

THE CITY AND BOROUGH OF JUNEAU, ALASKA

FINAL

Assembly Childcare Committee
Meeting Minutes December 14, 2018

I. CALL TO ORDER

Jones called the meeting, held in City Hall room 224, to order at 12:16 pm

Members present: Loren Jones, Chair, Bridget Weiss, Vice Chair, Eric Eriksen, Rob Edwardson, Blue Shibler, Wade Bryson, Michelle Hale

Other Assembly members present: Beth Weldon, Mayor

Staff present: Robert Barr, Library Director

II. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Jones added one item at the beginning to review the packet and a second at the end for each member to comment on the work of the committee to-date and future expectations

Agenda approved as amended

III. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

No changes to December 7th minutes, approved.

IV. AGENDA TOPICS

a. REVIEW PACKET MATERIALS

Barr reviewed the packet materials, including the agenda, problem statement, minutes, and included documents including one from Shibler, "Daycare or School? There's a Third Way", one from community member Meilani Shijvens outlining recent 2017 census American Community Survey data, and another from JEDC, "The Current Status of Childcare in Juneau" working paper from 2009.

Barr reviewed where these documents fit within the committee members' binders.

b. REVIEW UPDATED PROBLEM STATEMENT

Jones reviewed the working definition of childcare within the problem statement and his intent to use childcare consistently as opposed to other potential terms. Jones reviewed

other updates to the problem statement, including updated 2017 Census data from Shijvens and his hope to conclude problem statement edits during this work session.

Hale, for clarity, added “currently” between “we” and “lack” on lines 9/10.

Weiss clarified misinformation starting on lines 32 regarding the Kinder Ready program, noting that parents have the option to enroll their children in both morning and afternoon sessions for the full school day.

Jones asked a question about how the function of registration works for parents who may want to register for both AM and PM sessions.

Weiss clarified that the intent behind having AM and PM sessions was to offer flexibility in the program and that registering for both was an option and would result in continuous care for the school day, 8-2:30, including the transition time. Weiss indicated that JSD may consider expanding this program to include more time at the end of the day to cover a traditional work day at one of the current sites.

Weiss indicated close to a dozen kids were attending for the school-day at each site.

Weiss provided updated text for the problem statement to Barr.

Hale commented that many parents can't utilize Kinder Ready due to the 2:30 end time and asked to include this in the paragraph

Eriksen said that varied start/end times might be viable for some parents with non-traditional work schedules. Eriksen also requested removing the word “high” in line 9 to avoid unintentionally narrowing the committee's focus.

Hale requested changes including adding a date to the Economic Development Plan referenced on line 10/11, clarifying a reference to the Plan on line 11, noting a typo in the date of the JEDC plan in a footnote, and a grammatical error on line 15.

Shibler was unsure where the household data on line 16 came from and believed it should be higher. Barr will look into this. [Barr note: data from the Best Starts Brochure, “Early Care and Learning Investment in Juneau” which sourced the Best Starts for Juneau Kids Economic Analysis memo from the McDowell Group, 5/25/17]

Hale requested we strike the “if any” on line 46

Weiss, on lines 35 to 36, asked if there was a citation for the statement regarding the greatest need being for 0-3s, and suggested new language clarifying what the program provides and removing the “greatest need” phrase.

Shibler asked whether or not the Kinder Ready program needed to be in the problem statement, noting that it is one of many programs that offer childcare services in Juneau.

Jones said he had put it in here because it is one program that the Assembly has already funded and that there was a lot of Assembly discussion around the program, specifically regarding whether continued funding or an expansion of it would be appropriate.

Edwardson agreed with Jones and said in discussion with community members he has heard that people viewed Kinder Ready as a solution to the overall childcare problem.

Weiss agreed and said she has been pleasantly surprised at how well known the newly launched Kinder Ready program is and that while the Kinder Ready program is part of the solution, it is not yet the solution to childcare in Juneau. Weiss noted it is helpful to include it for this reason as well as the Assembly connection.

Bryson agreed indicating that the Kinder Ready was Assembly action and noting that it is not a complete solution indicates such actions have fallen short of a full solution.

Eriksen questioned whether or not the reference to “outside of their home” in the childcare definition unintentionally narrows the committee’s focus.

Jones noted that he and Shibler had discussed that and said that parents homeschooling or staying home with their own kids isn’t really daycare, but when a mom or dad stays home and brings in other kids, then that is daycare for those children that are outside of their own home.

Shibler emphasized the “their” in the statement

Eriksen questioned whether “learning” in the definition was the right term and suggested considering “development”

Jones said “learning” was used for the lack of other quality definitions and that learning can apply in a variety of ways depending on age and in some situations there may be a wide range of ages. Jones said learning, in this context, can be applied in a variety of ways and wanted to limit the definition to the smallest word we could with hopefully the broadest meaning.

Jones said Barr would make changes and send the revised problem statement back to the committee.

c. REVIEW POTENTIAL INVITATIONS FOR TESTIMONY

Jones said he met with Joy Lyon, AEYC, and Brian Holst, JEDC/JSD, to talk about what information they could provide to the committee. Jones said he went over comments from

past minutes that members had with Lyon and Holst. Jones said he'd like to set up a panel discussion in the Chamber and that Lyon and Holst could get ahold of people they think it would be useful for the committee to hear from, including providers, T&H Head Start, and others. Jones said he specifically asked them not to bring more research and instead to help the committee understand the stories/situations/problems people experience around childcare. Jones indicated this panel would be the committee's January 11 meeting.

Jones asked if the committee members had any issues or questions they would like addressed at this panel.

Bryson said the most helpful component would be what are the multiple factors that have went into childcare businesses closing – it's not just one thing, but a series of things.

