

**CITY OF NORWALK  
EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION  
REGULAR MEETING  
MAY 12, 2010**

**ATTENDANCE:** Betsy Bain, Chair; Linda Wilock, Youth Services Director; Vicki Smetak, Norwalk Hospital Pediatrics Chair; Lauriston Avery, Five Mile River School Director; Hyla Crane, Stepping Stones; Cathy DeCesare, United Way Coastal Fairfield County; Dona Ditrio, Community Representative; Dr. Sally Grose, Community Representative; George Hensinger, Community Representative, Ed Musante, Norwalk Chamber of Commerce President; Joan Parris, NCC Early Childhood, Lynn Sadlon Mortiz, Fox Run Family Resource Center, Victoria Schilling, Norwalk Health Dept. Coordinator; Jo-Ann Stabler, NEON Head Start Director, Jeanne Taylor-Hard, Parent Representative, Paula Trujilo, Parent Representative

**OTHERS:** Ayarber Crooks, The Marvin

**STAFF:** Barbara Smart, Rosalie Witt, NECC

**CALL TO ORDER**

Ms. Bain called the meeting to order at 9:40 p.m.

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES OF MARCH 10, 2010**

Page 3, paragraph 5, line 1: please change “Ms. DeCesear” to “Ms. DeCesare”

Page 5, paragraph 5, line 4: after “Ms. Bain said that the Steering Committee had” please add “moved to approve continuing the current action plan until such time as the Action Plan Committee reviews it early in the year regarding possible budget revisions.”

Page 7, paragraph 2, line 2: after the following, “wanted the Steering Committee to explore.” Please add “ the possibility of hiring a consultant for the strategy planning process.”

Page 8, under Good News, paragraph 2, line 1: please change “13th” birthday to “10th” Birthday.

**\*\* MS. DITRIO MOVED THE MINUTES OF MARCH 10, 2010 AS CORRECTED.**

**\*\* MS. PARRIS SECONDED.**

**\*\* THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

## **GOOD NEWS – HEALTH CENTER**

Ms. Bain said that the Health Center is now open. The Opening Ceremony was very exciting. Ms. DeCesare commended that Ms. Bain was recognized for her work in the community and with Graustein Memorial Fund.

## **UPDATES – GRANTS**

### **A. School Readiness Grant**

#### **i. Approval for Chair to sign**

This grant application needs to be submitted by May 20th. Ms. Wilock gave an overview of the grant funding allocations and the fact that the funding has been distributed in such a way as to have the same number of slots as last year.

Ms. Sadlon asked if the Brighter Beginnings Academy would be included in the general overviews of programs. She had concerns about whether the program would have oversight and monitoring. Ms. Witt said that there had been some contact with the program director.

Mr. Hensinger asked about the allocations of the \$25,000 and what portion of this money would be used for a salary increase for a staff member. Ms. Wilock reviewed the details of the funding allocation and Ms. Bain stated that the funding was all being used for School Readiness. Ms. Smart distributed copies of the budget justification and Ms. Wilock reviewed the details.

*Ms. Schilling joined the meeting at 9:53 a.m.*

Mr. Hensinger said that it wasn't clear as to how much was going to salary increases and how much was being assigned to monitoring. Ms. DeCesare indicated where the amounts were on the information sheet. Ms. Bain reviewed the allocations of the various staff positions and their funding sources. She said that the ECC had worked very hard to keep the funding sources of the various salaries clear and concise. Ms. DeCesare said that she would be willing to create a spreadsheet that would reflect these sources and the salaries associated with them. Discussion then followed about the shift of some of the positions and job titles.

**\*\* MS. DITRIO MOVED TO AUTHORIZE MS. BAIN TO SIGN THE GRANT APPLICATION FORM FOR SUBMISSION TO THE STATE OF CONNECTICUT.**

**\*\* MS. PARRIS SECONDED.**

**\*\* THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

## **ii. Policy Approval**

Ms. Wilock gave a very brief overview of the NECC Policy Regarding Family Fees.

**\*\* MS. AVERY TO APPROVE THE NECC (SCHOOL READINESS COUNCIL) POLICY REGARDING FAMILY FEES POLICY AS SUBMITTED.**

**\*\* MS. CRANE SECONDED.**

**\*\* THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

## **B. Quality Enhancement Grant – Approval for Chair to sign**

Ms. Wilock said that the application was for the same items that were submitted last year.

