



South Carolina First Steps to School Readiness
Board of Trustees
March 17, 2016

First Baptist Church, Columbia
2 p.m.

Members Present (16):

Ken Wingate, Chair
Senator Mike Fair – Via Phone
Representative Jerry Govan
Susan Alford
Mary Lynne Diggs
Christian Soura
Kathryn Burkhalter
Walt Fleming – Via Phone
Tim Holt
Julie Hussey
Alexia Newman
Jennifer McConnell
Rick Noble
Evelyn Patterson – Via Phone
Roger Pryor
Amy Williams

Members Absent (8):

Senator Gerald Malloy
Representative Rita Allison
Superintendent Molly Spearman
Beverly Buscemi
Catherine Heigel
Judith Aughtry
Tracy Lamb
Sue Williams

Others Present:

Julia-Ellen Davis
Dan Wuori
Rebecca Brown
Mary Anne Mathews

Debbie Robertson
Ginger Ryall
Lavinia Tejada
Russell Brown
Jim Riddle
Martha Strickland
Dave Wilson
Titus Glover
Karen Ponder
Samantha Ingram
Kristie Musick

Call to Order/Quorum Call

Mr. Ken Wingate called the meeting to order at 2:10 p.m. and declared a quorum present. Mr. Wingate asked for the approval of the minutes of January 27, 2016. Ms. Jennifer McConnell pointed out that her name had been omitted from the listing of Executive Committee members within the minutes. This correction was noted. **Upon a motion by Ms. Alexia Newman, and a second by Ms. Julie Hussey, the board unanimously adopted the meeting minutes as amended.**

Approval of Consent Agenda Action Items

Mr. Wingate directed Board members the consent agenda provided electronically and asked if the members had any questions. Ms. Mary Lynne Diggs asked if the partnership administrative waivers applied to the new Early Head Start grant. Mark Barnes explained that the administrative waivers applied to local partnership operations and were not connected to the Early Head Start grant.

With no additional questions or comments related to the consent agenda items, the board unanimously approved:

- a. [Draft IRS Form 990 \(Finance and Administration Committee\)](#)
- b. [Draft FY17 Partnership Allocations for FY17 \(Finance and Administration Committee\)](#)
- c. [FY17 Local First Steps Team Recommendation \(Finance and Administration Committee\)](#)
- d. [Partnership Administrative Waiver Requests \(Finance and Administration Committee\)](#)
- e. [Greenville Grant Amendment \(Finance and Administration Committee\)](#)
- f. [FY17 Partnership Accountability Standards \(Program and Grants Committee\)](#)

Early Head Start Governance Council

Mr. Wingate asked Roger Pryor to address the recommendations of the Early Head Start Governance Council. Mr. Pryor reviewed and asked for approval of several personnel actions (new hires). **The board unanimously approved the Council's Early Head Start personnel recommendations.**

Mr. Pryor briefed the group on the agency's draft Early Head Start Eligibility and Selection Criteria. Mr. Noble noted that he would like to share the Eligibility and Selections Criteria document with his Early Head Start staff for their feedback. Mr. Tim Holt asked if eligibility status was dependent on

nationality. Ms. Rebecca Brown explained that nationality does not disqualify a child from receiving Early Head Start services under federal law.

Chairman's Report:

Mr. Wingate noted the death of longtime First Steps staff member Leon Love and led the Board in the observance of a moment of silence.

Legislative Committee

Mr. Wingate called on Senator Mike Fair to provide a legislative update. Senator Fair noted that First Steps' reauthorization is the subject of both a budget proviso and a bill introduced in companion form in both the House and Senate. He noted that the House Oversight Committee is currently wrapping its study of First Steps and appeared to be strongly supportive of the work of the agency.

Finance and Administration Committee

Mark Barnes gave the committee report in the absence of Ms. Aughtry. Mr. Barnes reviewed expenditures related to the [I CAN] public awareness campaign.

Mr. Barnes reviewed the financial report, noting a rise in BabyNet service costs. He noted that \$3.2M in additional BabyNet funding has been proposed by the House for FY17, along with \$1.7M in new funding to support the local partnerships, raising the partnerships' base funding from \$138 thousand to \$200 thousand. Additionally both the House and Governor have proposed funding for four additional partnership technical assistants.

