



The Voice for Early Childhood

Maine Early Childhood Comprehensive Systems Initiative
DHHS, State House Station #11
2 Anthony Avenue
Augusta, ME 04333-0011
www.maine-eccs.org

*First Lady Karen Baldacci
Superintendent William P. Braun
Co-Chairs*

MEETING SUMMARY DECEMBER 7, 2009

Columbus Hall, Hill Mansion, 136 State Street, Augusta

1. Purpose

*As a Council that coordinates state, local and community partners, seek to achieve sustainable social and financial investment in the healthy development of Maine's young children and their families. Review and address recommendations of legislative studies, advisory committees and the Children's Cabinet and implement the long-term plan for a unified, statewide early childhood services system, *Invest Early in Maine*.*

2. **Attendance:** First Lady Karen Baldacci (co-chair), Supt. Bill Braun (co-chair), Rep. Seth Berry, Sheriff Todd Brackett, Alan Cobo-Lewis, Kathy Colfer, Sarah Forster, Lori Freid Moses, Jaci Holmes (representing Commissioner Gendron), Karen Heck, Ed Cervone (representing Laurie LaChance), Peter Lindsay, Steve Meister, Judy Reidt Parker, Rep. Meredith Strang Burgess, Penni Theriault, Patti Woolley, Sheryl Peavey.

Guests: Janine Blatt, Kelly Jackson, Kim Gore, Bill Hager, Becky Brown, Jessica, Therese Cahill-Low, Leslie Forstadt, Susan Mackey Andrews, Suzanne Farley, Dick Farnsworth

3. Council Record

Item 1. Announcements: Finance group hosted a webinar on Dec 4. This was recorded and will be posted on ECCS website. Intent to have two more webinars about public private partnerships.

Item 2. Approval of 11/9/09 Meeting Summary. Note that there will be an after-deadline bill. Group will meet on Dec 17. Being led by Reps. Seth Berry and Mark Eves. Summary approved by consensus.

4. Follow up Business

Item 1. Continued Discussion of the Role of the council in Context of Upcoming Budget/Legislative session

Discussion Highlights on Process:

- Group question: Should policy committee and the leadership team be the point people for this because things happen in legislature pretty fast?
 - Meredith: there are four legislators who should all have EC on their minds, and while they have their own issues to track, this is the lightning rod to anything that could adversely or positively affect EC. Legislator's role to keep everyone informed—perhaps by way of email.
 - Legislators should be clear in email about what the issue is and what the desired action would be
 - Process could be very budget oriented.
- Comment from member: It is attractive that in creating this council, the issues are vetted, and when the CGC speaks it is very powerful and the message is pretty clear. Everyone should be talking the same thing or on the same page and not fighting amongst ourselves. As legislators, most don't know the depths of many

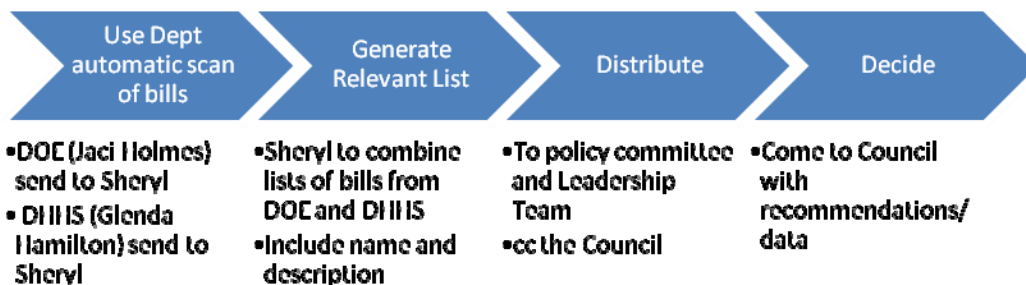
different issues, so they rely on constituents to learn. What is complicating is that all legislators are hearing so many different aspects from so many different people and the chorus gets muted. Powerful to say that the GCG has met and we are pushing x, y and z.

- As soon as bills are printed... by second week of January (although there is stuff in the system because of approval from legislative council).
- Can we have preliminary report by Jan 11: titles of bills, short description?
- Volume: There were 84 carryovers, leg council approved 40+ initially, +72 appealed (so could be 40 of those); but not all of those relate to children and families. Brenda anticipates about a dozen that the council would have to deal with.

For Policy/Legislation, Group discussed various processes for communication of issues/bills as they arise.

Agreed upon the following Process:

- For Bills that have been approved by the Legislative Council and assigned a number, we will rely on the automated tracking systems in place at the DHHS and DOE that lists the bills and a brief description.



