



JACKSONVILLE CITY COUNCIL

TRUE COMMISSION PERFORMANCE COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES March 1, 2012 3:00p.m.

City Council Conference Room B
Suite 425, City Hall
117 W. Duval Street

Attendance: Committee Members Ted Wendler (Chair), Marcella Lowe, Patti Anania, Diane Brown, Gamal Lyons, Tom Martin, Daniel Blanchard and (arr. 3:16)

Excused: Joe Andrews

Also: Linda Lanier, Executive Director – Jacksonville Children’s Commission; Jeff Clements – Council Research Division; Tony Bates – Concerned Taxpayers of Duval County

The meeting was called to order at 3:01 p.m. by Chairman Wendler who introduced Linda Lanier, Executive Director of the Jacksonville Children’s Commission, to discuss the Commission’s mission, budget and activities.

Ms. Lanier explained that the Children’s Commission’s mission, broadly stated, is to address the needs of children in the 90% of their lives from birth to age 18 during which they are not in school to ensure that they are safe, well-fed, and learning effectively. The commission has 8 funding sources: 1) City of Jacksonville (\$26.1 million - \$6.6 million from Jacksonville Journey, \$19.5 million General Fund); 2) Duval County Public Schools (\$294,300); 3) Early Learning Coalition (\$24.6 million); 4) Florida Department of Education (\$1.9 million); 5) Florida Department of Health (\$1.9 million); 6) Florida Department of Children and Families (\$957,200); 7) U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (\$1.5 million); 8) Fund balance from previous years and other (\$743,880). Different funding sources are used for different programs in compliance with the requirements of the funder.

The original purpose of the JCC when it was created in the early 1990s was to coordinate, systematize and strategize the use of the City funds that have always been appropriated for children-serving programs throughout the years; to get the “biggest bang for the buck” and to ensure accountability. The commission has four overarching objectives with regard to the children it serves: 1) provide a stable and nurturing environment; 2) prepare children to enter and succeed in school; 3) provide safe and educationally valuable programs for after-school hours and during the summer; and 4) get appropriate and timely assistance for children with special needs. The JCC has voluminous data about the children its programs serve, including health statistics and academic readiness and performance.

The commission has very high standards for its contracting agencies and a very stringent application and project tracking process which can be very burdensome for small agencies with small staffs. There is a lot of paperwork and reporting required and an agency needs a fair degree of sophistication to be able to meet all the requirements. The JCC is somewhat less stringent with its summer camp providers, so that is where smaller agencies have an opportunity to participate with somewhat less effort and resources.

In response to several questions about JCC's feeding programs Ms. Lanier explained that childhood hunger is a serious problem in Jacksonville and around the country for a variety of reasons. Poverty is one major reason. Another is the existence of "food deserts" – parts of the city where there are no full service grocery stores selling fresh, nutritious foods like fresh fruits and vegetables within walking distance or easy bus access, so families depend on either eating at fast food restaurants or the packaged, processed foods available at nearby convenience stores and gas stations. Third, the adults caring for some children make very poor choices about how to expend their income or food stamps and don't place a high priority on properly feeding their children. The JCC tries to ensure that children living in poverty get at least one nutritious meal a day during the school year and two meals a day during the summer.

In response to a question about the relationship of the Children's Commission programs to the Florida Department of Children and Families, Ms. Lanier summarized the difference as prevention versus intervention. The JCC's programs are aimed at preventing problems and intervening early if signs of problems arise. The DCF steps in when problems become full-blown and significant legal or regulatory action needs to be taken to address a serious situation.

The group discussed program oversight and Ms. Lanier stated that the JCC's oversight varies from program to program. Many program recipients are subject to unannounced drop-in visits by JCC program managers who check to see that the facilities, programs and attendance are as they are being reported by the grant recipients. Other programs (i.e. mental health counseling or mentoring) are not susceptible to unannounced visits so are evaluated in other ways. All funded programs are based on solid science and brain development research and try to help children get off to the best possible start in life, regardless of their economic or social circumstances.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 4:58 p.m.

Jeff Clements, Chief
Council Research Division
630-1405

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10:00 a.m.