

Minutes
Joint Municipal Action Committee

Friday, May 13, 2022

8:00 a.m. – 9:30 a.m.

Remote meeting via Zoom

CALL TO ORDER

JMAC Chair Elizabeth Bonbright called the meeting to order at 8:05 a.m.

ROLL CALL - JMAC COMMITTEE

Elizabeth Bonbright, Chair, Tacoma Public Schools
Kristina Walker, Vice-Chair, City of Tacoma + Pierce Transit
Kiara Daniels, City of Tacoma
Rosie Ayala, Metro Parks Tacoma
Andrea Smith, Metro Parks Tacoma
Marty Campbell, Pierce County + Tacoma-Pierce County Health Department
Deanna Keller, Port of Tacoma

JMAC CHIEF EXECUTIVES

Mike Griffus, Pierce Transit
Elizabeth Pauli, City of Tacoma
Cindan Gizzi, Tacoma Pierce County Health Department
Heather Moss, Pierce County
Matthew Mauer, Port of Tacoma
Shon Sylvia, Metro Parks Tacoma
Carla Santorno, Tacoma Public Schools

GUESTS IN ATTENDANCE

Alicia Lawver, Tacoma Public Schools
Chelsea Talbert, Pierce County
Joseph van Dyk, Pierce County
Williams Bridges, Pierce County
Hunter George, Metro Parks Tacoma
Norinda Yancey, Metro Parks Tacoma
Tim Reid, Metro Parks Tacoma
Antonio McLemore, Metro Parks Tacoma
Debbie Russel, Metro Parks Tacoma
Evan Smith, Tacoma Pierce County Health Department
Renée Meschi, Tacoma Pierce County Health Department
Jeff Robinson, City of Tacoma
Chrisy Vindivich, City of Tacoma
Rosa McLeod, City of Tacoma
Kacee Woods, City of Tacoma
Rebecca Japhet, Pierce Transit
Brittany Carbullido, Pierce Transit
Sally Perkins, Practical Solutions
Tanya Durand, Greentrike

AGENDA ITEMS

INTRODUCTION

Chair Bonbright noted that there may be OPMA considerations for moving forward with virtual meetings. She will let members know of any changes to the meeting forum in the coming weeks.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

It was moved and seconded that the agenda be accepted as-is; passed unanimously.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

It was moved and seconded that the minutes of April 8, 2022 be approved as-is; passed unanimously.

Both **Tacoma City Councilmember Kristina Walker** and **Chair Bonbright** thanked Chrisy Vindivich for her work on the minutes and overall JMAC meeting coordination.

Policy Focus Area Presentations: *Justice, Equity, Diversity, & Inclusion (JEDI)*

Metro Parks Executive Director Shon Sylvia and Greentrike Executive Director Tanya Durand presented on efforts to create a network of affordable and accessible childcare. *See attached PowerPoint presentation.*

- Director Sylvia kicked off the presentation, reporting that surveys have shown a high demand for childcare, but cautioned that one program cannot do it all. After finding that childcare availability was inconsistent across schools, Director Sylvia and his team worked to identify ways to come together to form one holistic system. A component of this was bringing on Greentrike, a nonprofit that has helped to lead a collaborative effort with the Tacoma School District and Metro Parks to build *Beyond the Bell* -- the afterschool extended learning opportunities offered between 3-6 pm at all 36 Tacoma Public Schools Elementary campuses. *Club Beyond* is a similar program being established at all 10 TPS Middle Schools.
- Director Sylvia and Executive Director Tanya Durand provided overview of current childcare opportunities in Tacoma, pointing out that data shows a greater need than our capacity to serve in both Tacoma and Pierce County.
- Executive Director Durand discussed envisioning what it would look like to serve the “whole child,” both inside and outside of Tacoma. One area where work has already begun on this is after school childcare, which has been piloted in Tacoma. Director Sylvia highlighted the Tacoma Creates program as an example. In addition to providing after school childcare, Tacoma Creates also allows for more diverse programming from smaller organizations. Greentrike is leading an effort to streamline and coordinate goals and efforts across the programs. Activities include clubs, field trips, and sports, which all provide a safe space for children from 3pm-6pm.
- A key aspect of administering after school childcare is collaborative program management from Tacoma Public Schools, Metro Parks Tacoma, and Greentrike. Director Sylvia reported that each entity is responsible for some aspect of program management, whether it be providing physical space and transportation, identifying providers, gathering data, and/or handling communications.
- In reviewing the number of after school programs offered by schools, Director Sylvia stated that the team is working on getting consistent offerings across the board. Graphs from the presentation showed that several schools have more limited programs when compared to their peers. These schools included N.E. Tacoma, Jefferson, and Stafford.
- Director Sylvia highlighted challenges and opportunities going forward. A key challenge is making sure programming is consistent. They have calculated that this equates to 288 offerings per session. Ensuring that there’s enough staff to facilitate the programs has also been a hurdle. Opportunity areas include better promotional communications to families and BIPOC community partners, as well as adding more providers through childcare licensing reform.

