



**South Carolina First Steps to School Readiness Board of Trustees Meeting
Special Meeting**

2 p.m.

**February 18, 2015 Sweeny, Wingate & Barrow, P.A.
1515 Lady Street, Columbia, SC 29201**

MINUTES

Board members attending in-person (9):

Ken Wingate
Lisa Van Riper
Julie Hussey
Sue Williams
Roger Pryor
Mary Lynne Diggs
Beverly Buscemi
Alexia Newman
Christian Soura

Board members participating by phone (10):

Julia-Ellen Davis
Tracy Lamb
Judith Aughtry
Tim Holt
Evelyn Patterson
Amber Gillum
Mellanie Jinnette
Reece Yandle
Jennifer McConnell
Walter Fleming, Jr.

Board members absent (6):

Senator Mike Fair
Senator Joel Lourie
Representative Rita Allison
Representative Jerry Govan
W. Marshall Taylor
Rick Noble

Pursuant to Section IV(f) the bylaws, a special meeting of the Board was called on February 18, 2015 at 1515 Lady Street, Columbia, South Carolina, for the purpose of finalizing the September 2013 through September 2014 performance review of the executive director. Due notice was given in accordance with Section VI(g) of the bylaws, and the meeting was publicly announced in accordance with the Freedom of Information Act.

The Chairman, Mr. Wingate, called the meeting to order at 2pm, and stated that it was being held in accordance with the bylaws and in compliance with FOIA. He took the roll of board members participating in person and by conference call, and declared a quorum to be present.

The purpose of the meeting being to discuss a personnel matter, a motion was duly made and seconded, and all board members voted in favor of going into executive session.

After coming out of executive session, **a motion to approve the September 2013 - September 2014 performance review of the Executive Director was made, seconded, and approved. The following board members abstained from the vote: Rick Noble (in absentia), Sue Williams, Mary Lynne Diggs, and Christian Soura.** Mr.-Noble also requested in advance of the meeting that his letter dated February 18, 2015 be included as part of the official record of the meeting, which letter is attached as "Exhibit A".

The Board also discussed performance objectives for the Executive Director for the period from now through June 30, 2015 (the close of the current fiscal year). A draft of some of the objectives discussed is attached as "Exhibit B." The board is to consider additional objectives and measurable ways of determining whether these objectives have been met. The 2015 performance objectives will be discussed and finalized at the Board's next meeting on March 19, 2015.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 4:00 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Kenneth B. Wingate, Acting Secretary

Exhibit "A"

I regret that I will be unable to attend and continue to participate in the discussion at our meeting on Feb. 18.

I'm on a mission trip to South Sudan, the newest country in our world (established/independent in 2011 after a very long civil war, succeeding as South Carolina failed to do so) as a representative of the Presbyterian Church (USA) to assist the regional government of one of South Sudan's ten states/political subdivisions. I will be coaching the new leadership as they begin creating their model for an educational system as well as general governance and administrative structures. This is a critically important step to insure proper decision making and management of significant international development funds from the UN, World Bank and USAID, as well as other resources that are and will be available to further develop this new democracy. It's a challenging assignment to say the least. Please keep me in your thoughts and prayers from February 11 to February 23.

February 18, 2015

Mr. Chairman and members of the SCFS Board of Trustees:

Please accept the following as my statement/position on the recently presented SCFS Director's performance evaluation for the period 9/2013 to 9/2014. **I request that this be included as part of the official record.**

The performance evaluation of the leader of any nonprofit organization is one of the most important tasks/responsibilities of the governing Board. It needs to be done objectively using the best information available and using a process that generates trust and confidence in its accuracy and thoroughness. I do not believe the evaluation under consideration meets generally accepted practices and standards of good governance. It's lacking in objectivity in terms of clearly measurable outcomes. It's the opinion of a small number of Board members. It did not solicit input from staff, County Partnerships, Board, other partners, Legislators or as far as I can tell from the Director herself. It ignores or omits a number of critical external reports (EOC on CDEPP and LAC/USDOE on BabyNet), some seen by the Board and others not seen, reviewed or discussed, which are critical of the performance and collaborative efforts of the organization. This evaluation, and the previous one I reviewed, do not, with any specificity, suggest corrective action and/or areas for improvement and further professional development. This type of evaluation serves neither the Board's nor the Director's needs. Perhaps if the Board were able to compare this evaluation with the previous 2 or 3 recent ones we would see some patterns. However, it's clearly better, in my opinion, to focus attention on the view through the windshield not the rear view mirror.

