



**Board of Directors Meeting  
June 18, 2021  
10:00 AM-12:00 PM**

*This meeting was held via teleconference in an abundance of caution due to COVID-19 concerns*

**MINUTES**

**ATTENDANCE:**

**Board Members present:** Bob Buesing, Allison Davis, Claudia Davant, Linda Stoller, Gege Kreischer, Diana Ragbeer-Murray, Larry Pintacuda,

**Staff Present:** Phyllis Kalifeh, Denise Bishop, Kerri Cloud

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**Welcome:**

Chair Bob Buesing welcomed those in attendance and called the meeting to order at 10:05.

**Reading and Approval of Minutes\*** Motion to approve the minutes from March 19, 2021 with a minor correction. (L. Pintacuda motioned to approve/C. Card second).

**Nominating Committee Report:**

Larry and Diana are both on the Nominating Committee. They shared that they will convene to discuss some options to fill Wil's position that he is vacating. There was an initial effort to recruit William Floyd as a possible applicant for the Board, but that is not feasible at this time.

**Mission Minute** (*Opportunities for Board members to be emissaries of the Forum's mission*):

Gege shared that there is a new NAEYC-Developmentally Appropriate Practices (DAP) document that was recently published. The document provides a strong focus on equity, access, and includes the revised core competencies for early educators. She added that Florida's revised core competencies (2019) already align with the NAEYC core competencies. A key to the new DAP recommendations is that best practices apply to the individual child based on their specific assets. It is a strength-based model.

**Chair's Report:** Bob Buesing:

Bob shared that Wil is resigning from the board due to his health concerns. Bob provided some personal reflection and talked about the impact Wil has had on his life, particularly as it relates to advocacy for children and families. He said he is forever indebted to Wil's mentorship and

support. Bob recommended that the Board retain Wil as a Board Member Emeritus, keep his name on the letterhead, and continue to provide him with Board materials. Bob asked if we could name a conference room after him and suggest the “Dr. Wil Blechman Meeting Space” or something to that effect. All members of the Board agreed and Phyllis said she would start the process of designing and ordering a plaque. Chris joked that we should also include a bronze statue! Several board members shared ideas for activities to honor Wil’s broad impact. Suggestions ranged from awards in his honor to scholarship donations to a fun Zoom roast. Bob asked that Phyllis resend Wil’s personal address to all board members so those who want to reach out on a personal level can do so.

Bob discussed his recent role as MC at the Children’s Week Advocacy Reception. He attempted to summarize why and how this work is so important in 5 minutes. Phyllis shared that Bob did a wonderful job and the event was a success.

Bob updated the Board on the Hillsborough space-sharing project that he discussed at the last Board meeting. He stated that the Hillsborough Public School Board approved a one-year pilot. Erin Smeltzer, ED of the AELC, is interested and involved as it may be a model for other ELCs to investigate and implement locally. The opposition that Bob has hears is “why aren’t they paying rent for the space”, which Bob sees as somewhat shortsighted given the goal of getting children, families, schools, and communities ready for kindergarten. Chris said he was at the Board meeting where the project was being discussed and feels as though the school board may need some more targeted education on the return on investment and benefits. He thought they presented an insular orientation. Diana shared that she has seen this model work successfully in Sugarloaf Key, Monroe County as part of a hurricane response. Gege said it reminded her of corporate models that have been implemented as well. It may provide a creative solution to the child care shortage. Phyllis suggested that Board Members may want to consider sending letters to the editors of local news outlets sharing their support for the pilot.

In closing the Chair’s report, Bob shared pictures of his newborn twin grandsons. He also talked about the enormous costs both physically and financially of bringing twins into the world and reflected on the challenge this would be for so many families. .

**Compensation Committee:** (Linda, Chris, and Bob)

Bob stated that the building at 1211 Governors Square Blvd. Tallahassee, FL is in foreclosure. Phyllis was recently served with papers. The Forum will maintain the lease and there are clauses in place to protect the organization, for example, there is an offset against rent as needed for repairs and maintenance.

**Finance Committee:** Kerri Cloud, CFO, Larry Pintacuda, and Chris Card had an opportunity to meet and discuss the financial statements prior to the board meeting.

- **Financial Statements\***

Kerri Cloud shared the financial statements through April, 2021. Please refer to the financial report for specific details. Allison shared that we are still waiting to see how much of the PPP loan will be forgiven. The Forum requested forgiveness for \$230k, and \$510k will be returned (unspent). Kerri added that the Assessment and Coaching contract is over-performing based on

prior estimates of revenue (\$332,800). Linda Stoller motioned to approve the financials and Gege Kreisler seconded the motion. All approved.

- **CEO Travel and Expense report\***

Diana asked if there was a detailed record of expenses available and Phyllis explained that this was just a summary and the detailed report was included with the supporting documents. Diana thanked Phyllis and Kerri and said that was exactly what she was looking for, but had missed in when reviewing the materials.

The CEO travel and expense report was reviewed and approved (M: D. Ragbeer-Murray/ S: C. Davant).

