

**Human Services Levy Review Committee Meeting Minutes for
Franklin County Children Services
April 18, 2024**

CALL TO ORDER—CHAIR

The Human Services Levy Review Committee (HSLRC) meeting was called to order by Jerry Friedman on Thursday, April 18, 2024, at 11:04 A.M.

ROLL CALL

- HSLRC members present: Jerry Friedman; Michael Curtin; Nana Watson; Rose Handon, Ph.D.; and Zachary Talarek.
- HSLRC members absent: Jesse Hemphill; and Jim Bowman.
- County Administration: Joy Bivens, Deputy County Administrator.
- Office of Management and Budget (OMB): Rachel Buske, Budget Analyst 3; and Madeline Gresham, Budget Analyst 2.

REVIEW OF LEVY REQUEST—HSLRC

Mr. Friedman stated that FCCS provided responses to the questions posed by the HSLRC during the meeting on Thursday, April 4, 2024. He opened the meeting to the attendees to receive their thoughts and comments regarding the responses.

Ms. Buske noted that during the last meeting, it was recommended that OMB meet with the fiscal staff at FCCS. She confirmed that the meeting took place and she provided an overview of the discussion that ensued. She relayed that FCCS believes that the high voter turnout that is expected due to the 2024 Presidential Election will be beneficial to their levy. She added that FCCS's other levy expires at the end of 2029, which is not during a Presidential Election, but she reminded the HSLRC that FCCS can put the levy on the ballot a year early, which would coincide with the 2028 Presidential Election.

Mr. Friedman asked if any other levies would be on the 2028 ballot. Ms. Buske stated that the Franklin County Board of Developmental Disabilities would have the opportunity to put their levy on the ballot early, as well, so they could either have their levy on the General Election in 2027, the Primary Election or the General Election in 2028. She noted that coordinating when these levies are put forward is an important consideration. She stated that agencies are encouraged to put their levies on the ballot early if they are asking for an increase because if the initial levy fails, there will be two more chances to try again before the levy has expired.

Mr. Curtin stated that he researched which other tax items may be on the ballot in November 2024 to determine what the total ask in new taxes would be for Franklin County residents.

Mr. Curtin noted that the biggest ask that could be put on the ballot would be from COTA, which would be asking for a 0.5% sales tax increase. He stated that the COTA Board has not yet taken official action to get this on the November ballot, but COTA has until August to file this matter at the Board of Elections. Ms. Watson asked if this was for the LinkUs project, to which Mr. Curtin replied in the affirmative. He explained that the LinkUS Mobility Initiative is the major proposal from COTA to build three new corridors for mass transit. He noted that if the 0.5% sales tax increase were to be put forward and approved, it would increase the combined state/county sales tax from 7.5% to 8%.

Mr. Curtin stated that he also spoke with the Chair of the Central Ohio Superintendents Association to determine how many school districts in the county are contemplating placing levies on the November ballot. He stated that there are four school districts considering this, but those decisions are not final yet, either. He emphasized that there is a tax ecosystem that must be considered with each levy.

Ms. Bivens noted that the population of Franklin County is growing, with the population of the Central Ohio region projected to reach 3.1 million people by 2050. She stated that tax decisions are being made based on current populations, and she is unsure whether the population projections are being considered when making these decisions. She asked if each agency that is requesting a levy could demonstrate to the voters, down to the dollar, how much the levies impact their day-to-day lives. She added that it should be demonstrated who would be impacted if the levy were to go away. She used the Senior Services Levy as an example, stating that by 2030, Franklin County will have more senior citizens than kindergartners, and the county must prepare for that. Mr. Friedman related that this ties into the FCCS issue of senior kinship caregivers.

Mr. Friedman reiterated that he would like to see SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Time-based) goals associated with the FCCS Call to Action. Mr. Talarek agreed and offered FCCS's proposed investments in prevention as an example. He stated that one of the FCCS proposals was to match the funds provided by a state program on a one-time basis for kinship providers, but he stated that this program may be too new to measure whether this investment is an effective prevention measure. Mr. Talarek noted that if FCCS is planning to make investments in prevention, then their efforts need to be tracked and reported on at least annually to determine if the investments are working. He emphasized that data is needed so that money is not being spent on efforts that are not making an impact.

Mr. Friedman asked about an FCCS proposal to provide individuals with a one-time payment of up to \$1,500.00. Ms. Buske noted that that was for emergency housing assistance, but she wondered if that proposal was duplicative of other services that are being provided by other agencies. She stated that a lot of COVID relief funds were put towards emergency housing, and now that those funds are going away, there is a concern regarding how those programs will be funded going forward.

Ms. Watson expressed concern regarding FCCS's community outreach and communication efforts and asked to gather more information about those efforts. Ms. Bivens noted that Mr. Spinning (FCCS) is scheduling appointments with her and the Commissioners to determine where there are opportunities to combine efforts for the preventative work that they are proposing.

