



Early Learning Coalition of Escambia County

**Executive Finance Committee Meeting Minutes**

**Note: Meeting conducted virtually due to the COVID-19 pandemic.**

March 26, 2020 8:30 a.m.

**Members Called In**

Van Mansker

Sheryl Rehberg

**Members Absent**

Mona Jackson

**Staff**

Bruce Watson

Dawn Engel

Vicki Pugh

Jamie Phelps

Paula Rollins

**Staff Members Called In**

Becki Rutchland

**I. Welcome and Introductions**

Notification of this Executive Committee meeting was posted to the Coalition Public Calendar Board and the Coalition website and sent to the Pensacola New Journal for publication on February 28, 2020. The meeting was called to order by Mr. Mansker. Mr. Watson noted that the Executive Committee has three members at this time and that quorum was met since two members are in attendance today.

**II. Public Comments**

There were no public comments.

**III. Consent Agenda**

Upon a motion made by Ms. Rehberg and seconded by Mr. Mansker, the Consent Agenda, consisting of the Agenda and Minutes of the February 27, 2020 Executive Committee Meeting, was approved without objection.

**IV. 2018/2019 A-133 Audit Presentation – Warren Averett**

Warren Averett representative, Ms. Godbey, presented an overview of the 2018/2019 A-133 Audit. No material weaknesses, no deficiencies, and no compliance issues were detected with the Financial Statement hence, there were no findings to report. Ms. Godbey noted that the Coalition books are extremely clean and that the audit report met the submission deadline. Mr. Watson noted that the Early Learning Coalition of Escambia County is the only Coalition in the state that is without a single finding on their audit this year related to use of EFS MOD. Mr. Watson also noted that in order to more accurately reflect the Coalition's invoicing and reimbursement processes, in particular the Coalitions reliance on EFS Legacy vice EFS MOD, the Coalition chose not to use the wording on this subject suggested by OEL and developed its



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own response. The Coalition's version was presented to the audit team who agreed to incorporate this response in the audit report. In addition, Mr. Watson noted that, to the best of his knowledge, every Coalition in the state edited the OEL wording to reflect their own situation.

### **V. Status Reports**

#### a. SR/VPK Fiscal Year Benchmark Report, Enrollment/Wait List Status Report, and Contracting Summary Report

##### 1. SR/VPK Fiscal Year Benchmark Report:

No new Benchmark Report was available for this meeting. The latest report will be presented to the Board at the meeting on April 9.

##### 2. Enrollment/Wait List Status Report:

Currently, there are 3,267 children enrolled and 3,250 unduplicated. With the exception of Priority 1 and 2, new enrollments have been frozen. The number of slots available varies on a day-to-day basis as non-working parents, and parents whose children who are ill, are encouraged to keep their children at home. The goal is to ensure that working parents have access to childcare and also to reduce the risk of virus transmission. Unfortunately, there may be an increase in the number of child abuse complaints filed with DCF as the COVID-19 crisis continues. Due to the COVID-19 crisis, the wait list is expected to increase and the Coalition may further under execute expenditures. There are currently four or five Providers still teaching VPK.

##### 3. Contracting and Fraud Summary Report:

The Coalition currently has 82 SR Providers and there were no new cases of fraud to report.

### **VI. Committee Recommendations**

#### a. Provider Rate Increase and Parent Fee Increase

Because the OEL deadline for submitting the Parent Fee Scale is April 1, 2020, it will not be possible for the full Board to vote on this proposal. Upon recommendation from the Resource Development Committee and a motion made by Ms. Rehberg and seconded by Mr. Mansker the proposed changes to the Parent Fee Scale were approved without objection.

Upon recommendation from the Resource Development Committee and a motion made by Ms. Rehberg and seconded by Mr. Mansker the recommendation to send the proposed Provider Rate Increase to the Board was approved without objection.

### **VII. New Business**

#### a. COVID-19 Response

##### 1. Provider Closures/Absences/ Provider Payments

OEL has announced that waivers will be granted for attendance requirements and that Providers will be paid at 100% whether they remain open or closed during the crisis. OEL has not yet



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established a firm start date for payments although OEL has suggested March 17, 2020. Coalitions across the state are in agreement that many Providers began closing on March 16, 2020 upon commencement of Spring Break.

