



**BOARD OF DIRECTORS
MEETING MINUTES
April 27, 2017**

Meeting: Early Learning Coalition of Pasco and Hernando Counties, Inc.
Board of Directors Meeting

Day/Date/Time: Thursday, April 27, 2017 at 8 a.m.

Location: Early Learning Coalition of Pasco and Hernando Counties, Inc.
15506 County Line Road
Spring Hill, FL 34610

Board of Director Members Present: Dr. Steve Kanakis, Chair; John Allocco, Dr. Amy Anderson, Florence Buono, Lisa Campos, Kathleen Casper, Cynthia Cook, James Cook, Gus Guadagnino, Pat McHugh, David Meglay, Dr. Lori Romano, Sam Shrieves, Jessica Weightman

Board of Director Members Present via Phone: Mary Beth Wehnes

Board of Director Members Excused: Cathy Dofka, Josh Kelly, Angela Porterfield

Board Members Unexcused: None

Coalition Staff Present: Colleen Armentrout, Carolyn Casler, Jenny Dodson, Bev Doucet, Pattie Eacobacci, Jim Farrelly, Jane Franco, Rachel Hardy, Melissa Hayes, Jak Jakubauskas, Jack Karuso, Betsy Kier, Katie Leslie, Sarah Mai, Kelli Rodriguez, Sherri Sabadishin, Ljubica Sevic, Kimberly Williams, Jenna Zimmer

Guests Present: Bimal Bhojani, Kids R Kids; Linda Cook, Jayne Goldstein, TodayCare Child Care at PHSC; Edna Lennox, Robin Napier, Hernando County Health Dept.; Jeff Webb

I. Welcome and Call to Order – Dr. Steve Kanakis, Chair

Dr. Kanakis called the regularly scheduled meeting of the Early Learning Coalition of Pasco and Hernando Counties, Inc. Board of Directors to order at 8:05 a.m. and thanked everyone for attending.

The Pledge of Allegiance was recited followed by introductions.

II. Action Items

- **Adoption of Agenda**

Dr. Kanakis requested a motion to adopt the agenda. Mr. Guadagnino so moved and Mr. McHugh seconded the motion. All were in favor with no abstentions and the motion carried. **(Action Item #1617-16)**

- **Approval of Minutes, January 26, 2017 Board Meeting**

Dr. Kanakis requested a motion to approve the minutes of the January 26, 2017 Board Meeting as presented if there were no corrections. Mr. McHugh so moved and Mr. Allocco seconded the motion. All were in favor with no abstentions and the motion carried. **(Action Item #1617-17)**

- **Treasurer's Report – Mr. Gus Guadagnino, Chair**

- A. Financial Statements – January - March, 2017**

Mr. Guadagnino stated the financial information was included in the packet and the report is excellent; he requested Ms. Hardy continue. Ms. Hardy explained the financial reports encompass January, February and March. She reported that School Readiness spending for January was well within the required minimum and maximum percentages with just under 87% being directed to children. She reported that \$1,530 had been raised for Match, primarily from the United Way of Pasco County.

February's financials indicate that School Readiness Direct Services spending was just under 86% and \$6,000 was reported for Match, again from the United Way of Pasco County. A surplus is still being reported and the Coalition is actively enrolling children.

For March, Ms. Hardy reported the Direct Services surplus projected has been drastically reduced to approximately \$500,000 and School Readiness spending was at nearly 87% for Direct Services. She explained the Coalition is only required to spend 78% of its budget on Direct Services.

Dr. Kanakis requested a motion to approve the Financial Statements for January through March as presented. Mr. Shrieves so moved and Mr. Guadagnino seconded the motion. All were in favor with no abstentions and the motion carried. **(Action Item #1617-18)**

III. Remarks from the Chair/Executive Committee Report – Dr. Steve Kanakis, Chair

- **Ratification, New Business Board Members**

Dr. Kanakis announced this would be the last meeting of the Board he will be chairing and Board membership will be turning over with new mandated members joining the Board. At this time, several new business members have requested and have been approved to join the Board: Ms. Lisa Campos, Mr. Dave Meglay and Mr. Jim Cook.

Dr. Kanakis requested a motion to ratify the new business Board members; Mr. McHugh so moved and Mr. Allocco seconded the motion. All were in favor with no abstentions and the motion carried. **(Action Item #1617-19)**

- **Executive Committee Report**

Dr. Kanakis reported the Executive Committee met in February, March and April and voted on the following items: approved the YOTYC marketing proposal, approved staff health insurance for FY 2017-18, approved staff incentive awards and a Sliding Fee Scale and Fee Waiver Policy; approved postponement of a grievance hearing; the grievance was denied; adopted OEL's Annual Report of Financial Compliance; approved the renewal of the Auto Contents Insurance policy; approved the purchase of a document server; approved the engagement of Trenam Law; approved new business Board members; approved changes to Personnel Policy and Records Management Policy; approved Community Impact Partnership Agreement with United Way of Pasco County and approved salary incentives.

