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**PHT Meeting Minutes**  
**October 5, 2023**  
**Skagit Station Meeting Room**

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**Members:** Dan Berard, Thomas Boucher, Patty Codd, Bill Henkel, Chris Johnston, Maddy Mackenzie, Kevin Murphy Mo Pettitt, Margaret Rojas, Mandi Rothman, Lyndie Simmonds, Dean Snider

**Community Stakeholders:** Chris Baldwin, Marci Bloomquist, KaSandra Church, Kristen Ekstran, Keith Higman, Jennifer Sass-Walton

**Ex-Officio:** Peter Browning, Howard Leibrand

**Staff:** Melissa Doss

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## **Agenda Review and Steering Report:**

Mo went over the agenda for today's meeting. She then touched on the topics discussed at the last Steering Committee including:

- Membership/Skagit Valley College seat to fill
- Food Security Workgroup
- Update on Opioid data

## **Child Care:**

Jennifer Sass-Walton and Dean Snider talked with the Trust about the on-going challenges to provide child care in Skagit County. Local partners are working hard to keep the industry afloat and ARPA investments are making a difference, but not against a stronger tide pushing providers out of business and forcing cuts to services. Themes covered were:

- Hiring context for child care.
  - Some teachers are in the 3<sup>rd</sup> percentile for earnings, barely above the 2022 poverty rate.
  - 39% rely on one or more sources of public assistance.
  - 43% turn-over/year
- Monthly (median) cost to families in 2022
- ARPA Investment results:
  - One \$10,000 start-up grant awarded.
  - Seven individuals in the pipeline for funding.
  - Six of the providers are multilingual.
  - One expansion of a cc center to focus on serving Mixteco population with extended hours.
- YMCA's recent Anacortes center closure

This is a complex issue with no single solution. Child Care Aware has been advocating to improve the situation in Washington. Their policy priorities are to:

- Change the subsidy system to reflect the true cost of care.

- Respect and professionalize the child care workforce.
- Encourage the state to play a role in making child care affordable for families.

Kristen asked members to help build the story of local impacts of the child care crisis facing Skagit County. Members discussed the impact of child care affordability, availability and quality on their sectors. Themes that arose included:

- Lack of child care forcing employers to evaluate how to get required work accomplished and can place inequitable burdens on employees who are not parenting, especially in small organizations.
- The cost-benefit analysis for employees means that parents are choosing to leave the workforce. Impact is highest on women employees.
- 80% of entering Kindergarteners (in one large district) are not prepared. This increases the cost of K-12 education.
- Challenges in providing access to medical services, because over 75% of medical workforce are women.
- This is creating a downward spiral in the medical industry: lack of child care means hospitals are challenged in hiring enough staff. This decreases care and revenue which, in turn, means hospitals can't pay high enough wages to allow staff to pay for child care.

The themes that emerged will be used to create the story of impact as an educational tool for the community as well as advocacy outreach. The group discussion ended with plans for possible guest speakers, education, and other ideas to bring the importance of child care to the community.

### **Food Security:**

Kas provided the group with an update on the Food Security Workgroup process. The final Workgroup meeting would be held on October 12<sup>th</sup> and at that meeting, members would prioritize actions within the plan, discuss their agency's commitment to the plan, and would celebrate their work together. The next step is to expand recruitment and invitations for the Food Policy Council (FPC). The first FPC meeting is tentatively scheduled for December 12<sup>th</sup>.

Kas asked the Trust for input on the plan:

- Will the action steps help activate the strategies, and will the strategies help achieve the goals?
- Is anything missing in the plan?
- What role could your organization play in advancing the work of building a better food system?

The group provided valuable feedback that Kas will share with the Food Security Workgroup at their last meeting.

### **Adjourn:**

Kristen shared the upcoming meeting schedule for the holiday season (no Trust Meeting in January), thanked everyone for their participation and adjourned.