



Board of Trustees Meeting

February 20, 2020

2:00 P.M.

Graduate Columbia, 1619 Pendleton Street, Columbia, SC

DRAFT MINUTES

Members Present (12):

Dave Morley, Chair
Representative Rita Allison (by phone)
Representative Jerry Govan
Sue Williams
Alexia Newman
Tim Holt
Roger Pryor, Jr. (by phone)
Jennifer McConnell (by phone)
Dr. Shelley Canright
Julie Hussey
Angel Johnson-Brebner (by phone)
Dr. Amy Williams

Members Absent (9):

Senator Greg Hembree
Senator Gerald Malloy
Dr. David Mathis
Mary Lynne Diggs
Michael Leach
Dr. Rick Toomey
Joshua Baker
Mary Poole
Walter Fleming

Others Present:

Georgia Mjartan	Pete Liggett
Samantha Ingram	Dorothy Priester
Zack Catoe	Danielle Harper
Debbie Robertson	
Chelsea Richard	
Betty Gardiner	
Beth Moore	
Jonathan Artz	
Mark Barnes	
Gina Beebe	



Call to Order/Quorum Call

SC First Steps Board of Trustees meeting called to order at 2:41 P.M.

Mr. Tim Holt made a motion to adopt the Agenda as submitted. Ms. Sue Williams provided a second and the agenda was unanimously approved.

There were no members of the public that signed up for public comment.

Ms. Julie Hussey made a motion to adopt the December 5, 2019 meeting minutes as written. Ms. Sue Williams provided a second, and the motion was unanimously approved.

Mr. Dave Morley stated that the Governor wanted to be known in his legacy as the Education Governor. In Mr. Morley's conversation with Governor McMaster, the Governor asked for a couple of things. The Governor said it was very difficult for him to make data-based decisions about early childhood and he said his one request of Mr. Morley was that if he had an incremental dollar to spend, he would like to have a data-based mechanism to be able to make that decision. One of Mr. Morley's takeaways from his discussion is that we have not broken through the communication barrier and thinking about how we can communicate our story is really our challenge.

Mr. Dave Morley presented his report and briefed the Board on his conversation with the Governor, notably the data-driven funding question.

Mr. Morley announced that after discussion with the Executive Committee, Dr. Shelley Canright was offered and has accepted the position of Board Vice Chair.

Executive Director Georgia Mjartan discussed the struggle to get the Governor and the President of the Senate to fill the vacancies on the Board, which must be filled by appointment. There are numerous vacancies, and candidates for these roles have been provided to the appointing individuals, however no action has been taken. Ms. Mjartan expressed gratitude to Representative Allison and Representative Govan for their role in getting the Speaker of the House to make his board appointments.

Ms. Mjartan reported 50% Board giving in 2019 which totaled around \$9,000. The goal was 100% Board giving.

Ms. Sue Williams asked if external folks would be permitted to be on the Executive Committee in order to give opportunity for board recruitment. There was some discussion about this. Mr. Tim Holt asked if these folks would have a vote. Mr. Morley advised that they could vote in committee but not for the Board. Mr. Morley would like to take this topic back up in Executive Committee. Ms. Mjartan said she would be happy to investigate it.

Ms. Hussey and Mr. Walter Fleming's terms on the Board have expired. Ms. Mjartan thanked both for remaining on the Board until their seats can be filled. Ms. Mjartan also thanked the other Board members for recommitting to new terms.

Ms. Hussey reminded of the "Give or Get" to acknowledge State Agencies.



Mr. Morley asked the Board of Trustees if they were in favor of the way the Consent Agenda was set up. All were in favor of it. Representative Jerry Govan made a motion to adopt the Consent Agenda. Ms. Hussey provided a second and the motion to approve the Agenda was unanimously approved.

Ms. Mjartan recognized Danielle Harper.

Ms. Mjartan presented her Executive Director's Report.

