

Rocky Mountain Development Council, Inc.
Board of Directors' Meeting
December 14, 2023, 3:30 p.m.
Neighborhood Center Card Room/Zoom Conference Call

Members present: Kate Anderson, Bruce Day, Jen Gursky, Andy Hunthausen, Trever Kirkland, Teri Lilletvedt, Erin Lyndes, Jerry Loendorf, Bob Mullen, Daniel Pocha, Niki Redford, Eric Schindler

Members absent: Dannai Clayborn, Susan Geise, Lindsey Richtmyer

Others present: Joan Anderson, Hayden Behm, Diane Edgar, Steven Ferriter, Jennifer Filipovich, Joanna Halland, Jaymie Hazel, Taya Hovan, Lori Ladas, Jean Leischner, Jim Marks, Kathy Marks, Liz Mogstad, Kelley Moody, Angela Nelmark, Ashley Peña-Larsen

Call to Order/Roll Call: The meeting was called to order by Trever Kirkland at 3:31 p.m. and a quorum was present. No public comment was received.

Approval of Minutes

Daniel Pocha made the motion to approve the November 30, 2023, Board of Directors' meeting minutes and the October 26, 2023, Finance Committee meeting minutes. Eric Schindler seconded, and the motion passed unanimously.

ERSEA Training – Jennifer Filipovich

Training on determining, verifying, and documenting Head Start eligibility is required annually by Head Start program performance standards. Jennifer explained how this training will help the Board understand the program's eligibility requirements and consider how families they encounter might fit in the Head Start program. The eligibility determination process begins with a family interview, where the child's age and eligibility are verified, and a record is created for enrolled participants. This meeting begins building a relationship with the family, and families are treated with dignity and respect throughout the process. Confidentiality is respected and protected, and the family shares as much as they choose. To attend Rocky Head Start, a child must be three years old, or be turning three by September 10, which is the eligibility date recognized by Helena Public Schools. The child must also not be old enough to attend school. Head Start has four categorical eligibility requirements. These include a family's income being equal to or below 100% of the federal poverty line, eligibility for public assistance including TANF, SNAP, or SSI, living unhoused, or a child in foster care. Jennifer explained how families who do not meet at least one of these criteria may still be able to attend Head Start, as the program has allowances to include a percentage of participants who are not categorically eligible. Jennifer then spoke about the various ways age, income, participation in public assistance programs, and homelessness can be verified by the program. Once a child is determined eligible for the program, their eligibility within the program is maintained as long as they are age eligible. If a child moves to a new Head Start program, eligibility must be re-determined. Rocky Head Start keeps their records electronically, and eligibility records must be kept for the duration of the child's enrollment plus one additional year. Records are also kept regarding completion of the annual eligibility training for management, staff, governing bodies, and the Policy Council. Jennifer concluded by confirming that Rocky Head Start has established the required written policies and procedures surrounding eligibility, and those were reviewed and approved by the Board last month.

Director's Report – Lori Ladas

Lori reported that Rocky's Program Directors met this week for a Strategic Planning session, facilitated by Eric Schindler. The group was able to complete a good deal of work, and as a result, the Board sessions will likely be consolidated into just one meeting rather than the initially planned two. Eric commented that the Program Directors worked well together, and the culture of the organization really showed throughout the session. Lori noted that 90 employees responded to the employee survey, and results were very positive. Kathy Marks and Steven Ferriter prepared the year-end mailing that was sent last week, and \$4,122 has been received in response already. Chefs and judges are lined up for next spring's Chopped fundraiser, which will be held on March 9.

Finance Report – Joan Anderson

Cash balance is \$2,500,699, which is down approximately \$270,000 from November's total. The difference reflects an \$84,000 county mill installment, along with distributions made to Area IV contractors. The unrestricted cash invested in a money market account this summer has earned \$15,000 in interest to date. The accounts payable balance is \$37,065.38.

Executive Committee Report and Approval of Pinion Audit Fee Agreement – Lori Ladas

Lori reported that the Executive Committee met on December 7 and approved the \$44,000 cost of the Rocky audit while asking for additional information from Pinion regarding the increases to the housing entity audits. Lori shared the response from Pinion, along with a spreadsheet detailing audit and tax fees for each housing property from 2020 through the present. Lori noted how Rocky's staffing issues in the fiscal department and delays that occurred during the audit process could impact the costs. Affordable Housing Director Liz Mogstad is currently researching the requirements of each housing entity and looking into whether changing the fiscal year end for Rocky-owned properties might decrease some auditing costs going forward. The recommendation of Lori, Joan, and Liz is to accept the audit fee costs as proposed by Pinion for 2023.

