



Commission Meeting
Thursday, March 25, 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, Pastor Howard Earle, Lynne Ferrell, Claire Guisfredi, Maureen Hale, Dr. Hanna Jaworski, Ron Koehler, Dr. Juan Olivarez, Kelsey Perdue, Julie Ridenour, Milt Rohwer, Michelle Van Dyke, and Carl VerBeek.

Absent:

Kristina Donaldson, Sue Jandernoa, and Sean Welsh

Guests:

Paul Petr, recently hired as Assistant to the County Administrator at Kent County, Communications Consultants Steve Faber (Byrum & Fisk) and Amy Turner-Thole.

Staff:

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

Welcome & Introductions:

Kate Pew Wolters welcomed everyone and called the meeting to order at 8:30 a.m. She noted two new members have joined -- Dr. Hanna Jaworski and Pastor Howard Earle.

Consent agenda:

Kate Pew Wolters asked for a motion to approve the consent agenda, including the minutes from the January 28, 2021 meeting. Bob Herr added a friendly amendment to the January 28, 2021 minutes under the Finance Report. He asked that it say, "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." A motion was made to approve the consent agenda and minutes, including this amendment.

Motion: Bob Herr

Support: Michelle Van Dyke

Unanimous

Public Comment:

There was no public comment.

Equity & Inclusion:

Annemarie Valdez shared that FSK is assimilating a diversity, equity and inclusion toolkit that was developed by consultant Emmy O'Dwyer. A staff team has been working with the toolkit and will have a full staff launch in June and a launch for Board in July. Kate Pew Wolters and Lynne Ferrell expressed an interest in helping with the Board launch. Other Board members are welcome to join

in. Please let Annemarie know if you are interested. FSK is designating the next two years to assimilate the DEI toolkit.

Investing Early:

- **Finance Report:**

Treasurer Bob Herr reviewed and presented FSK's February 2021 financials and the Ready by Five Early Childhood Millage February 2021 financials.

Motion: Bob Herr

Support: Julie Ridenour

Unanimous

- **Ready by Five Data Presentation:**

Communications Consultants Amy Turner-Thole, Steve Faber (Byrum & Fisk), First Steps Kent Vice President Heather Boswell and First Steps Kent Communications Manager Megan Streng presented.

The presentation explained how the Ready by Five Early Childhood Millage will be evaluated and how the data will be used to see if we are moving the needle toward the community's vision of every child entering kindergarten is healthy and ready to succeed.

The Evaluation Advisory Team has recently publicized a Request for Proposal. A contractor has not been chosen yet, but the Team expects to have a contract in place by August 2, 2021.

The rest of the presentation explained how the data will be used to share the human-interest aspect. Other areas the Communications Team is working on include:

- Communicating the new Community Needs Assessment (occurs every two years)
 - It was suggested that the Millage data be rolled into this report.
- Sharing the work of the Kent Shared Services Pilot Project
- Conducting a Gap Analysis that will be completed in 2022 (the first one was in 2017)
- Preparing for an Early Childhood Millage renewal in 2024
- Explaining how the Covid-19 pandemic has impacted families and services

Next steps for this team include communicating the data to the public and key stakeholders. The Gap Analysis will show how Covid-19 has impacted children and families and these findings will be used to begin a campaign for a 2024 Millage renewal.

The Communications Team is please with the earned media coverage FSK has received in the past couple months. There have been articles on MLive and in Grand Rapids Business Journal. First Steps Kent has also been asked to comment in articles focused on the recent federal and state budgets for child care.

Supportive Policies & Programs:

- **Shared Services Presentation:**

Shared Services Pilot Project Manager Kristen Sobolewski and Project Coordinator Daniel VanderMolen, along with Annemarie Valdez, presented.

The presentation gave an update on the Shared Services work. The Pilot Project is in its second year of a three-year grant from the W.K. Kellogg Foundation. The Covid-19 pandemic accelerated the work but provided an opportunity to respond in real time to child care

providers needs along with strengthening the overall child care network. As a result of the CARES Act dollars, Shared Services was able to:

- Hold a listening session with Governor Whitmer's office in January.
- Host a supply distribution at KSS Enterprises; serving 68 child care centers and 199 home-based, licensed child care providers.
- Distribute easy-to-clean toys through Discount School Supply
- Hold business support and resources webinars around tax preparation, computer/hardware technical support, human resources best practices, business efficiencies, access to resources around loans and grants, plus peer-to-peer mentoring.

Systems Foundations:

○ **Nominating/Governing Committee:**

○ **Bylaws:**

Chair Melinda Johnson reported that the bylaws have been updated by a committee workgroup and overseen by a Varnum Law attorney. The original bylaws were from 2009. They have been refreshed with minor changes.

Motion was made to approve the bylaws in their revised form.

Motion: Dr. Juan Olivarez

Support: Claire Guisfredi

Unanimous

Policy Updates:

Annamarie noted that Governor Whitmer has allocated \$370 million in the State of Michigan budget for child care. At the federal level, \$39 billion has been allocated in President Biden's most recent stimulus plan for child care.

Concern was expressed for the Great Start Readiness Program that was featured in a March 10, 2021 Bridge Michigan article. Due to a lack of additional state funding, school districts are struggling to afford the program, and some are considering discontinuing it.

Amy Turner-Thole said many media outlets and other systems level organizations have reached out to FSK to learn more about our collective impact work and early childhood millage. The BUILD initiative will feature FSK in its newsletter, next week. A few months ago, Montgomery County, Maryland used Kent County as a model in their collective impact work.

Adjourn:

The meeting closed at 10:20 a.m.

Next Commission Meeting:

Thursday, May 27, 2021

8:30-10:30 a.m.

Via Zoom