CALL TO ORDER / ROLL CALL:

1. Vice Chair Fielding called the meeting to order at 2:06 pm. Quorum was present.

COMMISSION: (Items 2 – 6)

2. Authorization for Staff to Negotiate and Executive Contracts for FY 2011-2012 with East Los Angeles College in the Amount of $396,732 as part of the Higher Education Development Academy for Family Childcare Providers; and with Los Angeles Universal Preschool (LAUP) in the amount of $4,008,862 as part of the ECE Workforce Consortium

Vice Chair Fielding commented that in response to the prior Commission Meeting as to what needed to be done by the end of August to preserve continuity, this was what lead to the beginning of today’s agenda and the several information items that follow it.
CPO Gallardo reported that this portion of the meeting was a follow up to the request that the Commission made of staff at the July 14th Commission Meeting. Due to the fact that the programmatic budget was approved in concept and to avoid the potential delay in implementation for items with no specific programmatic budget approved; and, because there was no Commission Meeting until September, staff was directed to review the timeline for all program projects and determine which contracts could be signed before the September 8, 2011 Commission Meeting. Although the efforts toward contracting continue through several areas of solicitation, staff has determined that there are only two contracts that could be signed before the September Commission Meeting. One of the contracts is with East Los Angeles College (ELAC) and the other contract is with the Los Angeles Universal Preschool (LAUP). The contract with ELAC is for $396,732 and it is to start the implementation of the ELAC childcare providers project. The total allocation for the entire effort is $1,057,000 and the contract for LAUP is for $4 million to start implementation of the ECE Consortium. Both contracts will be for FY 2011-2012.

Vice Chair Fielding wondered if CPO Gallardo could be clearer, making the assumption that he was not reading the July 14th agenda, and could the deliverables for both contracts be explained.

CPO Gallardo deferred to Aleece Kelly, Senior Program Officer, who is working on the contracts for a response to Vice Chair Fielding’s inquiry. Ms. Kelly responded that performance-based contracts for both ELAC and the LAUP ECE Workforce Consortium were currently in contract negotiations as well as in developing outcomes for each of the contracts. For the ECE Workforce Consortium, there are multiple components to that project. Ms. Kelly reminded Commissioners that those multiple components included a policy component, being led by LAUP, and a component being led for the R&Rs that employed a coaching model as well as formalized training. There is also a component by the Office of Childcare to expand the STEP Program and several other components. Each of the components will have programmatic outcomes tied to them and LAUP will also have outcomes specific to the project management and coordination of those efforts. For the Family Child Care (FCC) Higher Education Academy at ELAC, the outcomes will be specific to increasing access to educational services for FCC providers, specifically bi-lingual family child care providers and the educational attainment will be tracked throughout that project ensuring that there is progress made by those providers in the program.

Vice Chair Fielding commented that going forward it would be helpful to have, when asked to approve contracts, information to really understand what the deliverables are; and, if it was performance contracts, to have the performance measures. What is happening is that the Commission is being asked to approve something that has not been finalized without that level of detail. Vice Chair Fielding commented that personally, he felt the Commission should approve both contracts and the lack of information should not be an impediment; but going forward he thought it would be very helpful to have the contract. This would give true transparency for the public to see what exactly was being approved.

CEO Martinez commented that in this case, staff was still in the process of getting everybody’s deliverables finalized. Even at this point, because Commissioners have expressed an interest in making sure that at least the ELAC contract started with the new school year, it was very possible that staff would come up with deliverables that would have to be revised to be even more specific. Staff does not have any problems bringing contracts that are either ready to be executed for the Commission’s review, if this is what
Commissioners would like to do. CEO Martinez cautioned Commissioners that in doing so, this would delay the process for actual implementation. It would take a lot more planning on both staff’s part and the Board’s part to make sure that the delay was to be held to a minimum, given that staff would need to come back for every contract to be approved by the Board.

Commissioner Williams commented that she understood the sense of what was being asked for but thought it might just as well to have either the deliverables or the major goals so that Commissioners know what those are. She said that she had questions on the LAUP contract and had requested information from staff. What she found out was that there are five pieces in the LAUP contract that were being subcontracted. To her, this cleared the air in terms of what she was worried about. Commissioner Williams believed that Commissioners needed some sense of what it was that was being approved. She also commented that if she got a contract, she might not be able to read it or understand it.