Eric Schindler made the motion to approve the audit fee agreement as presented. Bruce Day seconded, and the motion passed unanimously.

Trever Kirkland reported that the Executive Committee minutes reflected the conversation regarding the audit fee agreement as presented.

Bruce Day made the motion to approve the December 7, 2023, Executive Committee meeting minutes. Daniel Pocha seconded, and the motion passed unanimously.

Head Start Director's Program Report– Ashley Peña-Larsen

Ashley reported that Policy Council will meet next week, so all items reviewed and approved by the Board today will be reviewed post-Board approval by Policy Council at that time. Ashley reported that Head Start has been busy providing holiday assistance for families. The Carroll College basketball teams have adopted the Rocky Head Start program, and Head Start will be honored at both the men's and women's games tonight. Ashley has been working with the State as they are revising the state education version of preschool for school districts, hoping for increased collaboration between the districts and Head Start. The Office of Head Start has released its proposed rules, and the comment period for those closes on January 19. Ashley met with the superintendent of the East Helena school district to discuss how Head Start may be impacted by their preschool plans. The Head Start classroom at Eastgate is confirmed for the upcoming school year. Since the Board met just two weeks ago, an updated budget was not provided at this meeting.

Daniel Pocha made the motion to approve the Head Start Director's Program Report. Kate Anderson seconded, and the motion passed unanimously.

Head Start Community Needs Assessment – Jaymie Hazel

Jaymie provided an overview of the needs assessment document, including the narrative, sources, and lists of community partners at the local and national level. Jaymie spoke about collaborative efforts to create a resource directory, combining information with resources such as United Way and CTI. Rocky's Aging on Aging may also be included in this effort, to cover a wider range of needs and available resources. The document presented was initially created in 2021, and updates have been made to reflect 2023 conditions. Jaymie highlighted that an overriding theme throughout the document is the disparity between need and availability in areas ranging from childcare to wages or housing. In Lewis & Clark County, there are nearly double the number of preschool-aged children as there are slots available in childcare programs. She also noted that the childcare crisis has numerous ripple effects, including that 30% of Montana businesses cannot expand due to the need for childcare.

Eric Schindler made the motion to approve the Head Start Community Needs Assessment, acknowledging that Policy Council approval will follow. Jerry Loendorf seconded, and the motion passed unanimously.

Head Start Annual Report – Ashley Peña-Larsen

Ashley asked for any questions or feedback on the report. She noted that graphics throughout were updated with new infographics, and that per Head Start request, information was presented as percentages whenever possible. Printed copies will be available at the next meeting for Board members to keep and distribute throughout the community.

Andy Hunthausen made the motion to approve the Head Start Annual Report, acknowledging that Policy Council approval will follow. Eric Schindler seconded, and the motion passed unanimously.

Head Start Self-Assessment – Ashley Peña-Larsen

Ashley explained that the Self-Assessment is an opportunity to look at the Head Start program, examining challenges, goals, and processes that can be updated. Ashley reported that a consultant was hired to work with the Head Start team and she is still meeting with them regularly, emphasizing working together, conflict resolution, and focusing on managing self-care and caring for others in a graceful way. Ashley noted some changes to the ERSEA section, where one goal was accomplished, and two others were combined. Some leadership items in the assessment are new, and some curriculum items have been updated. Ashley spoke about her goal to review the program's mission, vision, and philosophy. Each Head Start program determines these items individually, as each program has specific and different community needs.

Eric Schindler made the motion to approve the Head Start Self-Assessment, acknowledging that Policy Council approval will follow. Bruce Day seconded, and the motion passed unanimously.

Head Start School Readiness Plan 2023-2024 – Ashley Peña-Larsen

Ashley noted that this plan aligns with the Head Start grant, and that changes are minimal, mentioning that 2023 updates are noted in the document. She highlighted a new item that specifies the number of

students transitioning to kindergarten compared to those returning to Head Start, noting that less children are returning each year, and that preparing the 4-year-olds for kindergarten has been a priority.

Eric Schindler made the motion to approve the School Readiness Plan for 2023-2024, acknowledging that Policy Council approval will follow. Bruce Day seconded, and the motion passed unanimously.

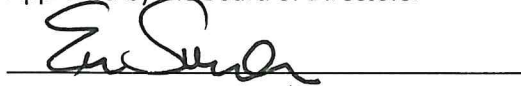
The meeting was adjourned at 4:29 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,



Diane Edgar
Executive Assistant

Approved by the Board of Directors:



Eric Schindler, Secretary/Treasurer

1/25/24
Date