BOARD OF SUPERVISORS
COUNTY OF MADERA

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April 26, 2011

The Honorable Mitchell C. Rigby
Presiding Judge
Madera County Superior Court
209 W. Yosemite Avenue
Madera, CA 93637

Subject: **Response to the 2010-2011 Grand Jury Final Report entitled "First 5 Madera County"**

Dear Honorable Judge Rigby:

In accordance with Penal Code Section 933, the Madera County Board of Supervisors submits this response to the Recommendations in the 2010-11 Madera County Grand Jury Report on "First 5 Madera County" (See Attachment #1).

The following are the Grand Jury's recommendations in their Report, and the Board of Supervisors' response to the recommendations:

Grand Jury Recommendation

The Grand Jury recommends that First 5 provide additional activities and programs for preschool children at the First 5 facility.

Grand Jury Recommendation

The Grand Jury recommends that First 5 provide preschool for the 110 children who have applied and are eligible for preschool programs.

Grand Jury Recommendation

The Grand Jury recommends that First 5 more closely live up to their vision and statement goals by providing preschool programs for all children three and four years old in Madera County.

Grand Jury Recommendation

The Grand Jury recommends that First 5 be more pro-active in locating additional preschools for

children that are not being served.

Grand Jury Recommendation

The Grand Jury recommends that First 5 keep a reasonable reserve fund which would free resources for additional preschool placements.

Grand Jury Recommendation

The Grand Jury recommends that First 5 provide additional training for staff and particularly for the Operations Manager/Deputy Director of the agency.

Board of Supervisors' response to Grand Jury Recommendations

The response to of the Executive Director to the above Recommendations is considered appropriate and is submitted as the Board of Supervisors response. (See Attachment #2)

Sincerely,

Frank Bigelow
Chairman
Madera County Board of Supervisors

Attachments

FIRST 5 MADERA COUNTY

Administered by Madera County Children & Families Commission

RECEIVED
APR 11 2011
MADERA COUNTY GRAND JURY

April 6, 2011

Madera County Grand Jury
P.O. Box 534
Madera, CA 93639

Mr. Haugen:

First 5 Madera County has thoroughly reviewed your 2010-2011 Grand Jury report entitled "First 5 Madera County".

In our effort to craft a response, it became obvious that preschool is a recurring theme of your report which suggests a lack of understanding of our holistic approach to enhancing child development as presented by the legislative mandates of Proposition 10. First 5 Madera County recognize and agree that our state has much work to do in expanding access to publicly funded preschool. However, this report fails to recognize that First 5 is designed to support a broader continuum of services and supports that bolster early child development. Further, First 5 is designed to support existing systems of service, not build new ones. To that end, much of the content of the report (Findings, Recommendations and Conclusions) is inaccurate or lacks relevance to First 5 work and mandates.

Please accept the following narrative and Attachments as our most sincere efforts to offer a comprehensive response to your inquiries.

Sincerely,

Chinayera C. Black Hardaman, MPA

c Madera County Board of Supervisors

First 5 Family Resource Centers
Madera
Chowchilla
Mountain Area

525 E. Yosemite Avenue
Madera, CA 93638

Tel: 559-661-5155
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www.first5madera.net

INTRODUCTIONS:

First 5 Madera County has been in operation since 1998 (not 2003) following Madera County Ordinance 571 adopted by the Madera County Board of Supervisors on December 14, 1998. Further, the Grand Jury visited only one of 5 preschools funded by First 5 Madera County (The second preschool visited was a Head Start facility located across the street from the First 5 funded preschool project.)

FINDINGS:

