided an updated on the First Steps work within the trial and plaintiff regions since 2006, including the Child Development Pilot Program, Centers of Excellence initiative, and US Labor Workforce Investment Act grant. Ms. DeVenny also provided a brief update to the board regarding the draft EOC evaluation of the CDEPP program, and noted that she would release the report to the board and partnerships as soon as it was made available to the public.

Ms. Carol Daly spoke to the board about the positive impact the 4K program was making in her county, and the children at Georgetown's Centers of Excellence sites. Ms. Daly said the 4K program enabled Georgetown County First Steps to complete more in-depth developmental assessments on the most at-risk children and to support these children up to Kindergarten matriculation with targeted assistance.

Rep. Allison asked if any of the county partnerships could apply for potential federal stimulus money. Rep. Allison suggested partnerships contact their mayors and county council chairs to discuss their plans for the federal stimulus money. Ms. DeVenny noted that several partnerships were in contact with their US delegations, and noted that she was working with other states to see how the national public-private partnerships were positioning themselves to assist communities.

Ms. DeVenny noted the addition of a board meeting to the 2009 calendar: March 26, 2008, in order to take up the FY10 budget and standards recommendations. Ms. DeVenny noted that additional meetings would be held at the call of the Chair, pending budget needs.

Mr. Henry Parr introduced himself and briefed the board on the strategic planning subcommittee work, and thanked board members who have been active with the committee.

Ms. Susan DeVenny reminded the board of the Feb. 19, 2009 meeting via conference call and thanked all trustees and partners for their attendance. With no further business, the meeting was adjourned.