



South Carolina First Steps to School Readiness
Board of Trustees
August 18, 2016

The Inn at USC
2 p.m.

MINUTES

Members Present (17)

Julie Hussey, Vice Chair
Senator Mike Fair
Representative Rita Allison – via telephone
Roger Pryor – via telephone
Rick Noble
Tim Holt
Mary Lynn Diggs
Alexia Newman
Evelyn Patterson – via telephone
Jennifer McConnell
Catherine Heigel
Christian Soura
Kathryn Burkhalter
Dr. Amy Williams
Judith Aughtry
Susan Alford
Sue Williams

Members Absent (7)

Ken Wingate, Chair
Superintendent Molly Spearman
Senator Gerald Malloy
Representative Jerry Govan
Dr. Beverly Buscemi
Tracy Lamb
Walter Fleming

Others Present:

Julia-Ellen Davis
Dr. Dan Wuori
Mark Barnes
Rebecca Brown
Samantha Ingram
Representative James Smith

Martha Strickland
Debbie Robertson
Dave Wilson
Tihsa Brown
Nikkia Moseley
Victor Smith
Laurie Traywick
Jonathan Artz
Deborah DePaoli

Ms. Hussey called the meeting to order at 2:13 p.m. She reminded those attending that that the meeting was being held in compliance with the SC Freedom of Information Act.

Upon a motion by Rick Noble, and second by Amy Williams, the board unanimously adopted the meeting minutes of June 16, 2016. Sue Williams and Mary Lynne Diggs abstained.

Approval of Consent Agenda Action Items

Upon a motion by Judith Aughtry, and a second by Jennifer McConnell, the board unanimously approved the Early Head Start policies advanced by the EHS Governance Council as part of the Consent Agenda.

Chairman's Report

Ms. Hussey provided background information regarding the Legislative House Oversight process. Ms. Hussey then introduced Rep. James Smith, who chaired the Education and Cultural Subcommittee, which conducted the recent review of First Steps. Rep. Smith gave an overview of the purpose of the committee and the process used to gather sworn information. The committee held eight meetings to learn more about First Steps and received public comment. Rep. Smith said the committee agreed that early childhood was an important investment for South Carolina and that First Steps was the right entity to continue the state's work in this area.

The purpose of the Legislative Oversight process is to make recommendations on state-funded programs to continue, curtail or eliminate. The committee voted unanimously to continue First Steps 4K, its local partnerships and local partnership supports, and role as an Early Head Start grantee. Because the assignment of the BabyNet lead agency falls under Governor Haley's purview, the committee made no recommendation regarding BabyNet's placement. Rep. Smith, however, expressed the subcommittee's belief that the program had performed better at First Steps than anywhere in its history. He then proceeded to discuss the committee's recommendations to the General Assembly and committee recommendations to First Steps.

Rep. Smith applauded the attendance of the agency heads and said their attendance is a powerful statement about the importance of First Steps' work for young children. Rep. Smith stated that First Steps needs to move beyond one-year extensions and encouraged board members and others to push hard and early for reauthorization.

Julie Hussey asked Rep. Smith if he had certain expectations of the board members.

Rep. Smith said the General Assembly will need guidance to figure a way out of its cycle of one year extensions. He hopes to see legislation pre-filed in early December. Rep. Smith expressed his belief that it is important to lift First Steps' legislative sunset.

Legislative Committee

Sen. Mike Fair noted that he would be leaving office and said Sen. Gerald Malloy will prove to be instrumental in achieving reauthorization. Sen. Fair said he would schedule a meeting of the Legislative Committee prior to his last day in office.

Finance and Administration Committee

Judith Aughtry presented the monthly finance report. Ms. Aughtry noted that the Executive Budget request would soon be due to Governor Haley and introduced Mark Barnes to elaborate on recent changes to the local partnership grant agreements.

Mr. Barnes noted that agency counsel had recommended changes to the local partnership grant agreement designed to:

- *Reflect the new overtime requirements of the federal Fair Labor Standards Act,*
- *Align nepotism language with the SC Ethics Act,*
- *Define dual employment and associated time-keeping requirements,*
- *Clarify restrictions on political activity and define time-keeping requirements for partnership staff serving concurrently as elected officials,*
- *Clarify that partnership staff may not serve as both employees and contractors of an individual partnership, and*
- *Require local boards to formally document their approval of Executive Director salary increases.*

In the spring of 2016, SC First Steps took steps to initiate an Executive Director Leadership Council, designed to gather feedback and include local voices in key decisions. While specific contract language had not yet been finalized by counsel, the proposed changes were reviewed (by topic) with a committee of directors at the Council's organizational meeting in Columbia on Monday, June 13, 2016. No specific concerns were raised at this time.

