

**THE CITY AND BOROUGH OF JUNEAU, ALASKA**

**Assembly Childcare Committee Meeting,**

**Assembly Chambers**

**Approved Minutes January 25, 2019**

**I. Call to Order**

Chairman Loren Jones called the meeting to order at 12:15p.m.

Members present: Loren Jones, Michelle Hale, Rob Edwardson, Bridget Weiss, Erik Eriksen, and Blue Shibler

Other Assembly and School Board members present: Mayor Beth Weldon, School Board President Brian Holst

Staff present: Municipal Clerk Beth McEwen, Zach Gordon Youth Center Director Jordan Nigro

**II. Approval of Agenda**

Mr. Eriksen asked to add an item to the agenda to have a committee discussion following up on the panel from the last meeting. Mr. Jones said it would be added to the end of the agenda.

**III. Approval of Minutes**

Hearing no objection, the minutes of the January 11, 2019 meeting were approved as presented.

**IV. Agenda Topics**

**a. Presentation from *thread* CEO Stephanie Burglund**

Ms. Burglund gave a presentation to the committee touching on the issues involving early childhood education within the state of Alaska and what the roles of government are at the federal, state, and local levels and how they interconnect. She provided a number of handouts to the committee members including a rainbow diagram showing the large complex systems involved recognizing that the end goal is to support young children and their families.

Currently early childhood programs are supported by the following levels of government/programs:

**Federal**

- Child Care Development Block Grants - The Federal Child Care Development Block grant is providing \$17 million to the state in FFY18.

- Head Start – the Federal Child Care Development Fund is providing \$25 million to 30 tribal child care grantees in Alaska during FFY18.
- Department of Defense – their Military Child Care has robust programs ensuring families are “Mission Ready” by either providing direct care or assistance to families in the Army, Air Force, Navy, and Coast Guard.

## State

- Dept. of Health & Social Services, Child Care Program Office  
As noted above, they receive \$17 Million in Federal Child Care Development Block grants, they also receive \$13 Million in TANF funds and there is a state required match of \$7.7Million totaling \$37 Million in funding for these programs.

Those programs include Child Care Licensing (provided by DH&SS and Municipality of Anchorage) of approximately 600 programs across the state. Of those 600 licensed programs, 67% of them are center based whereas 17% are located in homes. They serve approximately 24,000 of the children out of approximately 30,000 children across the state currently in child care.

They also include Child Care Assistance to approximately 3,500 children from 2,255 families, Child Care Grants providing financial resources for programs; and *thread* which is Alaska’s Child Care Resource and Referral Network. *thread* offers services to families, early childhood educators, early child education programs, and communities statewide.

- Department of Education & Early Development  
She provided handouts with additional information about *thread* as well as the SEED (System for Early Education Development) and the Learn & Grow programs.

## Local

- School Districts
- Government
- Creative partnerships

Ms. Berglund explained that *thread*, AEYC-SEA, and Thrivealaska have made up an informal network for the past 25 years and 10 years ago it was rebranded as the *thread* network. *thread* has offices in Anchorage, Fairbanks and Juneau and provides regional an statewide services meeting the needs of the direct service providers. Their formula for impact is to focus on linking families, guiding programs, bringing programs and families together. Services offered to families include free referral service across the state, consumer education, how to shop for child care, and childcare assistance in Southeast AK and in the interior out of Fairbanks. They are the largest trainers of early

educators across the state and their early childhood education programs provide staff going into the field and providing advice on room set up and mentor modeling.

They house and manage two main systems: SEED and Learn & Grow.

SEED stands for System for Early Education Development and is focused on identifying, supporting and developing standards for individuals working in early child care and education. They provide financial support to those seeking CDA (Child Development Association) credentialing, training and professional development funding.

She explained that it matters where children are and who they are with and that quality child care is in high demand. It is critical to the workforce pipeline. The number one reason for employee absenteeism in USA is child care issues.

The HEARTS program, which has been support by CBJ for a number of years, provides for teacher support but it is tricky because the workforce is fragile. The average wage is less than \$27,000/year and turnover is high at approximately 46%.

Ms. Berglund then showed a video which is online at [www.youtube.com/watch?v=krejcn2ivYU](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=krejcn2ivYU).

The Learn & Grow program is a system creating a framework with five levels to be obtained by child care providers. It is a voluntary system that they just launched in 2016 and currently has 150 programs participating across the state with six centers participating in Juneau. At this time, the programs are all operating at either a level 1 or level 2 stage of the program as they have not yet launched levels 3-5.

