

Hampton and Scotland School Readiness Council

Tuesday, March 25, 2025

Zoom Recording:

https://us06web.zoom.us/rec/share/wu9YuW_UieNUDX1q9Ti8sEsTHA1-fys8TMVhDGwLqz2SzQo244AL_isp2YN113hG.oIyCEq3fGzncFH6A?startTime=1742942019000

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Meeting Minutes

Attendance: Scott Sears, Joy Becker, Ann Knowles, Victoria Smith, Mary Geragotelis, Geri White, Kathy Donahue, Terry Surprenant

- 1) **Call to order:** Scott called the meeting to order at 6:33 PM.
- 2) **Audience for citizens:** No comments.
- 3) **Adjustments to agenda:** None
- 4) **Approval of January 28, 2025 meeting minutes:** Joy moved with a second from Jeri to accept the minutes. The minutes were approved as written.
- 5) **Acceptance of financial reports**
 - a. **Hampton:** Jeri moved to accept Hampton's financial report. Vikki seconded the motion. No discussion. The motion passed.
 - b. **Scotland:** Joy moved to accept Scotland's financial report. Mary seconded the motion. No discussion. The motion passed.

6) School Readiness Quality Components

- a. *Admission policies that promote diversity*
- b. *Sliding fee scale*

Terry shared that the School Readiness Council general policies and quality components will come to an end as of June 30. We don't yet know what will replace them for Early Start. For now, we will utilize the same admission policies and sliding fee scale but let families know that the fees may change a bit. Terry will ask for update from the OEC. She asked administrators to report on expected numbers for next year.

7) Program updates:

Classroom updates were received from both programs and placed within the shared folder before the meeting for members to view.

Hampton

Principal Vikki Smith shared:

- Themes include Community helpers and Springtime
- Working on phonemic awareness assessments

- Preschool Screening April 30th – open to new Kindergarteners as well
- Will utilize QE funds for CLASS observations and support for transition to K
- Budget challenges – Andy submitted budget to BOE with preschool intact, but depending on BOF decisions, adjustments may be necessary.
- Records on delinquent family fees going back many years shows unpaid fees totaling \$29,000. Families have been continually re-enrolled in Hampton even if they've owed money. Vikki asked for guidance from council members. Scott explained that the Council doesn't have any say about collection of fees; that is the purview of each program. Members suggested use of hardship policies. Ann offered to share letters she uses in Scotland – she hasn't had any families go more than 2 months past due, since she communicates with them as soon as there is an issue and follows SES policies. In the past some families were waived from paying fees due to a child with IEP. Family fee policies should be outlined in the family handbook.

One of the difficulties is that for a small program without a waiting list, disenrolling a child for lack of payment would result in additional loss of state funds for that space – so is more problematic for the budget. At this point, fees lost from previous years should be written off with a move to a new program and policies that should be consistently implemented moving forward. (Terry shared that the Governor has proposed a large expansion of funding for preschool. The governor's legislative proposal is House [Bill 6867](#), *An Act Creating the Universal Preschool Endowment*. This and other bills in consideration may either result in a reduction of, or even alleviate the need to charge family fees in public school.)

- Vikki received the OEC letter for the ESCT award. Hampton's allocation for FY26 is \$75,000 – for 12 school day and one part day spaces. Although this allocation is less than in the past, it isn't much lower than the funds they have been able to collect in recent years based on under-utilization.

Scotland

Principal Ann Knowles shared:

- Preschool is focused on the change of weather with the onset of spring.
- Preschool is included in all school wide activities and families are being engaged right from the start.
- A recent program included an author visit and presentation for families on early literacy. While only a small group of families were in attendance, they found it informative. Ann recognizes the value in parent workshops and is planning more for next year. Handouts on supporting literacy at home were shared with families when they came for conferences. Grade-level benchmarks are being shared with families to help them better understand their children's progress.
- Have 2 preschool classes currently but may go down to one classroom next year depending on numbers. Expecting at least 16 children to be enrolled next year, including one from B23 (ESCT funding was approved for 17 school day and one part-day spaces). Also heard that a family moved into

town with a 3 year old, so will reach out about the program. Only if get over 18 children registered, will they open a 2nd classroom.

- CT DOTS with the eObserve online system has been a success for sharing child assessment data with families.
- Tomorrow is a March Madness staff and students basketball event scheduled after naptime to include preschool.
- Book buddies have older children paired to read with preschoolers.
- Overall school enrollment will be down with about 10 fewer students next year.

