

**First Steps Commission Meeting**  
**Thursday December 5, 2019**  
**Varnum – Bridgewater Place 17<sup>th</sup> Floor**

**Attendees:** Kate Wolters, Bob Herr, Julie Ridenour, Carl Ver Beek, Ron Caniff, Lew Chamberlin, Sue Jandernoa, Milt Rohwer, Melinda Johnson and Alex Contreras

**Staff:** Annemarie Valdez, Bri Fett, Tyler Aman, Jill Salisbury, Christine Timbol, Kristen Sobolewski, Heather Boswell and Anissa Eddie

**Absent:** Jim Pike, Amanda Barbour, Dr. Juan Olivarez, Kristina Donaldson, Ashley Karsten, Maureen Hale and Michelle Van Dyke

**Kate Pew Wolters called meeting to order at 8:37am**

**Handouts:**

1. Agenda
2. FSK Commission Meeting Notes 9.26.2019
3. October Financials
4. Ready by 5 Financials
5. Ready by 5 Talking Points
6. Millage FAQ's

**Welcome and Introductions-**

Annemarie Valdez has introduced Tyler Aman as our new Data Analyst, Kristen Sobolewski as our new Shared Services Project Manager and Jill Salisbury as our Fund Development Coordinator.

**Public Comment:**

- None

**Consent Agenda:**

- First Steps Commission Meeting Minutes from 9.26.2019

**Motion to approve September 26,2019 Minutes**

*Sue Jandernoa moved approval; Melinda Johnson seconded the motion. All in favor.*

## **Finance Report:**

Mr. Herr states that the month of October First Steps Kent Financials and the RB5 Millage Financials are being kept separate for better tracking. An agreement with county on our admin fee starting in May, needed an amendment to the agreement. We will be receiving another check in total of \$80,000 which will be beneficial to our cashflow

Questions were asked and answered.

### **Motion to approve October Financials**

*Carl Ver Beek moved approval; Milt Rohwer seconded the motion. All in Favor.*

## **Audit Update:**

New CPA Firm has completed our Audit and has finished quickly with positive feedback.

## **Board Strategic Planning and Board Terms:**

Ms. Valdez has informed the committee that Eureka! Group has submitted a proposal for strategic planning. Kate Wolters is very confident in Eureka! Group being a good guide for our staff in Strategic planning and mentions that the cost for this has been written into the budget. Ms. Valdez States we have received a grant from the WEGE foundation to support this role. Questions were asked and Answered Ms. Wolters informs the Board that Alex Contreras is leaving the board due to relocation and that we are looking for members to join that have an interest in Early Childhood and that the sooner the better so the members can be included in the planning process.

Ms. Valdez states that planning will start in January moving through February to lay out a full timeline. Ideally in March an extended board meeting for the strategic planning process

Ms. Wolters states that we have been having minor delay in planning out upcoming meetings due to needing to work around the Kent County Board meeting as ours need to be held before the County.

Ms. Valdez states the week of February 17, 2020 we can re-visit the timeline for the planning process to be sure that as many members can be involved as possible so we can get it right and dedicate the proper time to it.

## **Ready by Five Early Childhood Millage Update:**

Heather Boswell reported that the second round of funding has been applied for and proposals are in the process of being reviewed by the Residential Proposal Review Board.

There were three separate opportunities for organizations to apply to, “Home visiting and Healthy Development” which includes ongoing parent education, developmental screenings and health and behavioral support as well as connection to recourses. “Play and Learn Communities” which includes play-based sessions once a week and information to support caretakers understanding of how that can support their child’s early learning development. Additionally, this offers links to developmental screenings and early intervention services. Healthy and Safe Home Programming which supports providers conducting and number of healthy and safe home programming interventions.

There have been 27 proposals submitted for review from several organizations which we find to be a very reasonable number for our board to review at this time.

Questions were asked and answered.

