



**COMMISSION MEETING
MINUTES**

December 17, 2020

Commissioners Present: Rachel Champagne, Dr. Michael Gollub, Stan Mantooth, Dr. Robert Levin, Kelly Long, Barbara Marquez-O’Neill, Dr. Cesar Morales, Bruce Stenslie, Barry Zimmerman

Staff Present: Petra Puls, John Anderson, Lauren Arzu, Sharon Elmensdorp, Fahim Farag, Heather Guerrero, Teresa Gutierrez, Jimena Hernandez, Jennifer Johnson, Sam McCoy, Nani Oesterle

Public Present: Cristina Alvarez, Cyntia Andres, Jhoelle Aspuria, Elizabeth Hardin Boyett, Lisa Bork, Elizabeth Cervantes, Juana Chaparro, Carizma Chapman, Tiffany Charaabi, Frank Chow, Hope de Moss, Sandra Diaz, Maria Espinola, Shelby Ferns, Heather Garcia, Hilcia Garcia, Cynthia Gonzalez, Lilia Gurrola, Andrew Huizar, Breanna Monette, Kim Mora, Blanca Morales, Mabel Munoz, Kelly Petruela, Veronica Reynoso, Crystal Rizo, Lani Schiff-Ross, Erik Sternad, Megan Switzler, Margarita Valadez, Joelle Vessels

OPENING

1. Welcome and Introductions

Chair Marquez-O’Neill opened the meeting at 1:03 p.m., reminded attendees how to participate via public comment, and shared a quote.

2. Approval of Minutes from November 19, 2020 Commission Meeting

A motion was made by Commissioner Gollub, seconded by Commissioner Mantooth, to approve the minutes from the November 19, 2020 Commission Meeting. The motion passed unanimously.

3. Agenda Approval and Review of Commission Packets

Chair Marquez-O’Neill provided an overview of regular and supplemental packet items, noting materials were sent via email and are posted on the F5VC website.

A motion was made by Commissioner Stenslie, seconded by Commissioner Zimmerman, to approve the agenda. The motion passed unanimously.

4. Recognition and Appreciation of Commissioner Mantooth for his work on behalf of First 5 Ventura County

Chair Marquez-O’Neill commented that Commissioner Mantooth has served since 2008 and has been instrumental in shaping policy in his role as the Chair of the Administration and Finance Committee. His passion, advocacy, and leadership have made a huge positive impact on children and families in Ventura County. She presented a plaque and book to Commissioner Mantooth to thank him for his service.

The Commissioners shared their appreciation for Commissioner Mantooth's service, leadership, and friendship over the years.

Petra Puls thanked Commissioner Mantooth on behalf of the entire F5VC team and noted that he has always been a tremendous cheerleader for First 5 and children in Ventura County. We will miss his leadership.

Commissioner Mantooth thanked the Commissioners and Petra for their comments and promised to continue to be a champion for early childhood and the entire educational continuum in his next endeavors.

5. Public Comments/Correspondence

There were no comments from members of the public.

6. Presentation: Highlights of Current Neighborhood for Learning Implementation

Chair Marquez-O'Neill introduced Erik Sternad, CEO of Interface Children & Family Services.

Erik noted that Interface Children & Family Services (ICFS) opposes the F5VC staff recommendation to not renew the NfL contract with ICFS. ICFS believes that they can serve a greater number of children by partnering with F5VC. He noted advantages of continuing the partnership could include: avoiding disruption in service and staffing, completing the current evaluation process, and keeping costs low. ICFS is open to streamlined oversight of their contract to improve efficiency. Erik added there are risks in ramping up staff quickly and offering direct services. The NfL program ICFS inherited has been improved through consolidation and standardization, which is complex. He acknowledged there have been disagreements during the partnership and ICFS is open to discussing those areas of concern. ICFS is concerned that current NfL staff will not transition to F5VC, which would lead to some changes and potential service disruptions. Erik concluded as this will be a heavy lift for staff and a strategic distraction ICFS respectfully asks the Commission to consider the benefits of the ICFS-F5VC partnership and noted ICFS is committed to a smooth transition if the staff recommendation is approved.

There were no questions or comments from the Commission.

