

MINUTES

Lane County Commission for Children and Families
And
Lane County Board of Commissioners
Serbu Youth Campus
2727 Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd
Eugene, Oregon

December 10, 2008
5:30 p.m.

PRESENT: Judith Hampton, Chair; Chuck Boyer, Vice Chair; Commissioner Faye Stewart, Teresa Kintigh, Shirley Swank, Marty Beyer, Commissioner Peter Sorenson, Betsy Clewett, Rich Cook, Debi Farr, Karen Hamilton, Ryan Stroup, Joachim Schulz, Phil Walker, Sharri da Silva, John Radich, Liane Lucas, Commission members; Bill Dwyer, Lane County Commissioner; Rob Handy, Lane County Commissioner-elect; Alicia Hays, Diana Avery, Christine Rogers, Robin Schaefer, Serafina Clark, Department of Children and Families staff; Melissa Smith, AmeriCorps VISTA; Heather Murphy, Tammy Stewart, Family Relief Nursery; Iris Bixler, Doulas Supporting Teens; Jennifer Gellar, Joy Marshall, Stand for Children; Gloria Griffith, Springfield Public Schools Family Resource Centers.

ABSENT: Kitty Piercy, Gail Parr, Kevin Maloney, Abigael Fender, Commission members.

I. CALL TO ORDER

Commissioner Stewart called the Lane County Commission on Children and Families and Lane County Board of Commissioners Annual Joint Meeting to order.

II. WELCOME ANNOUNCEMENTS, PUBLIC COMMENT

- **Welcome**

Ms. Hampton welcomed attendees and those present introduced themselves.

- **Announcements**

Ms. Hays announced that Commissioner-elect Handy would be attending the meeting, but would be late.

- **Public Comment**

Iris Bixler introduced herself and stated that she was the co-founder and development director for

Doulas Supporting Teens, a local non-profit that supported pregnant and parenting teens. She encouraged critical thinking of the information presented at the meeting and asked for support for children and families in Lane County, which she said was desperately needed.

Jennifer Gellar introduced herself and stated that she worked with Stand for Children and served on Governor Kulongoski's Task Force on Comprehensive Revenue Restructuring. She referred to a Draft Report Summary available at the meeting that explained the purpose of the task force.

Ms. Gellar announced that a hearing was scheduled for Friday, December 12, 2008 from 6:00 to 9:00 p.m. at the 4J School District Administration building to discuss state and local government findings, and short and long term recommendations for addressing the state revenue system to help fund programs for children and families.

Joy Marshall introduced herself and stated that she worked with Stand for Children. She opined that there were some reasonable and moderate things that could be done at the legislative level to help ease the current revenue crisis, and stated that those who cared about human services needed to work together to bring about change.

Ms. Marshall listed three ideas to help address the issues which included highlighting the flaws of the 2007 kicker, take advantage of the super majority in government, and close tax loopholes.

Heather Murphy introduced herself and said she was the Director at the Family Relief Nursery in Cottage Grove and was also representing the Early Childhood Planning Team (ECPT). She reminded members that the ECPT is a great informational resource for youth and families and urged members to lean on them whenever needed. Ms. Murphy called attention to program cuts to the Relief nursery and other local agencies. She added that the Family Relief Nursery had a long waiting lists and significant needs.

Tammy Stewart, introduced herself and stated that she was the board president at the Family Relief Nursery in Cottage Grove. Ms. Stewart talked about the Family Relief Nursery and said that it was the only rural nursery in Lane County serving many families in Cottage Grove, Creswell and North Douglas. Ms. Stewart added that the Nursery was 15 years old and was well supported and needed in the community, especially in light of the difficult economic conditions.

Gloria Griffith introduced herself and said that she was representing the Family Resource Centers of Lane County. Ms. Griffith gave a brief history of the Family Resource Center and talked about the services they provide as well as the partnerships with the school districts in Lane County.

Ms. Griffith noted that although the school districts were experiencing difficult times, the Family Resource Centers were still able to continue to provide services to the community. Ms. Griffith thanked the Lane County Commissioners and the CCF and added that despite the good work happening out in the community, the needs seemed to outweigh the help available to children and families in the community.