- ***Paragraph 2 states that the Commission employs nine (9) administrative personnel with a salary budget of $514,961.*** In fact, there are only 2 FTE administrative staff persons (1FTE Executive Director, .5FTE Operations Manager and .5FTE Secretary) for a total salary of less than 3% of the annual budget. It should be noted that the remaining seven (7) staff work directly with First 5 programming, two (2) of which are funded by outside grant sources. See Attachment A for the Commission's organization structure.
- ***Paragraph 3 states that co-locators provide the Commission with evaluations of their programs.*** In an effort to ease access to services and generate revenue to support overhead costs, the Commission leases office and activity space to a variety of agencies. Though complementary to the Commission's mission and core Family Resource Center (FRC) services, these agencies operate independent of the Commission and do not provide evaluations or any other reporting to the Commission.
- ***Paragraph 4 states that there are four programs provided on site by Commission employees: Story time, Play time, Music/Movement and Fitness.*** First 5 Madera County FRC employees provide a broad continuum of programming for children and families that far exceed those programs listed in the Grand Jury Report. In addition to core programming for children, the FRC offers more comprehensive services for children and their families including case management, parenting classes, car seat safety checks, PreKinder University, etc. See Attachment B for a more comprehensive list.
- ***Paragraph 5 states that one of the First 5 published goals is "All three and four year old children have access to high quality...pre-kindergarten curricula and experiences"*** Though first 5 Madera County does promote and fund preschool programming, this is not a stated goal of First 5 Madera County. The Grand Jury found this goal in a document titled "Madera County Preschool Access Initiative Master Plan" crafted by the Preschool Access Planning Grant under the direction of the Madera County Office of Education (MCOE). This is a countywide effort to collaboratively establish a 10 year plan for Madera County to expand preschool access; hence the stated goal. See Attachment C for the First 5 Madera County Strategic Plan Hierarchy that outlines actual Commission Goals and Objectives.
- ***Paragraph 6 states that there are "110 eligible children on a waiting list for the preschool program, but there is no available space for them".*** This statement, as presented, offers no context and therefore misrepresents the scope and size of need in the county. When visiting the FRC, Grand Jury members spoke to the Madera Unified School District (MUSD) State Preschool Director who stated that MUSD State Preschool has a waiting list of 110 children. The Grand Jury's Report does not reflect shortages experienced by other State Preschool providers (in Madera, Chowchilla and the foothills), Head Start, Migrant Head Start and Private Preschool providers. In fact, shortages of preschool are estimated to be over 1,300. See Attachment D (page 13) for the "Madera County Preschool Access Initiative Master Plan" as prepared by MCOE for a more accurate representation of unmet preschool need in Madera County.
- ***Paragraph 7 states that First 5 partially funds 5 preschool locations with grants totaling $323,509.*** This is inaccurate. First 5 Madera County <u>fully</u> funds 4 preschool programs with grant contracts totaling $567,701 over two years. That accounts for over 25% of our annual allocation and will provide preschool for approximately 200 additional children.

- ***Paragraph 8 states that the First 5 Family Survey found that there were 556 children three and four years of age who meet the eligibility criteria for [publicly funded] preschools; however there are only 112 registered in First 5 funded preschools.*** The "First 5 Family Survey" is one of many tools used to assist the Commission in better understanding community needs and to help inform funding investments. Typical of a survey, the "First 5 Family Survey" consists of responses from a random sample of families (n=772) in Madera County. To that end, the figure 556 does reflect roughly two-thirds of the population surveyed which reiterates the need for more preschool in the community. However, that figure (as derived from a random sample) should not be used as a hard number to define unmet need as the Grand Jury has done here. See Attachment D (page 13) for the "Madera County Preschool Access Initiative Master Plan" which provides a more accurate reflection of unmet preschool need in Madera County. Further, though First 5 would find great satisfaction in funding preschool for every eligible child in Madera County, First 5 resources alone simply cannot afford such an effort. That is why, First 5 continues to support MCOE in its ongoing Preschool Access Planning grant designed to coordinate the efforts of all preschool providers (State Preschool, Head Start/Migrant Head Start and Private Providers) to continue to seek added state and federal funding and strategically locate new preschools based upon need.
- ***Paragraph 9 states that First 5 allocates grants to seven social service programs in the amount of $778,525.*** This is an inaccurate representation of First 5 funding commitments. In addition to the 4 fully funded preschool programs, First 5 also funds 7 additional programs that cut across child health, family involvement and child development. For example, the Madera CARES program is not a "social service" program but instead a program designed to promote professional development among preschool providers through the provision of incentives to secure unit bearing coursework, Associate degrees and Bachelor degrees. See Attachment E for a brochure that summarizes First 5 investments for the 2010-2011 program year, totaling $1,062,034.
- ***Paragraph 10 states that in the First 5 June 30, 2010 statement of net assets and fund balance there is an unreserved fund balance of $2,362,868.*** Without context, this statement as presented is very misleading. Since inception, First 5 Madera County committed to the development of a network of Family Resource Centers (FRC). The first was completed in Madera in 2003. The second was completed in Chowchilla in 2009. Each of these facilities are fully paid for and now belong to the families of Madera County. In anticipation of additional investments in Eastern Madera County and possibly the Madera Ranchos, First 5 has maintained some of the referenced fund balance for those purposes. Also, since inception, First 5 has anticipated reductions in annual revenue as people slow or stop smoking due to the added tobacco tax. The referenced fund balance is designed to off-set such reductions over time. Finally, as the State of California experiences unprecedented budget challenges, the wisdom of the Madera First 5 Commission to be prudent in its spending and saving practices is proving to be an asset to the community and local agencies that are experiencing drastic budget cuts from State and Federal funders while First 5 is able to offer stability by maintaining its funding commitments at 100% through 2011-2012. In short, First 5s calculated spending and saving practices are proving to be sound decisions as other funding sources "dry up" or are redirected.
- ***Paragraph 11 states that the Operations Manager was unable to answer the majority of questions asked even though she had been the Executive Secretary of the agency for eight years and in her new position for approximately 4 months.*** This is a subjective finding of the Grand Jury that has no merit. As in any business or agency, the business office is not typically able (or expected) to answer detailed questions specific to programming. Moreover, the Grand Jury was introduced, and encouraged, to speak directly with First 5 Program Officers who manage the contracts of funded programs. Instead, the Grand Jury opted to speak with the Operations Manager who, when repeatedly questioned about program level detail, consistently redirected them to relevant staff.

