

Early Childhood Council of Kern

General Council Meeting

February 7, 2024

Minutes

Members Present

Maria Aleman, Myetta Beavers, Mike Bledsoe, Alesha Brown, Gladys Garcia-Jara, Yolanda Gonzales, Jessica Krall, Christine Lollar, Yadira Mendoza, Betty Phillips, Lily Pimentel-Stratton, Janet Rubio, Amanda Tumblin, Melissa Vittoria, Tracey Wheat, and Jennifer Wood-Slayton.

Members Absent

Kevin Bartl, Megan Gretona, Hector Gutierrez, Michelle Lynam, Deborah Murr, Shirelle Perez (Jamie LaFavor was present as her proxy), and Elizabeth Rose.

Staff Present: Amanda Cruz-Ardoin and Cheryl Nelson.

Guests Present: Carolyn Coffey, Jennifer O'Donnell (GPG), Shannon Vernon, Michelle Van Hook, Serena Witten, and Wendy Aldana.

Call to Order/Introductions: The meeting was called to order by Council Chair Alesha Brown at 5:32 p.m. at Larry E. Reider building Room 202. Members were also present at the satellite locations at the Kern River Valley Family Resource Center in Lake Isabella, Cerro Coso Community College Child Development Center in Ridgecrest, and the Taft College Library. Tracey read the Council Mission Statement.

Consent Items: The consent items were read, which included amendments to the dates on the agenda: February 7, 2024 agenda and the Nov. 1, 2023 Council minutes; and that Item 7 on the agenda is an Informational Item. Yolanda made the motion to approve the consent agenda. It was seconded by Amanda T. The motion was unanimously approved.

Glen Price Group: Jennifer O'Donnell began with the Project Phases for the Needs Assessment, which is currently in the Design phase. She stated that workforce focus groups have been conducted, and that more on family focus groups will be done. A small snapshot: 1) Family Survey: 174 Complete responses. The majority were from Bakersfield and Delano. English (74.98%). Challenges: Questions stated that survey participants could select all that apply. However, many said None of the above (32%). A high scoring area was Lack of quality time to spend with children (29%). Issues on finding child care: Not affordable (31%). Major areas in what parents are looking for in quality care includes Safety, Affordability, Experienced and Caring Staff, a focus on Play-based Learning, and programs that foster Social and Emotional Development. Myetta was surprised with high number of parents requesting play-based care. **Workforce Survey:** a total of 231 completed the survey. These were also mostly in Delano and Bakersfield. Ethnicity: 62% Hispanic, 27% White. Fluent language: English (79%), Spanish (59%). Years of Experience: 65% have 10 or more years. Lily stated that in the Workforce, members with 10 or more years of experience are more invested and committed, they care, and that it is hard to make a career switch after 10 years or more. Another figure that stood out is that 98% of participants are planning to work in ECE beyond this year. Jennifer Slayton said the providers love the kids, and feel they are serving the parents, which keeps the workforce motivated. Cheryl asked how do we help to retain others in ECE, such as helping them get their permits or renewals, or continuing their education. Alesha said that those who have invested 10+ years are staying, but others are less invested (and using ECE as a stepping stone to another career). Pre-K workforce is experiencing burnout, because they asked to do so much more than in the past. According to the organization surveys, around 65% reported they were fully staffed. Hardest positions to fill are aides and part-time

(cost of education to move to higher positions would not justify staying). Improvements seen by the workforce include more training in Social-Emotional Development, better communication with parents, and more training opportunities and additional resources for teachers. A comment from a Family Child Care Home provider was that most training is very elementary, and requested more advanced. Aides also asked for more trainings for them, where most trainings are focused on teachers and directors. Alesha said that it helps to hear what they need (Intro trainings, then more advanced in the future). Regarding Professional Development, Lily said that teachers want more leadership opportunities. They want a career, with an opportunity to work up, and let them know what the opportunities are available here in Kern County. Jessica said that training for aides needs to be more advanced, because some areas become stagnant. Jennifer Slayton said that when new requirements (including areas such as Special Education), supervisors are expected to pass along to rest of staff. Alesha is excited for the rest of the data to help impact that workforce piece; which will go beyond technical skills, but helping them to build beyond that. Regarding training requested by FCCH providers, Mike said that it would be good to offer to everyone, so they can see the whole picture of ECE. Jennifer O'Donnell said Next Steps will include working on an initial draft to present to Executive Committee to provide feedback, with the completed template by May. She also said GPG will develop a one-page flyer, and a slide deck, explaining the data that has been seen.

