



MINUTES

Governor's Child Foster Care Advisory Commission July 16, 2018

Members present

Timothy Colahan	Gina Valerie Colas	Elliott Hinkle	Alan Linhares
Kari Rieck	Caroline Cruz	Katie Robertson	Bill Wagner
Robin Donart			

Staff

Rosa Klein, Kali Scolnick, Pamela Heisler, Katherine Bartlett

Introductions

Introduction of members and new member, Alan Linhares

ACTION: Review and approve previous May meeting minutes

Kari Rieck requests extra time to review the minutes. Group agrees to wait until next meeting to review.

Public Comments

Phil Donovan – Lobbyist with NW Public Affairs. Represents Foster Homes of Healing. Coalition of Organizations united in the belief that we should bring supports for foster care parents. Would like to see the KEEP Program taken state wide. Asks this commission to consider KEEP, and any responsibilities of making recommendations to the Governor. Roughly estimated, they want to support 3000 foster families around the state at a cost of \$7.4 million dollars for the next biennium.

KEEP is an outgrowth of something called “Treatment Foster Care of Oregon” (TFCO). Program designed for children with high needs and their families. Idea is to have well-trained, well supported foster homes, who are surrounded by an array of therapeutic services. Evidence based alternative to group and residential placements. Youth reside in a TFCO home for approximately 9 months. The homes receive initial and ongoing training, daily monitoring, weekly group support and in-the-moment coaching. Youth receive support to navigate the program, practice problem solving and coping skills. The family participate in weekly services focused on coaching. TFCO is also designed to be available 24/7.

The Oregon Youth Authority is using a version of TFCO. They gave us a useful guide to an approximate cost of serving 200 high-needs children and families - \$9.7 million dollars.

Requesting that the Commission forwards a recommendation to the Governor for a foster parent retention strategy. The agency directors are charged with giving their proposed budget to GKB on September 1st. The Governor has until the 1st of December to put together her recommended budget. We are talking to DHS. This issue of having a retention strategy has been identified. I am not convinced that all the trains are going to align and that the agency is going to have a retention strategy when they hand in the budget. You as a Commission have an opportunity to weigh in and thing it would be helpful for you to consider this and to consider recommending it to the Governor so she can put it in her recommended budget. We welcome the opportunity to come back and talk some more about this as a part of your (CFCAC) agenda in the future.

Bill Wagner: We have two courses of action that you just described actually. We were concerned that the agenda today and adding a full item which you would have preferred so we could really have some extensive discussion about what you are talking about. Rosa felt that just this introduction would be helpful to us. Then the Commission can decide if they want to have at our next meeting, or meeting very soon . . . it sounds like there is some action that has to take place fairly quickly and a more extensive discussion. What is the pleasure of the Commission? Do you want to take 5 minutes right now and ask questions to get started?

Emily Reiman: We are running ahead of time so I think that would be great.

Bill Wagner: Are there questions?

Kari Rieck: I'm interested in learning more about TFCO. DHS certified foster families – are they coming or is TFCO the specific that does the training and certification of those foster families.

Phil Donovan: Not exactly sure I can answer that question. I'm looking forward sitting down with Peter Sprengelmeyer, who has been implementing this with the Oregon Youth Authority and learning about their process. Certification is a good question.

Kari Rieck: When kids come in with higher behavior needs and they go out of foster homes usually based on the trauma they have experienced. What is happening is they are either going through a huge number of foster homes or they are being put into some higher level of care facilities. But those facilities may also have specialist foster care placements they can go to. The problem with that is if a youth are placed in one of these higher level foster homes, they have to follow the rules which include not being left home alone, not allowed to go out for a walk by themselves, they can't have a cell phone, they can't have all of these things yet the system is set up to train them for independent living (ILP). Even if their behaviors stabilize and they are able to, the options are to remove them from the specialized foster home that can continue to work with them and put them somewhere else where it's not going to work because they don't have the specialized training. That's my curiosity regarding that is just what does it look like and what are we doing to ensure that teenagers who are aging out have the opportunity to be a better fit for specialized foster care.

Phil Donovan: I've heard this in some of the discussions. I've heard it to like how do you feel about 40 minutes? Is that a phrase that you have come across? For 23 hours and 20 minutes a lot of families are there and can deal with the high needs kids. There is that challenging 40 minutes

where you don't have coverage, the kids have a problem, how do you fill that? TFCO as far as I understand is designed to do that, but how that works . . . ?

Kari Rieck: Mine isn't about the 40 minutes, mine is about the 23 hours of allowing them to become adults and letting them go outside for a walk on their own if they meet certain criteria. If they meet that criteria, they no longer qualify for that placement. It is a vicious circle that we are doing to teenagers.

Emily Reiman: Have the foster families who have participated in the KEEP program been giving testimonials or feedback on how it has gone for them? What is the rate of retention with these foster families?

