



POLK COUNTY EARLY CHILDHOOD IOWA BOARD MEETING
Connmigo Early Education Center
828 Scott Ave., Des Moines
November 16, 2022

Voting Members Present: Deanna Bennigsdorf, Kevin Abler, Dave Arens, Alicia Chilton, Tabitha Choquette, Sam Early, Matthew Klemme, Marianka Pille, Eric Tubbs, Emily Westergaard; Ahmed Agyeman arrived at 8:12 a.m.; Rob Barron arrived at 8:20 a.m.

Voting Members Absent: Sandy Carter, Suzanne Cohrs, Adam Montufar, Eva Morales, Jessica Trinidad, Jana Shepherd

Ex-Officio Members Present: None

Ex-Officio Members Absent: Aaron Johnson, Barb Merrill

Staff Present: Barb Bremner, Jody Kanne

Guests Present: Tammy Engebretson, ECQuIP Manager, Iowa Association for the Education of Young Children

Welcome

Board Chair Deanna Bennigsdorf welcomed members to Connmigo Early Education Center and called the Polk County Early Childhood Iowa Board meeting to order at 8:06 a.m. Quorum was met at this time.

Approval October Minutes

Minutes were presented of board meeting October 26, 2022. There were no comments or corrections.

A motion to approve the October 2022 minutes was made by Emily Westergaard and seconded by Sam Early. THE MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.

October FY23 Financial Report

Meeting is third week of month rather than the usual fourth week so October expenditures not yet received from fiscal agent. October financials will be reviewed at the December meeting.

6-month Contracts

Bremner updated members on the two 6-month contracts approved in the spring:

- Friends of YJI - Power Play: Program is weekly hour-long session with parents and children at apartment complex in West Des Moines. Board approved a six-month contract for FY23 in order to evaluate impact of program. July through October program has served few children. Bremner met with agency, and program staff concede the program has not met expectations for participation. Bremner informed staff know she would not recommend extension of the contract to the board.

- Shalom Community Impact Center – Preschool program: Preschool program for refugee children three hours-per-day held three days-per-week. Program employs two teachers serving 20-25 children. Many parents attend ELL classes at site which are funded through United Way. Board funding is used for teacher salaries, food, transporting children, and a fraction of rent and liability insurance. Bremner recommends continuing contract for an additional six months. She will continue to communicate with Pastor Eugene to monitor program. Original contract will be amended to reflect additional six-month funding of \$57,000. Total fiscal year funding of \$114,000 was included in original FY23 budget.

Ahmed Agyeman arrived at 8:12 a.m.

Guest introductions were made.

A motion to approve Bremner's recommendation to not extend Friends of YJI Power of Play contract and to extend contract with Shalom Community Impact Center was made by Emily Westergaard and seconded by Marianka Pille. THE MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.

Association of ECI Areas and Advocates

Bremner thanked board members for their donations to offset the costs of membership to the Association of ECI Areas and Advocates. Thirteen board donations were received raising 50 percent this year's membership fee.

Bremner attended the Association of Early Childhood Iowa Advocates annual meeting last week at Des Moines Hilton Hotel. Lobbyists Eide and Walton presented information regarding advocacy with state elected officials and provided election updates. The meeting allowed for networking with ECI areas from across the state.

Rob Barron arrived at 8:20

Bremner reviewed the Association of Early Childhood Iowa Fiscal Year 2022 Annual Report and Fiscal Year 2023 Legislative Agenda included in today's packet.

Bremner stated the Association will have an important education and advocacy role with all the incoming new legislators. Association will also be critical advocating for continued structure of ECI and its model of local decision making as the merger with HHS proceeds.

Bremner discussed the recent decision by the Governor, at the recommendation of HHS Director Garcia to not apply for federal funds through a Preschool Development Grant. November 4th the ECI State Board. At this meeting Director Garcia told the board she would be meeting with ECI staff at 5 p.m. that day to discuss the grant which was due the following Monday. The Association immediately communicated ECI area concerns with Director Garcia. members met with the ECI State board and Health & Human Services Director Garcia. The co-chair and chair of the Association met with Director Garcia regarding the grant decision. This was positive as the process of merging continues. Bremner will share the press release of the department's decisions.

Discussion:

- Arens shared ECI state staff and others had been preparing the grant for several months. He shared his disappointment in the Governor's decision not to apply. He also shared his concerns that local decision making continue as part of Iowa's early childhood system. He mentioned the recent Child Health Services RFP which impacted services of Child Care Nurse Consultants as an example of decisions made at the state level that negatively impact the local community. He emphasized the importance of continued communication with legislators.
- Bremner updated the group on the Child Care Nurse Consultant situation. HHS recalled the award to Warren County Health Services. October 26th HHS notified EveryStep their contract was extended through December 31st. HHS released a new RFP on October 31st. EveryStep will likely be the only applicant.
- EveryStep was only paid for the four days in October they were able to provide services under the Child Care Nurse Consultants contract.

Administrative Report

Administrative Report includes details of the Preschool Development Grant and the Child Care Nurse Consultant situation.

Polk County ECI is in the midst of our accreditation process. Submission of Community Plan was part of this process. ECI state staff will conduct site visit December 21st. Shanell Wagler and another staff person from the Early Childhood Iowa team will meet with Bremner that morning followed by a meeting with Polk County ECI's community partners. They will attend the regularly scheduled board meeting to meet with board members. Members are encouraged to attend the meeting in person to meet with the team. A conference line will be available at this meeting. ECI staff will report to the State board at their April/May meeting to share notes from the site visit and to recommend accreditation renewal or make technical assistance recommendations.

Old Business

None.

New Business

None.

Public Comment

Tammy Engebretson thanked Bremner for her assistance throughout the EveryStep CCNC situation.

Adjournment

Early made a motion to adjourn the meeting; Abler seconded. THE MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.

Bennigsdorf adjourned the meeting at 8:33 a.m.

Kay Strahorn shared information regarding Conmigo Early Education Center and then led members on a tour of the center.