



MEETING NOTES

Region 8 Family Council Meeting

Date & Time: March 23, 2023, 6:30 p.m.

ZOOM: Becky, Lauren, Brianna, Casey, Samantha, Brooke, Bethany

Family and Community Engagement Specialist Dean Wright started the meeting at 6:31 p.m.

Dean gave an update on the Regional Scan we are preparing and the portions he has sent to Family Council members. He asked them all to submit their input on it.

Regional Manager Lou Ann Hayes updated what the Action Council has been doing with space needs, the governor's budget, and attracting people to this workforce.

The main topic for the meeting was the affordability of child care. Dean asked the members what they pay and their experiences. Casey said it's a lot of money. She has a 2 ½ year-old full day and her twin first-graders a couple of hours after school. Pays per week now but years ago it was per day. She said there's not much choice now.

Lauren said she's able to stay home and also watches a friend's daughter so she doesn't pay for child care now. She said her friend was nervous she would have to pay Lauren. Her friend works, but most of that income was going to child care and so was it worth it to work?

Samantha said she's waiting to hear if her son gets into Preschool at the school. If he does, she will take a job at the school and get a discount on cost, but still won't have much left over after paying for Preschool. She doesn't work now.

Bethany said her child care just raised the price and she has one child in it, but likely couldn't afford another. If a mom is working, there is the cost for daycare, gas, lunch and so is it worth it? Everyone has to have that conversation. When my son was 14 months old he was sick a lot, so I could work from home but the cost of child care has doubled in the 15 years since, and wages haven't doubled.

When asked if the cost ever got too high and they had to pull their kids from child care, Becky said that happened to them. About 8-9 years ago we had our son in child



care a couple of days a week because we wanted him to have that social interaction. But it was ridiculously expensive and we only went 1-2 months. It was too expensive and I didn't work. We tried.

Dean asked the members if they knew about the Child Care Assistance Program. Bethany said they tried to apply for it, but all the in-home day care providers don't take it anyway, so they quit applying after a while. In-home providers were not getting reimbursed by the State in a timely manner. She said the cost was a huge factor in where to send their son for child care because the quality of in-home care was basically you get what you pay for. The places they could afford were shady even though registered with the State. She still feels bad years later she sent her son to inferior-quality places. So they paid a higher fee to get better quality.

Lauren added that guilty is very overpowering. There's not just a financial burden but a guilt burden as well. It's hard to find other options for child care, so sometimes you feel stuck with a place especially bad if the provider is not high quality.

Dean then asked how engaged the members were with their kids' activities and in school programs. Lauren said she is on the Parent-Teacher Organization board because she wants to know what's going on and in a position to make changes.

Samantha said the school does a lot of activities for kids and she wants to help to ensure these keep going. Bethany said Little Sprouts in her town is amazing at parent engagement and tries to have activities at different hours so parents can attend.

Casey said she tries to be involved as much as she can as a working mom. She feels in Freeport many parents don't get involved. She said communication from the school often only gives a week's notice of events and those working nights can't attend. Also, transportation is an issue.

When asked, members said Region 8 needs more minorities' input on the Councils and Dean said we are aware and working on solving that issue.

The meeting adjourned at 8:01 p.m. The next meeting is at 6:30 p.m. on April 27.

Todd McKenna
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