Phil Donovan: We have had the opportunity to meet with one of the facilitators at Options Counseling in Portland. Describe the experience and describe the success. We are trying to work with Anthony Fox who is the DHS person responsible for the pilot to be able to actually quantify what we can with something that has been functioning for about 18 months. I just heard first hand from the facilitator testimonial to the difference that it is making but we are engaged with both Options and DHS to try to quantify that.

CFCAC Member: So Options does have a survey or program where they can capture that information (inaudible).

Emily Reiman: It is relatively easy to quantify . . . You've got \$7.4 million for the KEEP Program to support 3000 families and \$9.7 million to support 200 kids. For the KEEP program, that works out to just about \$2500 per family. I'm interested in comparative numbers. Has DHS quantified how expensive it is to recruit and train a new foster family? Do we have the stats to say we can retain them for \$2500 and that is going to save us "X" from trying to continually recruit?

Phil Donovan: We have struggled to get hard numbers from DHS. I want you to ask the question because it gives us something to go fetch. It would be great to understand the return on investment.

Emily Reiman: As I understand it, the treatment foster care is an alternative to a residential placement? I would also be interested in the stat of how much it cost to have a child in a residential bed for a year and how that compares to the cost of keeping them in a treatment foster home.

Phil Donovan: We've tried to do some of that number crunching by looking at the (VRS rates?). We are aware of the federal Family First legislation. Some of those providers may not be able to apply to comply with the new laws. As such, there may be fewer beds out there. We'd like to be able to understand with certainty that this is a potential landing spot for those kids. Some of those previous care options might not be there in the future.

Emily Reiman: It may not be that this is less expensive, and still think that there is a case to be made that this is better alternative. But if it also happens to be less expensive, that would be a powerful stat to have.

Kari Rieck: There is multitudes of current ones that already have the specialized foster homes. I would think that going to Morrison or the one in Eugene. They would be able to give what those costs are more specifically since they do it. That would be a good comparison.

Carolyn Cruz: Who would be receiving this \$7 million and \$9 million?

Phil Donovan: In state government, everything has to fit in a three ring binder in the ways and means process. These would be line items within the DHS budget. Our thought process is similar to what transpired with the pilot project on KEEP. DHS worked with Options Counseling. Options hired the facilitator and convening the groups in Multnomah and Washington counties.

Carolyn Cruz: So the oversight is going to be done by DHS?

Phil Donovan: Yes

Carolyn Cruz: So this is to increase the DHS budget?

Phil Donovan: Yes, it will increase the DHS budget.

Carolyn Cruz: To go with this particular program that is going to be working with the foster parents and then 200 children who need more therapeutic foster homes. So this is going to DHS? Not a firm, or a company or . . . ?

Phil Donovan: Again, DHS is partner with a non-profit to deliver the KEEP work. It is a good question that you ask.

Carolyn Cruz: I'm trying to figure out the amount of dollars that are going into DHS, is why they can't make this work with their current workforce. Is this something that needs to be pursued and why is it going to cost another 7 million and 9 million? You are looking at \$16-17 million to increase the DHS budget for something they should be doing.

Phil Donovan: The Secretary of State's audit came out last year on child welfare. This is one of the gaps that they identified. They identified that DHS is not doing this.

Carolyn Cruz: I understand that. I am asking why we are not redirecting DHS to do this instead of putting another \$17 million.

Phil Donovan: Then you would have to take the \$17 million away from something else. We think that this should be an add-on to the agency budget. That is why we suggested that it should be a policy option package (POP) which is fancy government speak for an addition.

Marissa Johnson: I facilitate the coalition. I work with Sen. Chip Shields and Phil here. One of the things about this option, these two programs, is the flexibility. One of the things we have now is this clearinghouse of a bunch of options that DHS draws from in terms of preparing and supporting foster parents and their ongoing education and care for children. They are not uniform options. They don't necessarily have the kind of outcomes and data that these two programs have. In addition to the fact that not everyone has access to them because our state looks different whether you are in SE Oregon or up in Multnomah County. One of the things we wanted to do was preserve the regional flexibility that each of those 16 distinct districts have to respond to the needs of the community that they serve because those needs are different across the state. But we also wanted to provide some guidance around how they could be consistent and maintain fidelity to a model that is proven to work. But, also have the flexibility to partner with community organizations if that is what works best in that district or to offer the programs directly through their DHS program. The other thing about both of these programs is they offer the opportunity to partner across the continuum of care. So, if you were in the district in SE Oregon, and you don't have that many families, and there aren't that many children that need either of these programs, but there are families that are wrapped up in either the juvenile justice system, intellectual disabilities system or another system that those communities could pool and partner and use a community resource, or they are going to have this programming model that provides the outcomes the outcomes we are seeking, has the evidence base that we are seeking, and also all the data collection and tracking that we need. There is a lot of components that the Secretary of State's audit brought to light that we are missing the mark on that we feel that these two programs help us get to.

