



SUTTER COUNTY CHILDREN & FAMILIES  
COMMISSION  
PUBLIC HEARING & MEETING  
June 17, 2020

The Sutter County Children & Families Commission held a public hearing and meeting on the above date at 3:30 p.m. virtually.

**CALL TO ORDER**

Commissioner Whiteaker called the meeting to order at 3:32 p.m. and requested the roll call.

**COMMISSIONERS PRESENT:** Jim Whiteaker, Tonya Byers, Tom Reusser, Nancy O'Hara (3:39 p.m.), Mat Gulbrandsen, Dr. Carolyn Patton, Doreen Osumi and Donna Garcia.

**COMMISSIONERS ABSENT:** Brad McIntire

**STAFF PRESENT:** Michele Blake, Executive Director, and Julie Price, Executive Secretary

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**PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

There were no comments received from the public.

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**PUBLIC HEARING**

**1) Approval of Sutter County Children & Families Commission FY 2020-2021 Budget**

Michele Blake, Executive Director, referenced the staff report and budget contained in the meeting packet and noted the FY 2020-2021 is a balanced budget. Internal programs, excluding Imagination Library, have been reduced due to leveraging funding from various state funding opportunities.

This having been heretofore fixed as the date, time and place to hold a public hearing regarding the presentation of Sutter County Children and Families Commission FY 2020-2021 Sutter County Children & Families Commission Budget, the matter was called to be heard. There being no public testimony, Commissioner Whiteaker closed the public hearing.

On motion of Commissioner Byers, seconded by Commissioner Gulbrandsen, Chairman Whiteaker called for a roll call vote that carried as follows: AYES: Commissioners Reusser, Byers, Whiteaker, Garcia, Gulbrandsen, Osumi; ABSTAIN: None; NOES: None; ABSENT: O'Hara, McIntire; the Commission approved the FY 2020-2021 Sutter County Children & Families Commission Budget as presented.

Commissioner O'Hara joined.

Ms. Blake noted a concept of long-term remote work for Commission staff being considered internally as a result of COVID-19 and the Commissions long-term revenue projections. Ms. Blake will work with County Counsel, IT, and Sutter County Health and Human Services administration to explore the opportunity. Ms. Blake asked Commissioners to contact her with any concerns regarding the concept.

## **2) Review of Sutter County Children & Families Commission Long-Term Financial Plan**

Ms. Blake referenced the staff report and Long-Term Financial Plan contained in the meeting packet and noted the 10-year plan is updated annually with actual financial data and assumptions are reviewed for continued accuracy.

This having been heretofore fixed as the date, time and place to hold a public hearing regarding the review and adoption of the 2020-2030 Sutter County Children & Families Commission Long-Term Financial Plan, the matter was called to be heard. There being no public testimony, Commissioner Whiteaker closed the public hearing.

In regards to a question from Commissioner Beyers, Ms. Blake noted a transfer from reserves is shown as not all funding is in contract form at this time.

On motion of Commissioner Patton, seconded by Commissioner Garcia, Chairman Whiteaker called for a roll call vote that carried as follows: AYES: Commissioners Reusser, Byers, Whiteaker, Garcia, Patton, Gulbrandsen, O'Hara, Osumi; ABSTAIN: None; NOES: None; ABSENT: McIntire; the Commission adopted the 2020-2030 Sutter County Children & Families Commission Long-Term Financial Plan.

## **3) Review of 2015-2020 Sutter County Children & Families Commission Strategic Plan**

Ms. Blake referenced the 2015-2020 Sutter County Children & Families Commission Strategic Plan contained in the meeting package. Ms. Blake noted the 2015-2020 Sutter County Children & Families Commission Strategic Plan sunsets June 30<sup>th</sup> and no revisions are required.

This having been heretofore fixed as the date, time and place to hold a Public Hearing regarding the presentation of the 2015-2020 Sutter County Children & Families Commission Strategic Plan, the matter was called to be heard. There being no public testimony, Chairman Whiteaker closed the public hearing.