CONCLUSIONS:

The Conclusion section of the Grand Jury Report is based mostly on the aforementioned Findings, all of which are inaccurate and/or taken out of context. To that end, the conclusions are incorrect and/or simply irrelevant. However, effort has been made to offer meaningful responses.

- ***Paragraph 1 concludes that there is sufficient space at the First 5 facility to conduct additional preschool programs.*** The FRC is not licensed to deploy preschool programs. However, the FRC does deploy a wide variety of age appropriate programming for children and their families. See Attachment B for a listing of general programming offered by First 5.
- ***Paragraph 2 concludes that there is sufficient funding available to place the 110 eligible children in preschool program.*** The provision of preschool is far more complex than that which is understood by the Grand Jury. Deploying additional preschool classrooms far exceed the cost of teachers and supplies. It requires licensed facilities, transportation, meal coordination, incorporation of children with special needs, etc. The FRC is not a licensed facility and therefore not an option for preschool expansion. Facilities are one of the biggest obstacles to preschool expansion. The preferred site to create additional preschools are elementary school campuses as they are in neighborhoods (reducing the need for transportation) and allow more ease with articulation and transitioning to kindergarten. However, such campuses are impacted and unable to dedicate facilities for these purposes. The Grand Jury is encouraged to thoroughly review Attachment D, the "Madera County Preschool Access Initiative Master Plan", to better understand the complexities that our community faces as we aim to expand preschool capacity.
- ***Paragraph 3 concludes that there are over 400 eligible children 3 and 4 years of age who are not receiving preschool services.*** This conclusion is inaccurate and a gross misrepresentation of the realities of unmet need of preschool in Madera County. The Grand Jury is encouraged to thoroughly review Attachment D, the "Madera County Preschool Access Initiative Master Plan", for a more accurate representation of unmet preschool need in Madera County.
- ***Paragraph 4 concludes that First 5 operates more as a resource center for the various county social services rather than following their vision statement, "All three and four year-old children in Madera County will have access to high quality Pre-Kindergarten experience".*** This is neither the Commission's vision nor mission statement. The First 5 Madera County vision statement is that "All Madera County children will thrive in supportive, nurturing and loving environments, enter school healthy and ready to learn in order to become productive well adjusted members of society", which is consistent with our operation as a comprehensive resource center. Preschool is only one of many strategies that are used to make progress towards this statement.
- ***Paragraph 5 concludes that the Operations Manager is not knowledgeable of First 5 operations.*** Again, this is a subjective finding of the Grand Jury that has no merit. The Operations Manager is quite competent in the scope of her assigned duties. The line of questioning by the Grand Jury was specific to funded programs and contracts, which is not consistent with her responsibilities. In the future, I urge the Grand Jury to be clear in their intent and select relevant staff for participation.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

The Recommendations section of the Grand Jury Report is based mostly on the aforementioned Findings and Conclusions, all of which are inaccurate and/or taken out of context. To that end, the recommendations are simply not viable or are non-related. However, effort has been made to offer meaningful responses.

