Bright Starts Cooperative Early Learning Centre Board Meeting
Tuesday, September 16th at 7:30 pm
Chairperson: Rebecca Koroll
Virtual Meeting (via Zoom)

Minutes

*** Please note that all relevant documents listed below for this meeting are located in this month's Board of Directors Meetings folder ***

In Attendance: Rebecca, Derek, Avery, Yuntian, Kaitlin, Valarie, Katie, Andrea, Patrick, Sean, Janice, Davene, Stacey, and Karen
Regrets: None
Absent: Alyssa, Maeve

Meeting called to order at 7:35

7:35 **Approval** of Agenda – **Rebecca**
Moved by Patrick.
11 in favour, 0 opposed, 0 abstentions.
Motion carried.

7:36 **Approval** of June 17, 2025, Meeting Minutes – **Rebecca**
Moved by Andrea.
10 in favour, 0 opposed, 2 abstentions.
Motion carried.

7:37 **Motion** to go in-camera to discuss a staffing update – **Rebecca**
Moved by Derek.
12 in favour, 0 opposed, 0 abstentions.
Motion carried.

8:14 **Motion** to go out of camera – **Rebecca**
Moved by Avery.
12 in favour, 0 opposed, 0 abstentions.
Motion carried.

Motion to adopt a sub-committee for Crisis Management – **Rebecca**
Moved by Janice.
8 in favour, 0 opposed, 4 abstentions.
Motion carried.

Discussion: It was agreed that a new sub-committee will be formed on a temporary basis and composed of Rebecca, Avery, Kaitlin, and Patrick. Three executive committee members and one member at large. The group will be responsible for drafting the mandate and providing updates to the board as circumstances warrant.

8:15 **Approval** of New Policy #5.21 – Internal Hiring – **Stacey**
Moved by Janice.
12 in favour, 0 opposed, 0 abstentions.
Motion carried.

Discussion Policy 5.21: The board discussed a new policy 5.21 which was developed to establish a fair, transparent, and consistent internal hiring process that promotes employee development, retention, and equal access to opportunities, aligning staffing decisions with organizational goals. The policy was circulated to board members one week before the meeting for edits and comments. It was suggested to engage a human resources consulting firm on the final version of the policy prior to initiating any reach out to employees.

8:18 Treasurer's Report – Yuntian

- Yuntian provided an overview of June, July, and August 2025 and YTD financial results.
- Full financial details are available in the *August 2025 Treasurer's Report* PowerPoint, located in the Finance Folder on the Board's Google Drive.
    - June 2025 Highlights: Actual revenue is higher than budgeted (-$9,630) due to CWELCC funding and subsidy fees being higher than budgeted; Actual payroll expenses are higher than budgeted wages and salaries (+$38,653); offset by general and administrative expenses being lower than budgeted (-$25,607), therefore total expenses are $12,746 higher than budgeted as well net income is $3,116 lower than budgeted.
    - July 2025 Highlights: Actual revenue is lower than budgeted (+$10,523) due to lower CWELCC funding this month; Actual payroll expenses are higher than budgeted wages and salaries (+$29,770); offset by general and administrative expenses being lower than budgeted (-$24,239), therefore total expenses are $5,194 higher than budgeted as well net income is $15,718 lower than budgeted.
    - August 2025 Highlights: Actual revenue is higher than budgeted (-$9,739) due to higher CWELCC funding this month; Actual payroll expenses are higher than budgeted wages and salaries (+$155,989); offset by general and administrative expenses being lower than budgeted (-$27,157), therefore total expenses are $128,831 higher than budgeted as well net income is $119,092 lower than budgeted.
    - YTD Highlights: Total revenue is higher than budgeted by $207,178 as well net income is $166,700 higher than budgeted; YTD actual as % of annual budget is 44.28%
    - Balance Sheet Highlights: Negative cash flow of 152K in July and positive cash flow of 37K in August; no change in investments; overall, cash plus investments decreased from 1.45M in May to 1.36M in August

8:22 Business Arising - Conflict of Interest Disclosure - **Avery**

- A memorandum included in the September meeting package addressed a compliance issue discussed virtually in August. The organization identified a missed formal disclosure under Section 13 of its Service Agreement with the Region of Waterloo regarding purchases from K&R Creative Spaces, owned by the Executive Director's partner. Although the conflict was previously approved by the Board and competitive pricing demonstrated, the formal disclosure requirement was inadvertently overlooked. A motion to approve the memo was conducted electronically in August, with 13 in favour, 0 opposed, and 1 abstention. Motion carried. No further discussion was held during the meeting.

8:22 Executive Director's Report – Stacey

- Stacey provided a summary of key updates. The full report is available in the *September 2025 Executive Director's Report* file, located in the September Meeting Folder on the Board's Google Drive. Highlights include:
    - Financial updates –
        - CWELCC Cost Review
            - Bright Starts was selected for a CWELCC Cost Review due to its high top-up allocation. A mandatory Mid-Year Operating Budget Template was submitted on September 5th, outlining year-to-date and projected year-end expenses. The next step involves receiving a site-specific Operating Budget Report from Children's Services, which will compare 2023 actuals to the 2025 budget and regional averages to identify potential cost-saving opportunities. Based on this report, Children's Services will issue inquiries for clarification, such as justifications for higher-than-average supply costs and suggestions for cost reduction while maintaining program quality.
            - CWELCC has reviewed the workbook submitted and they had a few follow-up questions that have been responded too so now awaiting suggestions for cost-saving recommendations.
        - Payroll Error
            - Subcommittee formed to address, see discussion section above.

