

# Marion County Children & Families Commission

July 9, 2020

12:00 PM – 1:30 PM

Online Virtual Meeting

**Commission Members Present:** Patrice Altenhofen, Phil Blea, Sue Bloom, George Burke, Paige Clarkson, Jayne Downing, Melissa Glover, Josh Graves, Troy Gregg, Lisa Harnisch, Jimmy Jones, Sheriff Joe Kast, Levi Herrera Lopez, Stacy Lake, Kimberly Lemman, Pete McCallum, Honorable Judge Cheryl Pellegrini, Chris Pineda, Allan Pollock, Sam Skillern, Shaney Starr, Commissioner Colm Willis

**Guests:** Kevin Karvandi, MCSO; Mark Chien, OSU Extension; Tricia Ratliff, CAA

**Staff:** Tamra Goettsch, Melinda Hautala, Heather Johnson

## Welcome and Introductions

The meeting was called to order at 12:06 pm. Welcome and introductions were made.

## Approval of Meeting Summary Notes

Sue Bloom moved to approve the meeting summary notes for May 21, 2020. Pete seconded the motion.

**Motion: Approved**

## Membership

- Melissa Glover has been appointed to the CFC, representing Salem-Keizer School District.
- Jim Seymour has resigned from the CFC, due to family obligations.

## HOPE ALIVE – East Salem

Commission Members met informally with principals from three schools in East Salem:

Michelle Halter, Principal at Hayesville Elementary

David Wood, Principal at Stephens Middle School

Tracy Moisan, Principal at Scott Elementary

We asked each of them the following questions:

- What are the biggest challenges you see for kids and parents right now, and how are they different from before COVID-19?
- What do you see as short-term needs as opposed to long-term goals?

- What are your fears regarding district budget changes?
- What would you like school to be like when it starts back in the fall?
- What would you like people from other parts of town to know about this neighborhood?

**COMMON THEMES from Meet to Learn Sessions with Principals:**

- **Families need short-term help with basic needs like food and housing.**
- **Mental wellness during a time of extreme stress and loss of social connection is a critical challenge.**
- **Parents need support in every way, including help with schooling at home, help with coping skills, and help with obtaining services.**
- **Schools want to strengthen relationships with families and build trust.**
- **Issues of diversity, equity, and inclusion are more important than ever.**

CFC members who had attended these meetings also noticed these common themes and added:

- Patrice pointed out that all three schools have a majority of students from underrepresented demographic groups, and all have a majority of students eligible for free and reduced lunch programs.
- Patrice and Sue recalled that all three principals mentioned not only wishing to strengthen relationships with families, but also with the community at large. They would like to see the schools act as community hubs for social connections, and have wondered how to engage the community with the school.
- Pete noted that although the pandemic has increased urgency for basic needs like food, all of the principals mentioned that families do also want help with things like mental wellness and parenting skills.

Kim said that families are overwhelmed, and schools are overwhelmed, too, because they do not have the staff capacity to do everything that is needed. Patrice and Phil both agreed, and added that schools do not have the staff capacity to organize systems to receive and distribute help that is available or to implement additional services and programs. Kim suggested that the CFC should be able to help with things like community connections, mentors, etc.

Shaney agreed that this is something the CFC should take on -- asking schools to make these community connections and create this structure for ongoing support is simply too much, with everything they are already doing. She added that the pandemic has spotlighted just how much the schools are expected to be responsible for.

Sue said that while they had originally envisioned community meetings in that area to talk about what sorts of services residents would like to have in the South Parcel development on the Epping property,

they could really serve to ask an even broader question about what residents want throughout their neighborhood. She pointed out that the process of gathering this sort of information from the community, and the work of building connections and relationships, can all be done now, even though it will be a long time before the Boys & Girls Club and South Parcel facility are completed. Shaney agreed that the community meetings can be used to create the platforms for building those relationships.

- ➡ The schools in East Salem wish to create structures of support for families and build relationships between the schools and the broader community.
- ➡ The CFC is especially suited to this type of work, and should support the schools by taking on this task.

Patrice suggested that she has staff who are skilled and experienced at designing and organizing community events, and could be very useful on a planning subcommittee for these listening sessions.

Tamra stressed that the CFC's efforts should involve not only community engagement but also systems engagement, and the structure should be such that these are dynamic and informed by one another. Community feedback allows organizations the opportunity to pivot and fine-tune their efforts when necessary. The structure that is created must be sustainable, whether the CFC continues to be involved, or community leaders are trained to manage it, or some combination.

Judge Pellegrini asked for clarification about who will participate in the listening sessions that the CFC is planning. Sue explained that while the Community Café model uses facilitators and prompting questions, the goal is for the families and residents to be the speakers and the ones giving input. Often, the larger group is broken out into smaller groups to encourage open conversation, and then the ideas are "harvested" to guide next actions.

Judge Pellegrini emphasized that when the CFC does invite community partners to participate in this effort, it needs to be made very clear what exactly is being asked of them, what is the goal, and what is the commitment, i.e. time, staff resources, financial contributions, direct services, etc. She also pointed out that any partners will want to know what is the benefit to their participation.

