



Call to Order/Quorum Call

Ms. Julie Hussey called the Early Childhood Advisory Council meeting to order at 8/15/2019, 2:13 p.m.

Dr. Shelley Canright introduced a motion to approve the meeting agenda as written. Senator Greg Hembree provided a second and the motion was unanimously approved.

The meeting opened for public comment. No members of the public present wished to speak.

Ms. Sue Williams made a motion to approve the June 20, 2019 minutes as written. Senator Hembree provided a second and the motion was unanimously approved.

Ms. Hussey introduced Ms. Megan Finneran, who was in attendance representing Lieutenant Governor Pamela Evette.

Ms. Hussey then introduced Ms. Christina Davis, a 5K Teacher at Red Bank Elementary, along with Mr. Jim Riddle, Executive Director of Lexington County First Steps, and Ms. Janet Richard, Principal of Red Bank Elementary. Ms. Davis then presented to the group about her experience as a Countdown to Kindergarten teacher during the summer of 2019.

Ms. Hussey acknowledged the work of the local partnerships and their many accomplishments with localized programs such as Countdown to Kindergarten.

Ms. Georgia Mjartan encouraged the board to think about the agency's budget request and the desire to expand programs, such as Countdown to Kindergarten, and open the door for more opportunities at the local level. Ms. Mjartan noted that through the Preschool Development Grant, funds were awarded to expand the Countdown to Kindergarten program in 2019 to reach 500 more rising kindergarteners.

Senator Hembree asked how teachers and clients learn about this program in order to participate. Ms. Mjartan responded and said the program is voluntary for both the teacher and the parent, and that Local First Steps partnerships work with school districts to recruit teachers and clients.

Mr. Riddle stated that he works with 47 teachers in 37-39 schools across all five school districts in Lexington County.

Ms. Mjartan then introduced Dr. Leigh D'Amico of the Research, Evaluation and Measurement Center at the University Of South Carolina College Of Education who presented the Draft South Carolina Early Childhood Needs Assessment to the group.

Ms. Hussey thanked Dr. D'Amico for her presentation and called for a motion on the future work of the Preschool Development Grant.

Sen. Hembree introduced a motion to recommend that the Governor's Office designate SC Department of Social Services as the lead applicant for the State of South Carolina for the Preschool Development Grant Birth through Five Renewal Grant, working collaboratively to develop and implement the project with SC First Steps, the SC Department of Education, the Head Start Collaboration Office, and other partners. The motion was followed by a second from Dr. Canright and approved unanimously.

Due to technical difficulties, Ms. Hussey relinquished her duties as chair to Dr. Canright.



Ms. Mjartan briefed the group on the work the SC First Steps board, Early Childhood Advisory Council and various other state agencies and non-profit organizations to create a web portal to help all families find subsidized services. Ms. Mjartan noted that this integrated platform is in the development phase, but once finalized will allow families to search types of services such as, health and safety programs, home-visitation programs, special-needs programs, and early education programs.

Ms. Mjartan thanked Mad Monkey for designing the First Five logo and their work building the website, along with the agency heads who have designated an outreach or communications member to attend the First Five meetings.

Ms. Angel Johnson-Brebner made the motion to say that: The Early Childhood Advisory Council commits to providing an organizational home for "First Five South Carolina," including hosting, maintaining, and co-promoting First Five South Carolina, the state's comprehensive early childhood portal, a one-stop shop for families to learn about and access federal, state and local early childhood programs. First Five South Carolina will improve coordination and delivery of early childhood education and development to children in South Carolina and will provide a unified, cross-agency mechanism to increase the overall participation of children in existing federal, state and local child care and early childhood education and development programs, including outreach to underrepresented and special populations. Mr. Mike Leach provided the second.

Senator Hembree asked if there would be adequate funding to sustain the First Five web portal.

Ms. Mjartan replied that, through the Preschool Development Grant, funding is available for the first year, but that a request for renewal of the grant funding would be made. Ms. Mjartan said that ultimately the Early Childhood Advisory Council will go to the General Assembly to ask for funding for this project.

The group discussed the importance of how the information collected through such a portal would allow agencies to better share data with each other, making systems easier to navigate.

After no further discussion, the motion was approved unanimously.

Ms. Cassie Barber then briefed the group on the 2019 SC Summit on Early Childhood and said this year's theme would be on the economics of early childhood with Mr. Rob Grunewald, an economist with the Federal Reserve Bank of Minneapolis, as a keynote speaker. Ms. Barber thanked BB&T for being a presenting sponsor and Lt. Governor Evette and Representative Rita Allison for agreeing to host the event.

Dr. Canright pointed the group to the event's Save the Date card in their packet.

With no further business, Senator Hembree made a motion to adjourn the meeting which was seconded by Representative Jerry Govan. The meeting was adjourned at 3:19 p.m.