

First 5 Solano Children and Families Commission

Minutes of Meeting – Tuesday, August 4, 2009, 5:30 PM Benicia Veteran's Memorial Hall 1150 1st Street, Benicia, CA

Attendance

Commissioners: Norma Thigpen, Chair; Debbie Gossell, Vice-Chair; Dee Alarcón; Dan Ayala; Stephan Betz; Dana Dean; Sheryl Fairchild; Dr. Elaine Norinsky; Linda Seifert.

Staff/Public: Commission staff and approximately 17 members of the public were present.

Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at: 5:42 PM by Chairperson Thigpen.

I. Greetings, Introductions, Public Comment

Commissioner Thigpen introduced new Commissioner Dana Dean and read her biographical information. Commissioner Dean commented that she was proud and pleased to have this opportunity to help what she considered Solano's most vulnerable population.

Commissioners and staff introduced themselves. Christina Arrostituto, Executive Director of First 5 Solano, introduced Denise Winters, the new Accounting Clerk for First 5 Solano.

Lynn Hoffman, School Readiness Programs Manager for First 5 Solano, introduced Pershia Miles, who is serving as an intern for First 5 Solano this summer through the Workforce Investment Board. Ms. Miles commented that this had been a great learning experience for her and she much enjoyed working at the First 5 Solano office.

Jayleen Richards, Mental Health Services Act (MHSA) coordinator for Solano County Health and Social Services (H&SS), thanked the Commission and Commissioner Thigpen for supporting and joining the MHSA strategic planning committee. She introduced Megan Richards, who is the MHSA Manager. Ms. (Megan) Richards thanked the Commission for their partnership on the Partners in Early Access for Kids (PEAK) Initiative and gave a brief update on the current MHSA activities in Solano County.

Marco Berrios of Barnes and Noble bookstores informed the Commission that Barnes and Noble offers community partnerships to local non-profits and government agencies for fundraising and bulk discounts for training materials. He announced that from August 13 to August 20 Barnes and Noble patrons mentioning a local school district would have a percentage of their purchase donated to that district.

II. Approve the Commission Meeting Agenda for August 4, 2009

Motion: Approve the Commission Meeting Agenda for August 4, 2009.

Commissioner Alarcón moved to approve the agenda. The motion passed unanimously.

III. Approve Minutes of the June 2, 2009 Commission Meeting

Motion: Approve Minutes of the June 2, 2009 Commission Meeting.

Commissioner Betz moved to approve this motion. The motion passed with eight ayes and

one abstention (Commissioner Dean abstained from the vote as she was not present at the June meeting).

IV. Approve the 2010 First 5 Solano Commission Meeting Schedule

Motion: Approve the 2010 First 5 Solano Commission Meeting Schedule.

Commissioner Seifert moved to approve this motion. The motion passed unanimously.

V. Benicia Services Presentation

Mayor of Benicia Elizabeth Patterson welcomed the Commission to Benicia and informed them that Benicia has been voted one of the "ten most playful" cities. She gave the Commission a brief background on the founding and history of Benicia.

Janice Adams, Superintendent of the Benicia Unified School District, informed the Commission that the schools in the Benicia district are very strong. She reviewed the current preschool programs in Benicia, their staff and locations.

Ellen Blaufarb, member of the Benicia Human Services and Arts Board (and former First 5 Solano Commissioner), informed the Commission that the board looks at proposals for Benicia, then recommends proposals to the City Council and administers funds awarded.

Sharon Petrolese, Chair of the Benicia Human Services and Arts Board reported that, of the eight requests received this year, seven had been approved. She gave a brief explanation of the grant process for the board. She noted that the board also accepts donations from the public.

Benicia Chief of Police Sandra Spagnoli gave a "top ten" list of why Benicia is a great place for families, including existing community partnerships, having the lowest crime statistics in the county, Youth Action Coalition and the Benicia Family Resource Center (run through the Benicia Police Department).

Maria Teresa Matthews, Board President of Families in Transition (FIT), gave the Commission a brief background on the program and the services it provides. The main mission of FIT is to prevent homelessness in Benicia. The staff of FIT is comprised of volunteers; there are no paid staff members, office or overhead costs.

Mary Frances Kelly Poh, Assistant Director of the Benicia Community Action Council (CAC), informed the Commission that the CAC is designated as the homeless assistance center for Benicia. She explained that the CAC is the only full service social service network in Benicia.

Blanche Hilman, Co-coordinator of the Benicia Family Resource Center (FRC), thanked the First 5 Solano Commission for the funding and program support they provide to the FRC. She reported that the FRC provides information and referrals to families for any services needed. Susan Ferdinandi, Co-coordinator of the Benicia FRC, explained that the FRC also offers parenting classes and workshops to Benicia residents. A budget workshop for families is being planned for the fall.

VI. Committee Meetings

Commissioner Thigpen informed the Commission that Commissioner Dean will be serving on the Community Engagement Committee and that Commissioner Ayala is moving to the Internal Systems Committee.

A. Program Committee

The Program Committee did not meet in July.

B. Internal Systems Committee

1. Motion: Consider rescheduling the date of the First 5 Solano Commission Retreat from October 17, 2009 to November 14, 2009.

Commissioner Alarcón moved to approve this motion. The motion passed unanimously.

C. Community Engagement Committee

1. Motion: Consider approval of delegation of ongoing authority to the Community Engagement (CE) Committee to oversee the deployment of CE line item budget funds.

Commissioner Seifert moved to approve this motion. The motion passed unanimously.