She explained that the trend is for more federal investment in universal pre-K through diverse community centers. There is an additional \$5 billion dollars in the federal funds going to the block grant program over previous years and local governments are looking at how they can support residents with child care needs. Juneau is a leading community in this effort statewide through it works with Best Starts and the HEARTS program. Other efforts in the state include the North Slope Borough which has been investing in pre-K through their school district for a number of years and Haines has a multi-generational program. In other U.S. cities, Chatanooga, TN offers a baby university and child scholarships in partnership with the United Way. Seattle, WA offers universal pre-K through a diverse delivery system. Other possibilities that local government can be involved with include offering family friendly benefits to their own local government employees. They can also support families through scholarship offerings.

#### **b. Committee Q&A**

Ms. Berglund then answered a series of questions from committee members about recommendations on how best to proceed. Mr. Edwardson and Mr. Bryson questioned how best to address two separate but important issues: 1) lack of child care openings,

and 2) providing quality pre-K opportunities. They asked her which they should try solving first while getting the highest quality for the lowest cost options. Ms. Berglund said those are good questions that she doesn't have ready/easy answers to. She did state that she didn't feel quality needed to be sacrificed for open slots in child care facilities but encouraged them to think of those as different sides to the same issue. She explained that for any facility, whether it is a child care center or in home child care, the health and safety issues are the same. Family child care across the country and in Alaska is on a huge decline. Some of the demographics causing the decline are that 30 years ago, boomers started child care businesses and now they are retiring. They are also seeing more single family households. She said that secondary income has been important factor for those who do offer child care in their homes but she is unsure how long they are staying open. She said the trend is in seeing a drive for more child care centers.

Ms. Wiess asked if she had any anecdotal information she could provide about the Learn & Grow framework and how it is working in Juneau. With respect to those centers that did choose to participate in the Learn & Grow system, what their motivations were to be involved, what that involvement looked like and if there were any fiscal impacts.

Ms. Shibler stated that hers is one of those programs and she was happy to share her experiences with the Learn & Grow program. Her center is of the programs currently at level 2 in Juneau and her desire in participating in the program was to provide quality care to children. The levels 3, 4, and 5 have not yet rolled out but she was instrumental in helping develop all 5 levels and when level 3 is ready to roll out, she will be ready to go to that level.

Additional discussion took place with committee members and Ms. Berglund regarding the various levels in the Learn & Grow program ensures quality pre-K educational opportunities to help prepare children for school.

Ms. Hale said the committee heard from child care providers at the last meeting and they expressed concerns that the children were not getting the high quality they would like to see due the amount of time being taken up by administrative duties. Ms. Berglund stated that is likely attributed to programs being understaffed and needing more support.

Mr. Edwardson said that Mayor Weldon formed this committee based on discussions that had come up during the last year. He noted that some of the concerns she has talked about is related to early child education being the gateway to success but it also builds the highest walls when it doesn't occur. He would like to see how they could reach the goal of getting the highest number of spots at the highest quality vs. the highest quality spots going only to the spots currently available.

Ms. Berglund answered a number of other questions pertaining to the details of Learn & Grow program. Mr. Jones asked about the funding sources for the tribal programs and if those programs are licensed by the state. Ms. Berglund explained that most of the tribal program money is spent on child care assistance but some also funds Head Start programs.

**c. 1/22/19 Memo to Committee from Chair**

Mr. Jones said he had wanted to have the committee look at his memo but that he also agrees with Mr. Eriksen that the committee should sit and digest the presentations they've received so far. He originally had the Best Starts presentation scheduled for the February 8 meeting but he asked the committee if they would be OK with postponing that presentation so they have an opportunity to review the memo as well as discuss the presentations they've received so far. The committee was in agreement with that approach.

**d. February Meeting Dates**

Mr. Jones suggested he would like to hold the February 8 meeting in the Conference Room #224. He said the meeting for February 22 would then usually be the next meeting but the Marijuana Control Board is in town meeting that week along with other major events happening in Juneau so he asked the committee if they would be OK with moving that meeting to February 15. He said from there, he'd hoped to hold meetings on March 1, 15, and 22 and that by March 22 they could have something they could have ready enough to begin putting out a draft report for public comment by March 22. He said he will work with Robert Barr on the final scheduling plan and get it out to the committee once finalized.

**V. Adjournment**

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 1:30p.m.

*Respectfully submitted,*

*Beth McEwen*

*Municipal Clerk*