



Southeast Vermont Building Bright Futures

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Southeast Vermont Building Bright Futures Council Meeting Notes December 3, 2014

Attendees: Matt Levin, Cindy Twombly, Samira Kappell, Sadie Fischesser, Chloe Learey, Sue Graff, Sandy Stark, Nancy Witherell, Margaret Atkinson, Chad Simmons, Deb McLaughlin, Tori Grahame

Thank you, Sandy, for facilitating.

Minutes

The group had no changes to the November 5th, 2014 minutes

December 8 Forum

It is 5-7 PM at the Marlboro Grad Center. Entera is catering the event. They have ordered enough for 50 people, but we don't have that many RSVPs. We have 6 "yes"s from legislators and 3 "maybe"s. There will be some press this week. BCTV will be filming.

The agenda is:

- Welcome, introduction, frame (moderator, Sue) **5 min**
- Performance by Academy School drama club, 2nd & 3rd grade (Eileen Parks and Amy Major) **5 min**
- Vermont's Vision for Early Childhood: Where are we now and how to we get there (Chad) **20 min**
 - Why is focusing on early childhood important? Why does it matter?
 - This is an exciting time for the field of early childhood
 - What is BBF's role, statewide and locally? You are BBF.
 - How is Vermont and Windham County doing in raising our children?
 - Provide a clear, concise picture of VT's Early Childhood Framework & Action Plan, highlighting 6 Result areas. Present in a simple, accessible way.
- Food **10min**
- Table Talk **25 min**
 - Break into table discussions. Each table will have one legislator and at least one member of the advisory board/council.
 - Provide facts/data 1-pager or table tents to inform discussion
 - Encourage people to wear all the hats they have (parent, working parent, etc)
 - Discuss elements of the presentation, ask questions share ideas, approaches.
 - Example of questions:
 - What brought you here tonight?
 - What jumped out at you during the presentation?
 - Locally, where should we put our energy?
 - What issues are most important to you as it relates to early childhood?
- Moderated Q & A with state legislators (Sue) ** 50 min**
 - Depending on how many legislators RSVP, each will take 2-3 min to share what his/her priorities are heading into this legislative session

Southeast Vermont Building Bright Futures includes these towns: Athens, Brattleboro, Brookline, Dover, Dummerston, Guilford, Halifax, Jamaica, Marlboro, Newfane, Putney, Somerset, Stratton, Townshend, Vernon, Wardsboro, Westminster, Whitingham and Wilmington



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- Then, open up Q&A for everyone to ask questions of one another
- Questions for legislators around legislative priorities and work being done in committees
- Reflect on what they heard during table talk
- BBF (Chad) will capture themes, questions and issues
- Where is the overlap between early childhood priorities and legislative priorities this coming year?
- Invitation to join BBF (Chad) **5min**
- Closing & Thank you (Sue)

Updates

Coordinator's report

Chad highlighted some items from his report. He is working a lot on the forum. He also noted that things might not be moving as quickly as some would have expected. The Coordinators are working together to be very intentional about their scope of work, especially to make sure they tie to the action plan and Early Childhood Framework. He is working on a survey for council members and potential council members to ask about our work into the future. He welcomed feedback, especially on the scope of service. He had a great conversation with the Directors group about universal pre-K. As soon as there is clarity at the state level, there will some communication from BBF within the next few weeks. Matt added that the senior staff members in state government are working on getting information out as soon as possible. Deb added a FAQ is one resource they are working on. Matt clarified that there is no delay to the rule-making process; it can't move forward fast enough to allow SUs to present budgets by town meeting day. There is an internal discussion in state government about financial impacts on private providers; he encouraged people to send feedback through Deb McLaughlin or others, including Reeva Murphy, Deputy Commissioner of the DCF Child Development Division. It is important for decision makers to hear different points of view. He is moving forward with getting together a team to look at the current guiding principles and council structure. If anyone is interested in being part of that group to bring a proposal back to the group, please contact Chad.

Let's Grow Kids budget update

Our council received some funding to do publicity and PR, etc. We have been allowed to access these funds past September 30th. We will use the funds to advertise in the NEYT program (beginning in January). Once that is spent, we will still have funds in the budget. At a later date, we will talk about how much money will be there and how we might want to use it.