Kari Rieck: I'm curious how you are working with the other ones. What I am starting to see is a whole bunch of organizations stepping up saying we are going to solve this problem. So what is it? Every child now? There is two that I know of that are already doing what KEEP is doing. Reportedly, of what I am hearing, is that their goal is to do what KEEP is doing. I'm concerned that we've got a bunch of different organizations going out and trying to do the same thing and trying to roll out things in different communities. I wonder if it might be a better model to be looking at someplace like our forensic (inaudible) sites. Like ABC House, Liberty House, those types of things, to do regional groupings and bring all of the different groups that are doing things together to create that type of a model vs having 4-5 different groups go out and do things in each community. It is becoming competitive. There are 3 different things happening in a small community that are all trying to do the same thing and find their niche. If these guys are going to be asking for money as well, then how do we say, well, KEEP is more important than Every Child or Forever Families or whatever it is?

Marissa Johnson: With Every Child, Embrace, and Foster Plus – those are three of the community organizations that I know are interested in the question of retention and recruitment. But the focus to our awareness has been on recruitment thus far, and making the table of options in terms of ongoing support available to people as they are recruited in or are already foster parents in the system. The Foster Plus model is a clearinghouse of what is already available up in Multnomah County. PSU does the same thing. Then you have Embrace and Every Child doing active recruitment in the community, doing drives for certain needs, partnering with community organizations to bring awareness. What we are talking about in terms of a retention strategy is a solid training and support program that any of those other programs could plug into. It is not an

either or. We believe that we do need both. That those community organizations are great partners and provide great resources. They bring a lot of opportunities forward for foster parents that foster parents might not be aware of otherwise. This is just a model of training. It is a train the trainer model. The Oregon Social Learning Center will be deploying the train the trainer part of it. Any of the community partners who want to participate in the training and ongoing support of foster parents at that level could be part of it and get one of the contracts and get that additional funding as well as provide the services they are already providing.

Bill Wagner: Clearly the Secretary of State's audit put their finger on a problem that we have – that is retention, not just initial (inaudible) of foster parents but how do we train them so they feel comfortable? How do we provide the supports that they need including respite care or whatever? Also, for your information, the Governor has asked this Commission in the last few months if we would pay attention especially to a couple of issues, one being foster parent recruitment, retention and training. What you are talking about is high on our agenda to figure out what we think we can recommend. Glad that you are here because you are helping us focus attention on a piece of that issue. What I am questioning is, you mention that you are working with ten or twelve families in the Portland area now.

Marissa Johnson: We have 100. We have 10-12 members of the coalition, then 100 families who have already been (inaudible).

Bill Wagner: So it is the coalition is may be providing the training?

Marissa Johnson: The members of our coalition are advocating for this policy proposal as a group. Our conversation with Phil and the rest of our members has been about, OK, so we all perceive this challenge, what do we think the best *first* step forward is in terms of what we would recommend? Then we are also open and looking to others for what they are recommending to see where we can be helpful with those recommendations.

Bill Wagner: You mentioned that this money would go to DHS. Isn't it just passing through DHS? It sounds like it could go to a "KEEP" (inaudible) so it's really not DHS that has a worker that is doing this. They would be contracting with others to provide the service, correct?

Phil Donovan: It is what we envision.

Marissa Johnson: It is sort of a mix of either or both. It would be up to DHS. Here's what I mean by that: in some of the districts they have a trainer who is a foster parent trainer and they provide the foundations training, and may do some of the ongoing training for their peer social workers and they may do some of the ongoing training for their foster families. If that person and DHS and that district determine that was going to be the best place for delivery of the KEEP model would be through that existing DHS trainer, then that person could be trained by KEEP. Or, like we have up in Multnomah and Washington pilot program, DHS has created a position which is a liaison position. They have an in-house worker who is partnering with the Options therapy group to deliver the model and work with families to make sure families are ushered into the model and that they connect to all of the other support services that they need. It is both. It can be either/or, or a combination.

Phil Donovan: To clear up any confusion about the coalition, all of these organizations have varying levels of representation or presence in the Capitol. It will be my job to harness that political capital and bring it to bear with the ways & means process in the 2018 legislative session. Having said that, the reason why we are here is, it is so much better to be advocating for something that's already in the Governor's Recommended Budget (GRB) as opposed to it not being there and trying to wedge something in later. Invariably, you either have to peel money off of something else or you have to find new money. Both of those are challenging.

Bill Wagner: So, to be timely with that, when would this group need to be recommending something.

Phil Donovan: I wouldn't want to get much later than early October. Because, the agency is going to hand in their proposals to the Governor, so you think we shouldn't have to kick it out until December 1st . . . there's a lot of putting together inside that office that takes several months. Not to mention that it is an election season so there is a campaign going commensurate. And then there is just the sheer printing. The GRB is a 1.5 inch thick budget doc that they have to get to the printer before Thanksgiving.