- **Honors to Retiring Board Members**

Dr. Kanakis and Mr. Farrelly presented retiring Board Members - John Allocco, Cynthia Cook, and Sam Shrieves with a framed piece of children's artwork with thanks for their years of service. Mr. Farrelly also presented Dr. Kanakis with a piece of children's artwork and stated it has been a pleasure to work under his leadership.

Other retiring members, who were not present, will have their artwork delivered.

- **Welcome New, Mandated Board Members (6/15/17)**

Dr. Kanakis announced the following members will be joining the Board - Ms. Robin Napier of the Hernando County Health Dept., Mr. Mike Wells, Pasco County Commissioner and Kelli Boles, Pasco County ESE representative; still to be determined is a Pasco based provider representative. Mr. Farrelly reported that an application has been received from a provider and will be presented at the May Executive Committee meeting.

- **Annual Board Reorganization:**

- **Nominations/Selection, Vice Chair**

Dr. Kanakis announced a Vice Chair is elected annually to serve for the upcoming year and this year the Vice Chair will also act at the Chair until another is appointed by the Governor. He stated that Mr. McHugh has stated he will continue as Vice Chair, if elected.

Dr. Kanakis requested other nominations from the floor; as there were none he requested a motion to accept Mr. McHugh as Vice Chair. Ms. Casper so moved and Mr. Shrieves seconded the motion. All were in favor with no abstentions and the motion carried **(Action Item #1617-20)**

- **Nominations/Selection, Vice Chair Pro-Tem**

Dr. Kanakis explained that as of May 1st, the Vice Chair will become the Acting Chair so a new Vice Chair needs to be elected and requested nominations from the floor. Mr. Cook nominated Mr. Meglay who accepted the nomination.

Dr. Kanakis requested a motion to accept Mr. Meglay as Vice Chair Pro-Tem; Mr. McHugh so moved and Mr. Shrieves seconded the motion. All were in favor with no abstentions and the motion carried. **(Action Item #1617-21)**

- **Presentation of Executive Director**

Mr. Farrelly requested Coalition staff move to the gallery and explained that in 40 years he has never felt the need to speak out about intimidation as being part of political life. A video was shown.

A community member has recently submitted a number of public records requests to the Coalition. This individual has requested, in writing, items such as minutes, background information on staff and Board members, personnel files of staff and information on any children of staff members that may be enrolled in one of the programs. The letters are signed “yours in accountability” and adds “...be advised that all documents provided are public records and may be disseminated as such.”

Mr. Farrelly stated he does not know the individual’s motivation. This Coalition is one of the finest in Florida and, over the last ten (10) years has been honored by WEDU and the *Tampa Bay Business Journal* and has also been listed as one of the 50 best non-profits to work for by the *Non-Profit Times*.

Mr. Farrelly stated that he has submitted his request for termination to Dr. Kanakis to be effective as of June 30, 2017 should the Board wish to pursue that action. If not, then his final contract will continue until his retirement in 2018.

Mr. Farrelly explained the Coalition has hired a new attorney, has new policies in place and a new position for a Public Information Officer is being proposed to serve as an intermediary for future public information requests, due at least in part to the tone and frequency of this individual’s requests. Unfortunately, these additional expenditures will take funds away from children.

Mr. Farrelly stated that requests from the public are welcome and appropriate, but these requests have a somewhat threatening undertone, and he is concerned they will continue. He explained there is no “black hole” of impropriety in the financials, program management or staff within the organization. Staff members work hard to ensure that all proprieties are observed. The several audits the Coalition undergoes annually find nothing wrong within the organization.

Mr. Farrelly explained he feels that these requests may limit the number of quality people to succeed the Executive Director as some will not seek employment under these conditions.

Mr. Farrelly stated that all future public information requests and responses will be forwarded to all Board members. All Board members and current and future staff are engaged in a higher and noble cause - the future of our children.

Dr. Kanakis stated that he gives Mr. Farrelly his vote of confidence. Mr. Guadagnino requested to take five (5) minutes. Dr. Kanakis adjourned the Board meeting until 8:45 a.m.

Dr. Kanakis reconvened the Board meeting at 8:45 a.m. and again stated Mr. Farrelly has his vote of confidence. He believes in Mr. Farrelly and his leadership and does not believe he should be terminated without cause.

Dr. Romano inquired why the meeting was being videotaped and was informed that a member of the public had requested the taping. Dr. Romano stated she was being presented with this information from out of nowhere and wondered what the Board was being asked to do.