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Request for funds

Morningside Shelter received a request to help facilitate a People Empowering People program. It is a 14 week program (10 weeks of curriculum and 4 weeks of follow up) that looks at different aspects of empowering parents and individuals. The cost of the program is covered, but they are looking for financial assistance for child care during the 14 week session. They are asking other groups for contributions as well. We don't know the total needed.

BBF has about \$2,000.00 that we could allocate some funds from. We have not yet discussed this funding and how we want to use it yet. The course is open to the community. We are using these funds to pay for the food at the forum (as well as donations).

We are open to the idea of using some funding to support it, but we need to understand what the full cost is, who else is contributing, when the workshops will be, who will be enrolled, etc. We also want to make sure it was tied to our action plan. Chad will follow up with Josh Davis and we will re-visit it in January.

Vermont Early Childhood Alliance (Matt Levin)

<http://www.vermontearlychildhoodalliance.org/>

Overview of the Alliance

The Alliance is a coalition of organizations and individuals concerned with issues that impact children pre-natal-age 8 and their parents. It is an evolution from Kids Are Priority 1 to expand to a whole range of issues and services that impact children. The primary focus is the legislative agenda, formed in the fall, and they work on that agenda the rest of the year.

They are a coalition and are doing a membership drive. Matt passed around an email sign up list; they come out about once/week. They are transitioning to a more formal membership organization; there can be a waiver if there is financial hardship. There are individual and organizational memberships.

The organization is governed by a steering committee of 21 members. People might represent themselves or organizations. Those funded by state government are not eligible to be voting members, but are considered strategic partners. That group goes through a process to determine the agenda.

There are 3 staff members: Matt (Executive Director), Kelly Ault, and Lindsay DeLauria (contracted lobbyist).

Their goal now is to help organizations do better job lobbying legislators about their issues. In that sense, it's almost a client-consultant relationship. They are funded in large part by the Turrell Fund. They have decided it's important to have this resource available to the community. The idea is not that everyone is buying into one mission/goal, but more that we share information and resources to reinforce each other's efforts.

Matt clarified the difference between the Alliance, Let's Grow Kids, and BBF. At the end of 3 years, LGK will have a big ask of the legislature and private funders; that is not the goal of



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the Alliance. There are groups like the Parent Child Center Network, are trying to ask for (relatively) small amounts of funding to improve services; those are the kinds of asks that the Alliance can and will work on for the next few years.

Legislative agenda (<http://www.vermontearlychildhoodalliance.org/2015-legislative-agenda>)

The agenda was developed through a transparent process. There was an application process for organizations to propose ideas and answer some questions. That process began in July. Once applications were received, 8 issues were children. They are trying to balance being flexible to things that come up and sticking to their 8 issues. Matt distributed a draft of the list with short summaries of the 8 issues:

- Blue Ribbon Commission on Sustainable Funding—LGK is the lead
- Improving Child Protection in VT—Voices for VT's Children is the lead
- Earned Sick Days—Voices is the lead
- CCFAP Market Rate and Eligibility Increases—there are proposals by VAEYC, Voices and VT Early Educators United
- Dedicated WET (Workforce Education and Training) Fund Support—VAEYC is the lead
- Restoration of VACCRA Funding—VACCRA is the lead
- Reach Up Reforms and Funding Increases
- Opposition to State Budget Cuts Based on Revenue Limitations

They also will have 2 second-tier priorities:

- Support for the PCCs' proposal of a \$1.25 million increase to annual base grants
- Support for efforts to increase state investments in housing programs that reduce homelessness and housing insecurity

For each issue, there is the possibility of an issue group. The lead organization on each issue will send out an e-alert to recruit people to get people involved and get feedback via conference calls. It is all a work in progress for the Alliance.

Organizations or individuals do not have to be members to be involved in any way except on the steering committee. There is not a decision yet about whether regional BBF councils should join as members. Individuals who are also council members should join as individuals or organizations (<http://www.vermontearlychildhoodalliance.org/join-alliance/membership>).

Advocacy and lobbying

Matt distributed some information about legislative outreach. He went over some key points for effectively talking with and reaching legislators. The information will be part of the Early Childhood Day at the Legislature as well.