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## **ACTION ITEMS – DISCUSSION AND POSSIBLE APPROVAL**

### **4) PROGRAMMATIC AGREEMENTS UNDER THE 2020-2025 STRATEGIC PLAN**

Ms. Blake referenced the staff report and reviewed the 2020-2023 Request for Proposal release and review process.

Commissioner Whiteaker asked Commission Secretary to read comments provided by the public on this agenda item.

Joe Moye, FLIP program contractor, asked that the comments provided below be read aloud.

“I wanted to share how I feel about what the FLIP program has accomplished during my tenure. As you know I have been teaching and administrating in our community for over twenty years, I do not have a political agenda and my heart and passion are with the children. In my opinion FLIP gives an opportunity for children to explore and manipulate the project being presented. It is not a cookie cutter presentation of rote learning. The facilities and the staff encourage free thinking and child-initiated activities which encourage brain development, problem solving and critical thinking.

I have been a teacher with YCUSD, Head Start, Yuba College Child Development, Migrant and the Smart Start program and I have 20+ years in the field. While working with FLIP I have enjoyed the best evidence of growth in social and academic skill, parent involvement and active participation by the children as any year I have spent in other environments. In addition, the FLIP program offers an evening class for working families, this option often has fathers in attendance which is a bonus in providing for the whole family.

The FLIP program offers everything that Early Childhood educators promise, it deserves to be considered as a viable program in our community.”

Robin Kussman, FLIP program specialist, provided an overview of the FLIP program, highlighted adjustments made to the program model due to COVID-19 and provided program evaluation data.

Jennifer Chaplin, Board Chair for Playzeum Yuba-Sutter, asked that the comments provided below be read aloud.

“I am writing in regards to the special meeting scheduled for today at 3:30 and to the proposed grant disbursement, item 4 on the agenda.

The proposed disbursement reduces FLIP’s funding by 60%, as compared to previous years.

It is the goal of Playzeum’s Board of Directors to move the FLIP program slowly to a sustainable program, to a place where we could provide the program to families through a sponsorship opportunity, when needed. However, at this time, the priority for current fundraising has been placed on our capital campaign, as we are working to develop a 5-year plan to fully fund a more permanent location.

With the closure of our open play hours, birthday parties, a decrease in membership sales and the inability to hold our three major fundraisers, we have experienced a projected revenue loss of at least \$25,000.

We are aware of the need to decrease the FLIP program budget as the commission’s funds lessen, however, I must ask the Commission this question: Is this the appropriate time to take away a year-round program that works to build families’ resiliency and assists in connecting them to

services, make social connections, build parenting knowledge and skills and give their children a safe place to learn and to build skills for their later school success?

Our children and families have a greater need for programs like FLIP now than they have had for the past five years, would you not agree?

Please reconsider the proposed disbursement.

Thank you for your time and consideration, and for your commitment to the children and their grown-ups in our community.”

Paul Daley, FLIP program parent, provided the comments below to the Commission.

“I wanted to share a few thoughts about our family's experience using the FLIP program and my concerns about it receiving any cut in funding.

1. I was only able to talk my pregnant wife (who is now working with Sutter North as an OBGYN) into taking a job in this county (which has worse outcomes for children than the area we left) because of the robust programming that the FLIP program has for young children. I would bet that other professionals that may consider moving to this area which needs them will have similar priorities for their children.

2. I do not think enrolling my child at a young age in the FLIP program will make him a genius but it will absolutely help him with his emotional intelligence and soft skills. In a guided setting, being able to interact and resolve conflicts with others from various socioeconomic backgrounds is incredibly important for us as parents. This issue is at the forefront of my mind as I have seen so many incredibly intelligent people be unsuccessful in life due to poor emotional intelligence and lack of soft skills (I would guess each of you can think of several examples yourself).