Dr. Kanakis explained that an individual has appeared at a grievance hearing and was looking to have Mr. Farrelly eliminated. Dr. Romano inquired why so much attention was being given to this individual as she faces situations such as this within the school board regularly.

Ms. Casper moved to have a vote of confidence and to retain James Farrelly as the Executive Director; Mr. Cook seconded the motion. Dr. Anderson inquired if this is a vote of confidence or a vote to not terminate.

Discussion followed and Mr. Meglay explained that he was part of the Coalition during the past merger and was witness to some of the experiences. He remained with the Coalition because he believes in the mission and the children. Since Mr. Farrelly joined the Coalition, the difference has been night and day. It is a tribute to what he has personally accomplished. To have him personally attacked, with no validity, and now to take a vote of confidence which will be part of the public record is unfortunate as it is giving too much credence to an individual seeking public record requests.

Mr. Guadagnino stated it seems like these meetings are getting more bizarre. He wondered if the grievance meeting that was held was valid. Even though the attorney was there, when questioned about policy, the attorney stated he did not have his laptop so could not answer the question. During the grievance, the staff member stated her case and Mr. Farrelly stated his attorney recommended he not respond and the grievance was denied. There was no hearing from other sides. Mr. Guadagnino stated he and the individual who has submitted the public records requests have had discussions and have he and Mr. Farrelly. Mr. Guadagnino stated he has seen nothing bad except for the last 3-4 months. Things have been happening and knowing both sides, he said that no one is

taking down the Coalition. He stated the big catch is letting Mr. Farrelly go or keeping him - termination without case will result in paying his contract.

Dr. Kanakis stated Mr. Farrelly's letter stated he asked to be terminated, with cause or without. Ms. Casper attempted to explain her original motion to have a vote of confidence and not terminate Mr. Farrelly. To which Mr. Guadagnino replied "this is as clear as mud."

Dr. Romano noted that she receives threats all the time and as a Board we should work for the good but it seems this came out of nowhere and asked if there was more to this than is being discussed. Dr. Kanakis stated he is not aware of anything.

Mr. Farrelly said to Dr. Romano that he has also been a school superintendent and because of the recent threats has taken to carrying a licensed weapon as does his family. Dr. Romano inquired if he felt so threatened, why not resign. Mr. Farrelly stated he will honor his contract unless asked to resign.

Dr. Kanakis stated a motion to retain Mr. Farrelly has been made by Ms. Casper. Ms. Casper stated she is new to this Board but has been impressed with how this Coalition works and believes it is appropriate to retain Mr. Farrelly and not to accept his request for termination.

A roll call vote was taken with nine (9) members voting "aye" and five (5) abstaining. Dr. Kanakis stated the motion to retain Mr. Farrelly passes.

Mr. Allocco inquired why this individual is here and why a restraining order has not been issued against him if Mr. Farrelly's life has been threatened. The authorities should be informed. Mr. Guadagnino stated he does not believe there are actions to take down Mr. Farrelly or the Coalition but believes that what just occurred will take it down and if Mr. Farrelly feels that way, he should leave and go to Colorado.

Dr. Kanakis stated the Coalition will be stronger than ever being led by Mr. McHugh and Mr. Farrelly.

IV. Utilization Reports - Ms. Betsy Kier, Assistant Executive Director

Ms. Kier reported that School Readiness enrollments have increased in March with new children being enrolled daily. Clients are only waiting 10-12 days for services. New enrollments will spend down the surplus.

Ms. Kier reported that VPK enrollments are down as some of the school year programs are ending. VPK numbers will continue to decrease as more programs end. She reported that approximately 3,000 VPK applications have been received to date for the upcoming school year.

Mr. Farrelly added that School Readiness enrollment is nearly at an all-time high as is VPK enrollment. Even with open enrollment since December, the Coalition will still have a surplus at the end of the year.

Mr. Guadagnino inquired why there were fewer children enrolled in VPK programs in Hernando County. Ms. Kier explained that fewer program providers were available. He inquired what percentage of children enrolled in the program but did not attend. Ms. Kier explained she does not have a breakdown by county and explained that some centers have also gone out of business.

Mr. Farrelly stated that in some communities it is more challenging to motivate parents to enroll their children and used the April YOTYC event at Westside Elementary School as an example as no parents attended the event. Ms. Buono stated she also sees less parent involvement.

Mr. Guadagnino inquired what percentage of providers offer VPK. Ms. Sevic explained the Coalition has 228 School Readiness providers and 161 VPK providers in Pasco County. In Hernando, there are 62 School Readiness providers and 49 VPK providers. A trend has been noted that more families are moving into Pasco County.

V. Committee Updates:

- **Finance and Audit Committee – Mr. Gus Guadagnino, Chair**

Mr. Guadagnino stated everything is fine as reported by Ms. Hardy.