### 2. Parent Fee Waivers

During an EFS call yesterday, OEL unofficially informed Coalitions that parent fees would not be waived until April 1, 2020. Along with other Coalition Executive Directors, Mr. Watson personally emailed Ms. Goff to express grave concern over the delay in waiving parent fees. Mr. Watson also expressed concern that programmatic policy decisions are being made based upon limitations within the EFS Mod computer program.

### 3. Requirements Waivers

Requirements, such as monitoring, program assessments, child assessments and developmental screenings have been waived until further notice.

Mr. Watson wrote an article lauding Providers and their staff members for staying open and continuing to provide care even though they may be at risk. The Coalition purchased high-demand supplies including bleach, toilet paper, paper towels, and gloves and distributed them free-of-charge to Providers.

The Coalition is considering paying retention incentives to Providers who remain open during the crisis and to practitioners who provide care during the crisis. The proposed retention incentive for would be around \$500.00 and would only go to those who worked throughout the crisis. The retention incentive will not be paid to workers who had the opportunity to work but chose to stay home. On March 23, 2020, Mr. Watson held a conference call with Providers during which time he strongly encouraged Providers who close to use the money they will be given to pay their staff members.

Due to the COVID-19 crisis, almost all Coalition staff will begin teleworking over the next couple of weeks. At most, the Coalition offices may have a small skeleton crew working on site. IT staff will remain on-site so that if teleworkers lose connection to the system, they can restore access. There are several job assignments that lend themselves well to telework so, looking ahead, some functions may change to telework permanently.

Upon a motion made by Mr. Mansker and seconded by Ms. Rehberg, the Executive Finance Committee approved a recommendation to the Board to approve a \$500.00 incentive bonus to practitioners working during the COVID-19 crisis and a Provider Incentive in the amount of \$1,000 per site.

### b. Census Report

The Coalition will function as a Census Champion this year promoting the Census and offering workspace for parents and Providers to complete the process. The Census will be a topic at the upcoming Coalition staff meeting. There are paid positions available with the Census at an hourly rate of \$20. Since government funding is tied to Census statistics, it is critical that the



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public accurately completes the process so that the community is properly represented. The Census sends up to six postcards per household as a reminder. Ms. Pugh will be conducting outreach efforts, particularly with the Latino community. The Coalition is preparing to set up laptops in the main conference room for people to enter their census data. Staff will also be available to assist.

### **VIII. Old Business**

#### a. Escambia Children's Trust Update (APR BOD Carryover)

The CSC campaign will not go public before June to limit the time any opposition can have to get organized. Mr. Watson noted that there is a need for written materials regarding the initiative as interested parties are asking questions and donors need documentation to support their donations. The Indian River County Commission brought up the subject of establishing a CSC at a recent meeting and it appears that a vote on getting a CSC referendum will be held by the end of the month. There is a three-step process in getting the County Commission to approve placing a referendum on the ballot, putting the matter on the agenda for public discussion, followed by a public hearing, and then a vote. There is a chance that Commissioners who are up for reelection may not support the initiative due to concerns they may be perceived as supporting a tax increase. Mr. Mansker commended Mr. Watson for his contribution to a recent article in the Pensacola News Journal. Mr. Watson noted that the article focused on the recent release of FLKRS numbers and did not focus on VPK. Escambia County Kindergarten Readiness went up about 2% and the rest of the state went up about 1%. Santa Rosa County went down 2% which may be due to a recent influx of service industry workers. Upon a motion made by Mr. Thompson and seconded by Ms. Jackson, a motion to recommend to the Board that the Coalition donate funds from unrestricted funds to the CSC campaign as well as officially name the Coalition as supporting the CSC campaign was approved without objection.

#### b. Coalition Reorganization (APR BOD Carryover)

Mr. Watson noted that the Coalition Reorganization is pending Board approval, but in the meantime the changes took place effective Monday, March 2, 2020. Upon a motion made by Ms. Jackson and seconded by Mr. Thompson, a recommendation to the Board for approval of the reorganization was approved without objection.

#### c. Board Vice Chair and RDC Chair (APR BOD Carryover)

The Resource Development Committee needs a Chair, preferably a Board member. The Board also needs a Vice Chair. Both positions come with the additional responsibility of being a member of the Executive Committee.

