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**SUBMITTAL TO THE BOARD OF SUPERVISORS
COUNTY OF RIVERSIDE, STATE OF CALIFORNIA**



FROM: Executive Office

SUBMITTAL DATE:
May 23, 2008


SUBJECT: Status Report from Child Care Pilot Project Exploratory Committee

RECOMMENDED MOTION: That the Board of Supervisors receive and file the attached report, and direct staff to discuss with school district officials the feasibility of expanding the child care capacity of Grant Elementary School in downtown Riverside for use by County and City employees.

BACKGROUND: The Child Care Pilot Project Exploratory Committee has met seven times since its formation in September, 2007. The attached report provides a summary of its activities and accomplishments.


At this time, it is recommended that efforts to develop a pilot project be focused on Grant School, which, after next month, will no longer function as an elementary school. Staff will perform an initial analysis of the site's feasibility and return to the Board with further recommendations.

Departmental Concurrence


Kathryn Field, Deputy County Executive Officer

FINANCIAL DATA	Current F.Y. Total Cost:	\$0	In New Year Budget:	n/a
	Current F.Y. Net County Cost:	\$0	Budget Adjustment:	no
	Annual Net County Cost:	\$0	For Fiscal Year:	n/a

SOURCE OF FUNDS: n/a	Positions To Be Deleted Per A-30	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Requires 4/5 Vote	<input type="checkbox"/>

C.E.O. RECOMMENDATION: APPROVE
BY: 
County Executive Office Signature

ep't Recomm.: Consent Policy
er Exec. Ofc.: Consent Policy

Child Care Pilot Project Exploratory Committee

Status Report May, 2008

Background

The Riverside County Childcare Pilot Project Exploratory Committee was formed by Board of Supervisors' action to study the feasibility of a childcare project in the Riverside civic area. The goal of such a project would be to assist the County in recruiting and retaining employees, as well as addressing the current shortfall of local childcare facilities.

The committee consists of three voting members (the Human Resources Director, Facilities Management Director, and a Deputy County Executive Officer) and representatives from First 5 Riverside; the Commission for Women; the district attorney's office; the County planning department; the City of Riverside; and the Riverside County Childcare Consortium. The committee has scheduled monthly meetings since October, and met a total of seven times.

The charge given to the committee was to explore options such as location, regulatory issues, and potential funding sources. This was to include surveying county employees and considering a childcare partnership with the City of Riverside. Below is a summary of the committee's accomplishments.

Meetings

The committee met on the following dates:

- October 9, 2007
- October 30, 2007
- January 8, 2008
- February 19, 2008
- March 11, 2008
- April 8, 2008
- May 13, 2008

Average meeting attendance was 13 persons.

Programs in Other Agencies

Initially, the committee explored successful childcare programs in comparable agencies. The following were discussed as potential models for Riverside:

- Alameda County's child care facility and referral services to employees.
- Los Angeles County, with 11 "County Kids Place" facilities that are privately operated but give preference to LA County employees.
- Ventura County, which publishes a child care discount program directory, and has a coordinator who assists employees in locating childcare resources within the community.

- Tompkins County, NY, which, as an employee benefit, assists parents in finding childcare, and also in paying for childcare (on a sliding scale).
- Monroe County, NY, partnering with community-based organizations to provide parent/employees with childcare vouchers.
- National Institutes of Health, MD, with three sponsored childcare facilities and tuition subsidies for families earning less than \$60,000 annually.
- Levi Strauss & Company, in San Francisco, gives pre-tax vouchers of up to \$100 per month to employees on a cost share model.

Current Programs

Currently, the County offers flexible spending accounts (in accordance with IRS guidelines) in which employees can elect to set aside pre-tax income to be used toward child care expenses. Usage of such accounts is low among both County and City employees.

Discounts at childcare facilities are also offered to County employees. The Kidd Street Child Care Project facility, at County Circle, offers 15% off the normal fees. Human Resources' Workforce Exchange website for employees advertises discounts (typically 10%) at private day care facilities such as La Petite Academy and The Growing Place. An unplanned but positive result of this committee's inquiries has been intensified monitoring of the Kidd Street facility by the Department of Public Social Services.

Employee Surveys

In November, 2007, both the County and City of Riverside surveyed employees on childcare needs. There were 4,594 responses to the County survey, and 199 to the City survey. The results were analyzed both separately and in combination. The responses from those who work or live in the 92501 zip code (downtown Riverside) were then isolated. Of those 573 employees, almost 75% had work schedules that were consistent daytime hours of nine hour shifts. They reported having 337 children needing day care; 53% of those were pre-school age or younger. About 54% of the respondents indicated that cost was their greatest childcare challenge. Quality of care and location were also listed as major challenges. Sixty percent expressed support for a County childcare facility and 47% recommended an employee stipend.

From the surveys it was difficult to determine the extent to which childcare provisions would attract or retain employees. Written comments from survey respondents were generally supportive of onsite childcare, however. Some individuals stated that a childcare facility for employees was long overdue.

Site Visits

In December, 2007, eight employees toured six childcare facilities within Riverside County. The facilities ranged in type from stick-built, to modular, to refurbished mobile homes.

In February, 2008, three employees and a representative of First 5 toured the Caltech/JPL Child Educational Center in La Canada, which is in a remodeled elementary school. As part of this tour they met with a leading childcare consultant in this region. They also toured Mothers' Club Family Learning Center in Pasadena, a LEED-certified renovation for parents enrolled in a job-training program, and their pre-kindergartners.

Facility Considerations

The County Department of Facilities Management researched the required and desirable characteristics of childcare centers. These were assembled in a draft request for proposals (RFP), which the committee reviewed. The minimum requirements for a facility included capacity for 148 children; indoor and outdoor activity areas; adequate restrooms, offices and parking; and kitchen and storage spaces. The committee decided to delay releasing the RFP until after the Grant Elementary site had been investigated.

Identifying Funding

There is an understandable reluctance to commit funding to a pilot project that may be short-lived. There are, however, state grants available to cover the expenses of evaluating sites and developing new programs.

Some discussion revolved around financial stipends or incentives to parents. Human Resources managers cautioned against adopting an approach that might favor employees with young children over those who have no need for childcare. It was generally agreed that were the County or City to provide a usable site or facility, with the operating costs covered by enrollment fees, it could be the fairest way to assist employees with childcare needs.

Human Resources managers also report that it is nearly impossible to quantify the value of available childcare as a hiring or retention incentive. This makes it difficult to commit potential savings from the hiring budget to this sort of project.

Only with a thorough analysis of a proposed site and population to be served would it be possible to develop a realistic budget and fee structure. Should the decision be made to pursue a particular site, consultants with specialized experience are available to perform such an analysis.

Conclusions

This committee has provided an opportunity for County staff and managers to interact with those knowledgeable in the childcare field, as well as with City leaders who are tackling these issues. Although discussion has focused on developing a pilot project in downtown Riverside, committee members recently realized the value of the committee as a brainstorming venue for related issues, such as childcare alternatives for jail staff.

While the pilot project committee was meeting, the Riverside Unified School District Board was considering the closure of Grant Elementary School, in downtown Riverside. Now that a decision has been made to discontinue its use as a school, the district may be willing to entertain proposals for alternate uses. At this time, members of the committee should focus on evaluating the potential of that particular site, and return to the Board of Supervisors for further action should the site be determined suitable for a pilot project.