**COMMISSION MEETING MINUTES**

**May 15, 2025**

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

Excused Absence: Rachel Champagne

Staff Present: Petra Puls, Jennifer Johnson, Lauren Arzu, Sam McCoy, Jina Jue, Sharon Elmensdorp, John Anderson, Lysa Urban, Courtney Pyle, Sky Limón, Mario Rodriguez, Marisol Hernandez, Grace Montejano, Sandra Diaz, Jhoelle Aspuria-Arca, Lilia Gurrola, Shelby Ferns, Hope DeMoss, Elisheva Hollis, Desiree Campos, Veronica Reynoso, Christina Espinoza, Tami Schupferling

Public Present: Alicia MacFarland

1. **Welcome and Introductions**

   Chair LaVere opened the meeting at 1:03 p.m. and asked Commissioners to introduce themselves.

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

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

3. **Public Comments / Correspondence**

   There were no comments from members of the public.

4. **Recognition and Appreciation of Executive Director, Petra Puls, for her work on behalf of First 5 Ventura County – Jennifer Johnson and Lauren Arzu**

   Jennifer shared Petra's 22-year history with First 5 Ventura County emphasizing her acts of leadership, collaboration, and dedication to the service of children and families. Lauren shared well wishes from several leaders of the community and former employees. The Commissioners expressed their heartfelt gratitude to Petra for her many years of dedicated service and for her significant contributions to First 5 Ventura County, highlighting her role in building its strong reputation. They commended Petra's unwavering commitment to supporting the children and families of the community.

5. **Presentation: Ninth Annual Take 5 and Read to Kids! – Lysa Urban and Sky Limón**

   Sky and Lysa highlighted the 9th annual 2025 Take 5 and Read to Kids! Event which was held on May 2, 2025. The goal of the annual event is to increase awareness about the importance of early literacy, to engage local elected officials and community stakeholders, and to build children's home libraries.

They shared a slide show of photos from the event and highlighted a testament to the long-term impact of F5VC early childhood initiatives. There were 64 celebrity readers who participated, visiting 56 classrooms and childcare centers, as well as 9 public libraries.

## CONSENT AGENDA

**6. Receive and File the First 5 Ventura County Expenditure Report as of March 31, 2025**

**7. Approval of Minutes from April l7, 2025 Commission Meeting**

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

## REGULAR AGENDA

**8. Report of Administration and Finance Committee – Commissioner Morales and Stenslie**

**a. Recommendation to Update Employee Compensation Schedule – Lauren Arzu**

Lauren presented an overview of prior updates to the employee compensation structure. She then shared the results of the 2025 salary survey that was conducted among other similarly sized First 5 Commissions and community agencies. Lauren shared the median and mean ranges for data collected from approximately 25 agencies and proposed updates to the salary ranges that algin with competitor data and the Consumer Price Index. These proposed updated ranges will help maintain competitive and equitable compensation structures, aid in recruitment efforts, and allow for advances via merit increases. In addition, staff proposed a reclassification of the existing Administrator class into three distinct classifications, which will separate exempt and non-exempt positions into different classifications.

**A motion was made by Commissioner Denering, seconded by Commissioner Marquez-O'Neill, to approve the recommendation to update the employee compensation schedule. The motion passed unanimously.**

**b. Recommendation to Grant Authority to the Executive Director to Enter into a Contract with Economic Development Collaborative to Manage and Implement the Community Investment Loan Fund – John Anderson**

As President and CEO of Economic Development Collaborative (EDC), Commissioner Stenslie recused himself due to a conflict of interest and exited the room for this portion of the meeting.

John provided an update on the Community Investment Loan Fund (CILF), which aims to increase the number of licensed, quality child care and preschool spaces by offering low-cost financing for facilities development. He stated that the cost for managing the loan is $20,000 and expected interest earnings are projected to offset these costs. He also outlined the Economic Development Collaborative's role in managing the implementation of the loan fund. John gave an overview of the allocation of $1.3 million in revolving loan funds, which created 343 new licensed spaces for children 0-5, with 97 of them for infants. John explained that the contract will

provide funds for EDC to issue up to $300,000 in loans, and $20,000 for management of the fund. Currently, there is an active loan application from the Little Blue Creche preschool in Ventura.

**A motion was made by Commissioner Morales, seconded by Commissioner Walker, to approve the recommendation to grant authority to the Executive Director to enter into a contract with Economic Development Collaborative to manage and implement the Community Investment Loan Fund (CILF) for FY 2025-26 not to exceed $20,000. The motion passed unanimously, with Commissioner Stenslie abstaining.**

Commissioner Stenslie rejoined the meeting.