8) SR Liaison report

Monitoring last completed in Hampton in January and Scotland in February. Will be back for final visits in Hampton in April and Scotland in May. All teachers in both schools are doing a great job and Terry has no concerns.

OEC updates

The transition to ESCT will occur on July 1. The next meeting of this council will be its last as School Readiness comes to an end. Anyone from the current council who is interested to become a member of the new Local Governance Partners (LGP) group will be included. It is now time for transition planning and making decisions about who the stakeholders will be in the new system.

Scott attended a recent informational meeting hosted by EASTCONN to learn more about the expected requirements of the LGP (the OEC is still working on many of the details).

Terry described the ways that LGPs will be similar and different from an SRC.

- Membership - Similar makeup of stakeholders.
- Responsibilities – LGPs will not have direct oversight of programs; will not vote on how programs spend funds nor determine which programs get awarded spaces. The programs will contract directly with the OEC.
- LGPs will have fiduciary responsibility and will be provided funds directly for the activities they will engage in. (Admin funds no longer will be going to programs, but to LGPs.) Groups can contract out the management of funds or can choose another entity – such as a local non-profit agency, municipality, or RESC to lead and manage the efforts of this group.
- LGPs will staff those with early childhood expertise to provide quality assurance supports to programs.
- Biggest responsibilities of the LGP will be engagement of stakeholders, family outreach and engagement, and completion of a community needs assessment (CNA).
- Next year will be a transition phase to build up this new coalition, choose members, and complete the CNA, (how comprehensive the OEC expects that to be, we don't

know but at the minimum, it will include creating a clear picture of families' needs for child care, including infant and toddler care).

- Programs' funding levels are set for the next 2 years. Data from the CNA will be shared with the OEC and will drive the funding decisions after that, at which point those funds will become competitive state-wide. Family Child Care will now be eligible for this funding along with any new community based child care centers that wish to apply. All programs, regardless of type, will need to achieve and maintain accreditation within 3 years. There will also be teacher qualification requirements.
- Family engagement will include use of Parent Ambassadors (PA) in each community. Communities can begin thinking about individuals that may be strong in this role. PAs will be paid for limited part time capacity and will focus on family engagement (birth to five) – including outreach, sharing resources, and event planning.
- We don't know yet the funding level for the LGP. It will be at least 5% of the programs' total grant allocations (75,000 + \$105,000) but may be more.
- Smaller communities may need to regionalize in order to best leverage limited funds.
- A transition planning grant is available to support the planning for how to move forward. The group has 3 options:
 - Do nothing
 - Apply for up to \$5000 for people's time to spend on these activities.
 - Request that their local RESC apply on your behalf.
- In May communities will be asked to indicate who they would like to be invited to apply for LGP funding on behalf of the community. Current SRCs are allowed to apply to become an LGP – but they will need to complete an application in June that demonstrates how they will function and meet the requirements.

Vikki made a motion for EASTCONN to apply on the council's behalf for the transition grant. Ann 2nd. No discussion. The motion passed unanimously.

Vikki moved to ask EASTCONN to be the Local Governance Partner Lead for a Hampton and Scotland Regional group. Ann seconded. Discussion included a mention by Vikki to ask Andy to consider including Chaplin. **The motion passed unanimously.**

Ann agreed to complete the survey to officially alert EASTCONN about the transition grant request. Terry will let her team know that the council is asking EASTCONN to lead the LGP for their communities. EASTCONN's is currently exploring their capacity to meet the requirements.

9) New Business: EASTCONN is offering a focus group/Resource Fair on April 30th. Terry encouraged each school to be represented. She will share the invitation with administrators.

10) Old Business: None

11) Audience for citizens:

Kathy Donahue had some questions about the breakdown of preschoolers in Hampton by age. Vikki shared that she didn't have access to her spreadsheet but reported out from memory that: Seven children currently in preschool will be moving into Kindergarten plus there are a few more from the community that she's hoping will attend the upcoming screening event. For next year, she thinks there about 16 three-year-olds in town. She is working with Chrissy to identify outreach strategies. For the following year, there are 22 children who were born in 2023. Three of those are already in B23. There is a large Mennonite population in Hampton so not sure how many of those might be intending to enroll in school.

Kathy also expressed agreement about requesting support from EASTCONN, and wondered if there are any other schools nearby who have asked EASTCONN to do the grant application. Yes, there are several small communities that are also seeking similar support.

12) Adjournment: A motion to adjourn was made by Geri, seconded by Ann at 7:38 PM. The motion passed unanimously.

Final meeting – April 29 in person at Scotland Elementary School with a virtual option.

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