Kari Rieck: When did Foster Homes of Healing and the coalition actually start?

Marissa Johnson: It didn't start until late this spring. My role as the facilitator – I am a former foster parent myself. My foster daughter has now aged out of the system. We had a very long haul of it. While I was doing that I was also working with state legislature with former Senator Chip Shields, who was also a foster parent at the time. We started having these conversations between ourselves and with the Foster Parents Association back then. This new iteration of the conversation was just since this spring.

Kari Rieck: So, each of the coalition members joined when?

Marissa Johnson: This spring.

Kari Rieck: And they are all represented?

Marissa Johnson: Yes.

Emily Reiman: Are there plans to expand that? This is a great starting group but it is also a bit random in terms of the conglomeration of organizations.

Phil Donovan: We are interested and if you have people we should be talking to, yes.

Marissa Johnson: These folks got in their application to us and did the whole process and have that official capacity. We also have a lot of community partners that we are talking to and engaging with across the state on the daily. We are welcome to more.

Bill Wagner: As a process the Commission can decide how they are going to proceed with this and we now have a time frame that we need to operate in on this question. Sounds like a timely proposal within what we have as a priority also.

Election Process for Chair and Vice Chair

Bill Wagner: We are looking at a new process. Rosa indicated to me that she would like to follow a process where the chair nominates. Then, I will ask for additional nominations. Then we will vote if we have other nominations that we have before us. I have been told that they would prefer it if we have them a co-chairs, so they intend to operate as co-chairs. However, the statute calls for a Chair and Vice Chair.

ACTION: Election and Installation of officers

As the Chair, I would like to nominate Valerie Colas as the Chair and Elliott Hinkle as Vice Chair.

Are there other nominations for Chair or Vice Chair?

Seeing none, will close the nominations and I will ask all those in favour of Valerie Colas as Chair and Elliott Hinkle as Vice Chair say “aye.”

COMMISSION: Majority vote of “aye.” Robin Donart not present for the vote. Alan Linhares abstains.

Bill Wagner: Turns over the seats and meeting to the new Chair and Vice Chairs, Valerie Colas and Elliott Hinkle.

Valerie Colas: The first task to order is that we are going to change the agenda just a bit. Celebration of outgoing chairs.

September Commission Retreat

Valerie Colas: I suggested at the Chairs meeting for the Commission to re-group as a Commission and to figure out what our next steps are. It is quite timely with Bill’s questions for the assessment of the Commission and what we still hope to accomplish. Figuring out what structure we want to follow-through with. We are not going to get in to a discussion about the assessments, although they have been provided. We want to go over the themes that came out of those assessments. We definitely have some limitations. We don’t have much budget for the Commission and how we work within that and how we feel as a Commission that we do more work and be able to use other means to be able to accomplish the work that we want to do. At this time Kali is going to help facilitate the discussion about what members would like to see at the September retreat. The retreat is going to be a closed Commission retreat. There will be no time for public comment, but it will just be for us to lay down the structures and also incorporate bylaws, examples of which have been provided in your packet. If anybody would like to chime

in about what they would like to see at the retreat. It will still be on the 3rd Monday in September. When I say a full day, it will be pretty much what our Commission meetings are like. Instead of breaking out into groups, we will work as a group and have different topics. We will have someone come in to help us.

Kari Rieck: I would still like to get legislators there.

Valerie Colas: We had a discussion at the last Chairs meeting about whether we wanted to have legislators come in talk to them and to present, based on the assessment, some of the limitations . . . what could be done and what their ideas were that were initially proposed to the Commission. That was the context behind Kari's request. Do you still want to see legislators there?

Commissioner: It sounds like we wanted to have a closed meeting without having additional parties there. I wonder if it is possible to provide them with a list of questions in advance and get their feedback that we could review as a group answering some of those questions. Although, it would be helpful to ask questions in real time.

Kari Rieck: Are we not doing anything? Maybe we need to have that discussion about our Committees moving forward with their work as everything is on hold until the retreat. What is the plan? Because, I have an update on the Systems Committee but I am not sure what we are doing.

Elliott Hinkle: At this time I think it makes the most sense to hold the Committee work because we are trying to figure out what we, as a full Commission are doing. So pausing the Committees and doing a retreat and at that time discuss does it make sense to have the Committee structure, what should the Committees be doing, so that everyone is utilizing their time more efficiently. I think that would be the best place to discuss that.

Kari Rieck: Are we not putting anything legislatively in?

Elliott Hinkle: Not at this point. The Commission has not approved anything legislatively.

Kari Rieck: My question was, are we basically saying, by not doing anything until September, until after the retreat, are we basically saying we are not putting anything forward to legislators for the upcoming session? Because the timeline is going to be so that it's a problem.