Ms. Mjartan pointed the Board to page 11 of the Executive Director's Report of the 4K expansion to discuss capacity levels around the state in the 17 non-eligible Districts and provide statistics.

Ms. Mjartan directed the Board to page 12, acknowledging that First Steps 4K is high quality and students are ready for kindergarten. She also noted the importance of child care centers for our economy.

Ms. Mjartan explained that we look to work with quality first and give incentives (10%) bonus on student tuition, plus two weeks of professional development.

Ms. Mjartan pointed the Board to the chart "*Child Care Centers Matter for our Economy*" and gave credit to Roger Pryor and Jennifer Williams for educating her on this.

Representative Govan asked about the true cost for child care. The RAND Study states that the true cost for child care is \$7,000 for a First Steps 4K classroom (traditional school year, 6 ½ hour day). SC First Steps only provides \$4,600. The true cost for 4K at public schools is \$11,000 and all of the expenses not covered by CERDEP are funded by the District or other public sources.

Mr. Holt asked how we fix this. Ms. Mjartan stated that we don't take 4-year-olds out of private child care and put them into public schools at a disproportionate rate. There needs to be thought and balance to the public-private, mixed-delivery of 4K approach.

Mr. Holt asked if there was a way to increase the reimbursement. Ms. Mjartan stated there is a reimbursement increase included in the proposal that goes from \$4,600 to \$4,800.

Ms. Hussey stated another problem is the low salary for child care workers.

Ms. Mjartan stated that we can't unintentionally incentivize competition for children and discussed the clawback clause and the issue with supplanting of funds and the SC First Steps uphill battle.

Representative Rita Allison asked Ms. Mjartan to repeat that again.

Representative Allison stated that it was her understanding that it (the clawback clause) was directed to public schools. Represent Allison further acknowledged that when public schools consider the expansion of their programs (specifically 4K), they have to have the facilities and, with the number of additional people that have come into the State since 2018, public schools are overflowing as it is. They can't keep up with the growth so in order for them to expand their early childhood they are going to have to have the facilities.

Representative Allison stated that it was her understanding that if public schools don't spend their money by that date, then that money flows over to the private sector, any money that is left.



“It should be and is about the children at this stage. We have spent many years not picking up all the children in this State that could qualify for going to 3K and 4K.”

She believes the Governor looked at it as trying to open it up and have it not being a competitive situation between public, private, parochial but to be able to find all of the children out there and Representative Allison commends First Steps for moving forward with the Portal so that parents, grandparents and guardians all know that they have this opportunity to send their children to a good, quality child care. Representative Allison stated that statistics show, and research shows that if you don't have quality programs, that can be negative for a child going into kindergarten and growing up. Representative Allison continued in saying that in the first year as we move forward, we as a State will know more of what we have, what we need, and if the children's needs are being met.

Representative Allison commends First Steps on the work they are doing but she does not want to see it get into a competitive situation that is going to hurt us moving forward with the opportunity that we have.

Representative Allison advised that she did not know until today that if First Steps does not spend all their money by September 15th, it goes to the Public Schools.

Mr. Holt reiterated that if SC First Steps does not have carry-forward next year, how can the program continue to expand?

Mr. Morley asked Representative Allison if she agreed with Ms. Mjartan's interpretation.

Representative Allison did not know about the clawback clause.

Mr. Morley asked Representative Allison for assistance on the unreasonable request of going into new communities from scratch between July 1 – September 15 and having to establish from scratch. Mr. Morley suggested that if there could be a start-up year and if there was a claw back and it was delayed one year, it would be beneficial. Representative Allison agreed and stated she was not aware of this and it took her back and asked Mr. Morley if this was just put in today. Mr. Morley advised Representative Allison it happened last night. Mr. Govan advised that this is what happens when Ways and Means makes decisions that needs to come through Education. Representative Govan advised Representative Allison that they need to discuss this with the Chairman of the Ways and Means Committee. Representative Allison said they will be discussing the clause with some people as this was not her understanding about this from the beginning. Ms. Mjartan thanked everyone for their engagement in the conversation.