CONSENT AGENDA

7. Receive and File the First 5 Ventura County Financial Reports as of October 31, 2020

A motion was made by Commissioner Gollub, seconded by Commissioner Morales, to approve the consent agenda. The motion passed unanimously.

REGULAR AGENDA

8. Recommendation to adopt a resolution per Government Code 54954(a) to establish time and place for holding regular Commission meetings for calendar year 2021

A motion was made by Commissioner Levin, seconded by Commissioner Long, to approve the resolution to establish time and place for holding regular Commission meetings for Calendar Year 2021. The motion passed unanimously.

9. Election of new officers to be seated in January

Chair Marquez-O'Neill noted that the Chair and Vice-Chair are chosen annually by an election and seated in January of the following year. She noted that the Commission's bylaws call for one-year terms, but officers do not have any term limits and have historically served for two years. Although the Vice-Chair has often been nominated for the Chair role, Commissioner Zimmerman is not able to serve as the Chair or Vice-Chair in 2021 because of time constraints in response to the pandemic.

Chair Marquez-O'Neill opened up the meeting for nominations.

Commissioner Long nominated Commissioner Marquez-O'Neill as Chair of the Commission. The nomination was seconded by Commissioner Stenslie. Commissioner Marquez-O'Neill nominated Commissioner Stenslie as Vice-Chair of the Commission. The nomination was seconded by Commissioner Gollub.

The motions to accept the presented nominations for Chair and Vice-Chair for calendar year 2021 passed unanimously.

10. Recommendation to Utilize Unallocated Preschool Funds for a Two-Year Family Child Care Shared Services Pilot

Nani Oesterle noted that this recommendation is for an exciting systems change effort related to preschool. F5VC was selected by the Pritzker Initiative for a technical assistance grant to work with Opportunities Exchange (Opp Ex) around implementing shared services, which will increase take home earnings and reduce administrative workload for child care providers. Opp Ex is looking for ways to improve the business model of shared services to improve outcomes for young children and childcare providers. Nani added shared services were also highlighted in the recently released Early Childhood Master Plan.

Nani detailed that shared services in the form of Child Care Management Software (CCMS) will help staff automate their operations so they can spend more time with children, as well as help providers reach full enrollment and full collection of family fees. Nani noted that CCMS can be especially beneficial for family childcare providers (FCCs) where the owner is the teacher, accountant, purchaser, janitor, and more. These providers operate with a very small profit margin. Nani noted in the last five years 1,400 family childcare spaces in Ventura County have been lost due to low profitability. Family childcare tends to serve infants and toddlers, locally there are less than 1,000 infant toddler spaces at centers and 5,700 at FCC locations.

F5VC recommends using unallocated preschool funds to launch a two-year pilot to fund the CCMS program for 20 FCCs in year one and another 20 in year two. F5VC would have enterprise access to see enrollment rates, utilization rates, etc. Nani noted if FCCs see increased earnings from the CCMS, they will be able to afford the platform fees on their own after the pilot. As F5VC would support this project with unallocated preschool funds no additional funds or allocation of staff time is needed.

Commissioner Champagne asked what the vetting process would be for selecting FCCs, and if all areas of the County would be represented. Nani responded that F5VC would target FCCs working with VCOE and CDR on the quality initiative as well as high-need areas, such as Oxnard. Commissioner Champagne noted voluntary participation would increase the chances of buy-in by FCCs.

Commissioner Stenslie agreed that having FCCs be committed will be key to the success of the measure. He noted operational efficiency is fundamental to any business model and will enhance resiliency and financial reserves to survive disruptions. EDC has business advisors available at no cost and will help integrate technology. Nani thanked Commissioner Stenslie for the offer of support and will follow up for a demo of the platform once a vendor is selected.

Commissioner Long requested that the entire county have access to the CCMS, especially the Santa Clara Valley, and that it be available in multiple languages.

A motion was made by Commissioner Stenslie, seconded by Commissioner Long, to utilize currently unallocated preschool funds to plan and implement a two-year shared services pilot for family child care providers. The motion passed unanimously.