Commissioner: That might be a question for Rosa and the Governor. Last I heard, there were two placeholder bills. If they are comfortable just leaving the placeholder bills, then that gives us more time to figure out what we are going to do with them. If they aren't comfortable with them just hanging there (inaudible) it would be good for us to know that.

Valerie Colas: That is a discussion that Elliott and I haven't had (inaudible) were going to put the Committees on hold until September, but that is definitely something I feel like the Commission should have input on. I think the best thing is for us to put things on hold until September for us all to figure out what we want to go forward with. At the same time, realizing that the Committees have done work and are at various points of their work. Do you want to provide an

update of where you are with the Systems Committee to say where you are at and what you might want to continue working on? We have enough time right now to have that discussion. Especially when we have everybody here we can see how we want to go forward until September too.

Kari Rieck: The reason I ask is we finally, the Systems Committee is an odd Committee because it has a little bit of everything. But the Committee has decided to focus on education and there is a lot of work being done to try and look at all the different things that are going on in the Agency between Department of Education and child welfare. So I don't want to put the Committee through all of that work if we are going to decide that we are not going to move forward with Committee work. I'd like to hear the Commission's input on whether focusing on education is a priority for us and if the Committee can keep working on that? I went to the town hall public forum that Representative Rayfield put on and then Representative Alonso-Leone and Representative Dougherty were there. One of them is the co-chair of higher ed, the other one is the chair of education committees. I talked to all three of them afterwards and they are really interested in education and foster and would like to talk more about those. I don't want to take their time if we are not going to move forward. I hate asking for time with legislators with our Committee if we are not going to do anything. I think that won't look good with legislators. That is why I am asking those questions.

Commissioner: The other tricky part about that is that that topic is not necessarily related to the two placeholder bills from the Governor's office. The placeholder bills are foster parent support and youth aging out. Which means potentially if we want to move forward with some sort of education request, we are probably on a tighter timeline for that and we'd need to go through, probably a legislator to get a sponsor for that bill. That's probably going to happen before September.

Kari Rieck: OK because I will have to fiscal impact because one of the things we are looking at is, right now they can access education until 21. Most other states are 25. We want to reach out to all of the other organizations that are working with foster youth and see what bills they are putting in.

Commissioner: I'm wondering if, based on that, that sort of ties in with youth aging out, if part of the interest is in extending educational access.

Kari Rieck: We talked with the Department of Education and it was shocking what they had to say.

Commissioner: One of the other pieces that were dispatched under the Committee level was relating back to the Chair's Committee discussion about trying to figure out if the Commission . . . two paths forward for the commission. There is the path we can get funding for staff and become a more fully fledged operating Commission. Or if we can't, then narrowing down and picking one or two priorities that we think we can accomplish. The Systems Committee had a pretty robust conversation about proposing that education be one of those . . . if we are narrowing down (inaudible) we saw a pretty clear path forward for education to be a manageable piece that the Commission could consider for its narrowed scope. But I guess coming back to the retreat

conversation, one of my hopes is that we can figure out that path. I don't know whether we are proposing that to legislators before the retreat so we have a likely path forward where we can delve more deeply into what this is going to look like at the retreat or whether we are actually having, sort of coming up with the two scenarios at the retreat?

Carolyn Cruz: Just because we have a new chairperson, it should not take away the work that has been done. This is no reflection on the fact that we didn't meet for a whole year. I think there are some things that are in place and that we still need to respect that. I understand too how we need to regroup. But, to not do nothing for the next two months? I don't think that is both of your intent, that fact that we are going to regroup in September. I think we should listen to what she has to say and (inaudible) it is still up to the whole Commission in terms of do we want to pursue it or not.

Kari Rieck: I want to be clear. We met with all the Chairs, and this retreat came out of that meeting.

Carolyn Cruz: I'm just saying that your question in terms of do we put everything on hold until after the retreat? (Inaudible) if this is something we need to pursue let's hear it and then we can make a decision if we want to wait until September or not.

Valerie Colas: Providing more and further context, at our last Chairs meeting we saw that we had reviewed some of the assessments, and we also reviewed some of the limitations that we have had and difficulties that each Committee has had in trying to go through its work plan and priorities that we have had. It was a consideration – what are the reasons for those limitations or those (inaudible) that is making it very difficult to continue working as separate Committees. It is the reason why a structure discussion is even up for the retreat, is to see whether we can continue with our structure given that our limitations that this is volunteer based. We all have other jobs and trying to facilitate and get outsiders to come in and provide the technical support that we need or to call in and get materials has been difficult trying to get them timely to process and to condense them. From our last meeting, even the Placement Committee had some issues with working on their bill, then the Commission had more questions about it, so they had to go back and put it on hold. Although we did have priorities, and the Commission voted yes on each Committee going off with those priorities, when it was coming back to the full Commission, there were still questions about is this really where we want to go or should we be looking at another track and having the Committee chairperson going back to their Committee to say we've worked on this, but now we need to (inaudible) something else. That was why the structure was up. That we need to reanalyse it to see whether the Committees should go forward.

