

**CITY OF NORWALK  
NORWALK EARLY CHILDHOOD COUNCIL  
REGULAR MEETING  
APRIL 17, 2018**

**ATTENDANCE:** Cathy DeCesare, SVP, Strategic Initiatives, United Way of CFC;  
Craig Creller, Interim Chief Academic Officer (Superintendent's Designee);  
Nicholas Brophy, Principal, Jefferson Science Magnet School;  
Rovitta Paul, Owner/Director, The Children's Playhouse Preschool;  
Lauriston Avery, Five Mile River Nursery School/Director;  
Veronica Naranjo, Parent Representative;  
Patricia Foley, Director of School Improvement (McKinney-Vento liaison)  
Christal Leach, Learn, Growing and Play;  
Heidi Keys, Norwalk Board of Education Board/Member;  
Mary Kate Locke, Family and Children's Agency;  
Patricia Marsden-Kish, Director of Education, Norwalk Housing Authority  
Anthony DiLauro, Human Services Council/Executive Director;  
Mary Oster, Early Childhood Coordinator/City of Norwalk;  
Jamie Zyla, School Readiness Coordinator

**CALL TO ORDER**

Ms. DeCesare called the meeting to order at 4:40 p. m. A quorum was present.

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

**March 20, 2018**

Page 1            Change "March 20, 2017" to "March 20, 2018"

- \*\* MS. MARSDEN-KISH MOVED TO APPROVE THE MARCH 20, 2018 MINUTES AS AMENDED.**
- \*\* MS. FOLEY SECONDED THE MOTION.**
- \*\* THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

**COMMUNITY UPDATES**

**Kindergarten Registration**

Ms. Oster stated that we are using an online registration process. We have about 280 registrations in process. She stated that the 280 includes all registrations, but the vast majority of them are for Kindergarten. She stated that about 3000 applications have already been

submitted. Ms. Oster stated that the preschools have done a great job of assisting families with the process.

Ms. Oster stated that the Saturday morning registration event at the library resulted in about 21 families registering. Families were helped with understanding the registration process. She stated that we continue to get the word out that assistance is available.

Ms. Oster stated that the Ages and Stages questionnaire is included in the registration process. It should give us a lot of data. It is a long process. Making copies of the questions allows families to complete it on paper before they come to the events. Ms. Zyla stated that we have been able to ask the families why their children have not been to preschool. Mr. Brophy stated that sitting down with families and helping them through the registration process allows us to build rapport with them.

## **SCHOOL READINESS**

### **Vote on SR Grant**

Ms. DeCesare stated that we will discuss and take action on the recommendations we will submit to the State in regards to School Readiness Grant Funding.

Ms. Zyla stated that she collected the School Readiness RFPs from all of the current applicants. That we have been funding. She stated that we received two RFPs from new applicants. The new applicants are Stepping Stones Museum and Children's Corner Learning Center.

Ms. Zyla stated that Ms. Oster, Ms. Naranjo, Ms. Avery, and she reviewed the RFPs. We conducted site visits at Stepping Stones Museum and Children's Corner Learning Center on April 9, 2018. We met on April 19, 2018 to review the criteria and make recommendations for the council.

Ms. Zyla stated that our priority is to use SR funding to support Norwalk families so they can send their child to quality Preschool. Our goal is always to put Norwalk families first. She stated that of the two new applicants, Stepping Stones clearly has a program that expands quality choice for Norwalk families.

Ms. Zyla stated that the decision to allow 12 slots for non-Norwalk families was meant to address potential of having open spots, if we could not identify Norwalk families. We are currently over the limit we set and will reallocate these slots to Stepping Stones Museum to serve Norwalk families.

Ms. Zyla recommended the reduction of non-Norwalk family slots as follows: 3 from Children's Playhouse, 2 from Growing Seeds, and 2 from Room to Grow.

Ms. DeCesare stated that we clearly saw Stepping Stones Museum as qualifying for School Readiness Fund consideration. We saw Children's Corner Learning center as needing to do more things before they would qualify.

Ms. DeCesare stated that we did not rank programs that submitted RFPs. We decided that we should make sure Norwalk families are given slots before non-Norwalk families are given spots.

Mr. Creller stated that in order to award new seats to a qualifying program, the seats need to be taken from another program. He stated that an average of 15-17 seats per month were going to non-Norwalk residents.

Mr. Creller stated that we are looking to reduce the amount of non-Norwalk residents by 7 children. Our long term goal is to reduce the number of non-Norwalk residents to zero. We need 100% of those seats to go to Norwalk residents.

Ms. DeCesare stated that two years ago, programs petitioned to be able to include non-Norwalk families. We agreed to set a target of 12 slots that we would be prepared to offer to non-Norwalk residents if they were not being used by Norwalk residents. She stated that we have gone over the target number of 12 non-Norwalk residents.

Ms. DeCesare stated that we need to offer the best programs that we can to Norwalk families. They need access to the programs.

Ms. Paul stated that we have families that started off living in Norwalk and have moved to other municipalities. She stated that we were told not to put them out.

Ms. DeCesare recommended that we award Stepping Stones seven out of the ten slots that they requested with the ability to do that be achieved by reducing the slots where there are programs currently providing School Readiness slots to non-Norwalk families. Ms. DeCesare recommended that 2 slots come from Children's Playhouse, 2 spots come from Growing Seeds, and 2 come from Room to Grow. Discussion followed on the method by which school readiness slots are determined.

Ms. Paul stated that we have hired staff based on the number of slots that we have. She stated that making this change now and it going into effect on July 1<sup>st</sup> does not give us enough notice.

Ms. Gay Cavanagh of Little Critters, came forward. She stated as business owners, we are looking at what is best for the child while trying to stay afloat. That should be taken into consideration. She stated that each program should lose one slot. Three programs should not be targeted.

- \*\* MR. CRELLER MOVED TO ACCEPT THE COUNCIL'S RECOMMENDATION TO REDUCE THE OUT OF TOWN SPOTS BY 7 AND AWARD THOSE SPOTS TO STEPPING STONES.**
- \*\* MS. AVERY SECONDED THE MOTION.**
- \*\* THE MOTION PASSED WITH NINE VOTES IN FAVOR WITH ONE VOTE IN OPPOSITION (MS. LEACH) AND ONE ABSTENTION (MR. DILAURO).**

**Vote on Quality Enhancement**

Ms. Zyla stated that we are awarded \$37,688. She distributed a budget page outlining where the money will be allocated. She reviewed the amounts allocated for each line item.

Ms. Zyla stated that under the supplies line item, we heard back from the ELLI programs and three of their programs received \$350. She stated that we put out requests to 14 sites and only heard back from the ELLI sites.

- \*\* MS. OSTER MOVED TO APPROVE THE QUALITY ENHANCEMENT BUDGET REPORT AS SUBMITTED.**
- \*\* MS. AVERY SECONDED THE MOTION.**
- \*\* THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

**ADJOURNMENT**

Next meeting will be May 15, 2018 from 4:30 – 6:00 p. m. in room 300.

Ms. DeCesare adjourned the meeting at 5:43 p. m.

Respectfully submitted,

Tom Blaney  
Telesco Secretarial Services