COMMISSION MEETING MINUTES

November 21, 2024

Commissioners Present: Dr. Christine Walker, Bruce Stenslie, Dr. Loretta Denering, Kimberly Naslund, Barbara Marquez-O'Neill

Excused Absence : Matt LaVere, Cesar Morales, Rachel Champagne

Staff Present : Petra Puls, Lauren Arzu, Jennifer Johnson, Sharon Elmensdorp, Lysa Urban, Christina Laubacher, Lilia Gurrola, Shelby Ferns, Jhoelle Aspuria-Arca, Mario Rodriguez, Sandra Díaz, Marisol Hernandez, Sky Limón, Jina Jue

Public Present: Alicia McFarland

1. **Welcome and Introductions**

   Vice Chair Walker opened the meeting at 1:01 p.m. and asked Commissioners to introduce themselves.

2. **Approval of Minutes from October 17, 2024 Commission Meeting**

   A motion was made by Commissioner Stenslie, seconded by Commissioner Denering, to approve the minutes from October 17, 2024 Commission Meeting. The motion passed unanimously.

3. **Agenda Approval and Review of Commission Packets**

   A motion was made by Commissioner Stenslie, seconded by Commissioner Marquez-O'Neill, to approve the agenda. The motion passed unanimously.

4. **Public Comments / Correspondence**

   There were no comments from members of the public.

CONSENT AGENDA

5. **Receive and File the First 5 Ventura County Financial Reports as of September 30, 2024**

6. **Recommendation to Update FY2024-25 Overall Operating Budget and Program & Systems Integration Budget with Home Visiting Grant Funds**

7. Recommendation to Adopt a Resolution per Government Code 54954(a) to Establish Time and Place for Holding Regular Commission Meetings for Calendar Year 2025

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

REGULAR AGENDA

8. Report from Commissioner on Bridges to Resilience Conference – Commissioner Marquez-O'Neill

Commissioner Marquez-O'Neill reported on the annual Bridges to Resilience Conference, which was held on November 4, 2024, in Santa Barbara. She shared the agenda and spoke about the keynote theme, Building Beloved Community through Collective Healing & Collective Liberation. She shared about the different breakout room session topics: Cultural Wealth Model, Trauma-Informed Pediatric Care, Post-Traumatic Growth & Resiliency, Meeting the Mental Health Needs of Multiply Marginalized Youth, Radical Acceptance, Sacred South Meditation, and Healing the Beloved Community. Commissioner Marquez-O'Neill spoke specifically about the socio-ecological model and the Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) connection. She spoke about different models of healing with a focus on the importance of the mind, body, and spirit connection.

There was an inquiry regarding whether Bridges to Resilience is a local or national conference. The conference is held in Santa Barbara and hosted by the tri-counties Child Abuse Prevention Councils.

9. Election of Officers to be Seated in January – Vice Chair Walker

The F5VC Commission held nominations for the election of new officers for 2025.

Commissioner Walker nominated Commissioner LaVere as Chairperson, seconded by Commissioner Stenslie.

A motion was made by Commissioner Walker, seconded by Commissioner Stenslie to elect Commissioner LaVere as Chairperson. The motion passed unanimously.

Commissioner Denering nominated Commissioner Walker as Vice Chairperson, seconded by Commissioner Marquez-O'Neill.

A motion was made by Commissioners Denering, seconded by Commissioner Marquez-O'Neill, to elect Commissioner Walker as Vice-Chair. The motion passed unanimously.

10. Report of Administration and Finance Committee – Commissioners Morales and Stenslie

a. Recommendation to Update Policy and Procedures on Internal Control - Jennifer Johnson

Jennifer Johnson reported that an update is proposed to the Commission's policy and procedures on internal controls to address the current business environment related to operating direct services.

Jennifer referred to the internal controls document and reviewed the proposed updates, providing data to support the changes and discussing the rationale for the updates, which included: 1) updating the threshold from $1,000 to $2,500 for Executive Director approval and modifying the approval structure for purchase requests up to $2,500 to rest with Department Director's designated area of budget responsibility and expertise, 2) adding a payment option via direct deposit for employee reimbursements, 3) increasing the threshold for dual authorization of checks to over $10,000 and allowing single authorization for regular occurring employee insurance premiums and retirement remittances regardless of dollar amount, incorporating the signature authority policy and modifying Commissioner signers to designate one primary signer along with three others as alternates based on availability and geographic distance from the Commission's main office instead of their position on the Commission.

A motion was made by Commissioner Stenslie, seconded by Commissioner Marquez-O'Neill, to approve the recommendation to update the Policy and Procedures on Internal Control. The motion passed unanimously.

b. Recommendation to Update Credit Card Policy and Procedures – Jennifer Johnson

Jennifer Johnson provided background information on the Commission's credit card policy and summarized proposed updates to the credit card policy and procedures.
Jennifer discussed the proposed limits for individual cardholders and the agency cardholders. She provided data used to inform the recommended levels. She noted that while the proposed limits are not expected to be reached on a regular basis, they provide the ability to 1) make approved purchases without arranging for payment by check, which can raise significant barriers for certain vendors, 2) provide an adequate per transaction amount for individual cardholders, and 3) provide a sufficient maximum limit for cardholders during the crossover period of high-volume months (typically in June and July) when expenditures wrap up for the end of a fiscal year and new or renewing expenditures occur at the beginning of a fiscal year. Jennifer reviewed additional updates that were made to 1) refine the authorized use examples and 2) reflect current processing procedures and position titles.

