

Wake County Smart Start Board of Directors Meeting Minutes October 27, 2021

A regular meeting of the Wake County Smart Start (WCSS) Board of Directors was held on Wednesday, October 27, 2021 with WCSS Board Chair, Sherry Heuser presiding. The meeting was held via Zoom conference call.

Board members present: Maria Cervania, Nikia Coates, Dale Cousins, Veronica Creech, Matt Glova, Liz Hamner, Sherry Heuser, Leslie Ann Jackson Tonya Kangkolo, Catherine Lassiter, Cathy Moore, Barbara Morales Burke, Antonia Pedroza, Kimberly Shaw, Charlotte Turpin, Mike Wasilick, Angie Welsh and Joe White

Board members absent: Christine Alvarado, Heather Drennan, Sharon Loza, Katherine Williams

Staff members present: Phyllis Barbour, Gary Carr, Joan Crutchfield, Sasha Gomez, Gayle E. Headen, Alex Livas-Dlott, Bryce McClamroch, Nancy Peck and Lynn Policastro

Guest: Dawn Dawson

Call to Order/Announcements/Adoption of Agenda

At 8:48 AM, Board Chair, Sherry Heuser recognized a quorum and called the meeting to order. Executive Director, Gayle E. Headen presented the "mission moment with a PowerPoint presentation focusing on the Digital Access Project Device Distribution Event on Oct. 14. Ms. Headen provided background on the project, a strategy developed to connect digitally isolated families to services and summarized the collaboration with private and public sector partners, including Verizon, RBC Foundation, Wake County Human Services and other trusted community partners to distribute tablets, provide digital service and technical support to 225 families in need. Following comments and questions on the presentation, Liz Hamner moved to adopt the agenda. Joe White seconded the motion. Calling for a vote and hearing none opposed, the vote was unanimous. (10-21-23)

The Board considered items on the consent agenda. Barbara Morales Burke moved to approve items on the consent agenda including the minutes from the August 25, 2021; WCSS Board of Directors meeting, financial reports for September 2021; recommendation to accept the resignation of L'Teisha Curtis, and financial reports for August 2021. Catherine Lassiter seconded the motion. Calling for a vote and hearing no objections, the motion carried. (10-21-24)

Sherry Heuser announced an immediately effective change to board and executive committee meeting operation by not requiring a second to a motion coming from a committee. This is consistent with Robert's Rules and will enhance a better flow to the meetings.

Committee Reports

Advancement Committee

Committee Chair, Liz Hamner, called on WCSS Director of Community Relations and Development, Phyllis Barbour to provide committee updates from the Oct. 12 meeting. Ms. Barbour announced Sonia Manzano, better known as "Maria" from Sesame Street has been secured as keynote speaker for the 25th Anniversary culminating event, scheduled on May 14, 2022. She said WCSS is negotiating with Raleigh Convention Center on the space for the event.

Board Governance Committee

Committee Chair, Barbara Morales Burke Welsh reported the committee had its first meeting September 29. After a review of the committee job description and a work plan/timeline for FY21-22, the committee reviewed Board composition and identified board needs prior to discussing a draft of a survey for current board members to inventory relevant experience/skills and demographics. The Committee reviewed the process/timeline for recruitment and discussed updating an application tailored to board volunteers. Ms. Morales Burke shared that WCSS has been invited to participate in the BoardLead program to match local corporate executives as board candidates with a nonprofit organization. She remarked that WCSS could expect to receive results from its application to the program by mid-December. If a suitable candidate is matched, their nomination will be brought to the board ahead of the usual election period due to the program requirement of election by April 15.

Ms. Morales Burke reported Katie King has submitted a letter of resignation from the board, citing that in her personal experience, she doesn't feel her skills and experience are a useful fit to the work of the

organization. Sherry Heuser commented that the points made by Ms. King in her resignation are part of the discussion by the Board Governance Committee on how to improve the process of recruiting and onboarding to create a better transition for new board members as well as a process of continuing engagement during the tenure of service. Following questions, On behalf of Board Governance Committee, Barbara Morales Burke moved to accept Katie King's resignation from the WCSS Board of Director effective September 30, 2021. Calling for a vote and hearing no objections, the motion carried. (10-21-25)

Finance Committee

Finance Committee Chair, Joe White summarized the information and included several highlights of note in the FY 2020-21 IRS 990 form prepared by the WCSS fiscal department and an independent accounting firm and reviewed by the Finance Committee prior to making it available for Board approval. On behalf of Finance Committee, Joe White moved to adopt the FY2019-20 990 and to approve its electronic submission to the IRS as required. Calling for a vote, and hearing no objections, the vote was unanimous. (10-21-26)