On July 12, 2016 Interim Director Julia-Ellen Davis provided Board Chairman Ken Wingate, with a draft of counsel's proposed language - alerting him to the proposed changes and inquiring as to whether he felt any Board action was necessary. Because these were changes recommended by counsel, Mr. Wingate - in keeping with the Board's longstanding practice - responded that he did not believe any such action was necessary. He asked that Ms. Davis provide an update and the amended document to the Board for information.

The full draft agreement was provided to both local partnership directors and Trustees by e-mail on Friday, July 15. During a call to review changes with the partnerships on Tuesday, July 19, a number of directors expressed concern over the timing of these changes, noting that it would take a transition period for them to come into full compliance with new requirements. A follow up call was scheduled and it was agreed that an amendment would be issued to accommodate for three

concerns raised by local directors: 1) an extension until October 1, 2016 would be granted to permit partnerships additional time to comply with new contract requirements, 2) directors dually employed by more than one local partnership would be required to disclose this employment to both local boards, but not specific salary details, and 3) the section on political activity was clarified (this language is intended to preclude political campaigning and other political activity using First Steps resources, not to limit the partnerships' ability to communicate with elected officials about the work of First Steps).

Ms. Hussey asked if, in the future, the board would like to formally vote on changes made to the local partnership grant agreement. Ms. Heigel responded that, as a trustee, she would not want to be providing guidance that varied from that of counsel on a matter traditionally delegated to staff. No action was taken.

Mark Barnes gave an overview of the FY18 budget request process and will begin to engage committees and groups. He noted that the agency will continue to request increased funding for local partnerships, continue working to address BabyNet's fiscal needs, and ensure that 4K program funding is adequate.

Program and Grants Committee

Jennifer McConnell gave the committee's report on conditional approvals, noting that a productive meeting had been held with Marion County First Steps. Ms. Davis thanked board members for taking the time to meet with local partnerships to help them meet the program standards and remain in compliance.

Strategic Planning and Evaluation Committee

Ms. Newman reminded the Board that committee is in the process of creating a chronology for action steps within the new strategic plan and noted that a quarterly status report would be provided in October. Ms. Newman thanked Sen. Fair for his service to the board.

Early Head Start Governance Council

Dr. Wuori presented an overview of the agency's proposed Early Head Start expansion grant which would add 162 slots in 11 SC counties (9 of the agency's 12 current EHS communities, plus McCormick and Fairfield).

Mary Lynne Diggs observed that, based on funding, there will be fewer grantees during the current round, and noted that – if funded - staff should be prepared for a single, national training (as opposed to multiple, regional opportunities).

ACTION: Upon a motion by Mr. Holt and a second by Dr. Williams, the Board unanimously voted to approve the submission.

Executive Committee

Dr. Wuori reviewed a proposed change to the Board's meeting calendar. Under this plan, the Board's October retreat would be replaced by a traditional meeting on October 20 and the Annual Meeting moved to December 6 to precede the 2nd Annual Chairmen's Summit on Early Childhood on December 7. The Board voted unanimously to approve the changes.

Interim Director's Report

Ms. Davis called the Board's attention to her written Director's Report.

Mr. Barnes reviewed data regarding the average length of time to BabyNet enrollment, noting that over the last 4 months, all office locations had averaged less than the required the 45 day timeframe.

Ms. Davis recognized the agency's Early Head Start team and discussed the federal monitoring review calendar and monitoring tool. Additional training will be provided in October.

Ms. Davis introduced Martha Strickland who provided a recap of the First Steps 4K Academy and the upcoming Director Training (August 30 – September 1). The Board was shown a short clip from WLTX TV highlighting the 4K Academy.

Ms. Davis introduced Dave Wilson, who gave an update on the Profile of the Ready Kindergartener. Dr. Williams suggested creating a version in Spanish. Ms. Heigel offered her in-house translators for this purpose.

Executive Session

At 4:26pm the Board voted unanimously to enter into Executive Session to discuss a personnel matter. The Board exited Executive Session at 4:54pm. No action was taken.

There being no additional business, the Board adjourned at 4:55pm.