Eriksen asked if Bryson had any specifics in mind

Bryson gave examples such as unanticipated costs, regulations that may have required a retrofit, revenues not coming in due to high bills going unpaid, etc. Bryson said the more information the committee has on why a business closed, the better equipped the committee will be to potentially prevent those situations from occurring in the future.

Eriksen agreed and added that it would be good to see/hear about some of the successful models in the community currently operating.

Shibler noted that this could include models currently operating without a subsidy.

Hale added that it could also include programs that have subsidies – like the federal building program, so that the committee could see what that takes.

Hale said that the committee should make sure we include the education question and to ensure the mayoral charge gets fully answered.

Eriksen questioned whether or not the committee should have questions prepared in advance.

Jones said committee members were welcome to do that and send them to Barr, who would forward them on to the panel.

Hale and Jones discussed the purpose of the panel.

Eriksen said it seems like there is an element of the community that is looking towards the school district for their feedback as well.

Jones indicated Weiss can provide that and that T&H Head Starts are located in district buildings.

Weiss clarified that not all Head Starts are in JSD facilities; two are.

Shibler suggested the committee also hear from a childcare worker who is living in Juneau with low wages. Shibler indicated there are some people who are very passionate about the work who made significant sacrifices to make it work.

Jones asked committee members to pass along any other suggestions within the next week to Barr.

Jones said in many states, Alaska included, have dealt with some of the quality/learning issues that Eriksen has raised. Jones referenced the Learn & Grow documentation in the binder. Jones said, for Alaska, Learn & Grow is the framework and suggested that the group get the director of the framework down to Juneau for the committee's 1/25 meeting. Jones said, as he understands it, the Learn & Grow model has standards for quality already complete and that it is similar to other State models. Jones referenced other professional industry standards and noted the similarity with Learn & Grow to the childcare industry.

Jones said that between the two January meetings would be the time to discuss the committee's plans for February, including starting to brainstorm solutions and fleshing out the direction the committee wants to head in. Jones said the committee may decide it wants additional public input after the meeting on the 11th.

Bryson suggested categories when the committee starts considering solutions – including very low cost, medium cost, high cost – as ways to break apart potential solutions.

Weiss added that indicating what the benefits of each option would be alongside their costs would also be helpful.

Bryson agreed.

Hale said beginning to think about standards starts to get at the question of education. Hale said some people are concerned with education starting too early and examining standards may help provide clarity around that topic as it relates to the mayoral charge. Hale said she would like to try to open the lid on where conflict might arise in the community and make sure we explore those areas of potential conflict throughout the process.

Eriksen agreed and said having some of those discussion will help solidify definitions. Eriksen said that what is meant when we refer to education in a quality childcare program may not be very onerous or controversial when we dig into the standards.

Shibler said she thinks that examining the Learn and Grow framework will help answer a lot of questions about what education/quality looks like in childcare programs.

Eriksen agreed that this element seems like it may be a potentially contentious part of the process and that there may be an opportunity for measurement.

Hale said that examining the standards may also improve communication as the committee is talking about quality and education.

d. REVIEW AGENDAS FOR JANUARY MEETINGS

Included in item c.

e. COMMITTEE MEMBER REVIEW

Jones said he recognizes that the committee has been given lots of material and that a lot of discussion has occurred in the 3 meetings to date. Jones said he recognizes the work of the committee is moving quickly. Jones said before we break for the holidays, he wanted to go around and touch base with everyone.

Eriksen said he is excited to be participating and is happy with the progression so far. He said he thinks we're working towards positive outcomes and that diving into the research has been a great opportunity for him to learn. Eriksen said doing the research has affirmed how complex of an issue this is and that it's an important one to be solved.

Shibler said she thinks the work of the committee is moving along nicely and that she is looking forward to the external information the committee will be getting in January. Shibler said she's glad that the panel won't be focused so much on data and paperwork as the committee already has that covered.

Hale said it has been positive to see the different organizations and groups across Juneau recognize the need to address this problem. Hale said this isn't so much a political issue and that even though it can become that way, there are nevertheless a lot of groups that agree on the problem. Hale said she wants to try to find people to talk to the committee who have very different ideas and that she would rather get those opinions and thoughts out during the process.

Weiss said she thinks the progress has been great and that she appreciates Jones' work and guidance of the process and Mayoral Weldon's initiative in putting this group together. Weiss appreciates how the group is comprised, acknowledging the multi-dimensional pieces of the problem – it is an educational problem, but that it is also a commerce, business, and economic problem for Juneau. Weiss said this group is representative of the layers and complexity of the problem.

Bryson said he is honored to be on the committee and that this committee will be setting the groundwork for moving Juneau to its next economic chapter. Bryson said addressing this problem is a key building block for moving the community forward. Bryson said he had been talking to other business owners about the problem since the last meeting. Bryson

said those discussions reinforced that not all businesses experience the same problems with childcare in Juneau. One correlation that seemed to be there is that the more profitable any given position was for any given business, the less likelihood there seemed to be that childcare would be an impactful factor. Bryson said he thought Jones was doing a great job leading the committee.

Edwardson said he was looking forward to the panels and agreed with Hale in that there should be on the panel to tell their stories. Edwardson also wanted to include the most informed and vigorous opponent the committee could find to ensure the committee heard all sides and was asked the toughest questions.

Hale said she wasn't envisioning having an informed/vigorous opponent on the panel on the 11th, but that she agreed with Edwardson and would like to see that perhaps at the next meeting.

Jones said he had a couple of names in mind and that he was going to reach out to them to gauge their level of what they might be able to add to the committee's conversations.

V. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 1:18 pm.

Note: Agenda packets are available to review online at <https://juneau.org>

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