

**CITY OF NORWALK
EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION
REGULAR MEETING
MAY 13, 2015**

ATTENDANCE: Cathy DeCesare, Co-chair; Tejal Athavia, Norwalk ACTS Parent and Representative; Pamela Augustine-Jefferson, Early Childhood staff; Lauriston Avery, Five Mile River Nursery School; Betsy Bain, Community Representative; Eva Beau, NHFL; Nicole Fagan, Carousel Preschool; George Hensinger, Community Represent; Darleen Hoffer, Norwalk Health Department; Christine Nelson, All Our Kin; Mary Oster, Early Childhood staff; Lynn Sadlon, Fox Run School FRC; Ed Musante, Greater Norwalk Chamber of Commerce President (7:02 p.m.)

OTHERS: Carmine Santa Maria, Silvia Siguz, Sharon Wells, Community Messenger; Marilyn Caldron, CT Parent Power; Ellen Swan, ECCP MFCGC; Patrice Emkar, Norwalk Housing; Donna Carney, Kids Kastle; Kim Barker, Leapfrogs; Erica Phillips, All Our Kin; Samantha Dynowski, Connecticut Early Childhood Alliance via Skype

CALL TO ORDER.

Ms. DeCesare called the meeting to order at 6:05 p.m. A quorum was present.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES FROM 3/11/15 MEETING.

**** MS. BEAU MOVED THE MINUTES OF MARCH 11, 2015.**

**** MS. SADLON SECONDED.**

The following correction was noted:

Page 1, under **Legislative Update**, Line 1, second sentence: please change “She that there” to “She said that there”

**** THE MOTION TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF MARCH 11, 2015 AS CORRECTED PASSED WITH EIGHT IN FAVOR (ATHAVIA, AUGUSTINE-JEFFERSON, AVERY, BEAU, FAGAN, HOFFER, OSTER, AND SADLON) AND FOUR ABSTAINING (DECESARE, BAIN, HENSINGER AND NELSON).**

ADVOCACY/BUDGET UPDATES.

Ms. Sam Dynowski from the Connecticut Early Childhood Alliance addressed the group via Skype. She introduced herself and said that she would be reviewing the current budget process going on in Hartford. The Governor had zeroed out a number of Early Childhood programs, but the Democratic legislators restored them. At this point in time, the budget negotiations start between the Governor and the elected officials.

Ms. Dynowski added that this was all contingent on new revenue from tax increase. The sales tax has been lowered but the list of taxable items has expanded. Ms. Dynowski encouraged everyone to contact their legislators about the funding for the Early Childhood programs.

Ms. Oster asked about the proposed cut for the Help Me Grow program. Ms. Dynowski said that it was a larger cut than the other programs, but the legislators had restored a major portion of the previous budget.

Ms. Arujo asked about the "No New Taxes" program. Ms. Dynowski reviewed the details with the group. Ms. Dynowski reminded everyone that ultimately, the Governor is required by the Charter to sign the budget.

The discussion then moved to circumventing the spending cap. Mr. Hensinger said that the legislators had not taken positions on the spending cap.

Mr. Hensinger said that there had been an incident where a Preschool had not been notified of a shoot out in New Haven that was right in the area. Now the police will be required to notify them.

He added that there had been a bill about mental health that has been stripped of the services.

Smart Start has been awarded to Stamford and Bridgeport. Originally it had been for small towns. Recently the teaching requirements have been changed to require a Master's degree.

Chronic absenteeism and expulsion is being reviewed. Any school with over 10% of either of these will be reviewed and it is unclear at this time whether it includes preschools. The legislators are working to prevent preschool expulsions.

Kindergarten testing is underway in Ohio and Maryland. It is being tailored for Connecticut and will be utilized in 2017.

Mr. Hensinger said that a number of parent initiatives, after school programs, Juvenile Justice, and a number of other programs have been funded.