Bill Wagner: One thing that is important that you didn't hear because you weren't at the Chair's meeting was Rosa said in her discussions as Governor's staff with both the Governor's budget I kind of wonder why the Governor isn't proposing a budget for the Commission. I'll assume that means that she will keep the budget that keeps the Commission's meetings going, which isn't cheap. Looks like we are going to end up spending about \$10,000, that's what we've been allocated and we are on a good track to spend all of that. Just to have our meetings and the retreat etc. That's an important piece. If we are going to get additional funding, that was the thought of inviting legislators that formed the Commission essentially, and tell them OK, if you want us to

do more work, here is what we have found in this first year. We had some good ideas, but it was difficult to have the background work that a staff would be doing to bring those ideas in a form that would be legislative concepts. That is why the people involved in the Chairs Committee are saying, OK, we've really got two paths to go. One is, if we don't have a budget, how are we effective? What effective things can we do that doesn't cost a whole lot? One was this education piece. Or, if we talked to the legislators and get some indication that they might be willing to put a budget bill forward, that we can have a different view for what the Committee structure could do. That's an important piece.

Commissioner: If we are going to do the retreat in September, which I actually fully support because I think we need to come together and we need to sit down face-to-face and hash out what are we doing and how are we doing it. Where are we going? How are we structuring this? What can/can't we do? But at the same time, that is two months off. Are there things that we can do or should be doing in the meantime so that we don't feel like we are just on hold not doing anything until then?

Elliott Hinkle: I think it is hard to say because it is hard to know what our unified path forward is. So, it puts it on hold for two months. I have to wonder what the work is that is being done that the full Commission which comes first, but that is the hold up for me.

Commissioner: In the Placement Sub-Committee we looked at a variety of different things and some of them relate to the placeholder bill. On the other hand, we had some things that rose to the top in terms of safety that we were trying to gather information on. I think that that might be something that we want to continue. The dialogue that has been going back and forth with DHS sending us information on what their policies and procedures are, and here's what we do and how we do it, and then we are responding back with some questions to try to dig into, that is great what your policy and procedure is, but what is actually happening regarding these policies and procedures? How is it being monitored? Who is responsible for the monitoring? Dig in deeper to get more information. Those are the kinds of things I am thinking we might still want to do in between now and September. It's not like pursuing something legislatively. It's mostly done through email. It might be fairly easy for us to do.

Valerie Colas: Based on your suggestion, I think each Committee can continue to get more information but in terms of reaching out to legislators, and advancing any kind of bill, hold off in terms of having those kind of conversations with others but to continue gathering information to the extent that the Committee wants to continue to do that. I'm not hearing anyone on the Commission saying that is something that they are opposed to collecting more information and to bring it back. And if each Committee then wants to continue meeting and have information to provide at the retreat for proposing what they would like to continue with, and having all the Commission on board with continuing with that topic and discussion. Then they could have this is the information we have and this is why we need to prioritize this and to get all the Commission members on board with that. In terms of talking with legislators. Is that something that you want to do or is that something that we could structure in different ways where we invite them in the first 30 minutes or so. When I say legislators, I mean Gelsner and Stark, and to see if they would like to have a discussion with us for any 30 minutes of their time. The retreat will be in Salem. We don't want to get in the weeds, but to say, these are things that have been identified

before when you were proposing the Commission. The fact that there was no budget allocated, that was part of the legislative minutes and their discussions and exhibits. What else can you imagine that we can do? Support for this Commission – how it continues. And to say that we also have the annual report that we are working on to present that. So, these are the things that we've been able to do. These are the discussions we have had with various stakeholders and we would like to continue doing that. In the long term, how do you envision helping the Commission to be able to do that because this is not a bi-partisan issue? This is the Executive branch working with the Legislative branch to figure out how we are going to make this continue so we can ensure the safety of all children in foster care. Is that something that Commission members want to have?

Bill Wagner: We need to know if Duane Stark and Sara Gelser still feel that the Commission has a broad mission. If it does, then we need staffing and are they willing to put forward an effort to get funding for the Commission. I would love us to have an hour or two, probably two, before we talk to the legislators. Then, talk to the legislators. Then, have another bit saying, OK, based on what we heard, let's figure out what we want to have as our track for the next year. Because if they say, well, this isn't the year to push for funding, that is going to clearly help us go. But if they thing there may be a chance then we can build an agenda for what we would do with a certain amount of funding.

Kali Scolnick: Kari, what specifically would you like to get from the legislators? I'm trying to capture specifically, what, having them come in, what is the purpose. If you were able to get three things from them at the end of their time, what is that?