Program and Grants Committee

Ms. McConnell reviewed changes to the program standards and noted that local partnerships have resolved issues related to conditional approvals, coming into compliance since the last board meeting.

Strategic Planning and Evaluation Committee

Ms. Newman reported that the committee met on March 16 for a work session facilitated by Ms. Karen Ponder. Mr. Wingate then introduced and thanked Ms. Ponder for her work with the agency. At the meeting on March 16, the planning committee discussed steps needed to reach the priorities intended for the state strategic plan, Vision 2020, previously approved by the board. Ms. Ponder stated that the agency has room to grow in interagency collaboration and encouraged growth.

At the time, Ms. Ponder facilitated a discussion of Vision 2020 Action Steps.

Ms. Ponder asked the board for input of how to achieve CAPACITY BUILDING. Ms. Ponder reminded the group that the board was created to help support the local partnership to be successful.

Ms. Diggs suggested that the board become educated on all resources already existing in our state, how the resources are funded, and learn more about existing programs and partners.

Mr. Tim Holt noted that he would like to know more about early childhood funding and the goals of all early childhood programs, including those not administered by First Steps.

Ms. Julie Hussey discussed focusing the First Steps board on interagency collaboration and suggested that the Board might receive presentations from model local partnership boards.

Ken Wingate suggested using annual Chairman's Summit to enhance interagency collaboration and have time allotted on the schedule to focus on this subject.

Ms. Ponder asked the board for input on how to improve ACCESS.

Ms. Ponder noted that the recently-adopted description of the Ready Five Year Old addresses readiness in five domains and suggested that, along with partners, First Steps should develop training materials for parents and teachers that support this comprehensive definition of school readiness.

Ms. Susan Alford noted that DSS would appreciate educational materials that are easily understandable by the public and translated properly to support a variety of cultures.

Ms. Diggs noted that school readiness definitions are different across funding streams. She suggested the board build on the strengths of each agency represented and that First Steps remain involved in the revision of the SC Early Learning standards.

Ms. Ponder asked the board for input of how to achieve ACCOUNTABILITY.

Ms. Diggs suggested that agencies must work together to ensure all partners are willing to share their data. Ms. Diggs stated that interagency partnership is tied to accountability.

Ms. Newman shared her experience attending the House Oversight Committee's recent public hearing on the agency, noting that she was proud to be a part of the First Steps family. Ms. Newman noted the commitment expressed by early childhood stakeholders and that was evident that First Steps' partnerships and 4K providers are "chasing what matters."

Ms. Ponder noted that she is currently working with Colorado and Connecticut to redesign their early childhood system and these states, among others, are working to build models more like South Carolina First Steps.' Ms. Ponder recommended the legislature proceed with caution when making changes to the First Steps structure, fixing the things that need to be fixed but with the least amount of disruption. Ms. Ponder said changes that during the 2014 reauthorization were significant and put the board and agency on the right path.

Head Start Governance Training

Mr. Wingate introduced Linda Dunphy, Foundations for Families, who provided an overview of the Board's responsibilities as part of the new Early Head Start grant.

Mr. Wingate acknowledged Rep. Jerry Govan. Rep. Govan provided the Board with an additional update on the legislative timeline for the agency's reauthorization. Rep. Govan noted that the House will take up the First Steps Reauthorization bill probably the first Tuesday after furlough. Rep.

Govan said he was forwarded an outline of a proposal that would abolish the First Steps Board of Trustees, creating an Office of Early Learning and Development and in conjunction with Children's Trust.

Executive Committee Report:

Mr. Wingate gave an overview of a proposal to change the structure of the Board committees in order to create an Interagency Collaboration Committee, comprised by agency heads. This change would both tap the leadership of these important – but busy - members and support the work of the remaining committees by helping to better ensure voting quorums. Susan Alford stated that she supports the idea but wants to be diligent when scheduling meetings and suggested committee meetings tag onto the First Steps board meetings in order to have good attendance. **Upon a motion by Julie Hussey and a second by Jennifer McConnell, the board unanimously approved the addition of the Interagency Collaboration Committee.**

Ms. Julia-Ellen Davis gave her Interim Director's Report which included updates on the Early Head Start-Child Care Partnership accomplishments, the school readiness definition endorsements, First Steps 4K, BabyNet new hires, Parents as Teachers' upcoming evaluation, and facility updates to the State Office.

There being no additional business, the board adjourned at 4:09 pm