- When a legislator or anyone sees something happening re: a bill, they will notify Sheryl and she will send an alert to leadership team and policy committee, cc'ing the Council. If time warrants, one of the accountability teams may decide to review the issue and bring recommendations to the Council.
- Of course, many of the bills will not have a fiscal note attached.
- Member suggested that we decide what kinds of things we as a Council would take action on as there will be sure to be some conflicting viewpoints in this group. How we slog through those things is the process we need to nail down.
- When there are policy or legislative issues that arise, Policy Committee (and Leadership Team) will bring together on an emergency basis, and hash it out. Get up to date and they make a recommendation to the membership saying that they reviewed it and propose what to do. If controversial, may require a vote.
- We need to be deliberative body, noting dissent, but documenting the discussion and how we arrived at a decision.
- We recognize that we have people around the table who can't take advocacy role because of their position in state government.
- We agree that this sort of issue goes out to everyone with an action item. We have constituents we can mobilize.
- This group can bring analysis to the table...what are the implications, losses, unintended consequences or benefits. There is a lot of knowledge in this council and we could make a statement about a suggested path.
- However, we as council members need to be clear when our jobs require that we make it clear that positions we take may not be as a Representative of the Council.

Upcoming budget issues:

- Latest buzz is that there will be \$383M on top of the cuts from last year. Appropriations is meeting this week on Wednesday to look in detail at the situation.

- New revenue forecast: \$383M in additional shortfall, \$30M piece still needs to be found from last year, \$24M that needs to be dealt with.
- All of this coming out of a \$5.4B state budget. (around 15% of leg budget cut from one year to the next not accounting for inflation).
- 80% of total budget is in K-12 Education AND Health and Human Services. We can only cut K-12 to a point, and some areas of HHS, due to maintenance-of-effort (MoE) requirements in ARRA. For some HHS programs there is also significant federal match, which makes cutting more challenging.
- Legislature is trying hard not to cut things with a federal match, but it will have to happen.

Discussion Highlight about 11-17 Legislator Letter

- Letter that was written in November needs to be distributed. Needs a sponsor from legislature to get this moving. Could be mailed to legislators, unless we put this in legislative mailbox before the 12/17 (wouldn't need a sponsor), or we wait until first Wed in January (which would go right to people's desks at that time). Caution—there will be a large volume of paper at that time.
- Could it be sent by email as well and then follow up with hard copy.
- Members generally agree this should get in hands of legislators before the 12/17. Seth agreed to take leadership on this activity.

ACTION: Email can come from Sheryl (not from state email, however) with header that includes the names of the four legislators and chairs at the very top, sent on behalf of CGC. Have in body of email and as email attachment. *From the Growth Council: these are the chairs, these are the legislators, who requested that this be sent on their behalf.*

- Letter approved by Council
- *Dear Legislator, at a meeting held on 11-9-09, the following was approved. The legislative members of the council and the Council members thought it important to send this letter out for your consideration.*
- Sheryl to add to original "DISTRIBUTED AT THE REQUEST OF (NAME FOUR LEGISLATORS)
- Set up email-- MCGC@maine-eccs.org as blanket email distributor.
- Send to Ed Cervone and MDF will make copies and bring to state house; Seth will ensure it gets into legislator mailboxes.

5. New Business

Item 1. Review of Outline of Council Report to Legislature: Sheryl Peavey

Sheryl handed out draft outline of Council report—intent is for report to be one that readers quickly understand who the Council is, what it is doing, and where it is going. Members made suggested edits to the flow of the report.

ACTION: Sheryl will draft report, run past the Leadership Team and Children's Cabinet, have Communications Committee review and bring to Jan 11 meeting for Council approval. Sheryl will work with HHS Committee to see about scheduling presentation for joint committee (HHS and Educ/Cultural Affairs).

Item 2. Comment from ACCESS: Lori Freid Moses

Discussion: Lori represents Child Care Advisory Council (CCAC) on this committee, but on CCAC, she represents ACCESS. CCAC felt that didn't want it to be too confusing, but because she and many others wear so many hats. ACCESS wanted to have the opportunity to speak to the cuts and policies, framed in context of Invest Early plan. Lori will keep CCAC hat on, and was willing to defer ACCESS hat to colleague, Bill Hager, present in the audience.

Chairs asked Lori to proceed with the informal statement from ACCESS. Issues included:

1. Want to make a strong statement made that investments in young child have taken substantial cuts already
2. Current issue that seems counterproductive: reimbursement rates for child care providers were rolled back to 2006 rates (CCAC is monitoring)