## **Business:**

### **Pritzker Update:**

Anissa Eddie states that The Pritzker Fellowship is a part of the National Collaborative for infants and Toddlers (NCIT). Mrs. Eddie shares her action plan goals which include Data, Childcare, Birth Equity and Political Will & Engagement.

### **Data:**

KConnect and First Steps Kent’s (FSK) internal early childhood data strategy team identified an opportunity to pilot the Community Data Trust Concept with the Home Visiting Prevention initiative.

A technical assistance contract was established with Calvin’s Center for Social Research to assist with the implementation of the pilot. Tyler, new FSK Data Analyst will also be closely involved.

### **Childcare:**

FSK hired a Shared Services Project Manager, Kristen Sobolewski, who started on September 30, 2019.

Mrs. Eddie states that she will be working with Kristen to connect child care efforts to the Ready by Five Navigation System and the Community Data Trust Pilot.

Mrs. Eddie is working with Megan Streng from FSK to develop a strategic communication plan for Great Start to Quality to use to increase the number of child care providers participating in the quality rating system.

Mrs. Eddie states she is facilitating a collaborative group exploring a child care start-up business training model in collaboration with SpringGR.

### **Birth Equity:**

Working to implement a community-based Doula program pilot and have confirmed partnership with Baxter Community Center as the host site as well as established a formal relationship with HealthConnect One as a technical support partner.

Mrs. Eddie states she has connected with Mercy Health Saint Mary's as a health care system partner that is interested in connecting their Black/African American moms with Doula support systems in an effort to improve birth outcomes.

Exploring funding opportunities and structures, have submitted a concept paper to the Michigan Health Endowment Fund and are in the conversation with Heart of West Michigan United Way to possibly have them serve as out fiscal sponsor.

### **Political Will & Engagement:**

Mrs. Eddie continues to provide staff support to KConnect's Prenatal to 3<sup>rd</sup> Grade Workgroup. They have done some international recruitment which has resulted in 10 new members bringing more demographic diversity and sector diversity to the group. They are also working to establish an updated support structure for early childhood systems work in Kent County that would further elevate parent/family leadership, policy & advocacy and communications/common messaging.

Mrs. Eddie has completed third level of Results Based Facilitation Training and utilizes those skills across her scope of work.

Mrs. Eddie is working on a Personal Capstone Project and The Pritzker Foundation is solidifying what it will look like, ultimately the desire is to produce information that continues to build momentum and drive action that will benefit infants, toddlers and their families.

Questions were asked and answered.

### **Shared Services Update:**

Kristen Sobolewski shares that the supply of licensed childcare is declining when it should be rising to meet the needs of working families and the urgency of early learning opportunities and care. Mrs. Sobolewski has a project that she has been working on mapping out childcare providers being based centered or private. Between January 2018 and January 2019, 69 family home centers closed in Kent County alone. Licensed family can care for (6) children and Group home can care for (12) Children. There are 306 Family and 86 Group in Kent County as of October 2019. Mrs. Eddie states that waiting lists are extremely long and it makes it very difficult for families to provide the care that is needed for their children that meets the needs of the families.

There has been 28.9 Billion estimated in wages lost annually by working families who do not have access to affordable childcare and family and medical leave.

Mrs. Sobolewski states that the “Play and Learn” grants will hopefully be helpful in in-home care giving situations to help increase the options in neighborhood care to eliminate the lack of support due to lack of options for families to receive care.

4.4 Billion is U.S. business loss due to lack of affordable childcare

Average wages for Child Care Providers is as little as \$11.17 per hour. The childcare workforce is mainly comprised of women, 40% of whom are women of color. These wages are amongst the lowest in the U.S. workforce.

Shared Services could potentially provide but is not limited to online financial management, bulk purchasing, Discounts on Supplies, Tax Preparation Services, Professional Development Training, Mentor/Coaching, Equipment and Materials and Fee Collection Services.

**Meeting Adjourned at 10:31am**

**Next Commission Meeting:  
Thursday January 16, 2020 8:30-10:30am  
Kent ISD – Rogue Room – Parking lot #11**