Joe White presented a Finance Committee recommendation for an increase in the merit wage pool. He drew attention to historical information on wage increases detailed on Attachment D.1 and remarked on other factors that led to a decision on the percentage of increase. Following questions, On behalf of Finance Committee, Joe White moved to approve a 2.0% merit wage increase pool retroactive to July 1, 2021 for permanent staff positions as of June 30, 2021 excluding the Executive Director and MAC Accountant. Calling for a vote, and hearing no objections, the motion carried. (10-21-27)

Joe White presented a committee recommendation for a one-time longevity payment to eligible staff to support staff retention. He commented that the source of funding for \$20,000 payments would largely come from Smart Start reverted funds with the remainder coming from NC PreK and other grant funds. On behalf of Finance Committee, Joe White made a motion to approve a one-time longevity payment to staff based on years of service as of December 31, 2021 as follows: greater than 1 but less than 5 years of service - \$500; 5 years but less than 10 years of service - \$750; 10 years or more of service - \$1,000. Calling for a vote and hearing all in favor, the vote to approve was passed. (10-21-28)

Joe White presented a committee recommendation for a revision to WCSS's medical leave policy which would allow staff to retain some available leave time after returning from medical leave for follow-up appointments or other illness. Following a question, Joe White made a motion to approve the Finance Committee recommendation to update the Medical Leave policy in the Employee Handbook, allowing employees to retain up to 24 hours of vacation or sick leave when on approved medical leave. Calling for a vote and hearing all in favor, the vote to approve was passed. (10-21-29)

Chair's Report

Chair, Sherry Heuser led off her report in remarking Executive Committee reports will look different from now on to allow more time for generative discussion, focusing on the "why" of WCSS work rather than the details of "what" and not necessarily requiring decisions to be made in the moment. Information typically reported from Executive Committee have generally already been received in the consent agenda or in committee reports and does not need to be repeated.

Ms. Heuser said during the September Executive Committee meeting, committee members heard updates from the Executive Director, Gayle E. Headen about the Annual Plan/Data Dashboard timeline, the anticipated Smart Start allocation. During the meeting, committee members entered a closed session to discuss the Executive Director performance evaluation and interest in reviewing some of the components of the performance review in the coming year with input from the executive director and others.

Ms. Heuser concluded her report with an invitation to contact her after the meeting with any questions or concerns about the new meeting processes introduced today.

Executive Director's Report

Executive Director Gayle E. Headen provided the following updates:

1. State budget process: Ms. Headen said state budget proposals discussion remains in a holding pattern. WCSS is readjusting plans for anticipated incoming funds as the period for expenditure will be reduced to four-five months. Plans for spending new money will focus on the following four areas:

- Longevity payment for early education providers who have remained at child care centers during COVID as a means of showing appreciation and as a strategy supporting teacher compensation and retention.
 - Online training platform for parents and teachers to make training specifically related to early education more accessible to parents and to centers who can't afford to send staff out for training. This is in alignment with emphasis on parent engagement and leadership in the WCSS Strategic Plan
 - Support for provider community with technical assistance.
 - Stipends to accompany stabilization grants to support costs of legal and accounting consultation providers may need to ensure compliance with reporting requirements.
2. Department of Education Roundtable: Ms. Headen reported on WCSS participation in a one-hour roundtable on Oct. 19, co-hosted by the Hunt Institute and North Carolina Partnership for Children. Participants included Head Start, Early Head Start, public schools, private providers and the Smart Start network. Ms. Headen commented on strong representation from Wake County, including Tonya Kangkolo as a family home based provider and representation from WCPSS partner classrooms. Participants shared their experiences in conversation with four staff members from the White House and US Department of Education to provide them with an understanding of what's necessary to support early care and learning from examples of successful models. The Department of Education is planning to look beyond K-12, teaming up with Department of Health and Human Services to create a cooperative partnership supportive of early care and education. Three themes emerged from the conversation:
- Valuing early care and education as a profession
 - K-12 can't achieve goals without formative work done in the early education years
 - Working together, we are strongest
- WCSS had opportunity to talk about the Pre-K collaboration as a model that has allowed expansion into serving three-year olds. Ms. Headen announced another upcoming opportunity to represent the state with a site visit by US Representative, Deborah Ross in November or December.
3. Wake ThreeSchool: Ms. Headen provided a brief update on Wake ThreeSchool
- Building a system mirroring NC Pre-K as the high quality standard
 - An RFP has been released for a consultant to develop a database, building on learnings from the NC Pre-K and Wake Connections databases to create a system combining application, enrollment and attendance.
 - The community advisory board has been formed
 - Community assessment is underway

Ms. Headen concluded her report by acknowledging staff for continued exceptional work.

Sherry Heuser provided a reminder to join the Board Racial Equity session starting at 10:00 with the CounterPart Zoom link sent by Nancy Peck on Oct. 25. Liz Hamner moved to adjourn the meeting at 9:59 am. Kimberly Shaw seconded the motion. Calling for a vote and hearing no objections, the vote passed. (10-21-30)

DocuSigned by:

Leslie Ann Jackson

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Secretary

12/7/2021 | 5:29 PM EST

Date