

Hampton and Scotland School Readiness Council
Tuesday, April 26, 2022

Zoom Meeting Minutes

Meeting Recording: https://us06web.zoom.us/rec/share/yn18bW3jLqabh-NlhP6PVuf2CjEftZV1pz5iWnleEOGT606q_cVhORDhq_PBEvA.CMFVOGP1dxenWRdJ?startTime=1651012407000 Passcode: aSTb4W?z

Attendance: Joy Becker, Mary Geragotelis, Ann Knowles, Sam Roberson, Andrea Kaye, Geri White, Frank Olah, Terry Surprenant

- 1) **Call to order:** Joy called the meeting to order at 6:33 pm.
- 2) **Audience for citizens:** None present
- 3) **Adjustments to agenda:** None
- 4) **Approval of March 29, 2022 meeting minutes:** Mary motioned to approve the minutes. Frank seconded the motion. Geri noted that her name was omitted from the March minutes. Geri was in attendance for that meeting. Motion passed.

5) Acceptance of financial reports

a. Hampton: Frank moved to accept Hampton's financial report. Geri seconded the motion. There was no discussion. The motion passed unanimously.

b. Scotland: Mary moved to accept Scotland's financial report. Geri seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

6) Program updates:

Hampton and Scotland classroom updates were shared via email before the meeting for members to review. Members were provided with an opportunity to discuss and ask questions of the principals. (Terry did draft a template for future Program Update Reports – in an effort to improve continuity – and shared it with the principals for their input. She'll share it with the council at the next meeting.)

Hampton's preschool screening will take place on Thursday April 28th. They have 4 families signed up for the screening and 3-year-olds who will be returning next year. Scotland has a screening upcoming in May for both preschool and kindergarten. They will include orientations and tours for new families while children are being screened. Scotland preschoolers will be visiting Kindergarten this spring and there will be a graduation ceremony for those 4-year-olds who will be moving up.

7) SR Liaison report

a) The SR grants were reviewed and scored by outside readers. Final scores and feedback were shared back with the programs on April 11. Principals were given an opportunity to adjust. Terry worked on the community sections and added those to the Google folder. Link to all final documents were shared with the council last week. Terry shared the scores (out of a possible 125) that were received by readers. All of

the pieces that were required were included in the applications. Both programs' scores were automatically reduced by 13 points due to not accepting Care-4-Kids payments. (It had been determined that it wouldn't be worth their time and effort to participate for the small amount, if any, revenue this program might bring.) Both programs received only partial credit in the area of "Recruitment." Readers suggested they provide more detail about efforts to increase enrollment and how they ensure that at least 60% of those families that do get enrolled are under 75% of SMI. Since these two communities have so few age-eligible children, recruitment is a challenge. Terry suggested that it would be useful to include a description of the community make-up and their unique circumstances.

Frank added that Hampton has several families that don't utilize the public schools due to religious beliefs and asserted that EASTCONN competes for preschool spaces. Terry clarified that although EASTCONN's administrative offices located are in the town of Hampton, and does advertise for its Head Start programs, none of its center-based preschool programs are open to families in either Hampton or Scotland.

Specific to each program:

- Hampton – 91 points were earned. Many items received high scores. Some received adequate scores. The application was approved for funding. Points were reduced for items where the readers felt there could be more detailed explanation in the responses, for example in the area of "Collaborative Activities." Curriculum only received partial credit (there were questions about the developmental appropriateness of Covid protocols).
- Scotland 97 points were earned. Many items received high scores. Some received adequate scores. The application was approved for funding. Points were reduced for items where the readers felt there could be more detailed explanation in the responses including the daily schedule (specials aren't scheduled at the same time each day and it's better for young children to have consistent schedules.) Ann did make some adjustments to her narrative based on feedback received.
- Additionally, readers suggested that programs consider:
 - Engaging in a formal partnership agreement with each other. However, Frank noted that due to the current situation (potential consolidation of schools) it may be difficult for the schools to collaborate.
 - Collaborating with social service agencies within the larger region. Fostering relationships with these entities might be helpful in recruiting families with low incomes.
- Terry will follow up with First Selectman from each town to get their signatures next week.