Vice Chair Fielding commented that at least the narrative portion of the program would be helpful. He said that he did not need to see all the boilerplate language. Just as Commissioner Williams pointed out, if there was information available about subcontractors, he questioned why it was not provided. All of the information pieces would bring a level of transparency that the Commission owes to the public. Vice Chair Fielding asked if there was any disagreement going forward.

Vice Chair Fielding also commented to CEO Martinez that if there were problems with a contract, then those issues could be brought to the attention of the Commissioners, especially if there were going to be long delays. To him, approving things in concept when the deliverables have not been really finalized was a little tricky.

Commissioner Arroyo agreed with Vice Chair Fielding that it was a little tricky. He said that he would like to be assured, in some way, that there would be language in the contract that would allow the Board to go back and revisit the final set of deliverables; otherwise, the Commissioners’ hands were tied when engaging in a contract with no safeguard for the Commissioners to go back and revisit the contract deliverables.

Vice Chair Fielding commented this was why the information was needed ahead of time. The Commission does not want to put the contractors in jeopardy by telling them that there is a signed contract with the Commission but the Commissions subsequently want to revise some things. This was not to say that the Commission does not have the right to do this. Vice Chair Fielding said that he would hate to think that people were going to be thinking that this was another stage as opposed to looking at things upfront.

Commissioner Arroyo commented that as a contractor to get an okay and then to be called back by the funder to be told that things need to be done differently--this made it really hard for the contractor having been in that position himself.

CEO Martinez commented that she understood what Commissioners were saying but that was not the conversation that staff was having with these contractors. The contractors are all individuals who have had good working relationships with the Commission in the past and understand this Commission as well. It was not as though staff would spring something on them that they did not anticipate. It was really to further refine what those specific deliverables would be given the timeframe that staff has to execute this contract.
CEO Martinez assured the Commissioners that staff was always vigilant about what the goal of that particular initiative was about and what the outcomes should be. The only thing that CEO Martinez wanted to make sure Commissioners understood was if steps were going to be added to the process, Commissioners needed to understand and accept, as do the grantees and contractors, that there was going to be more time in this process. She wanted to make clear that everyone understood this.

Commissioner Au commented that she appreciated the comments made by CEO Martinez because she was sitting there reflecting on many of the difficulties that have happened over time. Some of the major criticism that the Commission has had to hear from others outside of First 5 LA is that the Commission seems to be very bureaucratic. It seems the Commission takes forever to get projects off the ground and funding out the door. Even Commissioners around the table have criticized staff regarding this. Commissioners need to be cognizant of the fact that they play a role in many of those delays. If Commissioners were willing to accept responsibility by making these kinds of demands, then that was okay. On the other hand, Commissioners need to be in alliance with the staff when they are trying to comply with Commissioner requirements as well as hearing the criticism out in the community.

Commissioner Au also stated that she was not sure where the purview of Commissioners lied. Time has been spent by Commissioners in clarifying roles and responsibilities. It was one thing to be able to articulate it in sort of generalities but when it was put into application, this was where it got to be quite fuzzy and difficult. She was not sure if she would like to be in a position of having to review contracts that are were prepared by staff before they are being issued out. Commissioner Au agreed that there needed to be an understanding of what it was that the staff was detailing out; but by virtue of the fact that oftentimes, initiative, programs and allocations have been initiated by Commissioners and have been articulated based on their requests, certain issues are to be addressed within communities. Commissioners should have an understanding of how they would like those issues addressed since it seems there was broader requirements and expectations.

Commissioner Au further stated that this was as far as the Commission needed to go because it still had the opportunity to hold staff accountable when down the road the Commission would see that it was not getting the kinds of results that were expected from the allocations and investments. In short, Commissioner Au said she was vacillating on this issue.

Vice Chair Fielding commented that he was not suggesting that every Commissioner wanted to read every contract and narrative. For the sake of transparency, Commissioners needed to understand what was going into the contract. He could not even tell from the agenda of July 14th, what the deliverables were for those contracts. Regarding the performance-based contract, he wanted to know what the issues that were performance-based were.

Commissioner Dennis commented that there needed to be a balance. On one hand, he has been one of the Commissioners saying that the Commission needed to move and thus get contracts out on the street; but at the same, there has to be some degree of due diligence as Vice Chair Fielding was suggesting. It was not uncommon to sign a performance contract and develop the standards afterwards. This was not uncommon in the real world. It could be done. The contract could be signed and the standards developed within 90 days or within...
120 days. This was not really uncommon. This was done with LAUP. The Commission decided to give them the money and then decided that there would be standards; after which, the Commission made a decision as to whether or not LAUP kept to the standards, the Commission then had the ability to take the contract.