Mr. Morley stated that if this proviso goes forward, we may have to take a funding risk. This might be a business decision and require discussion about how to do this. Representative Allison advised that First Steps needs to move forward with their plan and let them deal with the proviso because it did not start out that way.

Ms. Mjartan gave an update on the \$3M grant request. The Ways and Means Committee passed this out of the subcommittee yesterday. Funding, if approved, would be used for a competitive grant award for the 0-3 population and would be granted out to local partnerships. Ms. Mjartan asked the Board to thank legislators for advancing the possibility of having this recurring pool of money.



Mr. Morley and Ms. Sue Williams discussed the competitive grants and various ways to have funders combine with the grants to get more impact and broader reach.

Ms. Mjartan brought the Boards attention to the Profile of the Ready Kindergartner. Changes were reviewed by State Department of Education (Dr. David Mathis and Wendy Burgess) with a blessing of several key players.

Mr. Morley asked about including information on hitting milestones for children under 5. Ms. Mjartan stated we would have a new section on our website that would go backwards from the Ready Kindergartner profile and support the earlier milestones.

Representative Govan reminded the Board members that not all children develop at the rate so not everything can be put in the same box so be cautious on what is put in the Profile. There is a lot of information already out there in terms as to what is age appropriate like Parents as Teach so he wouldn't go too heavy into that.

Mr. Holt made a motion to adopt the edits to the Profile of the Ready Kindergartner. Representative Govan provided a second. The motion was unanimously approved.

Programmatic update

Ms. Mjartan advised that we have reached our target goal of 3,000 children in First Steps 4K this year which is 20% growth goal that we set.

Ready Rosie and Raising a Reader Pilots are underway.

Ms. Mjartan advised the Board members that if they *follow* and *like* SC First Steps posts on social media, it really helps boost our page.

Ms. Mjartan informed the Board members of additions to the SC First Steps staffing with a new Communications Director as well as two new interns.

Discussed grant updates, specifically talking about United Way Association Census Grant.

Recently received news that AmeriCorps concept paper was approved, and we are moving forward into the full application stage for 38 members State-wide.

Dr. Canright presented the Local Partnership Program & Grants Committee Report.

Dr. Canright recognized the people in attendance that do the work like the Local Partnerships Executive Directors.

Mr. Holt presented the Finance and Administration Committee Report.

Mr. Morley asked why there was change in funding based on the allocation model. Mr. Holt explained there is less population as folks are moving. Representative Govan mentioned that most Local Partnerships who took a hit were rural counties and cautioned using population as a big basis on funding. Mr. Mark Barnes explained the disbursement of funds.



Dr. Amy Williams presented the Strategic Planning and Evaluation Committee Report and pointed the Board to the draft Strategic Plan. The Committee would like a Board vote on the definition of the values today. Ms. Sue Williams made a motion to adopt the definitions of the values on the draft strategic plan. Dr. Canright provided a second and the motion was unanimously approved.

Vote on adopting Strategic Priorities:

Only vote on priorities and asked the Board to give feedback to Ms. Chelsea Richard on strategic objectives.

Mr. Holt asked about the dual language learners.

Dr. Williams provided background research about linguistic learning.

Representative Govan believes strongly in a bilingual education.

Ms. Sue Williams made a motion to adopt the Strategic Priorities as submitted (1-4). Ms. Hussey provided a second and the motion was unanimously approved.

Mr. Morley recognized Peter Ligette from DHHS.

Representative Govan said the House will begin their budget debate next week and that he plans to speak with Representative Allison about the 4K proviso.

Representative Govan asked Ms. Mjartan to convene a meeting of the legislative committee.

Representative Govan made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Mr. Holt provided a second and the meeting was adjourned.