



Commission Meeting
Thursday, January 28, 2021
8:30-10:30 a.m. via Zoom
Minutes

Present:

Co-Chair Kate Pew Wolters, Co-Chair Lew Chamberlin, Treasurer Bob Herr, Amanda Barbour Lynne Ferrell, Claire Guisfredi, Sue Jandernoa, Melinda Johnson, Juan Olivarez, Kelsey Perdue, Julie Ridenour, Milt Rohwer, Michelle Van Dyke, Carl Ver Beek, Ron Koehler, Maureen Hale. Communication Consultants Amy Turner-Thole and Steve Faber.

Absent:

Kristina Donaldson and Sean Welsh

Staff:

Annemarie Valdez, Heather Boswell, Tyler Aman, Cati Cortes, Christine Timbol-Larson, Megan Streng, Kristen Sobolewski, Daniel VanderMolen, Shelby French, and Jill B. Salisbury who recorded the minutes.

Welcome:

Kate Pew Wolters welcomed everyone and called the meeting to order at 8:30 a.m.

Consent agenda:

Kate Pew Wolters asked for a motion to approve the consent agenda, including the minutes from the November 20, 2020 meeting.
Motion: Michelle Van Dyke
Support: Carl Ver Beek
Unanimous

Public Comment:

One member of the public attended, but there was no public comment.

Investing Early:

○ **Finance Report:**

Treasurer Bob Herr reviewed and presented:

- FSK's December 2020 financials and the Ready by Five Early Childhood Millage December 2020 financials. Bob noted that the last Finance Committee Meeting was January 22.
 - A question was asked whether First Steps Kent applied for a second PPP loan? No, they did not.

Motion to approve: Julie Ridenour

Support: Michelle Van Dyke

Unanimous

- 2019-2020 Audit. The Audit was prepared by Rehmann who gave an unqualified (clean Audit) opinion. The FSK Finance Committee recommends approval of the acceptance of the Audit report to the FSK Commission (revised 3/25/21). It was completed virtually this year and there were not any concerns. The County Administration has not asked to review the Audit, but per the Ready by Five Early Childhood Millage agreement, they can request to see it.

Motion to receive Audit: Sue Jandernoa

Support: Car Ver Beek

Unanimous

Equity & Inclusion:

○ **Nominating Committee:**

Committee Chair Melinda Johnson presented two new names to be considered as additions to the Commission:

- Dr. Hanna C. Jaworski, a pediatric specialist at Spectrum Health since 2013. One correction to her biography; she has three children, not two. Melinda suggested adding Dr. Jaworski is a good way to bring the medical community into the work of First Steps Kent.
Motion to approve Dr. Hanna Jaworski: Car Ver Beek
Support: Julie Ridenour
Unanimous
- Rev. Howard Earle, Jr., senior pastor at New Hope Baptist Church since 2005. He has been involved with First Steps Kent in the past. His wife, K'Sandra, works at Early Learning Neighborhood Collaborative.
Motion to approve Rev. Howard Earle, Jr.: Claire Guisfredi
Support: Juan Olivarez
Unanimous
- Annemarie Valdez reminded Commissioners that an annual Conflict of Interest form, individual Board terms, and a Board Roster will be sent via email. There will be instructions for review and completion.
- Annemarie gave a Bylaws update. The Bylaws Workgroup, made up of Julie Ridenour, Amy Turner-Thole, and Varnum Law's Dale Rietberg, have been working on revising the bylaws. Dale Rietberg has recently completed the revisions. These will first be presented to the Executive Team next week. The full Board will receive them before March 25.

Accessible Resource for Families:

○ **Communications PowerPoint Presentation:**

Consultants Amy Turner-Thole and Byrum Fisk's Steve Faber along with First Steps Kent's Communications Manager Megan Streng gave an update on current Communications projects.

- First, the Ready by Five Early Childhood Millage, Outreach and Navigation campaign, is underway through Social Media, Google Grants, and a Texting Campaign.

- Juan Olivarez asked if this messaging is in Spanish? Currently it is not. However, with the recent third round of Ready by Five Early Childhood Millage funding, we have providers contracted for translation services and therefore this campaign can easily be translated into Spanish.
- Kate Pew Wolters asked are we receiving cooperation in the Outreach and Navigation campaign? Yes, this is not a competition.
- Kelsey Perdue asked if more could be shared about what happens when parents click on the link for outreach and navigation:
www.firststepskent.org/forparents

Kate Pew Wolters had to leave the meeting early. She asked Co-Chair Lew Chamberlin to preside in her absence.

- A Communications Survey was conducted in 2020. Steve Faber gave a summary of the findings.
 - Juan Olivarez asked how are we measuring impact?
 - Heather Boswell explained that First Steps Kent will be selecting a third-party evaluator for Ready by Five. A Request for Information is in the works, along with a Request for Proposals later in March. There is an evaluation advisory team that has been meeting since Summer 2020. This team includes Kent ISD, Kent County Administrator’s Office, KConnect, Calvin University, and the Kent County Health Department. Up to \$250,000 of Ready by Five Early Childhood Millage funding has been allocated for this work.
 - More about the evaluation work:
<https://www.firststepskent.org/articles/millage-goals-and-evaluation>
 - Link to the Request for Information document:
<https://www.firststepskent.org/articles/request-for-information-timeline-and-details>
 - Juan Olivarez asked about public service announcements?
 - The Communications team shared that they are beginning to explore this option with WGVU. Also, there will be more community conversation around child care especially after Governor Whitmer’s State of the State Address last evening. Annemarie shared that First Steps Kent has had two meeting with the Governor’s office around child care and the Shared Services Pilot project.
- Amy Turner-Thole shared that Montgomery County Maryland, outside of Washington DC, is a county a little larger than Kent County. They contacted First Steps Kent after researching how to form an early childhood education coordinating entity. They are using First Steps Kent as an aspirational model to do similar work. Amy Turner-Thole is consulting on this project and is willing to share their report, which mentions First Steps Kent, with anyone who is interested.

Annemarie Valdez provided background and updates on the following:

- **Ready by Five Early Childhood Millage**
 - Currently in the third round of funding allocations. Twelve contracts were awarded in the third round for a total of 40 Ready by Five contracts.
- **Shared Services Pilot Project**
 - First Steps Kent received the Kent County CARES Act grant for \$450,000 in October. All the money had to be spent by December 2020. The money went to support licensed child care providers in the form of supply distributions and technical assistance.
- **Supportive Policies & Programs:**
 - First Steps Kent received a Pritzker Foundation grant in December 2020. The amount is \$350,000 for three years. This community grant parallels the Pritzker State of Michigan grant. This national funding has opened the door for more national grant opportunities for First Steps Kent.

Adjourn:

Co-Chair Lew Chamberlain closed the meeting at 9:55 a.m.

**Next Commission Meeting:
Thursday, March 25, 2021
8:30-10:30 a.m.
via Zoom**