Board member meeting attendance was discussed. A summary of Board meeting attendance for fiscal years 2018-2019 and 2019-2020, to date, was reviewed. Although attendance improved for several Board members, that was not the case for all Board members. For instance, Dr. Edler attended two meetings at the beginning of her term but has not attended either in person or electronically in the past year. Mr. Mansker suggested following the Board meeting attendance



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guidelines in the By-Laws which allow for three absences after which, the Board Member is removed from the Board. Mr. Watson noted that Dr. Edler is the School Board Designee and as such cannot be removed. Ms. Patty Hightower, President of the School Board, will be contacted to discuss attendance of their designee. Ms. Ochs attended four out of six Board Meetings in fiscal year 2018-2019 and to date has attended only one out of four Board Meetings in fiscal year 2019-2020. Mr. Watson indicated that he will follow up with Ms. Ochs regarding her irregular attendance. CareerSource ESCAROSA will be assigning another designee after Ms. Rehberg's retirement in July 2020. The Coalition has 18 Board Members with the recent departure of one of the Provider Representatives. Mr. Watson noted that careful consideration should be given as to who the Board would like to target to replace the Private Sector Representative. There has been good feedback from Tallahassee indicating that the legislative proposal to reduce Board membership from 30 to 15 will be rescinded. Mr. Watson noted that most Boards are well under the current limit of 30 Board Members and that Miami has only 22 Board members. The burden for participation in Coalition Board related activities has been significantly reduced the past eight years as the number of Committees has been reduced from six to one.

### d. Third Term Approval Edna Williams (APR BOD Carryover)

Ms. Williams' second term with the Board has expired and she has expressed interest in serving a third term. Upon a motion made by Mr. Thompson, and seconded by Ms. Jackson, a motion to recommend to the Board to approve a third term of service for Ms. Williams was approved without objection.

### e. Board Provider Representative Position

Nominations for the Provider Representative position are open until the first of May, at which time, nominations will be taken to the RDC and subsequently to the Executive Committee for consideration. So far, one application for Provider Representative has been received. Mr. Watson and Ms. Pugh will review the list of Providers for potential candidates.

### f. 2020 Legislative Actions and Rule Making

House Bill 1013, known as the early learning bill, has been significantly amended since it was first proposed. The Bill proposes the most significant number of changes to the early learning statutes since the changes made in 2013. The proposed changes have a minimal impact on the SR Program, but will have a big impact on the VPK Program. The proposed changes include adding VPK class assessments and increasing the training requirements for VPK staff. These changes are largely in response to the statewide low Kindergarten readiness rates. The Office of Early Learning will become the Division of Early Learning operating under more direct oversight of the Department of Education and include significant changes to the rule making process to bring it in closer alignment with the Department of Education and DCF processes.

The SRPA Rules are pending their final public hearing. Mr. Watson noted that several changes are needed in order for the Rule to be effective in accommodating Providers who fall in the 3.0



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to 3.5 range. Mr. Watson has drafted language and will participate in the conversation regarding the proposed changes.

g. 8<sup>th</sup> Annual Early Learning Summit – May 26, 2020 (FEB BOD Carryover)

Mr. Watson and Ms. Pugh will be visiting the Amos Theatre and discussing rates and other logistics for using the space for the upcoming summit. Ideally, both the morning and afternoon sessions would be held at the theatre. Mr. Watson informed the Escambia Children's Trust PAC, as well as three Kiwanis Clubs, about the summit and has solicited their support. At a minimum, the Coalition may expect about \$100 dollars from each club to subsidize costs. Sponsor logos will be printed on handouts for the summit. In addition, the summit will be the soft kickoff for the CSC Campaign as the CSC will have a table in the lobby and will be offering information on the CSC efforts.

h. EFS Modernization Transition Update

The Finance Department is testing samples of several kinds of adjustments and so far, the adjustments reviewed have been good to the penny. A trial run of the 5045 (invoice) is pending and scheduled for February 27. Mr. Watson noted that there are still significant differences being discovered from trial to trial.

**Adjourn: Meeting was adjourned at 9:30 a.m.**

**Next Meeting: April 23, 2020 at 8:30 a.m. at the Early Learning Coalition Office, 3300 North Pace Boulevard, Suite 210, Pensacola, Florida 32505**