

**Kent County  
Family & Children's  
Coordinating Council**



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**KCFCCC Meeting Minutes**  
**September 6, 2016** 12:00pm – 1:30pm  
Kent County Health Department, Lake Huron & Michigan Rooms  
700 Fuller Ave NE

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**Members/Alternates**

**Present:**

Adam London, Wayman Britt, Ron Caniff, Candace Cowling, Lynne Ferrell, Judge Patti Gardner, Kathy Freberg, Jack Greenfield, Lynn Heemstra, Jacob Maas, George Meek, Jackie O'Connor, Jim Paparella, Julie Ridenour, Diana Sieger, Michelle VanDyke, Patti Warmington, Michael Zoerhoff

**Members Absent:**

Melanie Beelen, Bill Forsyth, Cynthia Gladyness, Nancy Marshall, Yazeed Moore, Teresa Neal, Savator Selden-Johnson.

**Guests:**

Steve Zwart, Carol Paine-McGovern, Veneese Chandler, Maureen Kirkwood, Betty Zylstra.

**1. Welcome & Call to Order**

Adam London called the meeting to order and had everyone introduce themselves.

The agenda was reviewed and a motion to accept it was made by George Meek and 2<sup>nd</sup> provided by Lynn Heemstra. Agenda was accepted.

After a review of the June minutes, a motion to accept them was provided by George Meek, seconded by Jack Greenfield – vote was UNANIMOUS.

**2. Public Comment**

There was none.

**3. ELO Network Strategic Planning**

Matthew thanked Lynn for coming today to discuss the ELO (Expanded Learning Opportunities) Network and the strategic planning the network has undergone. It was

thought that it would be appropriate for Lynn to have an opportunity to share with this group where things are heading.

Lynn Heemstra noted that this is the 15<sup>th</sup> year for the Expanded Learning Opportunities (ELO) Network which began as a partnership between the City of Grand Rapids and the Grand Rapids Public Schools (GRPS) to establish after school programs. Providers wanted to see a better aligned system that was dedicated to quality after school programs for children. The ELO Network plays a critical role in the service for children impacting them in many ways.

Lynn stated that the ELO Network reviews their strategic plan goals on an annual basis. ELO has received funding to do long term sustainability planning and there have also been discussions about the program going county-wide. We have contracted with Evolve Consulting to take the group through the strategic process and conduct interviews with community partners including the KCFCCC Executive Committee. Our planning team hopes to have the updated strategic plan in place by November 4. A celebration of 15 years is scheduled for that day and everyone is welcome to attend; it will be held at the Downtown Market.

She thanked the KCFCCC Executive Committee for their feedback which included questions about her place in the ELO Network process. Lynn stated that she was hired to develop the Our Community's Children (OCC) office and promote shared standards and shared outcomes so GRPS youth are ready for college and life. She related that she reports to a number of people and who she reports to depends on who has been elected. She added that her office, OCC, drives policies, programs, and partnerships to make sure children in GRPS are ready for college and life.

Lynn reported that they have applied for a Wallace Foundation grant focusing on social, emotional learning (SEL) in their after school programs and would include SEL training for adults. There has been a site visit and we are hopeful that we will be awarded a grant. If that's the case, it will be a nine month planning grant spelling out how ELO and GRPS work together on SEL. If the Wallace Foundation likes the plan, ELO would be up for another 4-5 year grant that would come with significant dollars. Lynne Ferrell asked if the strategic plan lines up with grant requirements. Lynn replied that they line up fairly well; we should receive notice about our grant application in October/November. Regarding the strategic planning process, Diana Sieger encouraged Lynn to seriously consider the feedback that the KCFCCC Executive Committee provided to the consultant; Lynn replied absolutely.

Judge Gardner asked for more information about the programs Lynn's office supports. Lynn stated that there are 180 sites where services are offered to students before, after, and during school. The programs focus on low income and minority students and are serving approximately 28,000 children.

After discussion on questions raised by the group, Matthew stated that there have been discussions about expanding ELO work county-wide. Whether or not this is going to occur has not been clarified. The data being collected is focused on the City of Grand Rapids. He noted that there has been a lot of work done on SEL by DHHS and Network180. How does that work translate into these grant opportunities? To be effective moving forward is to talk about this in the strategic plan. How do we better

align these things and bring in all the providers throughout the County? When there is talk about expanding ELO, other providers aren't sure what they would be getting into. A decision needs to be made about working together or not.

Jack stated that he appreciated Matthew's comments. How do we create the structure to have the discussion about these issues? Matthew related that work can't happen unless all of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century grant agencies get together. That's what the next step needs to be for us to move forward as a community. He added that he appreciated Lynn coming today and giving her presentation. Lynn related that her office is dedicated to the City but we need other players to take the program county-wide.

Adam commented that the strategic plan will be released on November 4. Lynn replied that is what is planned. If it isn't, we'll have a good sense of the pieces and where they are at. She stated that the following year could be a year of transition. Adam thanked her for her presentation and the work that's gone into the process so far.

#### 4. **West Michigan Partnership for Children (WMPC)**

Matthew stated that Steve Zwart and others met with the Executive Committee last month and provided everyone with good but sobering news.

