



**South Carolina First Steps to School Readiness
Board of Trustees
June 16, 2016**

**The Inn at USC, Columbia
2 p.m.**

Members Present (16):

Ken Wingate, Chair
Senator Mike Fair
Representative Rita Allison
Superintendent Molly Spearman
Susan Alford
Catherine Heigel
Judith Aughtry
Kathryn Burkhalter
Jennifer McConnell
Walter Fleming
Tim Holt
Julie Hussey
Alexia Newman
Rick Noble
Roger Pryor
Amy Williams

Members Absent (9):

Senator Gerald Malloy
Representative Jerry Govan
Evelyn Patterson
Mary Lynne Diggs
Beverly Buscemi
Evelyn Patterson
Christian Soura
Tracy Lamb
Sue Williams

Others Present:

Julia-Ellen Davis
Dan Wuori
Mark Barnes
Lisa Dial
Bryan Kost
Sally Cauthen
Pierce McNair
Mary Anne Mathews
Debbie Robertson

Ginger Ryall
Russell Brown
Martha Strickland
Joy Mazur
Rosemary Wilson
Barbara Black
Kate Roach
Dave Wilson
Karen Ponder
Karen Martini
Dorothy Priester
Patti Wilkes
Centuria Watson

Call to Order/Quorum Call:

Mr. Ken Wingate called the meeting to order at 2:00 p.m. and declared a quorum present. Mr. Wingate asked for the approval of the minutes of March 17, 2016 and April 21, 2016. The board unanimously adopted both sets of minutes. Mr. Wingate called for approval of the meeting agenda. Mr. Noble requested that an executive session be added to the agenda. The Board unanimously adopted the agenda as amended.

Approval of Consent Agenda Action Items:

Mr. Wingate directed Board members to the consent agenda action items provided electronically and asked if the members had any questions. There being no questions or comments related to the consent agenda action items, the board unanimously approved:

- a. Ratification of Actions of the Early Head Start Governance Council
- b. Partnership Grant Renewal Recommendations of the Program and Grants Committee.

Chairman's Report:

Mr. Wingate updated the Board on the conclusion of the legislative session, noting that H.4774 - which would have reauthorized First Steps for two years - was passed unanimously by the House, but did not see debate in the Senate prior to adjournment. The agency has been reauthorized for FY17 via budget proviso. Mr. Wingate asked that the Board save November 30, 2016 as the proposed date of the 2016 Chairman's Summit on Early Childhood.

Legislative Committee:

Senator Mike Fair reiterated the Chairman's summary of the session and noted that the extended reauthorization of First Steps would be the committee's top priority for 2017. He described the House Oversight Committee report as an affirmation of the agency's work and worth, and noted that the failure to reauthorize First Steps for an extended period remains detrimental to both agency staff and the local partnerships. Representative Rita Allison noted the importance of First Steps and suggested that she believes the reauthorization of First Steps will come, particularly as the agency continues to demonstrate strong leadership and results.

Mr. Wingate expressed concern that the lack of continuity, or threatened lack of continuity, continues to be impair the work of both the agency and its local partnerships. Ms. Newman noted that both First Steps' most recent external evaluation and the House Oversight Committee have suggested that the agency is meeting its legislative goals and asked if legislative trustees could address any remaining issues preventing an extended reauthorization. Senator Fair responded that the agency has consistently met its targets and that any discussion to the contrary is simply not

true. Ms. Allison noted that a tremendous amount of work has been done in studying the agency (LAC, Study Committee, and House Oversight Committee).

Martha Strickland provided an update on the state's school readiness assessments, noting that they are now different at 4K (where there are currently three assessment options) and 5K - and that addressing this inconsistency is a recommendation of the House Legislative Oversight Committee. Superintendent Spearman expressed her desire to collaborate with First Steps to ensure that no 4K students remain on waiting lists.

Finance and Administration Committee:

Ms. Aughtry noted that the Committee met on Wednesday, June 8, 2016 to receive the monthly financial report and called on Mark Barnes to review this information. Mr. Barnes reviewed the monthly report, with a particular focus on BabyNet costs and improved compliance. Mr. Barnes noted that during March, each local BabyNet office averaged less than 45 days from intake to IFSP development, which the agency believes may be a first since BabyNet's inception.

He noted that First Steps will receive approximately \$6 million in increased funding as part of the General Assembly's FY17 Budget. \$1.7 million of this funding will be dedicated to increasing partnership base funding from \$138K to \$200K.

Program and Grants Committee:

Ms. Jennifer McConnell noted that the Committee met on Tuesday, June 7 for the purpose of reviewing staff recommendations re: FY17 Partnership grant renewals. These recommendations were adopted as part of the consent agenda earlier in the meeting. Ms. Debbie Robertson provided a brief overview of the renewal process, which Mr. Noble noted is especially detailed. He shared Richland County's grant renewal package as a sample.

Strategic Planning and Evaluation Committee:

Ms. Newman shared an anecdote about successful recent contact between clients at her crisis pregnancy center and First Steps' Early Head Start program. She reported that the committee met on Thursday, June 9 to review and approve action steps related to the Vision 2020 Strategic Plan. Ms. Newman called on Dr. Dan Wuori to present the proposed action steps. Dr. Wuori reviewed these steps, noting that each is associated with one or more measures (64 in total) which will allow the Board to track progress. Progress will be reviewed at least twice annually and the document revisited and reviewed annually. Mr. Noble expressed his belief that Vision 2020 is the strongest strategic plan in the history of the initiative. The Board unanimously adopted the recommendation of the Committee.

EHS Governance Council:

Mr. Roger Pryor noted that the EHS Governance Council has met monthly since the Board's last meeting, approving items ratified by the Board earlier in the meeting as part of the Consent Agenda. He called on Ms. Rebecca Brown, who provided an enrollment update. First Steps anticipates the enrollment of 79 children by the end of June.

Executive Committee Report:

Mr. Wingate noted that the Executive Committee met on Monday, June 13, 2016 for the purpose of reviewing the Board agenda. No action was taken.

Interim Director's Report:

Ms. Julia-Ellen Davis reviewed her Interim Director's Report, providing updates on Early Head Start, 4K and the [I Can] public awareness campaign.

Public Input:

Mr. Wingate called on Karen Martini, Executive Director of Chesterfield County First Steps, who requested to address the Board. Ms. Martini expressed concern that the Board has yet to hire a permanent Director and did not play a more active role in reauthorization or in debating a plan put forward by the Governor, which would have restructured the initiative under separate leadership.

Dorothy Priester, Executive Director of Cherokee County, thanked the Board and the state staff for their hard work. Patti Wilkes, Executive Director of Fairfield County First Steps, expressed her thanks and her desire to see the Board support local partnerships, particularly those with small budgets. Centuria Watson, Executive Director of Chester County First Steps, thanked the Board and noted how helpful new resources will be.

Executive Session:

Upon a motion by Mr. Noble and a second by Superintendent Spearman, the Board entered executive session at 3:44pm to discuss a personnel matter.

The Board re-entered full session at 4:52pm. No additional action was taken and the Board adjourned and 4:53pm.