3. The long-term nature of many of the FLIP programs is where the value comes in for parents. If this was a condensed program that only lasted a month, then that would only have helped me during that specific month of my child's growth. If we met once a week for a much longer period, then the program can (and did, for me) help with problems as they come up during development. If we are going to focus on trying to cram a program into a short period of time, ask yourself how much can a 5-year-old or their parent possibly retain? Think of all the conferences that you personally have attended, could you right now pull much more than a phrase or a general idea of what they were about?

Thank you for your time”

Patty Ryan, FLIP program contractor, provided her comments below aloud.

“I have been a contractor with the FLIP program since it’s inception, 5 years ago. In my position with the FLIP program, I facilitate RIE® Parent, Infant and RIE® Parent, Toddler classes for parents and children from birth to 3 years old. These weekly classes are based on Magda Gerber’s respectful approach to working with children and families and run in two consecutive 18-week sessions beginning in August and ending in May of each year. The classes offer children the opportunity to engage in free, uninterrupted play and exploration while their parents sit back, relax, and observe their children as they grow in mastery, competence, and social skills.

While these classes provide the opportunity for children to learn through exploration and discovery, develop cognitive, physical, language, and social, emotional proficiency, what I’ve learned over the course of the past five years is that the FLIP program is unique in the degree to which it strengthens family bonds, both within the individual family unit and between the families who participate in the program. Families start in the FLIP program when their children are as young as 2 months old. Most continue in the program until their children are up to five years old and begin full-time preschool or kindergarten. They progress as a group through the infant, toddler program into other classes that fit the evolving developmental needs of the children as they grow. Likewise, the parents in the FLIP program develop strong and lasting bonds that often continue well beyond the time they are in the program. I have seen the strength of the bonds between families in the program throughout the past five years. Parents often share with me that this program is an invaluable resource for them, not simply because their children learn in developmentally appropriate classes, but also because of the relationships the cohort families develop. They come into the program as strangers and leave as long-time friends who support each other through these first, critical years of parenting. Simply put, the FLIP program builds a network of support and comradery for families that goes beyond the stated scope of FLIP’s mission. The benefits of this program extend far beyond the classroom. Families develop deep-seated, secure, attached relationships that binds them to the broader community of Sutter County.

Another benefit the FLIP program offers that is not in its stated goals is the opportunity for local college students to observe children in developmentally appropriate classes. As an Associate Professor at Yuba College, I encourage my Early Childhood Education students to observe FLIP classes so they can see what a quality program looks like for young children and families. It is clear to me that the students who take advantage of the opportunity to do their required observations in FLIP classes come away with a comprehensive understanding of true developmentally appropriate practices. This manifest benefit serves the Sutter County educational community in ways that are outside of the scope of the FLIP mission.

As for my own, personal level of commitment to the FLIP program, for the first two years of the FLIP program, I commuted from Sacramento to Yuba City. For the past three years I have been commuting here for FLIP classes and Yuba College classes from Berkeley. In December 2019, I decided to move to Yuba City permanently in order to continue my work with both FLIP and Yuba College. My husband and I relocated from Berkeley to Yuba City in February of this year. We made this move solely for my work with these two exemplary programs. To be frank, living in Berkeley was more financially lucrative for me and much easier for my husband, who is an executive in a Silicon Valley company. However, over the five years I have worked in Sutter County, I have grown to value this community and moved here in order to be closer to where I choose to work. I hope to and plan to continue to serve this community for the rest of my career.

However, if the FLIP program loses the majority of its funding, as has been recommended, and we were to move the RIE® Parent, Infant and Toddler classes to a completely fee-based model, I fear that the cost of the classes would be out of reach for most families. RIE® Parent, Infant and Toddler classes generally run from between \$35.00 and \$75.00 per class (or between \$151.00 to \$325.00 per month, depending on the location of the class). The FLIP program is the ONLY program in the country – in fact, in the world – where these classes are offered to families at no charge. This program serves as a model for what is possible when the community makes such a committed stake in its families. This community commitment was one of the reasons I made the choice to move to Yuba City. It is my fondest hope to continue to make Yuba City and Sutter County my home and to remain with both the FLIP program and Yuba College.