Ms. Buske stated that during their prevention efforts, FCCS is having a hard time matching up services that can be reimbursed under the Family First Prevention Services Act (Family First). She emphasized the importance of FCCS continuing to seek out additional revenue that is available for those prevention programs. Ms. Bivens added that she is having an outside organization analyze and validate the model that was used for the Family Stabilization Unit, and if it is determined that it is an effective model, she will work with FCCS to infuse the model into their prevention efforts.

Ms. Buske stated that she and Mr. Talarek met with Mr. Shook and Ms. Clapp (FCCS) to discuss fiscal matters, including a comparison of FCCS and OMB projections. Ms. Buske reviewed the recommended model that she believes should be used to determine the FCCS projections and noted that the FCCS estimates would be used for Board & Care and prevention expenditure growth.

Mr. Friedman asked what FCCS is locked into with their collective bargaining agreement. Ms. Buske stated that they are locked into 7.25% for this year and next year. She explained that it is not exactly 7.25% because there is a 2.25% increase for cost of living, and then there is a 5% increase on the employees' anniversary dates.

Mr. Friedman noted that some employees will reach the top of their steps for increases and he asked if that would have a significant impact on costs going forward. Ms. Buske explained that when people get to the end of their steps, they revert to getting a 2.25% increase. Mr. Talarek added that the percentage is determined by the number that is in the agreement when those increases are negotiated. He stated that they are limited to three-year agreements with the union due to state law.

Dr. Handon asked if FCCS ever quantified how many employees left their agency in the past three years to transition to the state or other agencies. Ms. Buske stated that FCCS did not really quantify it but stated that their turnover of people leaving to work for the state has decreased significantly since entering their collective bargaining agreements. Ms. Buske noted that there was a high rate of turnover because of the pandemic, so it is difficult to determine if the decrease in turnover is because of the improved pay structure or because of things settling back down after the pandemic. Ms. Buske stated that FCCS reported that since 2019, at least 33 staff members have left the agency to work at the state.

Ms. Buske shared additional FCCS statistics, noting that their case worker vacancy rate currently sits below 7%. She added that FCCS compared to the Cuyahoga County case worker vacancy rate, which is 29%. She stated that FCCS had 757 employees in January 2023, and as of January 2024, they had 809 employees.

Mr. Friedman stated that he wonders how costs are calculated for managed care because FCCS stated that for complex cases, they negotiate rates based on the individual. He also asked whether the quality of the care is improving and if metrics can be tracked over time to determine what is

being accomplished by implementing various plans. Ms. Buske noted that there are varying degrees of complexity among the cases, resulting in variability of costs. She stated that she is unsure whether a 5% increase for Board & Care projections is too high.

NEXT STEPS—OMB

Ms. Buske reviewed levy scenarios and shared a model of FCCS Estimated Revenue and Expenditures. She stated that she would recommend a 0.6 mill increase based on this model. Mr. Talarek stated that he agreed with Ms. Buske’s assessment, and he reviewed additional factors for levy scenarios. Mr. Curtin stated that he agreed that an increase in the range of 0.5 to 0.6 mills is appropriate.

Mr. Friedman asked OMB if they have a dashboard to track progress and metrics for FCCS. Ms. Buske stated that there is a strategic business plan that FCCS completes, and they report performance data on a number of metrics. She added that this plan will be revised next month, and Mr. Talarek stated that May 1 is the kickoff to begin working with agencies to review their plans and make updates. He noted that a lot of FCCS measures match what is required by federal and state reporting guidelines. Mr. Talarek stated that each quarter, agencies report on their performance measures, noting that some measures are only done annually. He added that if the HSLRC has specific measures of FCCS that they would like to track, OMB can incorporate those into the budget system.

A robust discussion ensued, and Ms. Buske compiled the questions asked by the HSLRC into the attached Addendum (see page 5).

Mr. Friedman noted that the next meeting is scheduled for Thursday, May 2, 2024, from 11:00 A.M. to 1:00 P.M.

CLOSING REMARKS—CHAIR

Mr. Friedman had no closing remarks.

With no further business before the committee, the meeting was adjourned at 12:35 P.M.

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These minutes are a general summary of the Human Services Levy Review Committee meeting on Thursday, April 18, 2024.

Submitted by:

Lauren M. Graessle,
Deputy Clerk to the Board of Commissioners &
Assistant Director of Community Appointments

Addendum

1. Please provide the most recent copy of your agency Strategic Plan.
2. Please provide the most recent copy of your Community Outreach Plan/Communication Plan.
3. Please explain how you address the issue of sibling placement and how you assure that siblings that are separated are able to continue a relationship.
4. Can you provide information on how you determine the case rate for Managed Board & Care (i.e., the process and components used, including profit/loss based on the case mix)?
5. Are there any recognized kinship Best Practices that are promoted and used either from a statewide or a nationwide perspective?
6. Please provide information that compares the agency's spending and programing in kinship services with other jurisdictions.