VII. Executive Director's Report

Ms. Arrostuto reported to the Commission that in light of the current budget from the state, Solano County alone would lose almost nine million dollars in general funds (aside from any other program cuts) from state borrowing or otherwise diverting funds for FY2009/10.

Patrick Duterte, Director of Solano County H&SS, gave the Commission a brief review of the most recent cuts to the county services as a result of the current state budget. Services being cut included Healthy Families, CalWORKs, Child Welfare Services, Welfare to Work, In-Home Support Services, Early Periodic Screening Diagnosis and Treatment, Maternal Child Adolescent Health, Adolescent Family Life and Black Infant Health. Mr. Duterte commented that "town hall" meetings are being planned to discuss the current state cuts and what the impact will be to community members.

Rosalia Velazquez, Executive Director of Solano Coalition for Better Health, informed the Commission that cuts to the Healthy Families program are expected to result in approximately 2,302 children in Solano County being denied coverage in FY2009/10 and about 2,648 children will be disenrolled from the program.

Kim Thomas, Executive Director of Children's Network, reported that child care funding cuts being made by the state are mostly being offset by the federal stimulus money available locally. In addition, local FRCs are facing cuts while trying to cope with the huge increase in people needing services due to layoffs, foreclosures and other impacts of the "slow" economy.

Ms. Arrostuto delivered a PowerPoint presentation about the statutes, policies and guidelines for non-supplantation. She informed the Commission that First 5 Solano's cost to fill the gap in the Healthy Families program by year five (since there is no indication that the state will make the program whole in the foreseeable future) could exceed the Commission's entire allocation. There is also a possibility of another \$1.50/pack tobacco tax increase, which would not backfill Proposition 10 and would decrease the First 5 Solano revenues by approximately one million dollars per year. Ms. Arrostuto asked the Commissioners for suggestions/input for criteria for determining which services to fund in this current economic downturn.

Commissioner Gossell commented that the Commission needs to look at basic community needs like shelter and healthy food for food banks and that the Commission didn't provide a lot of funding in those areas. She also asked Commissioners to go back and look at the mission for the

First 5 Solano Commission and take that into consideration when considering funding.

Commissioner Seifert asked staff to direct county counsel to give an opinion on non-supplantation that provides the greatest level of flexibility, as well as clarify and interpret the phrase "existing levels of service". She also commented that it was too soon to talk about the specifics regarding what direction the Commission should go; the Commission needs as many options as possible so it can act when the local impacts are known.

Commissioner Alarcón agreed that the Commission needs an opinion that allows the greatest flexibility; it is too soon to give suggestions on funding tonight.

Commissioner Betz informed the Commission that he thought a September meeting could be needed. He suggested that staff check existing Commission contracts for language that could help define "existing levels of services."

Commissioner Dean asked staff for additional resources, including the document and/or table that has been compiled from all the county non-supplantation policies. She would like to define "existing levels of service" as "one day" after cuts were made.

Commissioner Thigpen commented that the long term financial plan and commitments made in the past should be reviewed. She suggested giving preference to currently funded partners who are providing direct services to the community. When making funding decisions, she suggested the ability to leverage funds as a primary criteria.

Ms. Arrostuto informed the Commission that if a September meeting is set, it would probably be on Tuesday, September 8 and asked the Commissioners to please save that date on their calendars.

Ms. Arrostuto commented that she appreciated the way Cherelyn Ellington, Community Programs Manager, had taken the "community engagement" to a whole new level with the help of the committee. First 5 Solano and its grantee partners reached hundreds of families by staffing a booth at the Solano County Fair for its full five day run. Ms. Arrostuto's support of other projects include: 1) outreach to the African-American faith community and meeting with pastors in Solano County; and 2) a "Business Engagement Strategy" that includes business "focus groups" at every Chamber of Commerce in the County facilitated by LFA Group, evaluators for First 5 Solano, to talk with local business people on how they could become champions for children in Solano County.

VIII. Commissioner Remarks

Commissioner Thigpen thanked the Commissioners, staff and the First 5 Solano funded partners for keeping services going through these tough times.

Commissioner Gossell commented that there are hits in other states, but she really feels that there is a major crisis going on in California.

Commissioner Betz referred Commissioners, staff and members of the public to the website www.f5ac.org, which has a comprehensive strategy that addresses the needs for early childhood mental health and development. He would like to bring this back to the Commission and suggested that we try to get the other counties on board with the PEAK Initiative to standardize early assessments, treatment and reimbursement for early childhood mental health services.

Commissioner Seifert commended staff and First 5 Solano funded partners, as well as all the other agencies who are struggling to provide services.

Commissioner Dean commented that it was a great honor to her to be part of the Commission, and she looks forward to working through the current budget issues.

Commissioner Ayala informed the Commission that it may be time to get a closer look at what the First 5 Solano grantees current needs are.

Commissioner Norinsky commented that she wanted to get out into the community more to find out what people think about what is going on now and what direction they think the Commission should take. She would like more personal community involvement in how it relates to the First 5 Solano Commission and what the Commission is trying to do.

IX. Future Agenda Items, Meeting Time/Date/Location

The next regularly scheduled Commission meeting is on Tuesday, October 6, 2009 at 5:30 PM, Multi-Purpose Room at 2101 Courage Drive, Fairfield, CA 94533. Future agenda items include: Public Hearing on FY2008/09 Annual Audit, Public Hearing on FY2008/09 Solano Annual Report submission to First 5 California, Nominating Committee for 2009 Officers and Annual Retreat Draft Agenda.

Meeting adjourned at 8:21 PM.


Heather Devaney, Administrative Secretary

Approved: *October 6, 2009*