The FLIP program has served children, families, and the broader community for five years running. Over the course of this time, it has become evident that the bonds that families create through this program are extraordinary and extend well beyond the years that families are in the program. This program plays a critical role in the Sutter County community of families and can continue to facilitate these long-term relationships with adequate funding. Reduction in funding could result in a disconnection of these important bonds and sense of community that build over time as families progress through the FLIP program. I urge the Commission to continue to fund the FLIP program at its current level, to ensure that families continue to benefit from this one-of-a-kind program; a program that serves a vital role throughout Sutter County.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak directly to you about the benefit of the FLIP program. I would be happy to discuss this with the Commission further if you feel that would be helpful. Thank you again for your past and future support of the FLIP program.”

Leanne Cox, FLIP program contractor, provided the comments below to the Commission.

“I recently read a quote that a quote that said, “Not all classrooms have four walls.” To me this was a good summary of the need for flexibility and variety in the world of Early Childhood Education. Today’s children need a well rounded education to help them succeed in this fast-paced world where critical thinking skills are needed more then ever. Children need hands-on learning, varied programs, space for inquiry and investigation and learning that goes beyond worksheets.

I believe that this is the type of learning 0-5 year olds get at the Playzeum’s FLIP Program. Students learn numbers and colors while singing and dancing. They learn literacy skills while putting on plays and reenacting stories. They learn writing skills while recording observations that they have made during science experiments. They learn about caring for living things while exploring at classes held at the community garden. All of this helps children learn, grow and build critical thinking skills in a flexible environment that is adaptable to children of a wide variety of ages, learning styles and developmental stages.

Because of the FLIP Program’s unique setting within the Playzeum, children are able to have these opportunities that would not be as feasible in traditional preschool or classroom settings. We know that not all children learn in the same way, so we need to make sure that the programs offered to Sutter County 0-5 year olds reflect a variety of experiences and potential for growth. The FLIP Program provides this varied approach ensuring that learning is a journey full of twists

and turns rather than a one-size-fits-all approach. Please consider giving the FLIP Program the financial support needed to continue on this journey.

Thank you”

Staci Howell, FLIP program and Playzeum Yuba-Sutter Executive Director, provided an overview of features specific to the FLIP program. Ms. Howell offered potential community sponsorship opportunities and Playzeum program fees to lower the requested Commission funds.

Commissioner Whiteaker thanked all for their comments and noted strain on upcoming budgets due to COVID-19. Commissioner Whiteaker also highlighted the Request for Proposal's specific request for direct services and the Commission's requirement for a balanced budget. Commissioner Whiteaker thanked Ms. Howell for highlighting potential solutions and encouraged Ms. Howell to work with the Commission's Executive Director on details of the program.

Ms. Howell stated that the FLIP program “provides a bigger bang for the buck in comparison to the other program being recommended for funding.”

In regards to a question from Commissioner Patton, Ms. Blake noted program variations that have been recommended for funding however, the Commission has existing partnerships with all the recommended agencies.

On motion of Commissioner Gulbrandsen, seconded by Commissioner Garcia, Chairman Whiteaker called for a roll call vote that carried as follows: AYES: Commissioners Reusser, Byers, Whiteaker, Garcia, Patton, Gulbrandsen, O'Hara, Osumi; ABSTAIN: None; NOES: None; ABSENT: McIntire; the Commission approved program agreements with seven agencies resulting from the Request for Proposals (RFP) 2020-2023 in an amount not to exceed \$915,000 for three years with the possibility to renew agreements for two additional years under the 2020- 2025 Strategic Plan based on performance and availability of funds; Authorize the Executive Director to negotiate and execute the agreement's and any other document(s) necessary with agencies, subject to approval by Counsel; and Authorize Executive Director to take any other actions necessary to implement the agreement's.