- ➡ Any structure for community engagement that the CFC helps to build in East Salem must be designed for long-term sustainability.
- ➡ Content and input must come directly from community members, with the CFC only providing guidance.
- ➡ When asking business partners and other stakeholders to participate in building relationships with schools and residents, it must be made clear what their role should be and what is being asked of them.

Tamra stressed that recent social justice dialogues should absolutely be addressed in these community cafes, because in order to get authentic feedback, it's crucial to acknowledge the voices of some members of the community who may have felt like they weren't being heard before.

Patrice and Lisa both suggested that in addition to the listening sessions, there could be an online survey, which could encourage some to participate who might be uncomfortable speaking out or who might simply have a language barrier. All agreed that every effort should be made to provide information in Spanish at the very least, and a survey would be one easy way to do that. Tricia added that if there were an ongoing online survey, then anyone doing outreach at any time could share the link to it and information could be continuously gathered without waiting for scheduled events. Melissa said that the school district usually asks families to complete a survey by sharing a link on Facebook, which has been far more effective than email. Tamra said that the county has some restrictions about social media, but possibly the CFC could form a "Hope Alive" group on Facebook and use that to disseminate information.

Tamra and Lisa both noted that it might be useful to connect with organizations that already hold programs and meetings in this neighborhood, not only CFC member organizations like Family Building Blocks, Early Learning Hub, Salem Leadership Foundation, Catholic Community Services, and Mano a Mano, but also other organizations such as Salem-Keizer Coalition for Equality.

Melissa said that schools will be asked to hold listening sessions with families, also, and she offered to communicate with principals to find out those plans and get the CFC involved in some way. Melissa emphasized that the CFC must collaborate with school planning, because school administrators are still in crisis mode, and they will only be able to participate if the plans fit together. If asked to participate in an effort that is in addition to their school planning, they will decline. She also suggested that it might be easier to work with Community-School Outreach Coordinators (CSOCs) as liaisons, rather than with principals who are already so overwhelmed. Each school has its own CSOCs, but the district also has some CSOCs that are group-based (for Pacific Islander communities, for example) and families have indicated that this has been extremely helpful.

Patrice and Lisa reiterated that the CFC could still plan parallel sessions for families who don't have school-aged children Both Family Building Blocks and Early Learning Hub currently have families involved with their programs and advisory committees.

Judge Pellegrini pointed out that one of the goals of the community cafes has always been to reach out to some residents in the neighborhood who may not already be involved, so using established committees might not be the right direction. Lisa agreed, but suggested that the participants in the established committees would be able to get the word out to others in the community.

Some members wondered if there might be a technology barrier to holding virtual meetings, but Kim said that the families she works with all have phones, even if they don't have computers. Melissa added that any families that had picked up Chromebooks for distance learning are permitted to use them for this purpose, as well.

Tamra proposed that one thing the CFC could do right away is to look at the Northwest Human Services Mid Valley Resources website to see if the information listed there is complete and accurate, and to

gather any additional information that can be submitted. This would at least be a start, to make sure that CSOCs have one place to go for complete and up-to-date resource information.

- ➡ All efforts in East Salem must be culturally aware, and every effort must be taken to “meet people where they are”.
- ➡ An online survey is one way to overcome some language barriers, as well as encouraging participation from some who may be unable or unwilling to speak in a meeting.
- ➡ The CFC will reach out to organizations that already have a presence in East Salem, and ask them to lend their knowledge and experience to planning community events.
- ➡ While the CFC must work closely with schools, they must also ensure inclusion of families without school-aged children, and welcome families and individuals who may be new to this sort of participation.
- ➡ Community-School Outreach Coordinators (CSOCs) should be enlisted to help make connections with families.
- ➡ The CFC will assist CSOCs by reviewing information on the Mid Valley Resources website to make sure it’s current, and to add additional information if necessary.

### **Phase One Action Plan DRAFT**

Melinda presented a draft action plan for the first phase of the East Salem project, which is the planning of community meetings. Tamra asked CFC members to contact Melinda with any suggestions for people at their organizations (or elsewhere) who are particularly skilled and experienced at planning community events and would be assets to a planning subcommittee. She added that this subcommittee could be tasked with refining parts of the plan, like the questions to ask at meetings, but the CFC should take a formal action on whether to adopt this action plan.

Patrice moved to approve the Phase One Action Plan and Sue seconded the motion. All were in favor.

### **Motion: Approved**

### **Additional Discussion**

- Patrice announced that Family Building Blocks has received funding that will allow them to expand all of their programs by 15%.
- Pete shared that the City of Woodburn has received an Oregon Community Development Block Grant for \$1.5M which will be used to build a community resource center for one-stop services from non-profit organizations.

- Lisa said that Early Learning Hub will be involved with implementing expanding early-childhood programs throughout the region.
- Tricia announced that Community Action Agency's ARCHES program has received a large amount of state funding for rental assistance to families and individuals affected by the pandemic and urged everyone to refer anyone they know of who needs this type of support. CAA is also embarking on a program to gather data about runaway and homeless youth, in order to develop more programs aimed at prevention and other services.
- Tamra shared that the County has taken on the cost of renting and staffing a hotel for individuals who are infected with COVID-19 but have no way to isolate at home. This is being managed through the Health and Human Services Department.

**Meeting adjourned at 1:30 pm**