Ms. DeCesare asked if there were any suggestions that the Council Members wanted to do. Ms. Oster reported that a group went up to Hartford for Advocacy Day to speak to

legislators. Ms. DeCesare said that another suggestion was to write Letters to the Editors. Discussion followed.

**** MS. BAIN MOVED TO AUTHORIZE MS. DECESARE AS THE CO-CHAIR AND MS. OSTER TO DRAFT A LETTER ABOUT EARLY CHILDHOOD ADVOCACY TO BE SENT TO THE LEGISLATORS AND THE MEDIA.**

**** MR. HENSINGER SECONDED.**

**** THE MOTION PASSED WITH TWELVE IN FAVOR (ATHAVIA, AUGUSTINE-JEFFERSON, AVERY, BAIN, BEAU, DECESARE, FAGAN, HENSINGER, HOFFER, OSTER, NELSON AND SADLON) AND ONE ABSTENTION (AVERY).**

OTHER UPDATES.

Discussion followed about the QE Quality Enhancement grant for \$50,282.00 and includes All Our Kin's request.

Ms Augustine Jefferson said that the existing providers, with the exception of one, were re-applying for funding. She reviewed the details.

**** MS. AUGUSTINE-JEFFERSON MOVED TO RECOMMEND REQUESTING \$5,469,310.00 FROM THE OFFICE OF EARLY CHILDHOOD BASED ON THE CURRENT RATE AND FOR THE 609 EXISTING SLOTS PLUS 40 EXPANSION SLOTS AND TO STIPULATE IT WITH THE UNDERSTANDING THAT THE PROGRAMS MET THE REQUIRED STAFFING REQUIREMENTS BY JULY 1ST, 2015.**

**** MS. SADLON SECONDED.**

**** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

PRESENTATION BY HOME CARE PROVIDERS.

Ms. Sadlon said that it was time to discuss the Family Childcare Environmental Scale. There were 13 day care providers participating in the program. Ms. Sadlon then asked the home care providers to come forward. She then introduced Donna Carney of Kids Kastle, Kim Barker, Leapfrogs Day care; Julia Susan Dioce, and Carmen Santa Maria and her assistant from Family Start Daycare to the group. The All Our Kin staff provided the consulting and support.

Ms. DeCesare then asked the providers to tell the Council about their Vickers experiences. Ms Avery asked if she could visit a program.

Ms. Carney commented that it was a very nonjudgmental visit.

Ms. Santa Maria said that she was very excited to show how her students are improving with sensory activities. She said that the parents sometimes feel guilty leaving the babies

with a virtual stranger, but with All Our Kin, the parents are learning and the daycare providers are more connected. As an immigrant, it wasn't easy but the children have maintained contact with her years later. She really appreciates not feeling alone.

SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION.

Ms. Calderon came forward to speak briefly about CT Parent Power.

Mr. Ed Musante joined the meeting at 7:02 p.m.

Ms. DeCesare said that the discussion topic was how and where parents get information. It will also be important to know how to tap into these systems.

Ms. Wells said that, as a parent and grandparent, she has connected with the parents at the various schools as a Community Messenger.

The following thoughts were shared:

- Having the human touch is lacking. Community messengers are great, but there needs to be more such as photos of behaviors that should be supported and fliers in simple English without acronyms.
- Invite parents to bring children to the play ground for interactive play and give them directions to parks and beaches.
- Analyze where parents go, such as libraries, grocery stores, Laundromats, playgrounds and doctor's offices.
- Should Norwalk have a website with the resources with pictures and photos?
- Creating a system to get information to child care providers.
- Word of mouth happens in neighborhoods and apartments along with immigrant groups.
- Public schools are using emails to communicate with parents.
- The Community Messengers work and perhaps there needs to be more of them.

The next meeting will be on June 10th in the morning.

ADJOURNMENT.

Ms. DeCesare adjourned the meeting at 7:30 p.m.

Respectfully submitted

S. L. Soltes
Telesco Secretarial Services