#### **5) YUBA CITY UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT SMART START FY 2019-2020 BUDGET REVISION REQUEST**

Ms. Blake reviewed the staff report and recommended action. Mil Elliott, Smart Start Coordinator, reviewed the requested line item adjustments and, due to COVID-19, the Smart Start distance support plan. Ms. Blake noted that the requested line item adjustments do not alter the total grant award, as previously approved by the Commission.

On motion of Commissioner Patton, seconded by Commissioner Byers, Chairman Whiteaker called for a roll call vote that carried as follows: AYES: Commissioners Reusser, Byers, Whiteaker, Garcia, Patton, Gulbrandsen, O'Hara, Osumi; ABSTAIN: None; NOES: None; ABSENT: McIntire; the Commission approved the Smart Start FY 2019-2020 budget revision request as submitted.

## **6) FLIP FY 2019-2020 BUDGET REVISION REQUEST**

Ms. Blake reviewed the staff report and recommended action. Staci Howell, FLIP Program Coordinator, reviewed the requested line item adjustments. Ms. Blake noted that the requested line item adjustments do not alter the total grant award, as previously approved by the Commission.

On motion of Commissioner Byers, seconded by Commissioner Gulbrandsen, Chairman Whiteaker called for a roll call vote that carried as follows: AYES: Commissioners Reusser, Byers, Whiteaker, Garcia, Patton, Gulbrandsen, O'Hara, Osumi; ABSTAIN: None; NOES: None; ABSENT: McIntire; the Commission approved the FLIP program FY 2019-2020 budget revision request as submitted.

## **7) FAMILY SOUP SPECIAL NEEDS PROJECT FY 2019-2020 BUDGET REVISION REQUEST**

Ms. Blake reviewed the staff report and recommended action. Cindy Chandler, Family SOUP Executive Director, reviewed the requested line item adjustments. Ms. Blake noted that the requested line item adjustments do not alter the total grant award, as previously approved by the Commission.

On motion of Commissioner Patton, seconded by Commissioner Reusser, Chairman Whiteaker called for a roll call vote that carried as follows: AYES: Commissioners Reusser, Byers, Whiteaker, Garcia, Patton, Gulbrandsen, O'Hara, Osumi; ABSTAIN: None; NOES: None; ABSENT: McIntire; the Commission approved the Family SOUP Special Nee4ds Project program FY 2019-2020 budget revision request as submitted.

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## **CONSENT CALENDAR**

On motion of Commissioner Gulbrandsen, seconded by Commissioner Garcia, Chairman Whiteaker called for a roll call vote that carried as follows: AYES: Commissioners Reusser, Byers, Whiteaker, Garcia, Patton, Gulbrandsen, O'Hara, Osumi; ABSTAIN: None; NOES: None; ABSENT: McIntire; the Commission approved the Consent Calendar, as follows:

### **8) Approval of the minutes of the May 20, 2020 meeting.**

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## **DIRECTORS REPORT**

### **COVID-19 Commission response**

Ms. Blake noted an ACEs Aware grant from the California Surgeon General the Commission was awarded to assist with adverse childhood experiences.

### **California Family Resource Association (CFRA) funding update**



Ms. Blake noted funding received for gift card distribution to partners for foster families, tribal families, and other high-risk families for essential needs at this time.

**SupplyBank/First 5 California essential supply distribution update**

Ms. Blake noted the Bi-County essential supply distribution is scheduled from 4:00 p.m.- 7:00 p.m. tomorrow. The Yuba-Sutter COVID-19 Task Force will assist with the distribution and Ms. Blake invited Commissioners to help with the distribution if their schedules allow.

**COVID-19 Emergency Fund update**

Ms. Blake noted funding is still available and funding request applications have increased as recovery efforts have begun.

**PROGRAM REPORTS**

Program reports were noted, no discussion was held.

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**PUBLIC COMMENT**

There were no comments from the public.

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**ADJOURNMENT**

With no further business coming before the Commission, the meeting was adjourned at 4:41 p.m.

By:  
Julie Price  
Executive Secretary