A motion was made by Commissioner Stenslie, seconded by Commissioner Denering, to approve the recommendation to update the Credit Card Policy and Procedures. The motion passed unanimously.

c. Recommendation to Update Established Holidays in the Employee Handbook – Lauren Arzu

Lauren reviewed the proposed holiday closure for the weekdays between Christmas and New Years Day. She explained that over one-third of organizations nationwide, more than half of independent Commissions, and many local leading companies are closed during this time. Lauren also pointed out that generally, most childcare centers are closed, and many

Neighborhoods for Learning sites are located on school district sites which are also closed. Newer employees are not able to accrue enough vacation time to take time off between Christmas and New Years. In conclusion, Lauren stated that this will strengthen the ability to retain and recruit future employees.

Commissioner Walker commended First 5 for pursuing employee policies that support work-life balance.

A motion was made by Commissioner Marquez-O'Neill, seconded by Commissioner Stenslie, to approve the recommendation to update Established Holidays in the Employee Handbook. The motion passed unanimously.

11. Strategic Planning Process and Timeline – Petra Puls

Petra provided background on the FY 2020-22 Strategic Plan which was extended through June 2026 to better evaluate the impact of First 5 investments. She presented a timeline of activities and key questions to guide the development of a new strategic plan by March 2026. The process will begin with a staff-driven local landscape analysis, and a California & National Context review. She proposed engaging a Strategic Planning consultant to facilitate discussions regarding the future direction of the Commission through a series of planning sessions.

Commissioner Walker inquired about how data is collected during the first phase of community input. A consultant was used in the past to conduct surveys which yielded good results. The most important data came from parent leaders' efforts in collecting data from parents and the community. Petra stated that an online survey could be useful to gather information from stakeholders.

She also inquired whether there are consultants who specialize in Strategic Planning for similar organizations. Petra commented that there are consultants who specialize in strategic planning and that the challenge is finding the right person who can facilitate the conversations.

An inquiry was made by Commissioner Marquez-O'Neill as to whether discussions within the community have taken place. Petra shared the Commission's recent experience with United Parents in strengthening community engagement. She plans to work with staff on identifying strategies for encouraging broad-based participation from the community.

Petra discussed examples of data included in the landscape analysis to examine the conditions of prenatal to age five and their families: demographics, child health & development, strong and resilient families, and quality early learning.

Commissioner Denering appreciated the timeline and the plan to utilize a consultant. She agreed that working with a consultant will ensure neutrality as there can be misalignment among what First 5 is envisioning, what the community is voicing, and what the finance models reveal. In addition, a consultant can help contribute new ideas. She asked if a Request for Proposal (RFP) will be implemented for a consultant. Petra confirmed that a RFP will be issued and stated that Commissioners will be a part of the final selection process. Commissioner Marquez-O'Neill supported the idea of working with one or multiple consultants. Petra confirmed this is a possibility and is dependent on their different skill sets.

12. Report from Executive Director – Petra Puls

Before starting the report, Petra thanked Sharon Elmensdorp for all her efforts in making the Bridges to Resilience Conference a success.

She introduced a new program manager of the team, Sky Limón, and shared a brief background. Then Petra spoke about Prop 10 distributions which are 16.4% lower than the prior year as of September but this does not include the anticipated Prop 56 backfill nor the quarterly CECET funds. She then shared that open enrollment for medical, dental, and vision insurance took place earlier in November. The overall annual premium increases were below the budgeted amount of 15%. Staff issued a request for proposals for audit services with a contract to be awarded in February 2025.

As for Neighborhoods for Learning (NfL) programs, there are many active parent education activities occurring with an on-going heavy demand for diaper distribution events. The parent advisory groups are planning future events such as Winter Festival, Book Swap, and diaper distributions. Petra introduced Sandra Díaz, Quality and Technical Assistance Administrator, and mentioned her important role in standardizing the program and implementing quality enhancements at the NfL sites. Help Me Grow staff continue to participate in Southern California regional meetings while working on data collection efforts with LA County and developing screening alignment with Santa Barbara County.

She then shared that F5VC staff are participating in the Central Coast Community Health Worker workforce effort to implement the new Medi-Cal benefit. In addition, F5VC was approved and received a National Provider Identifier (NPI) number, which is the first official step in being a Medi-Cal service provider. F5VC received a Technical Assistance grant to achieve HIPAA compliance and ready to offer Medi-Cal services.

Petra then spoke about child focused ballot measures that resulted from the election. Sonoma passed Measure I which is expected to generate 30 million dollars per year, the City of Pomona passed Measure Y that sets aside 10% of their $161 million general fund, and City of Santa Cruz passed Measure Z that levies a $.02 per ounce tax on sugar sweetened beverages. Next, she spoke about the Governor's call for a special session, which will allocate resources to empower the State to file lawsuits to challenge actions from the new federal government that may be deemed harmful to families. Petra shared that staff are preparing for the impact of these changes that will affect F5VC families like potential deportation and immigration issues. A statement will be made regarding providing safe places and not separating families. She concluded by sharing the Children's Movement letter to the Governor requesting prioritization of the children's budget and to not repeat the cuts that were proposed in the last budget cycle.

13. Commission Member Comments

Commissioner Marquez-O'Neill shared that she toured the MICOP Puentes program and highly recommends Commissioners to do the same as they will find the components of the program impressive.

Commissioner Walker inquired whether F5VC families or staff were affected by the Mountain Fires. There was one family that lost their home.

14. Next Meeting

Thursday, December 19, 2024, has been canceled.

15. The meeting was adjourned at 2:20 p.m.