11. Recommendation to Release a Request for Letter of Interest for a Child Care Management Software (CCMS) Vendor

Nani Oesterle noted F5VC needs to release an LOI to determine how potential CCMS vendors can meet the Scope of Work. It will be critical for the vendor to offer an enterprise account so that F5VC has full access to the data. She reviewed the LOI process, noting if there are multiple responses a full RFP will be released and if only one qualified vendor submits an LOI F5VC will proceed with sole source contracting.

A motion was made by Commissioner Gollub, seconded by Commissioner Morales, to invite qualified Child Care Management Software (CCMS) vendors to submit a Letter of Interest to support a two year Shared Services Alliances pilot for Family Child Care Providers. The motion passed unanimously.

12. Recommendation to Adopt an Implementation Model for First 5 Neighborhoods for Learning

Petra Puls recognized the NfL staff and ICFS team for their hard work over the past 18 months and noted she, Jennifer Johnson, and Sam McCoy will jointly present the recommendation.

Petra recapped the Strategic Plan implementation timeline, which includes: evaluating all initiatives for effectiveness and fidelity; alignment with vision and strategic priorities; and seeking local, State, and Federal partnership opportunities. The process will result in recommendations for strategic investments and aligning resources to support those investments. She noted this presentation will focus on opportunities and not the challenges we have encountered and asked Sam McCoy to start the presentation.

Sam McCoy recapped the NfL RfP process in 2018 and reminded the Commission that F5VC developed a hybrid implementation model to include direct staff oversight with the selected contractor. The model presented many challenges and staff is confident that direct oversight will enhance the implementation of the initiative. Sam noted that performance was not the impetus for the recommendation to bring the NfLs

under F5VC administration and added F5VC is ready to make the necessary changes to our organizational structure to take on direct implementation of the NfL initiative.

Sam noted the Commission requested information on participants served and reviewed the NfL service provisions, goals, targets and actual service numbers for FY 2019-20 and FY 2020-21 quarter 1. He detailed how targets were developed and adapted for PACT programs.

Commissioner Long asked if ICFS was on target to meet their goals in FY 2019-20 prior to COVID-19. Sam noted that targets were developed anticipating reaching 360 new parents each quarter and the participation per quarter was met but the unduplicated number of clients was not. He added service numbers were not the primary reason for the upcoming recommendation.

Petra added that F5VC has always worked with contractors to problem-solve when targets were not met and has never taken a punitive approach. FY 2019-20 was the first year of the transition, and required significant ramp-up, resulting in lower service numbers with an expected increase for FY 2020-21.

Jennifer Johnson shared budget and actual expenditure information for the FY 2019-20 NfL contract, noting that of the \$2.9 million budget, ICFS expended 81% (\$2.3 million), with \$1.4 million on personnel. She then shared preliminary potential budget scenarios for the NfL for FY 2021-22 with the approved allocation amount of \$3.045 million. She noted these scenarios are conceptual to discuss staffing models, and not presented for a decision. The NfL currently has 21.25 FTEs filled and 27.6 FTEs budgeted. Jennifer presented four budget scenarios, which vary from 21.25 FTEs to 25.25 FTEs, and noted all models allow all currently filled NfL positions to be included in F5VC's staffing plans. She added that if the recommendation is approved F5VC staff will further refine budget models for Commission approval.

Petra highlighted the potential benefits and opportunities of F5VC having direct oversight of the NfLs, including embedding effective F5VC funded programs into larger systems for scale and sustainability. She added F5VC needs to drive our vision to maintain our leadership position in the ECE system, which has allowed access to outside funding and expertise. F5VC can ensure NfL fidelity, adaptability, and quality through direct access to staff and coaching. Petra added F5VC is dedicated to building community partners' capacity, including training librarians to implement the PACT program and embedding PACT in the QRIS program.

Petra reviewed the transition timeline, and detailed the plans to retain the current talent and expertise. F5VC staff are dedicated to being available to NfL staff to build relationships and ensure a smooth transition if the recommendation is approved. F5VC will be fully prepared to bring NfL staff in-house by July 1st so that there isn't a gap in services for families. Additionally, F5VC staff are contemplating requesting the use of prior year unspent funds to bring some staff on early to support the transition. Petra noted staff are currently updating job descriptions to fit F5VC's organizational structure, with two-way interviews intended to begin in late January. F5VC's status as an industry leader for competitive compensation and benefits will be highly attractive to current NfL staff.