**\*\* MS. Parris MOVED TO AUTHORIZE MS. BAIN TO SIGN THE QUALITY ENHANCEMENT GRANT FOR SUBMISSION.**

**\*\* MS. DITRIO SECONDED.**

**\*\* THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

## **C. Graustein Grant Update**

Ms. Bain said that approval has been granted for the amount of \$25,000 with the potential of gaining an additional \$25,000 if certain conditions are met. Ms. Bain said that she had contacted the Fund management and discovered that the Steering Committee had some questions. A letter dated May 3, 2010 from Mr. David M. Nee to Ms. Merle Berke-Schessel of the United Way of Coastal Fairfield regarding the additional funding was then distributed. Ms. Bain explained that the Fund management and review team was aware that there were some transitions taking place within the NECC and that the Graustein review team was looking for clarification by the Council regarding the structures, roles and responsibilities following the changes. Discussion followed about the structure flow chart and the use of the word “advisory” on the chart.

The discussion then moved to a summary statement that Ms. Bain had drafted covering the key points of her meeting with the Mayor and Interim Superintendent Nast. One issue that needs to be clarified is who will be responsible for the School Readiness Grant.

## **United Way – Approval for Chair to sign**

The Steering Committee charged Ms. Witt with writing the grant application with the assistance of Ms. Pytleski and other members of the Council. The grant application is due by the end of the week. The request for funding includes:

- Funding for the new Family Alliance Coordinator to insure that items are approve in the Action Plan are implemented.
- There is also funding requested for the PAT program,

- Continuing the preschool kindergarten insert in The Hour;
- Upgrading the PDF resource listing on the website.
- Funds are also requested for the new Family Support Alliance

**\*\* MS. DITRIO MOVE TO AUTHORIZE MS. BAIN TO SIGN THE GRANT APPLICATION FOR THE UNITED WAY ON BEHALF OF THE EARLY CHILDHOOD COUNCIL.**

**\*\* DR. GROSE SECONDED.**

Ms. Ditrio asked who the employer would be. Ms. Bain said that this question was still under discussion.

Ms. Sadlon said that during the original discussions, it had been stated that the Coordinator would be an independent contractor. Discussion followed about the details of the legal department home and oversight then followed. Ms. Bain suggested that the Council break down into a subcommittee to determine this.

Mr. Hensinger asked about the lack of two of the domains on the application. Ms. Witt explained that the application was focuses on only two of the domains, so she had focused on those areas.

*Ms. Taylor-Hard left at 10:35 a.m.*

**\*\* THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

### **Council Structure**

Ms. Bain said that she would be turning the meeting over to Ms. DeCesare to chair for the discussion regarding the Council Structure.

Ms. Ditrio said that she had to leave and that she would like to comment on the grievance policy that was distributed. She said that the policy appeared to supercede the authority of the employer and that of the Council. She suggested that the item go back to committee because it states that it addresses issues in “the workplace”. Ms. Ditrio said that the issues at a workplace were between the employer and the employee.

*Ms. Ditrio left the meeting at 10:40 a.m.*

### **Council Structure Cont'd**

#### **i. Committee Structure – areas of responsibility**

Ms. DeCesare said that before the Graustein letter arrived, there were two groups that were working on different issues: the structural component and the job descriptions. The aspect of inclusiveness and having parental input has been highlighted. Ms. DeCesare said that she did not feel that the Graustein letter changed this situation. However, the principles need to be determined.

She then asked what the process would be for determining the principles. If the committees are making decisions, the Council's role would be providing oversight. This would present a concern about having the general Council involved with giving input. The other possibility was to have the committees recommend actions to the full Council and have the Council make the final decisions. She stated that the answers have not been determined yet because discussions needed to be held. Another question was the involvement of the Council in reaching out to the community. Shifting the emphasis of the Council to outreach as opposed to its current supervisory position.