Steve thanked the Coordinating Council for letting them attend today's meeting. He noted that WMPC is a collaboration between Bethany Christian Services, Catholic Charities of West Michigan, D.A. Blodgett, Lutheran Social Services, and Wellspring. He reviewed the history of how WMPC came about adding that the best thing that came out of the consent agreement were lots of discussions at the State level on how to do things better for Michigan's children. The State is open to performance based contracts for foster care services and Kent County is the only county that uses the contracts; performance based contracts are expected to eventually go statewide. In fact, too much has happened for this effort to go backwards. WMPC has worked very closely with the State and consultants to bringing together data around the true cost of foster care services; work is being done to develop a case rate.

Steve stated that the goal of all this work is to reduce the length of stay of children in foster care. WMPC is working on identifying the services that are needed and the agency that can best provide them. Our agencies are working together and being transparent with each other. We have also developed great relationships with the school system and the philanthropic community.

Steve related that a big issue is data and data sharing and dealing with the State's database. Jack Greenfield noted that it is a very difficult system to deal with. Steve added that the State felt that their system would need to be rewritten in order for us to access it; the estimated time of the rewrite completion was six to seven months. The State has agreed to use contracting with Mind Share which has a program that overlays the State's system and will allow us access to the data we need.

Steve noted that we thought we had completed our search for a CEO to take over operating WMPC but we ended up rescinding the offer after an issue was discovered during the background check.

On a brighter note, Steve shared that WMPC re-wrote its contract with the State in order to be a child placing agency. Our data sharing agreement with the State is ready to go. A tremendous amount of work was done on this and he wanted to give the State credit for moving forward with them and working closely with them on this entire project. Jim noted that the State is giving us the authority to make some decisions and basically privatizing some of the functions that the State used to do. As mentioned earlier, the goal is to reduce the lengths of stay and agencies get to keep the savings that would be used to improve infrastructure. There are State careers on the line that are dependent on the success of this program.

Steve gave some more details regarding Mind Share noting that it is widely used in the State of Florida; they have fully privatized their system. Staff at the Grand Rapids Community Foundation suggested we request funding to purchase the software from the Michigan Health Endowment Fund and it was approved.

Matthew stated that there is a commitment to create an oversight body to review the performance measurements along the lines of a community based care network. The KCFCCC Executive Committee met with the WMPC leadership to start discussing and working on the charge of the oversight committee, appointments, outcomes, etc. He related that everything needs to be transparent; child care is a risky business and being transparent will let people know what's going on. The KCFCCC will be kept informed on progress.

Lynne Ferrell asked if the pilot has been started. Steve replied that the WMPC is starting a newsletter to communicate how the program will be implemented in phases. The five WMPC agencies are serving at the Board right now to get things done. We are working with the Executive Committee to develop the mission statement, values, etc.

Adam asked what the game plan is for the CEO search. Steve responded that our search company suggested to start looking again in December/January with April 1, 2017, start date; we are flexible.

Wayman Britt asked who else is going to fill out the Board. Steve replied besides representatives from the five agencies, we will open it up to have wide representation with an emphasis on diversity. Jim Paparella added that bylaws would be written so our agencies would not have a quorum.

Candace Cowling expressed her appreciation for all the work that has been done on this project. What does this mean to the children involved in the foster care program? Steve responded the data shows that the agencies know what they are doing. Agencies want to intervene where it makes the most sense and make sure the children have a fairly good experience with the system.

Matthew noted that changing the contracts was discussed. The case rate could be used to create higher wages to have a more stable workforce and be used to provide respite which could help to retain foster care homes. Jim added that it is hoped that a more stable workforce would allow judges to feel more comfortable reunifying families when there is confidence in the recommendations from staff.

George Meek asked for an overview of the services provided to the children. Steve replied every child is assigned a case manager; the child is assessed to determine their needs. Many children are placed with a family member who is licensed or they are placed in foster homes. The average amount of time a child is in foster care is 2.4 years.

Judge Gardner commented that it is important to bring in members from the community when pulling together the oversight community. Their input, comments and concerns need to be taken into consideration.

Adam thanked Steve for his presentation; let the Council know if there is anything that the KCFCCC can do to help.

## **5. Miscellaneous**

**Jack Greenfield** - He reported that Arbor Circle received a grant from the Office of Minority Health to offer access to health care to minorities 18-26 years old in the Kent County jail. It's a five-year grant of \$356,000 per year and one of the goals is to reduce recidivism. Arbor Circle and Pathways will be merging on October 1; we are looking forward to the merger.

**Judge Gardner** – She related that Adam London, Scott Gilman, and Andy Thalhammer met recently to underscore the important work of this body and discuss the possibility of having a mental health court in Kent County. We are applying for a grant to see if that would fit here. Diana Sieger asked what a mental health court would do. Judge Gardner replied that it would have the potential to streamline access to mental health services for families. Diana stated that she was very interested in hearing more about that. Adam noted that mental health access was identified as the number one need in our Community Health Needs Assessment.

**Adam London** – He stated that the environment that children live in impacts their lives. Lead has been one of the most notorious issues for children as it relates to learning and development. For years, the number of children testing positive for lead has been in decline but we have recently seen an increase in those numbers the past two quarters. The Health Department is hiring a consultant to help with gathering information that will help us determine the cause(s) behind the increases.

## **6. Adjournment** – The meeting adjourned at 1:34 p.m. The next meeting will take place on November 1, 2016, at the Kent County Administration Building, Room 311.