**9. Strategic Planning: Community and Stakeholder Engagement – Sam McCoy**

Sam gave an overview of the Strategic Planning timeline:

- June through August – Engage stakeholders and the community through 1) Parent and caregiver surveys and 2) Community partner surveys. 3) Listening sessions and 4) Key informant interviews. Applied Survey Research (ASR) will conduct interviews with Commissioners. The parent and caregiver surveys are designed to determine the needs families have and barriers to accessing services. The community partner surveys will indicate awareness of and utilization of F5VC services and initiatives.
- September through November – Prioritize desired outcomes and investments through three planning meetings, during which the vision and mission will be solidified, along with the strategic framework and investment priorities.
- December through January of 2026 – Develop and finalize the Strategic Plan.

**10. Report from Executive Director – Petra Puls**

Petra shared that F5VC was named one of the "Best Places to Work on the Central Coast" which reflects F5VC's commitment to being an employee-centric, business minded, and family-friendly organization. As for the Early Childhood Programs, there were several community outreach efforts including: two Earth Day celebrations, a Social Connections Walk, and Family Springtime Picnic. The second annual Fatherhood Summit attracted over 100 attendees, with 91 fathers attending.

Petra spoke of the interviews that Intrepid Ascent Inc. is conducting with F5VC staff. The results will be used to make recommendations around best practices in privacy and security, in compliance with HIPAA and California Advancing and Innovating Medi-Cal (CalAIM) requirements. Petra shared that the Department of Health Care Services has issued a standing recommendation that all Medi-Cal members who are eligible for CHW services can receive them without a written recommendation from a physician or licensed practitioner for the first six hours of service. This policy change will remove barriers for F5VC families to better access services.

Petra spoke of the Community Investment Loan Fund's origination and intent. The EDC loan board has approved a loan for a new preschool in Ventura, The Little Blue Creche. It will offer 36 spaces for 0-5 year olds and a co-working space, funded by co-lenders, will be available for parents of enrolled children and breastfeeding mothers.

Regarding advocacy efforts, F5VC signed a letter of support for continued diaper bank funding, recognizing that the diaper distribution program directly benefits F5VC families.

Petra moved on to speak of the state budget, which indicates a $12 billion deficit for the upcoming year, however; analysis shows there is a commitment to increased child care slots and some funding allocation for Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) projects. There are proposed cuts to continuous Medi-Cal enrollment and to enrollment for undocumented adults. She spoke of F5CA Commission's $3 million fund to support county commissions' capacity building and long-term sustainability efforts. There will be discussion on how the fund will be utilized with a focus on supporting smaller county commissions. She moved on to speak about the Federal budget and shared that AmeriCorps funding has been eliminated. AmeriCorps members are often part of the early childhood workforce in First 5 commissions, particularly in rural counties.

**CLOSED SESSION**

**11. Public employee appointment, employment, performance evaluation, discipline, dismissal or release (Govt. Code, Section 54957)**

The Commission entered closed session at 1:56 p.m. to discuss employment of the Executive Director and a contract for consultant services.

The Commission returned to open session at 3:01 p.m.

**RETURN TO OPEN SESSION**

**12. Appointment of Acting Executive Director - Chair LaVere**

The Commission has appointed Lauren Arzu, Sharon Elmensdorp, and Sam McCoy as Acting Co-Executive Directors of F5VC, effective May 31, 2025. During this interim period, each will receive a 5% salary increase until a permanent Executive Director is hired.

**A motion was made by Commissioner LaVere, seconded by Commissioner Morales, to approve the appointment of Lauren Arzu, Sharon Elmensdorp, and Sam McCoy as Acting Co-Executive Directors during the interim period effective May 31, 2025, until an Executive Director is hired. The motion passed unanimously.**

**13. Appointment of ad-hoc Executive Director selection committee - Chair LaVere**

Chair LaVere is appointing an ad-hoc committee consisting of: Commissioners LaVere, Marquez-O'Neill, and Stenslie, to collaborate with Ventura County Human Resources in the recruitment and selection of the next Executive Director for First 5 Ventura County.

**A motion was made by Commissioner LaVere, seconded by Commissioner Denering, to approve the appointment of an ad-hoc Executive Director selection committee consisting of Commissioner LaVere, Commissioner Marquez-O'Neill, and Commissioner Stenslie. The motion passed unanimously.**

**14. Recommendation to approve contract with Petra Puls for consultant services - Chair LaVere**

Petra Puls will support the transition and onboarding of a new Executive Director, as well as other project consultation for June 1, 2025, through June 30, 2026, in an amount not to exceed $75,000.

