

Bright Starts Cooperative Early Learning Centre Board Meeting

Tuesday, March 17th, 2020 at 6:45pm

Chairperson: Jennifer Bleakney

On minutes: Phil Boyle

Meeting by teleconference

In attendance: Jenn Bleakney (JB), Marina Ivanova, Stacey Reid (SR), Mark Stuart, Phil Boyle, Jenn Tung, Robilyn Vanos, Owen Gallupe, Veronica Michael, Amina Giliani, Tetyana Reichert, Nomair Naeem, Hassan Asif, Leanne Varey, Mahyar Shafih, Phil Boyle

6:45 Approval of Agenda

Moved Tetyana

Seconded Leanne

All in favor, none opposed, no abstentions

6:47 Approval of February minutes

Moved by Owen

Seconded by Hassan

All in favor, none opposed, no abstentions

6:50 Notice to Board of Executive Motions on Friday, March 13th, 2020

Review of executive motions on afternoon of Friday, March 13th by Jenn B. Stacey summarize discussion during conference call with Regional Child Services and other daycare centers in region.

6:53 Discussion re: COVID-19 closure

Review of proposal to not collect fees from April onward and implications for staff.

Marina – so we are not collecting fees for three months, but we are paying staff for three weeks?

JB – yes, with this motion we would cease collecting fees on/after April 1st, and would start again only after reopening. After 3 months of closure, we might have to revisit that in terms of cash flow.

Marina – what about staff after three weeks?

JB – we had a motion on that, but it is too early to tell. We might want to wait for more information. We have emergency funds, but we would need that for rent and benefits, not top-up. Staff would have to go on EI via layoff. There aren't funds to pay staff without collecting fees from parents for a service, and we can't offer that service.

SR – talked to lawyer today. We can issue layoff letters to staff and lawyer could help with wording. We also discussed vacation and sick day allotment. There are no expectations a round that, but we could let them use it. But there are challenges: what if they use all the vacation and then come back in June, they wouldn't have any until the new year. But in general, we can let staff make the choice. With regards to benefits, the lawyer advised us to keep paying benefits. Also talked about cost-sharing for top-ups: you need a plan with Service Canada but we could set that up. The max to top-up is 95%. If we are going to

look at it, we anticipate that it might be easier to do that after tomorrow's announcement from the federal government. Looks like a lot of other daycare centers are looking at a top-up, it just depends on the finances of each center.

Tetyana – is going on leave an option? And can we reduce rent with the university for a period?

SR – yes, I did initially let our university contact know that we are closing and she did offer help if we need it. We just don't quite know yet. It sounds like schools will probably not go back until after Easter at the earliest. It can't hurt to start drafting a letter regarding rent. As for losing staff, I don't think we will lose staff.

JB – another important thing is a rumor of the region of coming up with funds to support child care centers, and that is another source of funds we might be able to look into.

SR – the region did put out a call today to have centres not apply for a certain funding pool so they might be looking at reallocating that money, which could be good.

JB – so we have no details on a lot of this, so it might be prudent to wait to see what our budget is looking like in terms of supporting staff. Mark invited to speak to finances.

MS – current rainy-day pot is \$225k. Major expenses are rent, benefits, and payroll. Rent is \$26k/month all the rest is \$16k per month. When I did the rainy-day analysis, I didn't separate salaries and fees. You have one, you have both. So we have about six months of rent, that would be \$156K, then six months of benefits to bring us to \$220k. That is pretty much all of the rainy-day fund.

Veronica – What is [other daycare center] topping up to?

SR – topping up to 95% for three weeks, then deciding after that.

Veronica – so the daycare is paying 45% of salary.

SR – correct. And that is confidential. Sounds like others are doing something like that too. Many are waiting for federal announcement tomorrow, for example the 55% of income from EI might change. It's worth waiting to see what the announcement is tomorrow.

JB – in our meeting yesterday, we started talking about top-up for staff, but we need to free up funds or get new funds to make it happen.

Robi – is there a severance package?

MS/SR – no because they are not terminated.

Robi – and are you confident they will come back? Might they move on?

SR – they could, but other centers are closed. I guess I can't say that we won't lose anyone. And we are continuing to pay their benefits. I'm not sure what else we could

Marina – can we ask them to commit to return?

SR – I can ask the lawyer.

MS – no. They are free to leave at any point. We do our best to retain staff, but turnover happens.

SR – and this problem is across the province. Some are being topped up and some are not. The region is paying their employees. It just depends on budget and what a business can afford.

Tetyana – should we wait to see what kinds of option we can offer them? And if they are interested in staying, hopefully they stay.

SR – we should wait until the federal announcement tomorrow. Then maybe we can top-up.

JB – provincially and federally too. ther

Nomair – could we not ask the university to delay the rent and use that money to top-up as much as we can? I am certain they would say yes.

SR – definitely worth starting a letter.

Veronica – if we do top-up, are we committed in stone to the end of the crisis, or can we commit for two months and end it when we review the situation?

SR – yes we can review the situation as we go on.

Veronica – can we do that now and not pay 100% salary? And stretch it out longer?

MS – good point. We were thinking 3 weeks only.

Robi – the decision was good on Friday.

Veronica – I would be in favor of trying to top-up for say four weeks at a time

MS – if we top-up, is this on top of benefits?

JB – that would be a separate calculation, yes.

PB – I think we should not shorten the three-week period that we have committed to for staff. We have already made that commitment to them and we should not shorten that.

Leanne – agreed. We don't want to make it hard for the staff.

SR – we should get a plan together next week and guide them through the process.

MS – we could look at paying rent for three months and use some of those funds for top-up.

Leanne – and what about after that?

MS – we would have to go into operating costs.

Nomair – from a PR perspective, it would be really bad to keep paying rent. I think they would waive the rent. I don't foresee them saying no. And how much is payroll per month? We might want to know that. We could do a sliding scale starting at 95% and going down.

JB – yes, and if we open in May or June then that would work great.

Nomair – we should do our best. That rent-waiving letter should be drafted.

Tetyana – if there a lease with UW? That's who the contact per is.

JB – in terms of tonight, is there anything else anyone wanted to discuss?

Leanne – that ok for the letter to come from Stacey and the board?

SR – what are we asking for, delay or waive rent?

JB/MS – waive it. We don't want to be saddled with it in the future.

SR – we will need to make a decision because it will be a lot of ROEs to issue.

Veronica – I would like to look at some scenarios for top-up and their implications.

JB – that would helpful.

JB – can we meet again next Tuesday at 6:45pm?

Discussion of time of meeting; next meeting will be at 6:30pm on March 23rd via teleconference.

Action Item: SR will draft letter to university for rent relief. Exec & Robi will assist.

Motion: Monthly fees for April 1, 2020 onward will not be incurred or collected until the centre reopens. Fees will begin to be prorated for the days that the centre reopens. Prorated fees for the month of reopening will be invoiced and collected along with full fees for the subsequent month immediately following the month that the centre reopens. The Board reserves the right to make changes to this motion through subsequent motions should the closure extend beyond 3 months.

Moved by Phil

Seconded by Mark

All in favor, none opposed, no abstentions.

Motion to adjourn meeting

Moved by Amina

Seconded by Jenn T

All in favor, none opposed, no abstentions.

Meeting adjourned