Therefore I'm faced with only two choices, to vote not to accept it or to recuse/abstain. I choose the later and here is my rationale. I was appointed to the SCFS Board effective November 5, 2013 and attended my first meeting in December. Therefore I have served, unlike many of the new members, during most of the period that the evaluation before us represents. At no time was I informed or aware of any annual goals or expectations of the Director. Since I have attended and observed almost every Board meeting since October 2000 when I became CEO of Richland County First Steps, I can also state that I never witnessed any previous discussion regarding same. I also have a very unusual perspective as a County director. As hard as I try to be objective I'm more involved in the current operations of the organization than the other Trustees and therefore have more direct experience with the activities of SCFS. I've spent considerable time during the last 15 years inside the network of early childhood/school readiness. I consider myself well informed.

Admittedly a gadfly and critic of both the Board and leadership of SCFS for some time, I think the LAC report speaks to many of my concerns over the years and I'm encouraged by the responses and actions of General Assembly with regards to the recent "reform" reauthorization and study/oversight of structural changes. I'm optimistic that under your leadership, and that of the many new members to the Board, continued progress in governance is on the horizon. I've already seen the difference.

I appreciate the efforts and commitment of our current "veteran" Board members and of those who previously served and have since moved on. SCFS has made significant progress over the years particularly in regards to program standards and accountability of the partnerships. This has recently been confirmed by the latest program review by Compass Evaluation and Research. I believe now is the time to create a Governance Committee tasked with future evaluations and other duties. In the spirit of continuous improvement, I encourage the Board, as soon as possible, to do so.

Rick Noble, Trustee

Exhibit "B"

Memorandum

TO: FIRST STEPS BOARD OF TRUSTEES
FROM: KBW
DATE: February 25, 2015
FILE: KBW-9403 - KBW -- South Carolina First Steps to School Readiness
RE: 2015 Goals for Executive Director

As we discussed on February 18, 2015, the following is a summary of the tentative goals for Susan DeVenny in 2015:

1. With respect to **external bodies** (such as the Legislature, the EOC, the Legislative Audit Council, etc.), the Executive Director should publicly respond to all issued reports. Such response should be issued in a timely manner, in writing, with the Board's prior input and assistance.
2. With respect to **staff**:
 - a) Empower deputy directors to act and then report on a collaborative basis.
 - b) Develop a team spirit within the state office.
 - c) Reinstate greater levels of travel and community presence by the staff.
 - d) Train and develop the next generation of leadership within the staff (the next layer of leadership beneath the deputy directors).
 - e) Develop staff performance objectives.
 - f) Maintain, publish, and use the organizational chart for work flow.
 - g) Focus on staff development.

3. With respect to **fiscal management**:

- a) Provide more clarity in all financial reporting.
- b) Providing more communication with local boards, such as the formula for allocation of resources from various grants or appropriations.
- c) Include Board in development of next year's budget.
- d) Track and report the distribution of funds from various sources.

4. With respect to **county partnerships**:

- a) Reinstate regional meetings.
- b) Establish regular lines of communication with executive directors and local board members.
- c) Visit the county partnerships in the field on a more regular basis.
- d) Invite county E.D.'s to come to State Board meetings.
- e) Assist county partnerships with marketing, fundraising, and community relations.
- f) Provide a variety of webinars and regional meetings for training, coordinating, and encouraging county partnerships.
- g) Solicit feedback from E.D.s and local board members of county partnerships.

5. With respect to the **Board**:

- a) Distribute, with interpretation, all key public reports on a timely basis.
- b) Hold state board meetings around the state on an occasional basis, using the opportunities to tour facilities and learn more about county partnerships.

- c) Provide a written executive director's report to the Board at each of its meetings, apprising the Board of important things happening and issues coming up.
 - d) Focus on substantive topics that are key to the overall mission, such as distribution and interpretation of the mCircle assessment, the Read to Succeed program, and assist the Board in focusing on the theme of "readiness."
6. With respect to the **Public**:
- a) Focus on communicating the big picture message of early childhood development.
 - b) Raise public awareness of SCFS's role and services.
 - c) Timely respond to phone calls, emails, and other communications requesting information or assistance from the public.
 - d) Consider adding a survey to the website to measure "customer service."