Kari Rieck: Are you talking the education piece or are you talking Sen. Gelser and Rep. Stark?

Kali Scolnick: If they are going to come in the room for 30 minutes, what answers are you seeking? What is it that we want to know? I think what Robin was talking about being able to send something out in advance with the questions so they come prepared to answer specifically what the Commission wants answered is important. Before that invitation even goes out, we need to get clear about what that looks like. What are those things?

Kari Rieck: I think that what I would want to hear from them is what they see and what they are hearing are the biggest issues with the system and what their priorities are regarding the child welfare system. And then to prioritize all the tasks and see which ones that are in the bill, a statute that says this Commission does this, this, this and this, is, which ones are their highest priorities and would they support a roll-out of different types of things given that we have no staff.

I think my main question for them would really be, we heard from them, and we know that from enabling the legislation most of what their vision for this Commission was. I think my question is, if they want that, are they willing to put dollars behind it? If they are not willing to put dollars behind it, then what are the priorities? How do we figure out the one or two things that the Commission can accomplish without?

Kari Rieck: I have to disagree on a lot of regards. I think that the Commission as a whole has not had the opportunity to do the work. This isn't meant towards anything in particular, but we come to these meetings and it is all about presentations then we have a few minutes to ask questions and the Commission has never had the opportunity to discuss anything that we've heard or any healthy conversations about going forward. Even if we had staff, if we continue doing and having meetings the way we've been having them, we are going to be right in the same conversation next year, saying wow! What are we doing as a Commission because as a Commission we are not doing anything but hearing presentations? That is where my frustration is and I understand money will help to support a staff person, but money is not the answer to what I think is our biggest issue. That is why I think a retreat is important, because I felt for the Placement Committee, they kind of were . . . it's like you have 15 minutes, now get everybody's buy in on all of these things and it was kind of the first time we've been able to have that conversation about those. So, they were completely new topics for people. I feel like that with education, right? If I was to ask the group, oh, please support the Committee's work on this, it would throw everybody off because we haven't had any discussion or allowed enough time to have discussions. I really think at least half of our meeting should be working sessions where we are working on things together as a group. That's just my opinion because I don't want to rubber stamp anything. If a Committee brings something, I need to know that when I approve it, that I have an understanding and, that while I may not totally agree with it, I can buy into it.

Valerie Colas: I think that is what is (inaudible) about the September retreat is to create the structure. When I say structure, I mean provide the procedures for us to go forward. We do have procedures, but to make it more transparent, like what is this Committee doing, and then for everyone to be able to know what each Committee is doing and what the meetings are about and to have those kind of notes as well so that everyone can keep up to date. To reimagine what our Commission meetings are like so that we do get the work done and that we are able to have timely discussions about each presentation and take away a few pieces that fit into what the Committees are prioritizing but, instead, to sit down with each other and have a work session to the extent that we feel like, well, this really seems like something that this Commission follow up on or we need more follow up on this because as a Commission as a whole we want to do the work together or assign it to a Committee, then that's the way we can reimagine at the retreat, and to provide that kind of way of setting the agenda and what parts of it are going to be presentation and what part will be work for the Commission. Although this is a concern, it has been laid out in the assessment. Those are the things that we are going to try to work out during the September retreat. See what kind of meetings work best for us.

Valerie Colas: When we are talking about what we are going to see is just not what are the issue now, but what kind of presentations . . . what do you think we need as a Commission further to be able to have the procedures and create the transparency/accountability so that we can continue and work or to do the work. I guess what kind of facilitators that we would want to have? Not to say that we would have many, but what would be helpful for us to have at the September retreat for us to be able to get these things into place. If we are going to have a discussion with legislators, and if we want them to perhaps list things we are going to do it 30 minutes during lunch and perhaps what kind of topic we need to have before then. What are the topics that you want to hear at the retreat. I know some of the things that we are going to be working on is a

manual. Instead of just taking these samples of bylaws but to provide more of where the bylaws are going to go so we can vote on it.

Commissioner: What do you mean by “manual?”

Valerie Colas: Other commissions have manuals of rules. It is based on bylaws where procedures are broken down, of resources that the Commission can use. Whenever we have new Commission members, this is an easy, quick guide and where to go to for certain things. That is what I am hoping to also come out of the retreat is having those kinds of things in place.

Elliott Hinkle: To get us more foundational. Who are we? What are we doing? How do we go about it? This sample seemed like a good starting point.