Discussion:

Elizabeth Bonbright, Tacoma Public School Board President, remarked that it is amazing what has been accomplished so far and represents a huge shift in community focus on children and childcare.

Kristina Walker, Tacoma City Councilmember, thanked Director Sylvia and Executive Director Durand for their presentation. She reported that Cindy Marten, Deputy Secretary of the US Department of Education, recently came to Tacoma to tour Tacoma Public Schools. During her visit, Deputy Secretary Martens expressed her admiration for the innovative partnerships in our community that ensure the success and effective programming of *Beyond the Bell*, and other collaborative programs supported by JMAC members working together to address

community issues. Council Member Walker also expressed her recognition regarding the value of having childcare available for public agencies and will continue working on creative solutions.

CEO Discussion & Agency Update

CEO Questions:

- ***How is the growing child care crisis affecting your jurisdiction?***
- ***What are your staff's child care needs?***
- ***Is your organization investing in child care or looking to do so? If so, please share details.***

Carla Santorno, Superintendent of Tacoma Public Schools, gave a presentation on their efforts to address childcare. She began by thanking Director Sylvia and Executive Director Durand for their amazing work, stating that it is a great example of working as a community. *See attached PowerPoint presentation.*

- The Tacoma Public Schools mission is to support students reaching their highest potential. This means starting when they're young and getting their families involved.
- Superintendent Santorno shared an overview of the available preschool programs, which are considered the best in the state. Preschool options include Head Start, Peer Inclusion, Montessori, Early Childhood Education and Assistance Programs (ECEAP), English Language Learners (ELL), and Deaf or Hard of Hearing/Listening and Spoken Language programs.
- She reported that the Tacoma Public School Board approved a \$2.7m allocation to Metro Parks for after school programming through the 2021-2022 and 2022-2023 school years. This programming is primarily for Beyond the Bell (elementary schools) and Club Beyond (middle schools) focusing on supporting student well-being and academic achievement through extended learning opportunities.
- Data shared by Superintendent Santorno showed that overall enrollment in these after school extended opportunities is increasing. Reviewing data by program revealed that there's still much to be done when it comes to enrolling students in foster care.
- She detailed how Tacoma Public Schools provides infrastructure for the childcare eco-system by offering facilities, supplies, registration systems, snacks and transportation. In addition, TPS has instituted a Youth Mentors and Coaches program that aims to provide older students with an opportunity to mentor younger students while earning up to \$500.
- Finally, Superintendent Santorno described the many ways that TPS, through the work of the staff Equity Design Team, is working to foster equity, including providing training for staff, as well as resources for students and educators.

Chair Bonbright thanked Superintendent Santorno for touching on the equity work as it relates to JEDI. She also appreciated that TPS staff are building their program as a team model so the work can keep going if someone retires.

Elizabeth Pauli, City Manager of the City of Tacoma, described how the City has worked to address childcare for employees.

- Early in the pandemic, the City spent \$800,000 to support families and childcare centers.
- City Manager Pauli noted that childcare is not the City's primary focus, so they've been identifying where their place is in the broader ecosystem.
- When the pandemic began, the City conducted a survey of employees to identify barriers to childcare. 80% responded that teleworking and flexible schedules were the primary need, while 12% cited a need for onsite or close proximity childcare. 5% requested additional leave or financial assistance. It may be worth surveying employees again since the results are from the beginning of the pandemic.
- She reported that a new telework policy has been implemented with an emphasis on accommodating parents who need to provide childcare. H.R. staff are closely watching retention and conducting exit interviews to identify why employees are leaving. Building on-site childcare spaces was also briefly explored but was not pursued due to significant risks that were identified.

- Support is also given to employees through information about resources in the area and benefits like a dependent care savings account to offset childcare expenses. The City also has an Employee Assistance Program that can help parents select childcare through a free phone consultation.
- City Manager Pauli added that about 30% of City employees live in Tacoma, which likely impacts childcare needs and opportunities to help.