III. LANE COUNTY COMMISSION ON CHILDREN AND FAMILIES YEAR IN REVIEW 2008 & LOOKING INTO 2009

Ms. Hampton referred to a PowerPoint presentation on the 2008 Year in Review. The presentation included highlights, outcomes and budget cuts to the following programs:

- Healthy Start of Lane County
- Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA)
- Family Relief Nursery, Cottage Grove
- Family Relief Nursery, Eugene
- Family Resource Center Network
- Youth Mural Collaborative
- Food For Lane County Summer Food Program
- Child Care in the Court House

Ms. Hays talked about a half-time position that was funded by the Board of County Commissioners and stressed how important the position was in raising \$310,000 for several programs in the community including runaway and homeless programs, the rural host home project, and A Family for Every Child. She noted that the position was originally full-time, but was cut to a half-time position due to the County budget cuts in 2007. Ms. Hays reported that the Department of Children and Families staff is paying close attention to federal level funding and how to prepare the community for the outcomes.

IV. LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

Mr. Schulz reported that the Legislative Committee recently met with local legislators to discuss current issues facing children and families in the community. He added the committee shared results from the community survey and discussed the positive impacts of the child care tax credit. In addition, Mr. Schulz said the committee talked about the Family Violence Response Initiative policy option package for domestic violence advocates and child welfare officers.

Mr. Schulz said the committee, in pursuit with Marion, Multnomah and Lane Counties, wanted to promote an Early Childhood Caucus which had been successfully developed in Minnesota to provide services for early childhood care and education. Mr. Schulz reported that after six years, 70% of Minnesota legislators belong to the caucus.

Referring to the State budget, Mr. Schulz reported that Governor Kulongoski had proposed a 6.4 % reduction in funding from \$88 million down to \$82 million. Mr. Schulz said the Legislative Committee supported the Governor's plan on education, but wanted to stress the importance of focusing on services that get children ready to learn so they could benefit from what the education systems currently offer.

In final, Mr. Schulz said the Legislative Committee would be in Salem often during the legislative session and invited those interested to attend.

Commissioner Stewart welcomed Commissioner Dwyer and Commissioner-elect Handy to the

meeting.

V. REVIEW OF STATUS OF LANE COUNTY CHILDREN, YOUTH & FAMILIES

Ms. Farr thanked Commissioner Bobby Green and his wife for their many years of service working for Lane County's children and families. She added that she hoped they would continue to be leaders in the community and noted that "you don't have to be elected to be a leader."

Ms. Farr went over the Children First for Oregon Report Card 2008 and the Lane County Status of Oregon's Children 2007 in which both were passed out at the meeting. The reports were based on an objective analysis on progress toward the 2010 Oregon Benchmark Targets for the State performance measures. She pointed out that the overall grade for 2008 was a D.

Ms. Farr referred to the following categories in the report:

- Child Welfare
- Early Care and Education
- Family Financial Stability
- Health
- Youth Development and Education

Referring to the statistics of the report cards, Ms. Farr pointed out that the grades were low, and due to the dire economic conditions, things could potentially get worse.

Ms. Farr said that the commission could have the opportunity to partner with United Way of Lane County to work on several initiatives and maximize efforts to benefit children and families through the Success By 6 program.

Ms. Hays said she appreciated the opportunity to partner with United Way of Lane County and added that the Commission had a very strong relationship with them.

Referring to the outlook on the economy and lack of funding for programs, Commissioner Sorenson suggested there were ways to address issues with minimal governmental costs. He related to the way some communities addressed obesity issues by requiring restaurant chains to publish information on the amount of calories in their food.

Commissioner-elect Handy asked if Lane County had considered publishing a report card similar to the Children First for Oregon Report Card because it seemed to be an effective way to relay Lane County's performance and deepen awareness.

Ms. Hays and Ms. Farr agreed that it was a great idea and that a county report card had not been published yet.

VI. PREVENTION: A KEY COMPONENT IN PUBLIC SAFETY

Mr. Radich referred to a PowerPoint presentation on prevention as a key component in public safety. The presentation demonstrated 2001 statistics and the costs of prevention programs versus the costs of treatment.

Referring to statistics, Mr. Radich reported that students who dropped out of high school were 3 ½ times more likely to be arrested, and eight times more likely to become incarcerated. He reiterated that investing in prevention was the key to public safety.