Budget: Cheryl stated that a budget revision for Mileage/Child Care in the Foundation Account has been budgeted for a 10-month period. The Mileage will be at 67 cents per mile, which is the federal mileage amount that is allowed in 2024. She discussed the different changes in the budget report. Alesha said mileage increased since everyone can't be on Zoom any more. Betty questioned reporting of Workforce Pathways Grant. Cheryl said the grant is overseen by the LPC coordinator. Christine also had questions regarding the Wendy Wayne Scholarship. Yolanda asked why not put it under the Foundation Account. Betty asked about what role we play with the different accounts. Alesha will work with Cheryl on reporting format with KCSOS, and Cheryl will dig deeper to get the answers. Maria commented to give Council members info on all accounts. Betty moved to approve the budget revision, which Gladys seconded. It was unanimously approved.

LPC Outreach Message: Yadira stated the flyer is intended for parents and families to talk about the Council. It is easy to understand, and will hopefully get people to come to the Council. Members and guests liked the flyer. Jamie asked about translation services for meetings (the flyers will be translated). Amanda T. asked if there would be electronic copies available. Yadira said that after feedback is received from the Council, she will create a 30-second animated video to post to social media. Yolanda made the motion to approve the message and flyer, which was seconded by Christine. The motion was unanimously approved.

Fundraising: Alesha presented this as an informational item. She shared information on the Tulare County Legislative Event that was held in October, which maybe could be done here in Kern County. She also said that it could also recognize quality ECE providers, and another way for us to share what we are doing. Yadira said we need to show the passion we have in ECE. Tracey said that it would be good to provide in major voting years. Mike suggested starting a committee in 2024-25. Cheryl suggested scheduling it ahead of time (and giving priority registration), to make sure meeting space is available. Cheryl also stated that KCSOS has purchased the Bell Tower at Truxtun and L Street, which might be another location to hold the event.

Workforce Development: Myetta said that March 7 is Spring Career Expo at CSUB. Lily said that this would expose younger people to ECE field. Alesha said that we need someone eye catching. (Amanda C. said that there are some pens and note pads in storage). Gladys made the motion to approve the \$275 registration fee for the event, which Tracey seconded. The motion was unanimously approved.

2024-2029 ECCK Strategic Plan: Alesha stated that there are not funds available to build a new Strategic Plan from scratch. Instead of a new Strategic Plan, Alesha suggested using the 2023-2024 Action Plan as a template to create a five-year Strategic Plan that would be change each year as needed. Amanda T said that Simple is better. Amanda T made the motion to use the 2023-2024 Action Plan to start creating the Strategic Plan, and to allow the Executive Committee to start working on the Strategic Plan. It was seconded by Tracey. The motion was unanimously approved.

Public Policy Report: Cheryl reviewed *First Look: Understanding the Governor's 2024-25 State Budget Proposal* produced by the California Budget & Policy Center. It stated that the Governor would not be expanding child care slots. He hopes to build a cost-plus rate (which would only be temporary). He promised 200,000 in 2021-22. There is a push for more of the UPK Mixed Delivery System statewide.

LPC Membership Certification Form: Amanda C. thanked everyone for providing their information. Betty made the motion to approve the Certification Form, with the corrections in Maria's zip code and Jennifer S.'s area code, which was seconded by Lily. The motion was unanimously approved.

Council Committee Reports: For Professional Development, Gladys stated that their committee met last week, and came up with some parameters. Areas included possible topics, one Professional Development, and whisper service for Spanish. For the Wendy Wayne Scholarship committee, Christine said they discussed ethical issues, such as people who know the committee members applying for the scholarship. To address possible conflicts, Mike and Amanda T. are alternates.

Member Reports: Jennifer S. discussed the Lamont and Weedpatch Health Fair March 16, themed Health on Whoville. She also mentioned that there was a fire at Lamont School District's preschool. Maria reported that Kern Behavioral Health and Recovery will build a hospital at Oswell and Highway 58. It will be able to house 16 adults and 16 children. She also stated that further growth at the site will include a Family Resource Center in a few years. Christine – Blue Zones Project is working with the City of Bakersfield on Cycle Centennial, a 1.5-mile bike ride on the new Centennial Corridor which will be held this Saturday. Alesha stated that Kaiser Permanente is funding youth mental health for ages 0 to 5 during 2024. Melissa reported on the Kern Valley High School career fair that is coming up, and will get more flyers from Amanda. Yadira said that Kern Early Stars will conduct a family child care recruitment Feb. 27 and 29. This will allow for the FCCH provides to network. Kern Early Stars will also present during the March Council meeting.

Adjournment: Amanda T. moved to adjourn the meeting, which was seconded by Mike. The meeting was adjourned at 7:30 p.m.

Next meeting: March 6, 2024, 5:30 to 7:30 p.m. Larry E. Reider Education Building, 2000 K Street, Room 202, Bakersfield, CA 93301 (satellite locations at the Kern River Valley Family Resource Center in Lake Isabella, Cerro Coso Community College Child Development Center in Ridgecrest, and the Taft College Library).

Respectfully Submitted,



Mike Bledsoe, Secretary