- **President's Report: Phyllis Kalifeh**

Phyllis included in the materials packet her president's report, but provided an overview for the board. The Nonprofits First accreditation process is finished and we are waiting to learn of the re-accreditation decision. Bob was interviewed as part of the process and said it was very clear we are ahead of the curve in terms of our policies and procedures. He said there is a need for the Board to document discussions that take place during the Closed Executive Session and to include any motions/decisions made during that time. Since Phyllis and Denise are not included in that segment of the Board meeting, a board member will need to take responsibility for ensuring the documentation is complete. Nonprofits First reviewers said they very much appreciate the structure, organization, and comprehensiveness of our Board Material pages on the Forum website. The emergency succession plan was also reported to be very thorough.

A few areas that could use some modifications are adding the dates for revisions of the by-laws, documentation of an Orientation for new Board members, and including metrics for progress on the strategic plan goals. We are comfortable reporting inputs, but we need to think about outputs we can also capture and report. Phyllis said she would like to create an online dashboard for the strategic plan. Phyllis will send orientation materials to the Board for review.

Phyllis shared her impressions of the federal landscape as it relates to early care and education. Unfilled positions are an issue nationwide and Florida is no exception. The current administration at the federal level is making a major investment in early education and child care. At the state level, the legislature approved a \$1000 bonus to early educators, in line with the K-12 teacher bonuses, but there are logistics to getting those checks delivered. The Early Learning Consortium has made recommendations to the Office of Early Learning on how those increased funds should be spent. Linda said that we all need to stay involved in how HB419 will change the way of work for the Office of Early Learning (i.e., OEL will become a Division within the Florida Department of Education).

Gege stated that we need to help the public understand that there is a need for two investments in the early care and education field. The first is the market rate, and the second is efforts to ensure quality. She is concerned we may be at risk for compromising quality because our current market does not fully support quality. Gege is worried that one time influxes of funding cause issues

with stability because often times, interventions won't be sustained once the funding is removed/expended. Nonetheless, she is excited that child care is finally on the federal radar and that investments in infrastructure are greatly needed. Bob is concerned with a lack of transparency and asked if there is specific advocacy that board members should do. He emphasized that the Florida Chamber has embraced early learning and is striving for 100% K-readiness by 2030. Bob asked if the Chamber should get more actively involved in the recommendation made by the Consortium. He acknowledged the role politics could play in the allocation of funds. Phyllis reminded the board that as a vendor, the Forum is limited in what we can do in terms of advocacy, since we will likely bid on some of the project /contract work. Gege jumped in to praise Phyllis on her effective advocacy and advisory skills stating that she is seen as a leader in these areas. In finishing, Phyllis said that the Legislative Budget Commission is working hard to get the money out the door.

Phyllis shared that Ted Granger is serving as the interim ED for the new Children's Service Council in Leon County and that the Alachua CSC and the Kids First Alliance in Duval are considering developing PD Registries with the Forum.

The Forum is going to bid on a research project that involves conducting a comprehensive statewide ECE Workforce study; the Forum is well positioned for that work.

Linda discussed HB419 in a bit more detail and asked how moving the Gold Seal program from DCF to FDOE would affect the Forum. Phyllis responded that we are still waiting to hear about the transfer and the potential impact. Funding will continue for the Forum through this fiscal year and until further notice.

- **Strategic Plan:**

Phyllis recommended that we insert a guiding principle in our overall work that relates to anti-racism. The statement was drafted and shared with members of the management team across Forum departments to determine if it reflected the core values of the Forum and could be supported by all staff and stakeholders. *“Racism in any form is antithetical to the Forum’s vision, mission, and values and is not tolerated. Respect for all individuals is paramount as evidenced in organizational policies, practices, and delivery of services to children, families, and the early learning and afterschool workforce.”* Dasiely Cruz reviewed the statement through an equity lens given the national work she has been engaged in and felt as though it was very appropriate. Gege asked with other forms of discrimination were addressed in the strategic plan and Diana added that we should consider being more intentional about how we promote inclusion and diversity. She suggested we add the sentence: “Diversity and equity will be promoted.” Chris shared that they are doing this type of thoughtful work in child welfare as well and are actively addressing institutional racism within the child welfare system. Phyllis told the board that Jinan Higginbotham, Outreach Coordinator at the Forum, is almost finished her training in and would be providing training to the rest of the staff once certified.

**New Business:** Bob raised the idea that we may want to pursue a Hybrid Board Meeting model. Phyllis said she would look into what type of technology would be needed to use this model and would get to the board with more information.

**Closed Executive Session (N/A)**


**Next meeting:** September 17, 2021 (subsequently changed to September 24, 2021)”

Respectfully submitted,


Larry Pintacuda  
Secretary

Denise Bishop  
Recording

Minutes Approved on: \_\_\_\_\_ <<to be submitted for approval at the Dec meeting>>

Signature of Secretary:  \_\_\_\_\_ [Date]

September 17, 2021  
[Date]

Signature of Chair:  \_\_\_\_\_

September 17, 2021  
[Date]