Chair Bonbright thanked City Manager Pauli and hoped that these conversations can help spur an exchange of ideas between Executives.

Mike Griffus, the CEO of Pierce Transit, provided an overview of childcare obstacles for transit employees, noting that transit agencies across US are experiencing staffing shortages and are unable provide full service.

- CEO Griffus relayed that daycare is a major hurdle to hiring new employees and drivers. Drivers work on various shifts ranging from early morning, day, and evening. This is especially true of Relief Transit Operators (RTOs), who fill in for other operators that are sick or on vacation. This means their schedules can shift dramatically depending on coverage needs. He remarked that it's difficult to provide childcare to that kind of workforce. He also reported that pay and the cost of childcare are other issues.
- CEO Griffus also discussed ways that the agency is trying to help. While it would be ideal to create set schedules for employees, the number of absences that the agency has on any given day make it extremely difficult. Staff are looking at grant opportunities and childcare providers who can work outside of normal business hours. In addition, the agency has created Employee Resources Groups where staff can share resources, seek support, and collaborate on childcare.

Chair Bonbright thanked CEO Griffus for bringing up childcare needs during non-standard hours for shift workers and those with inconsistent schedules, stating that it has historically been a significant issue for families and for their employers.

Commissioner Rosie Ayala of Metro Parks commented on surfacing the need for cross generational care. She pointed out that there's often a single person responsible for taking care of both older family members and children.

Heather Moss, Director of Human Services for Pierce County, on behalf of County Executive Bruce Dammeier, reported out on the County's efforts to address childcare for staff.

- Director Moss relayed her professional experience of instituting an Infants at Work policy at the WA State Department of Early Learning.
- She commented that COVID has shown how effective parents can be at both caring for a child and getting work done at home. Along the same line, Heather reported that the county allows telework and flexible schedules so parents can look after children while working.

Pierce County Councilmember Marty Campbell added that it's important to acknowledge that a large portion of the workforce can't work from home. Additional attention is needed on that segment of the workforce.

Matthew Mauer, the Local Government Affairs Manager for the Port of Tacoma, presented on behalf of Port Executive Director Eric Williams.

- Matthew Mauer stated that the Port has an older population of workers, so childcare has not been as big of an issue. He noted that working from home has further alleviated childcare strains for staff. The Port also has an Employee Assistant Program that helps with childcare placement and cost.

Chair Bonbright pointed out that as far as EAPs, it's not only finding childcare but also affording it that's the issue. This may be something staff can take back to their organizations for ideas and ways each agency can explore ways they can ease the burden of the high price of childcare through vouchers or other financial benefits for their staff.

Deputy Director Cindan Gizzi of the Tacoma Pierce County Health Department, speaking on behalf of Tacoma-Pierce County Health Department Director Dr. Anthony Chen, stated that the department is thinking about childcare as gender equity issue.

- Staff are working on family friendly policies and programs, such as allowing parents to bring in their infant and providing breastfeeding rooms.
- Regarding telework, supervisors are focusing more on work deliverables and less on whether parents are simultaneously providing child or elder care during work hours. This will be formalized in a telework policy that will be released soon.
- Deputy Director Gizzi also relayed the department's experience with implementing a childcare facility. 10 years ago, an off-site childcare facility was started for employees and participants in the treatment services program. She reported that it was difficult and ran into many challenges, ultimately causing it to be closed after a year.

Chair Bonbright thanked her for sharing that experience and hoped everyone learned from the discussion. She noted that we ran out of time and were unable to get to Director Sylvia's remarks.

CEO Griffus mentioned that Pierce Transit will be providing fare free service to those 18 and under starting later this year. This may provide further opportunities for after school programs.

Commissioner Andrea Smith of Metro Parks reminded attendees that the Seymour Botanical Conservatory opens at noon on Saturday. Owen's Beach is opening on June 4.

STAFF WORKGROUP UPDATE-

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Chair Bonbright called for public comment. No comments were provided.

GENERAL COMMENTS BY JMAC

Chair Bonbright called for general comments by JMAC members.

NEXT MEETING

The next meeting is Friday, July 10, 2022, 8:00 a.m. to 9:30 a.m.

ADJOURNMENT

Chair Bonbright adjourned the meeting at 9:34 a.m.

**Minutes taken by Pierce Transit*