Robin Donart: Figuring out how we are going to structure our meetings and what our agendas are going to be like is going to be very important. I agree with what Kari says that part of the struggle that I think we have had so far is that we brought together a very disparate group of people who all have an interest in the same thing and different areas of expertise, but who don't know the entire system. We've spent a lot of time providing information, and education so we have the information that they need. But if we can put it together here so it is a reference for people rather than having to have so much of our time in the Commission meetings focused on presentation of that information but have resource materials that people can look at in order to get that information probably will be helpful. I will say that I don't want to spend a ton of time focusing on putting together a manual. I think that we should have a time limit on how much time we are devoting to that so it doesn't eat up other important conversations that we want to have. I think things are very different. Actually, that is another reason I think it would be nice to hear from Sen. Gelsler and Rep. Stark, things are very different from when we were first created. The public presentation is that things are better and I don't think that is correct and I think those things need to be addressed and confronted in terms of what we are actually looking at in foster care. I think certain things have been focused on with the Safety Plan that DHS has been working on but I think there are now huge gaps with significant changes in leadership that DHS has experienced. That has changed some of the support and perspective on the work that we're doing. I would be interested in hearing from them where they sit at this point.

Emily Reiman: I totally agree that I wish we had time for substantive discussion at our meetings but we come back to the same sort of time conundrum that caused us to create Committees in the first place. I think most of us agree that the Committees haven't function quite as effectively as we had hoped. The impulse behind starting them was that we only have 6 meetings a year and they are 5-6 hours apiece. We do have a ton of education that needs to happen. We've been focusing on system education the first year, but even look forward. The Systems Committee has had several presentations about different pieces of the education system to know enough what needs to be discussed, right? Somehow there still has to be a balance of how we get our education and information and then how we are able to discuss it. Maybe the other missing piece is then, where does the follow-up come from? That's another thing I feel like we struggle with. We have discussions, and we pose questions and then we never revisit. The action doesn't happen. How do we manage those three pieces when we are all volunteers with day jobs and we only gather 6 times a year? That is why our first effort in overcoming that was, let's create some

working committees so that some work can be happening in between, divide and conquer. After we divide and conquer it sounds like there were some problems when we try to come back together. That's an issue to be thoughtful about. My hope for having staff and having a budget to have staff would also be some of that capacity, right? Some of the follow up or some of the research or some of the education could be brought in from an outside professional person for whom this is their day job. That's not the right answer but I don't think we can accomplish all of those things in a meaningful way just with a Commission that meets 6 times a year.

Commissioner: So, it's almost like we need a project manager.

Bill Wagner: Exactly

Emily Reiman: I don't know

Commissioner: That would address a lot of what you are talking about, which is, somebody to pull in information to disseminate. Someone to make sure that all of the Commission members have what they need and then to address action items and follow up.

Bill Wagner: I think that is what is missing for me. I agree with Kari. I would love to have more conversation. The Secretary of State's audit. We could have had conversation about well, what do you think the most important thing that that audit says and that we want to focus on. But then, my concern is, then we need to have somebody say OK. Research these five topics for us and come up with some option for us so that we can make some decisions. Yes, the presentations are important to me so I learn something. The discussion is important but how do we follow up with that discussion? Who is going to take the ball and form it into an actionable item?

Kali Scolnick: A lot of things being brought up sound like the things that we want to have during the structural discussion section of the retreat. Knowing that that is going to be a large topic that we want to have, to take the time to think about what that looks like so that when we come together in September, we are ready to have the structural conversation. I've heard at least 5-6 different huge chunks that have been laid on the table in the last 10 minutes. I think it deserves a deeper discussion. Even what Bill is talking about with this idea of staffing? If staffing is something that is wanted, a project manager looks very different than somebody who is going to go out and do research and data. How do we know what we need if we don't know what we are focused on at this point.

Commissioner: What I would like to see is before we meet in September for this conversation, having a list of questions that we want to answer at that meeting so we can think about it and prepare. That is one of the things that I think would help going forward for agenda items is actually having things that we should come prepared to the meeting to discuss. Information that we should already have so that it will be more about discussion than about trying to get on board with what we are going to talk about. So if we had a series of questions, these are the things that we are going to cover, specifically your answer to these questions and what your thoughts, solutions, concerns are. Those items to me would be helpful to have in my what it is that we are going to be talking about.

Tim Colahan: I think it is important that we have some time with the Senator and Representative so they hear from us some of the challenges that we've had. When I was appointed to this commission, I remember some of the conversations I've had with some of the legislators and they had some extremely ambitious and high expectations of what we were going to accomplish. I think it is necessary that we explain to them what the challenges have been and why we haven't been able to get there. I'm not blaming anybody, I just think we need to do that. What I don't want to do is put together a report that people look at and say it is a nice 8x10 glossy report and it gets set down on a shelf somewhere and never accomplishes anything. The Dependency Representation Commission that you were on. The task that that Commission had is somewhat similar to what this is. I think our task here is even larger. I look at the resources that were put into that Commission and the amount of work that went in. For us to be successful and to come up with something that is beneficial, that is what we are going to need. It takes a lot of work and all of us have lots of other work to do but we need the resources and the ability for the support to rely on that in order to help. We're just not getting there.

Valerie Colas: Describes the Dependency Representation Commission operations

Meeting Closed