There was some discussion about whether Terry should provide additional support around grant writing. The written descriptions are important for readers to understand the nuance of each program. Scores are based on how well the applications describe each program and highlight

their strengths. (Not necessarily on how strong the program actually is.) However, there are no competing programs in either community so it was up to each program to decide whether it made sense to spend additional time on the applications. There are many other competing priorities – including accreditation. Additionally, next year the process won't be as comprehensive, and we have no way of knowing whether the OEC will continue with an RFP process in the future. There has been talk of switching to a contractual process. Terry will share more information as it becomes pertinent.

- b) Monitoring** – Final visits will be scheduled to occur in May.
- c) Annual evaluation** – What data exists? Sam shared that they gather feedback from families when they come to the school for various events. During COVID when the school was shut down, she sent letters with return envelopes and received no responses. Sam also does the NAEYC parent survey at the end of each year. They don't currently have parents in the building. Hampton is having its first parent event upcoming but it will be outside.

Terry noticed that on the Hampton Town website, there is quite a bit of information about SR. (She recently sent the Town Clerk some updated documents), and while on the website, she noticed that there is an old parent survey that was created in 2012. She will share the link and asked if there was any interest in revising and sharing an electronic survey with families. Terry asked to use some time next meeting to discuss more and to set some goals for next year.

8) New Business

a) Vote to Approve the Grants:

- a. Hampton School Readiness** – Geri moved to approve the SR grant as written. Mary seconded the motion. There was no discussion. The motion passed unanimously.
- b. Scotland School Readiness** – Sam moved to approve the SR grant as written. Geri seconded the motion. There was no discussion. The motion passed unanimously.
- c. Hampton Quality Enhancement** – Geri moved to approve the SR grant as written. Ann K. seconded the motion. There was no discussion. The motion passed unanimously.
- d. Scotland Quality Enhancement** – Mary moved to approve the SR grant as written. Sam seconded the motion. There was no discussion. The motion passed unanimously.

9) Old Business

- a) Policy Revisions** A committee worked on updating additional SR policies specifically related to the family fee policy. As requested, Terry reached out to programs to request examples of what others are doing. The program director from Putnam SR shared their fee policies for our consideration. The group wasn't able to find a date that all could participate. They will need some additional time to meet again and complete this work. Initial accomplishments of the group include:

- i) A review of Scotland's hardship policy (as it was considered to be pretty well-developed and a good starting place). Ann offered to adjust some of the wording based on input from the group.
 - ii) A determination that in order to be the most useful, the policies should be specific enough that someone new to the program would understand exactly how to follow the policy, and that items should be listed in the order that tasks need to be followed. Began reordering and adjusting language to make it more descriptive.
- b)** On the issue of charging fees to families with children with IEPs, the committee still needs to discuss, however, Terry contacted several entities for additional guidance: The OEC SR managers, The CT Parent Advocacy Center (CPAC), and the CT Department of Ed, Special Education division. Based on their input, Terry feels confident that her initial guidance about this was affirmed: there is a distinction between School Readiness which is an optional **program** and Special Education which is a **service**. The family fees that are charged are for the SR program. Families are not to be charged for any portion of the program if the IEP designates it as a part of their SPED plan, nor shall they be charged anything above and beyond their SR fee for related services. The committee will discuss and will draft language to provide additional guidance.
- c) Potential for consolidation – how that might affect School Readiness programs.** Terry spoke to the OEC SR managers and learned that it should be possible to continue with funding. They would be willing to meet with the committee to answer questions if plans move forward. There will be several options for how to proceed with NAEYC accreditation. Either one or the other program may be able to continue with a name change and addition of new classroom and staff. Or, they could relinquish both accreditations and start fresh. Terry shared this info with the committee and suggested that they consider meeting with an ECE education consultant while planning for how to proceed.

10) Audience for citizens – None present.

11) Next Agenda Development: The May agenda will reflect the standing items as well as:

- a) Review and approval of changes to Policies
- b) Template for program report
- c) Annual evaluation/parent survey

12) Adjournment: A motion to adjourn was made by Geri. Meeting adjourned at 7:33 PM.

NEXT MEETING will be held on May 31, 2022.

Held through Zoom

Respectfully submitted by Teresa Surprenant, Hampton and Scotland School Readiness Liaison
These minutes are unofficial until approved at the next School Readiness Council Meeting