- **Ad Hoc Fundraising Committee Update - Mr. Pat McHugh, Chair**

Mr. McHugh announced the Spelling Bee event will be held on October 5th at the Rotary Pavilion. Mr. Mike Fasano will be the emcee for the event and there will be prizes, auctions, food and beverages. Volunteers are being recruited.

Ms. Weightman stated that the event will require volunteers and it will be held between 5:30 - 8:30 pm on October 5, 2017. Sign-up sheets were distributed. Mr. McHugh explained that spelling teams will be able to purchase “mulligans” or second chances to stay in the competition.

VI. Executive Director Report – Mr. Jim Farrelly

A. Sunshine Stars Update - Ms. Carolyn Casler, Program Manager

Mr. Farrelly introduced Ms. Casler and explained the Sunshine Stars program began several years ago as Quality Rating Information Services (QRIS) became a national trend. This is a way for the Coalition to rate its own providers and is acceptable to the state and within the scope of our contract.

Ms. Casler stated that QRIS promotes a culture of quality among providers. The program began in 2014 with ten (10) pilot providers, seven (7) of whom completed the program in

2015. Today, there are 33 Sunshine Stars Providers with another six (6) working on their Quality Improvement Plans (QIP), a plan designed to increase their original assessment score, with their Provider Specialist. The provider has six (6) months to work with a Provider Specialist before being reassessed. The provider will maintain their final score for two (2) years.

Ms. Katie Leslie, Provider Specialist, discussed the assessment process explaining that staff qualifications, professional development, the learning environment and teacher/child interactions are key focus points. Ms. Jane Franco, Provider Specialist, explained providers have three (3) choices when entering into the program - they can opt out at any time, keep their initial score or start a QIP to increase their original score.

Ms. Casler explained the program is a continuous process and at the end of the first 2-year term, providers will begin building upon the second tier of the program which will add family engagement and discussion into the assessment. The Coalition will also begin to plan on bringing VPK only providers into the program.

B. Coalition Update

Mr. Farrelly advised Board members to hold October 21, 2017 for the Coalition's 10th Annual Early Learning Conference. It will draw approximately 1,000 teachers to Bishop McLaughlin High School. The cost this year has increased to \$4,500 from \$3,600 last year. The Coalition is also negotiating a \$3 per car parking fee the school is charging this year into a flat rate of \$2,000 to reduce the cost to attending providers. The Coalition will now begin the search for a keynote speaker.

C. Update, Years of the Young Child Events

Mr. Farrelly explained YOTYC began in January with a kick-off event, in February an event was held for Black History Month at a Barnes and Noble; March's event, Storybook Forest, drew approximately 2,500, April's event was held at Westside Elementary and May's event will be held at Mary Giella Elementary School. Events continue to be planned for the remainder of 2017 and 2018.

Mr. Farrelly announced that he had appeared with Mr. McHugh on ABC's Morning Blend show which aired on April 24 and will air again on May 1st. Additional advertising for YOTYC events will appear in the *Tampa Bay Times* and several networks affiliated with Spectrum TV. Their purpose will be to generate interest in the importance of early learning.

Mr. Farrelly announced that Hernando County's Head Start program has been approved for an Early Head Start program. Now parents will have the opportunity to place their children in either the Head Start program or the School Readiness program.

He reported that information from Tallahassee indicates budget information may not be available until mid to late June. The Coalition is anticipating a "hold harmless" budget. Additionally, there is discussion about combining Florida's 30 Coalition's into a total of

25. This Coalition will not be affected as it is the 15th largest, but parts of a Coalition just north of here, Citrus County may be merged into Pasco/Hernando.

Mr. Farrelly introduced Ms. Sarah Mai as the Coalition's new Communications Specialist.

D. Foundation Update

No report was presented.

VII. Public Input

Mr. Webb indicated he would like to address the Board. Dr. Kanakis inquired if he had filled out a Public Comment Form; he replied not at this time. Mr. Webb came to the podium and announced that he was "the shadow." He stated he was not here to hurt the Coalition, there is nothing to fear and that he has never personally threatened anyone. What was heard today was an image conjuring exaggeration based on hearsay. He stated what was said was slanderous and a perfect example of bullying. To suggest that people are not accepting jobs because of public record requests was not realistic. He explained that he has requested the personnel files of only two (2) employees and the majority of his other requests, 7 or 8, have been for background information and does not believe his requests rise to the level to be called "attacks." He is out to hold the Executive Director and the Board accountable, not to win a Pulitzer.

VIII. Adjournment

Dr. Kanakis requested a motion to adjourn; Mr. Guadagnino so moved and this meeting of the Board of Directors of the Early Learning Coalition adjourned at 9:45 a.m. without further discussion.

Respectfully submitted by:

Ramute "Jak" Jakubauskas
Administrative Assistant I