Ms. Bain said that these were major topics, but that it was important not to be caught on process when there were global issues to discuss. Dr. Grose said that she had heard in the past months that decisions were being made without people knowing about it. She pointed out that the key people were the providers and they know what works best for them. Ms. Bain asked for clarification on word "providers". Dr. Grose said that it would have been the providers with a capital "P".

*Mr. Schmidt left the meeting at 10:55 a.m.*

Discussion followed about potential structure. Ms. Bain asked for suggestions on how this could be formulated for the Council to consider without getting into the details.

**\*\* MS. SCHILLING MOVED TO HAVE THE GRAUSTEIN LETTER BE STUDIED CLOSELY BY THE COUNCIL MEMBERS IN LIGHT OF THE WORK THAT GOES ON OF THE WORK OF THE MANAGEMENT, STRUCTURE AND RESPONSIBILITIES AND DISCUSSED IN THE MEETING ON MAY 19TH AT 8:30 A.M.**

Ms. DeCesare pointed out that these were issues that the Council had started to discuss. She said that by the end of the summer the NECC should have this prepared so it doesn't get tangled in the start of the school year rush. Ms. Bain said that it was important to remember that in terms of a collaborative having a timeframe was critical since it would allow for transparency and making sure that all the members were informed. Ms. DeCesare said that it would be important to have the voices of the parents recognized.

Ms. Sadlon said that because the School Readiness slots have increased, the pool of parents has also increased and that there may be an opportunity to have the parents participate. It will also be important to look at programs that represent parents, who can be spokespeople for the parents.

Ms. Bain said that the letter would be sent out to the Council Members with a request for input by May 19th.

*Ms. DeCesare left the meeting at 11:05 a.m.*

### **Council Membership**

Ms. Bain said that the membership terms for the Council were for two years and now it was time to renew their membership. Ms. Smart then distributed copies of a NECC Membership Questions to Current Membership. Ms. Bain requested that the members think about the questions on the sheet and consider the issue regarding the role of the Council and who is making the decisions. The form will be send out via email to all the members with a deadline for responses. The Mayor and the Superintendent had requested a list of membership for September.

## **Other**

Ms. Crane said that Stepping Stones was applying for a grant for Healthy Build program for preschoolers and would like the NECC to be responsible for choosing three School Readiness providers for the grant. Ms. Bain said that she would suggest that the providers would be the best ones to contact directly. Ms. Sadlon suggested that the Stepping Stones work with the School Readiness Provider Network. Ms. Paul reminded everyone that all the accredited providers need to have a nutrition component.

Ms. Crane said that Stepping Stones would be honoring Providers and educators at the “It’s Your time to Play” program on Wednesday night, May 19th. Please RSVP

Mr. Hensinger said that the legislature finished their session last week and that there were some positive things:

- DSS will be providing bonuses and
- There is now a requirement for DSS to give 30 days notice before closing a program.
- There was also a change in the HUSKY re-determination period.
- PLTI was saved.
- The Parent trigger bill passed. This allows the parents to take the school system to task if the school had failed NCLB two years in a row. Mr. Hensinger then gave the details of the Connecticut ruling.
- The enrollment cap has been removed from the Charter Schools. Discussion followed about number of Charter Schools and how this affected the Race to the Top funding and the requirement that all preschool teachers have Bachelors by 2015.

Ms. Bain said that the Graustein Memorial Fund provides many opportunities for capacity building. She said that there was an upcoming RBA program. Ms. Bain said that the Graustein Fund required a minimum team of 3 and no more than 6 to attend the RBA program and named those who would be attending.

Ms. Paul said that she would like to give kudos to the providers because they have lost so much Care for Kids funding along with the family fees because so many people have lost their jobs. The State requires the providers keep the students despite this and the providers are really struggling. The State licensing fee jumped from \$200 to \$500. It

was suggested that letters be drafted to the legislators about this. It was also stated that the community is not aware of how this is having a domino effect.

### **VIII Announcements**

There were no additional announcements to be made at this time.

### **ADJOURNMENT**

**\*\* MS. AVERY MOVED TO ADJOURN.**

**\*\* MS. CRANE SECONDED.**

**\*\* THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

The meeting adjourned at 11:30 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Sharon L. Soltes  
Telesco Secretarial Services

City of Norwalk  
Early Childhood Education  
Regular Meeting  
May 12, 2010  
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