Commissioner Dennis said he would not want the contract process to be held up because the Commission has not dotted every “i” or crossed every “t” on the performance-based contract. He did believe, however, that a stipulation could be placed in the agreement which would say that standards had to be developed, agreed upon and negotiated within a certain period of time.

Vice Chair Fielding commented that he was not suggesting this for just performance-based contracts for that same aspect; but in general for contracts because Commissioners needed to know what the deliverables would be.

Commissioner Kaufman stated that this was really simple but really complex. It was complex because everything that the Commission does was slightly different. The Commission may have a contract that was $396, one that was $4 million, one that was $50 million or one that was $10 million. It seemed to him that Commissioners were on the wrong part of the conversation. The Commission needed to have standards of what comes to the Commission and when, under what circumstances, and in what format. The Commission has a thing that says a terminal idea is a contract. In his view, this was one part. The thing before that said that the Commission was going to assign a certain amount of money to a particular initiative. It seemed to him that a way to get out of this conundrum was to come up with language that all Commissioners understood where a spending an amount of money was going and where it was along that pathway. There are a series of paths and the Commission has the language in terms of assigned versus committed funds as discussed during the recent meeting of the Executive Committee.

Commissioner Kaufman said there should be a manual that says everybody knows where it is and Commissioners know what the expectation is. For example, today Commissioners were being asked to vote on two contracts and giving staff authorization to negotiate a contract. This is a specific stage and it should have what staff is doing—what is the major purpose of the proposal/grant, what are the major outcomes that they are going to be looking for. There was nothing in the staff report whatsoever other than his memory of what was formerly going on with these contracts. There should be a standard. The Commission does not have it. If the Commission could establish this, everybody would know what they would be getting in that particular approach. Commissioner Kaufman said that he did not know what approach that approach was. This is why he said it was really complex but simple if the Commission just had those standards. The Commission needed to come up with what it was that staff should bring forward and this would not bring any delay. Commissioner Kaufman said that he never wanted to touch a contract and read the whole thing. That was ridiculous. This was not the job of Commissioners and Commissioners do not have the expertise that staff does. What the Commissioners want to know are the goals, the measurable objectives, and the outcomes.

Vice Chair Fielding suggested that the Ad Hoc Executive Committee work with staff to try and come up with something to bring back to the Commission, unless Commissioners would rather have it done some other way. The Ad Hoc Executive Committee would look at
exactly at those issues—what really needs to come and at what level of detail—to have a more fruitful discussion around some specific proposal.

CEO Martinez commented this would be a change in the way the Board has been functioning because, as Commissioners knew, staff brings forward a report that gives Commissioners background information and recommendations.

Commissioner Martinez interjected and commented that this was no recommendations in the staff report provided to Commissioners.

CEO Martinez responded that there were no recommendations because she was not in the office the week prior when the report was prepared. What has been done in the past is all that relevant information is provided and part of the recommendation is to authorize staff to negotiate and execute a contract. Basically, Commissioners are now saying that this process is to be changed. CEO Martinez stated that she wanted to be clear on the Board’s directive, especially since there was discussion about establishing threshold amounts.

Commissioner Kaufman commented that the process described by CEO Martinez does not have to change. It may still be that staff is authorized to negotiate a contract that at least has the following goals and will be a performance-based contract. The staff report should be something that gives Commissioners some sense.

CEO Martinez responded that every initiative is different. Again, she was trying to understand the expectations of the Board so that when staff does come back with recommendations, it is meeting the expectations.

Commissioner Martinez commented that at first she did not really have “a horse in the race” but there was no back up to the $5 million expenditure and this was Board Book 101. The fact that this did not have basic background information caused people to be concerned and to panic. Now, she also is one of those people that feel that there has to be some process and rules because one would think that this recommendation would have had the back up. And, if the recommendation had the back-up documentation, maybe people would not have had all these ideas. In a sense, the staff report was shoddy.

Vice Chair Fielding commented that Commissioners needed to be clear on what they considered back-up. Commissioners needed to be clear on what they wanted in the way of back up.

Commissioner Martinez stated that she wanted what was normally included.