3. Parents in subsidy system and their children who are eligible for part time, now have to pay full time copay, so parents are opting out of subsidy system
 4. Head Start cuts from Medicaid because of the TCM changes are problematic
 5. DOE changes in eligibility and the \$\$\$ cut from CDS budgets for children with special needs means for child care providers that the children they serve might still be in child care but not eligible for IDEA services.
- Child care community wants it known that this has already impacted system. They are trying to collect data to really understand the effect.
 - Lori suggested that the ECE Accountability Team look at potential policy changes or legislation asking “how does this impact the system?” or “What does this look like?” CCAC is very interested in capturing that. This will be test case for CGC in how to evaluate this process.
 - CCAC does recognize that others are also taking a hit. ECE Accountability team will work with CCAC when these issues come up...so feedback is referenced as part of IE plan and how it directly affects the objectives of the plan. ACCESS should create outline for ECE Team who can then add to the context.
 - Other member recommended that context for moving forward should include the history and the realities with context for why such things as rollbacks came to happen. We should give the whole picture going forward, especially since the ARRA is scheduled to end. Really important to ground the issue in a full report that gives entire context.
 - Members agreed and reiterated importance of everyone here representing various silos bringing facts to the table. There is always a human piece of the equation...needs to be based in fact with some history along with human piece. Needs to be focused so that the word on the street is that “the Maine Children’s Growth Council says...” and that carries weight.

Discussion continued about how we’re waiting for the ax to fall. How are we going to proceed from now until 1/11 with response to budget being released in a couple of weeks?

- If individual committees have thoughts on this, be sure that those relevant committees put together concise response with statement about what impact will likely be. Need to be realistic that none of the cuts will be fair, but will be equitable and transparent. At the end of the day, we don’t want early childhood to take disproportionate number of cuts.
- Judy/Karen H: should not only look at impact on children but also infrastructure. Some cuts will be harder to turn around than other cuts when things do get better. If the bottom line is infrastructure, then we need to keep infrastructure. Advocates are doing the work around which of the programs should not be cut, then the Council should be the one to take the position that infrastructure should NOT be cut. Keeps intact what we will need if we are going to implement this priority for early childhood
- We need to be ready to answer the question from appropriations about what we (CGC) are willing to cut.
- Seth suggested that we have a concise picture by January 11 of what cuts have been done in past and recently and what is being proposed currently, with caveat that there is a lot that we don’t know. Answer the question: Not how bad it is, but how is it bad?
- State government employees can bring to table as this is being done as we speak. ACCESS can do this. Judy: format the view of what will happen on the ground and what will happen to the infrastructure.

ACTION:

- Define infrastructure: Judy will bring definition of infrastructure and Jaci will bring definition from Controllers Office.

Item 3. Discussion: Get the Children’s Growth Council more visibility. The legislators are going to start to see the logo and name, but to reinforce it, Meredith suggested the idea to do an EC factoid every day that the legislature is in session. Could be a boring piece of paper with some color on it; a 5X8 size would work; be sure to include names of legislators on Council.

- Need 37 different factoids (one for each day in session).

- First few need to frame B-5 and then as session gets going, needs to be more advocacy-oriented. Make it real. Make it Maine. Teach the legislators.

ACTION:

1. Communications committee will create the 37 factoids about EC in Maine, including Maine data report suggestions from Judy and Fight Crime data from Kim Gore.
2. Distribution--Sheryl will take from communications committee and bring to state house to Seth's office. Could do once a week – or less frequently if do in advance. Seth will make sure his staff gets it out.

Item 4. Revenue solutions ideas: Referendum or Snack Tax

Discussion: Member asked about way to raise awareness and money for early childhood. Referendum work?

- Legislators have tendency to see referendum as last resort, because legislators should make effort to make it law and then let the people veto it if they don't like it.
- Concern about snack tax with too many unknowns. There are lots of people calling out for revenue solutions.
- Perhaps this could be discussed at the Dec 12 Finance meeting.
- Member commented that if we have a war in Afghanistan, we should have a war tax. Really, we need to start the conversation or we will have no taxes and no services and then where are we?
- Member noted that a Referendum will reveal whether or not people are willing to put \$ into early childhood kinds of things. Yes, there are lots of things to be worked out about dedicated revenue and why, but this is one of the places where something like that needs to be vetted and discussed.

ACTION: Table until we know how to have the discussion

6. Committee Reports (Discussion/Action Requested of Council)

Held until January unless discussion requested.

7. Review of Action Items and Persons Responsible/Set Next Agenda/Adjourn Meeting at Noon

Review the Report to the Legislature

Review the bills that we have to date (from DOE and DHHS staff via Sheryl)

Review the parts of the budget that relate to EC and noting where this affects infrastructure.

Members instructed to take the opportunity to represent their constituent group at next meeting.

Next Meeting Date: **January 11, 2010**, Columbus Hall, Hill Mansion, Augusta

- Snow date: none. Sheryl to get phone number for conference call in case of snow. Only if state government closes will there be no council meeting.
- Brief discussion of whether Council should have monthly meetings. Only required to meet six times, however, Sheriff Brackett noted that our role is to defend infrastructure and sees that it will take time for us to evaluate all of this information and understand what is our position (including making decisions that are painful).
- **ADDED MEETING for FEBRUARY: 2/1/2010**