    - Health, Safety, and Nutrition –
        - Two cases of head lice were reported over the summer; currently, all children are healthy.
        - The Fall/Winter menu will launch in October and be posted to the website.
        - In response to recent safety concerns highlighted by the Richmond Hill incident, the provincial government has initiated the mandate to change parking regulations near childcare centres.
        - Stacey reported positive collaboration with the University regarding parking safety. Temporary concrete bollards have been installed around the centre, including in the X Lot, with a permanent solution to follow. There is currently no indication from the Ministry regarding funding responsibility.
        - Families have expressed appreciation for the prompt action taken.

    - Enrollment –
        - All programs remained at 100% occupancy in July, August, and September.
        - The Preschool 6 program concluded on August 29th and was well received by participating children and families. Appreciation was extended to Katie and Vibs for delivering a successful program. Following its conclusion, the multipurpose room has reverted to use as a gross motor space.
        - Approximately 60 preschool withdrawals occurred at the end of August due to children transitioning to Junior Kindergarten. These openings allowed for new enrollments, primarily in the Infant and

Toddler programs, including the accommodation of 10 internal families enrolling siblings.

- Staffing/Programs –
  - Kitchen team: A leave of absence is expected to be approved for long-term disability. The application process has been initiated.
  - Leadership team: A team member has returned from a leave of absence.
  - Technology request: Educators have requested a second tablet for each classroom (12 in total), with an estimated cost of approximately $7,000.
    - **NOTE** – this agenda item was mentioned but no formal motion or vote was held and will need to be added to the next meeting.

- Expansion of Child Care Services on Campus –
  - No new updates were reported following the July memo and meeting with Children's Services. It was confirmed that Children's Services will not be extending applications for additional childcare spaces and will not consider proposals from centres with more than 50% priority spaces.
  - The Region of Waterloo is currently exploring modular childcare facilities on public and school board properties to expand not-for-profit childcare. While this may present a future opportunity for Bright Starts, eligibility is currently limited to school board properties. It is recommended to monitor developments as the initiative progresses.

- AODA Audit Follow up –
  - A single area of non-compliance was identified during the AODA audit. Training on the Human Rights Code, which is now completed by all employees, addressing the previously unknown requirement.
  - Compliance has now been met, and the training has been formally incorporated into the staff orientation process.

- Summer Fun Fair –
  - The event took place on Thursday, July 17, 2025
  - Only positive feedback has been received, and no concerns were brought forward about ticket price
  - The event was cost neutral with $10,133 spent and $10,109 funds raised
  - The administrative team is looking forward to planning next year's fun fair – thanks to Chrisanne and Karen who co-organized the event

- Administration Software –
  - The organization has adopted Digibot as its new administration software platform. Initial setup faced challenges integrating Direct Payment (PAP) with RBC Express, which was originally configured for outgoing payments rather than incoming deposits. RBC's compliance requirements made the process complex; however, Digibot provided strong support and all necessary documentation. The first round of fee

withdrawals is scheduled for Monday, September 22, with families receiving 48 hours' advance notice.
    - Activation began with one parent/guardian registering, with the option to add a second parent for portal access if desired. Both parents will receive email notifications regardless of portal access. Digibot will eventually replace Lillio, and families will be notified in advance to allow time to download any existing content.
    - Educators are currently undergoing training on the attendance module, with online attendance records set to launch on October 1.
    - Digibot is a web-based platform, and parents are encouraged to bookmark the portal. A mobile app is in development, with a tentative release planned for January 2026.

- Logo Design/Rebrand –
    - Looking to do an update to be more inclusive
    - Have staff potentially wear a shirt with logo to identify staff
    - No official vote took place about which logo to adopt

Discussion: Fee Withdrawal Timing – Digibot Platform
Stacey raised a question regarding the timing of upcoming fee withdrawals, noting the delay in September's withdrawal from the 1st to the 22nd. Board members agreed to return to the standard schedule of withdrawals occurring on the first of each month. It was also agreed that timely communication should be sent to families, inviting those with concerns to reach out for support.

8:27 Annual Staff Appreciation/Years of Service Celebration Report – Janice

- Janice provided an update on the annual staff appreciation event scheduled for October. The proposed staff dinner will take place on Tuesday, October 21st, organized by the board with a celebratory focus. The dinner will include a gift for each staff member.
- An in-person board meeting will follow the event, with a Zoom option available.
- Historically, as part of the celebration week, snack offerings were provided by the board members each day. The staff appreciation committee suggested a revamp to instead have two board members sign-up to deliver treats on a monthly basis.
- Planning for the event as well as the treat sign-up can be found on the google sheet: 2025 Staff Appreciation Planning
- A video is being prepared for staff recognition and the committee will be hosting filming sessions at the centre or families can email their videos.

--- New Business/Items for next agenda (October 21)

- None proposed

--- Regrets for next meeting (October 21)

- None received

--- Feedback (from Gmail and Box)

- None received

--- ADJOURNMENT

- Meeting adjourned at 8:51