**A motion was made by Commissioner LaVere, seconded by Commissioner Marquez-O'Neill, to approve the authorization to enter into a contract with Petra Puls for transitional support services related to the onboarding of a new Executive Director and other consulting needs. The agreement shall be effective from June 1, 2025, through June 30, 2026, with total compensation not to exceed $75,000. The motion passed unanimously.**

**15. Commission Member Comments**

Commissioner Marquez-O'Neill invited Commissioners and attendees to participate in the Child Abuse Prevention Council of Ventura County's Strong Families Safer Kids 5K run on Saturday May 17th, 2025, in Oxnard, CA.

**16. Next Meeting**

The next meeting is on Thursday, June 26, 2025, Ventura County Office of Education, 5100 Adolfo Rd., Camarillo.

The meeting was adjourned at 3:06 p.m**.**

# SPECIAL COMMISSION MEETING MINUTES

**June 25, 2025**

Commissioners Present: Matt LaVere, Dr. Cesar Morales, Dr. Loretta Denering, Kimberly Naslund, Rachel Champagne

Excused Absence: Barbara Marquez-O'Neill, Bruce Stenslie, Dr. Christine Walker

Staff Present: Jennifer Johnson, Sam McCoy, Jina Jue

Public Present: None

1. **Welcome and Introductions**

   Chair LaVere opened the meeting at 8:00 a.m.

2. **Agenda Approval**

   **The agenda was accepted by consensus.**

3. **Public Comments / Correspondence**

   There were no comments from members of the public.

4. **Recommendation to Adopt Delegated Authority for Duties of the Acting Co-Executive Director**

   Jennifer Johnson referred to the proposed Authority Delegated to Acting Co-Executive Directors, establishes how the interim plan of appointing three interim Co-Executive Directors will function and the decision-making duties for each individual to authorize certain items and legally bind the Commission. From an audit standpoint, it also clarifies roles and responsibilities to maintain proper internal controls and compliance with policies. Jennifer stated that the proposed delegated authority will be in effect until an Executive Director is appointed and begins employment or is otherwise modified or rescinded by the Commission. She noted that, as previously established, the signing of checks, wire transfers, and authorization of direct deposits will be authorized by the Commissioner designated as Primary Signatory or one of the three approved alternates. In addition, it is proposed to have the Commissioner designated as Primary Signatory also review monthly bank reconciliations. Jennifer reviewed the proposed policy and provided the rationale for the assigned areas of responsibility.

**A motion was made by Commissioner Morales, seconded by Commissioner Denering, to approve the recommendation to adopt the delegated authority for duties of the Acting Co-Executive Directors. The motion passed unanimously.**

**5. Review of First 5 Ventura County FY 2020-26 Strategic Plan in compliance with Health and Safety Code Section 130140**

Sam McCoy stated that it is a statutory requirement and best practice to review the Strategic Plan annually. The current Strategic Plan spans 2020 through 2026. Sam recapped the progress to date on strategic planning that is currently underway for the next cycle and provided an overview of the timeline to adopt a new plan no later than June 30, 2026.

Referring to the Strategic Plan document, Sam reviewed the F5VC Mission, Vision, and Core Values as well as Programs and Systems Integration within the strategic priorities' framework. He discussed the key areas of: Comprehensive Child Health and Development, Strong and Resilient Families, and Quality Early Learning, and outlined investments in each area. He described the Commission's cornerstone investments in Neighborhoods for Learning (NfL) and Help Me Grow. Sam spoke about desired outcomes and how impact is measured. He explained the framework, using results-based accountability, to monitor and measure program performance and participant outcomes.

There are no revisions recommended for the FY 2020-26 Strategic Plan by staff at this time. Since no changes are needed while strategic planning for the next cycle is occurring, there was consensus to maintain the FY 2020-26 Strategic Plan. Since action was not needed to make changes, the Commission received and filed the FY 2020-26 Strategic Plan.

Commissioner LaVere inquired about the timeframe for strategic planning that is underway. Sam provided an overview of the timeline and milestones.

**6. Update on Proposition 10 Revenues**

Jennifer Johnson provided an update on Proposition 10 tax distributions stating the Ventura County revenues for July 2024 through April 2025 total $2,556,386, plus $1,335,800 for the annual backfill from Proposition 56 and $38,003 in CECET (CA e-cigarette tax) funds. The total represents 77% of the budgeted revenues with 83% of year lapsed. She stated that, after evenly applying the annual Prop 56 backfill and CECET funds, we are currently running 13.8% lower than last year - a decrease of $594,039 as of April. Jennifer discussed potential contributors to the higher-than-expected decline, noting that the decline last fiscal year was only 4.5% when an 11.3% decrease was projected. Jennifer stated that the financial plan was updated in April 2025 and forecasted a 10% annual rate of decline for FY 2024-25 tobacco tax revenues, based on the trend at that time.

**7. Next Meeting**

Thursday, August 21, 2025

**8. This meeting was adjourned at 8:15 a.m.**