Petra noted if the recommendation is approved F5VC staff will examine, review, and renew leases for the current locations, as well as review other operating costs. She noted communication with staff, participants, and parent leaders is key and detailed upcoming strategies to achieve a smooth transition.

F5VC is asking for ICFS support to support a smooth transition and noted there will be minimal disruption for families as staff, programs, and locations will remain similar.

Petra discussed the intention to embed NfLs into existing systems integration efforts like HMG and the continuous quality improvement model that will drive long term program changes. She added current NfL subcontracts with MICOP and New Dawn will be examined and recommendations will be made in quarter 3. F5VC will look for ways to continue to work with MICOP to provide services. Triple P outcome data, which was recently received for FY 2019-20, will be examined before a recommendation is made. Petra added that families' needs are changing rapidly, and F5VC is committed to being nimble and to meet families where they are. Implementing the NfLs under F5VCs leadership is a critical turning point in our evolution which will help enhance our impact for years to come.

Commissioner Long asked if ICFS had grants to off-set costs. Jennifer replied that they did not have any grants that we are aware of beyond the 10% required match. Commissioner Long noted she is concerned about the transition during COVID-19. Petra responded that COVID-19 resulted in families having many unanticipated needs but F5VC has always adapted to the changing needs of the families we serve. Offering employment to existing staff who have established relationships will help ensure that families don't have a gap in communication or service. F5VC has a solid track record of recruiting and retaining staff, and there is sufficient time to recruit and train new staff if needed. F5VC are the designers and expert implementers of PACT, and while we appreciate how quickly ICFS pivoted to offer services virtually, we won't have a big learning curve to implement the program. Sam added that we will communicate with families currently enrolled and future cohorts to continue outreach through family networks as well.

Commissioner Long asked if we will still fund 2-1-1. Petra commented that we have a separate contract for 2-1-1 funding and that although countywide strategies have yet to be evaluated we anticipate recommending to continue that contract as well.

Commissioner Stenslie commented that we are not blind to the potential of disruption, but he is confident that we are able to manage potential disruptions. He added having multiple organizations involved can be beneficial but F5VC has always been highly leveraged and this recommendation will allow F5VC to take greater advantage of our central role within the ECE system.

Commissioner Marquez-O'Neill thanked ICFS for the work they did despite unforeseen challenges. She appreciates the continued partnership to connect families to important services. She noted transition is hard and the pandemic is creating difficult situations for families, and by focusing on strengths and opportunities we will maintain integrity in the community and better serve children and families.

A motion was made by Commissioner Stenslie, seconded by Commissioner Gollub, to approve the staff recommended implementation model for First 5 Neighborhoods for Learning, beginning with FY 2021-22. The motion passed unanimously.

13. Report from Executive Director

Petra thanked the ICFS team and noted she looks forward to working together to make sure that families don't fall through the cracks during the transition.

Petra directed the Commission to the written report and shared a few updates in the interest of time. The childcare provider survey had over a 50% response rate, with findings on the impact of COVID-19 on childcare to be presented to the Commission at a future meeting. She thanked CDR for their partnership in distributing supplies to the community and noted another shipment is coming in December. She also thanked VCOE for the volunteers at each distribution event. F5VC partnered with CDR and Catalyst Kids to distribute 1,000 books to kids to read during the holiday break. Petra concluded her report noting staff if working feverishly to draft an ACEs Aware grant that is due Monday noting enclosed advocacy and media items.

14. Commission Member Comments

Commissioner Long thanked ICFS for stepping in and noted this was a difficult decision. She asked Petra to keep the Commission informed during the transition. Erik thanked his staff for their dedication.

Commissioner Gollub commented that this was an eventful meeting and thanked Chair Marquez-O'Neill and Petra for their leadership.

Commissioner Levin wished everyone a happy holidays. He advised to limit our interactions with family members to protect all our community members.

Chair Marquez-O'Neill commented that the biggest gift we can give each other this year is the gift of well-being.

15. Next Meeting

Thursday, January 28, 2021, via Zoom.

The meeting was adjourned at 3:04 p.m.