Mr. Radich referred to Senate Bill 133 – Children of Incarcerated Parents Project - and said the committees would conduct a survey to complete a systems review of policies and procedures regarding children and their incarcerated parents. A key part of the systems review includes a review of best practices. As an example of how children were affected by the incarceration of their parents, Mr. Radich read several letters written by children in which they detailed their experiences.

VII. UPDATE OF COMMUNITY PRIORITY FOCUS AREAS

- **Child Abuse**

Ms. da Silva reported that the committee elected to address this particular issue spent time focusing on how to support families and aid in reducing child abuse and neglect. The committee came to a consensus that prevention made a difference and reduced the costs to the system.

Ms. da Silva said that one of the best practice models for preventing child abuse and neglect was through a Home Visiting System, which she opined worked well in Lane County. She added that the committee had teamed up with Healthy Babies, Healthy Communities initiative to administer a survey to look at gaps in services and how to better coordinate current services. Ms. da Silva noted that Health Policy Northwest was in the process of analyzing the survey results.

Referring to statistics, Ms. da Silva said that 49% of children abused and neglected were under the age of six. She added that she believed the community could come together to provide services and support to families to prevent abuse and neglect, even in spite of the downturn of the economy.

- **Child Care Availability**

Ms. Hamilton reported that access and affordability for child care continued to be a major issue for families, and that Lane County fell below the State benchmark. To address the issues, Ms. Hamilton said that the ECPT continued to gather information to identify service gaps and barriers to provide better infant-toddler care.

Ms. Hamilton talked about several improvements that had been made for child care availability which included assisting providers in making improvements to their business through the Infant Toddler Network, giving discretionary funds to Lane Family Connections to support training and licensing requirements, and supporting efforts in rural areas to start quality child care programs.

- **Supports for Transition Age Youth with Mental Health Needs**

Ms. Kintigh reported that transition age youth tended to drain a significant amount of available funds from the system because they use mental health services most of their lives. She noted that many youth were in the developmental stage and made health decisions on their own, resulting in a high rate of homelessness and self-medicating behaviors.

Ms. Kintigh reported that a committee of Lane County providers had met to address issues affecting transitional age youth. She noted that teams wanted to brainstorm ways to provide unconventional services to youth who reject tradition services.

Referring to Ms. Farr's question, Ms. Kintigh responded that the connection between chronically mentally ill individuals most likely stemmed from abuse and neglect, as well as other factors.

VIII. BOARD MEMBER'S PERSPECTIVE ON CHILDREN & FAMILIES

Commissioner Sorenson encouraged the Commission to make formal grant requests for the CCF within the Board of Commissioner's budget authority.

Referring to budget cuts, Commissioner Sorenson suggested using recently available county building space to help non-profit agencies with temporary office space as a way to save money. He related the partnership with the Family Relief Nursery Downtown as an example.

Commissioner Stewart said it had been a pleasure to serve on the CCF and talked about several programs he worked on and supported including the Summer Food Program, the grant writer resource development position, and expanding school-based health clinics. He added that he felt blessed to have become the director of the Faye and Lucille Stewart Foundation, where he had the opportunity to award small grants and learn more about local non-profits, such as the Relief Nursery and CASA.

Commissioner Stewart stated he was very aware of the downturn in the economy and the impacts to children and families and said his goal was to help reduce the stress on families. He recognized that prevention was a key component in public safety and said it was important to continue to support programs that provide prevention services.

Referring to the dismal economy and unemployment rate, Commissioner Dwyer stated that people needed to be creative and look at alternatives for bringing in income. He felt that there were tremendous opportunities that could be cashed in on such as picking mushrooms, ferns, cedar boughs, and mistletoe.

Commissioner Dwyer said it was important to provide services for teens as well as infants and children, and to provide more things for kids to do in their spare time to keep them out of trouble. He added that it was important to look into alternative ways to fund public safety such as a tax levy.

Commissioner-elect Handy asked the CCF to hold him accountable as he does his work as a County Commissioner. He noted that he and his wife, Julie Hume, had been involved with children and families in the community for many years.

Commissioner-elect Handy thanked the CCF for their work with children and families and noted that the Commission would be a good conduit for him as an effective voice in the community.

IX. Wrap Up

Ms. Hampton thanked everyone for attending the meeting.

Ms. Kintigh announced that she was resigning as a commission member for personal reasons and that the meeting would be her last. She added that she would continue to do work in the community and had thoroughly enjoyed working with the CCF.

(Recorded by Jo Schutte)