- ***Paragraph 1 recommends that First 5 provide additional activities and programs for preschool children at the First 5 facility.*** First 5 staff offers a wide variety of programming for children and their families at the FRC. See Attachment B for a comprehensive list. The FRC is working very hard to

maintain operation at both the Madera and Chowchilla facilities with fewer resources. In this economic climate, expansion simply is not an option.

- ***Paragraph 2 recommends that First 5 provide preschool for the 110 children who have applied and are eligible for preschool programs.*** First 5 currently has 4 contracts worth over $500,000 (25% of our annual budget) to facilitate the expansion of preschool for approximately 200 additional children throughout the county. Given the economic climate and threats to Proposition 10, further expansion as suggested by this recommendation is simply unreasonable. Additional resources would be necessary for such expansion; however, threats to Proposition 10 may compromise our capacity to even maintain existing contracts. Additional facilities would be necessary for such expansion; however, due to the budget crisis there is a freeze on licensure. Though First 5 fully supports and promotes access to preschool, this recommendation is simply not well thought out or realistic for implementation.
- ***Paragraph 3 recommends that First 5 more closely live up to its vision and statement goals by providing preschool programs for all children three and four years old in Madera County.*** The vision statement that the Grand Jury attributes to First 5 in this report is inaccurate. Moreover, it is not the First 5 Vision statement. The First 5 Madera County vision statement is that "All Madera County children will thrive in supportive, nurturing and loving environments, enter school healthy and ready to learn in order to become productive well adjusted members of society", which is consistent with our operations. Preschool seems to be a recurring theme of the Grand Jury Report suggesting a lack of understanding of the holistic approach to enhancing child development as presented by the legislative mandates of Proposition 10 and reflected in the First 5 Madera County vision statement.
- ***Paragraph 4 recommends that First 5 be more proactive in locating additional preschools for children that are not being served.*** First 5 maintains much rigor around expanding access to all services for children in Madera County, including preschool. In fact, in addition to funding 4 preschool projects, First 5 also continues to invest $50,000 annually in the Preschool Access Implementation Grant which brings together State Preschool, Head Start/Migrant Head Start, Private Providers, Special Need Providers, etc. for ongoing coordination and strategizing around preschool expansion. This grant is in its fourth year of funding and has coordinated the addition of new preschool classes throughout the community.
- ***Paragraph 5 recommends that First 5 keep a reasonable reserve fund which would free resources for additional preschool placement.*** Given the Governor's threats to Proposition 10, much of First 5s reserve will be used to sustain existing contracts.
- ***Paragraph 6 recommends that First 5 provide additional training for staff particularly for the Operations Manager of the agency.*** No comment.

FIRST 5 MADERA COUNTY

Administered by Madera County Children & Families Commission

April 6, 2011

Presiding Judge
Madera County Superior Court
209 West Yosemite Avenue
Madera, CA 93637

Your Honor:

First 5 Madera County has thoroughly reviewed your 2010-2011 Grand Jury report entitled "First 5 Madera County".

In our effort to craft a response, it became obvious that preschool is a recurring theme of your report which suggests a lack of understanding of our holistic approach to enhancing child development as presented by the legislative mandates of Proposition 10. First 5 Madera County recognize and agree that our state has much work to do in expanding access to publicly funded preschool. However, this report fails to recognize that First 5 is designed to support a broader continuum of services and supports that bolster early child development. Further, First 5 is designed to support existing systems of service, not build new ones. To that end, much of the content of the report (Findings, Recommendations and Conclusions) is inaccurate or lacks relevance to First 5 work and mandates.

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Sincerely,

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