CEO Martinez commented that normally Commissioners would have been provided a lot more information. Staff lives with this information day in and day out. Commissioners do not. Staff cannot assume that from two meetings ago or even the last meeting, Commissioners would recall all the details. Staff has to put back the details in the staff report although the Commission has been talking about the Consortium for months and months. The same thing should have been done for the ELAC project. Yes, there should have been more information just as a friendly refresher. CEO Martinez commented that she absolutely took responsibility for her staff not being more thorough.
Commissioner Williams suggested moving the agenda forward on the two items being discussed with an understanding that the Executive Committee will look at the whole issue of the process.

Vice Chair Fielding agreed with Commissioner Williams.

Commissioner Au thanked Commissioner Martinez and CEO Martinez for their comments. This was the very criticism that she had at the Commission meeting of two weeks prior when the programmatic budget was presented for implementation. There was too much generality. There was not enough detailing out. It was not that Commissioners want every finite detail presented but at least enough information for Commissioners to have clarity. In looking at the staff report submitted for the approval of the ELAC and Consortium projects, it was the same. When staff presented Commissioners documents such as the current one, staff then triggers a reaction from the Commissioners to ask for more clarification and more detailing. This was where the Commissioners then start to bleed into areas that Commissioners really have no business in. This was, again, a criticism of what has taken place with the whole budget presentation. Commissioner Au said that she recalled, in the past, when asked to have contracts approved or any expenditures approved, within the memo, there would be background information. It would look ominous but it was appreciated by Commissioners because Commissioners could then be refreshed about what was approved or required or authorized.

CEO Martinez commented that she will make sure not to miss another Board meeting.

Vice Chair Fielding commented that Commissioners needed to be clear about what level of detail they expected. In his view, at least having the narrative and clear deliverables were important; and if it was performance-based contract, a list of performance measures.

Commissioner Au commented that when Commissioners received the materials ahead of time, there was an opportunity for Commissioners to ask questions by picking up the phone or email. Staff has in the past initiated contact with Commissioners and has taken the time to brief Commissioners, especially when staff knew that a presentation would be made on something that was complex and complicated. The written word is oftentimes very limited. Commissioner Au commented that she thought the Commission should go back to this practice. She truly felt that if time and energy in prepping Commissioners were invested, there would not be this kind of conversation when Commissioners need to act.

Vice Chair Fielding commented that he did not disagree with Commissioner Au but felt that Commissioners needed to be clear on the level of detail that they wanted. The information should be relatively uniform or maybe it needed to be different for different size contracts. Commissioners needed to decide if they just wanted a paragraph, a page or the list of deliverables. He felt that this could no longer be discussed at the meeting but did suggest coming back and having this as a discussion item with a presentation. Vice Chair Fielding suggested that staff work with the Executive Committee or if they preferred with some other process.

Commissioner Arroyo commented that a template needed to be developed for all the Commissioners to review. This might be a tool that staff can use in order to prepare the meeting packets.
CEO Martinez commented that there will be an exception to this. There was a standard format for reports; but, staff also receives, almost every month, something from the eighth floor at the Hall of Administration, saying to put this on your agenda. It is usually a request for funding and it is tied to a motion that the Board of Supervisors has approved. Other times it just a motion that comes over from one of the Supervisors. This is not in the same format. There will be exception to how staff reports will be presented regarding these requests.

Vice Chair Fielding stated that it was understood that there were things beyond the control of CEO Martinez.

Vice Chair Fielding stated that the Executive Committee would be working with staff on this issue and put something on the agenda in the coming months.

Commissioner Stockwell referenced a typographical error in the last paragraph, second to the last sentence, where the word “unified” rather than “universal” was used when referring to Los Angeles Universal Preschool.

M/S (Evangelina Stockwell / William Arroyo)
APPROVED UNANIMOUSLY AS RECOMMENDED

3. PRESENTATION: Best Start Metro LA

CPO Gallardo commented that for next two sections of the meeting, the objective was to provide the Commission with an update on the implementation efforts of Best Start including the next steps in the implementation process. Because there were two major efforts under implementation in Best Start, a pilot in Metro LA and the efforts in the remaining 13 communities, the presentation had been divided into two separate sections. First, Gisselle Acevedo, President & CEO of Para Los Niños, would be providing an update on the implementation efforts of Metro LA that started back in March, 2009—almost two and a half years ago. After this presentation, Randi Wolfe, Director of Best Start Communities, and Elizabeth Iida, Director of Program Development, would be providing an update on the implementation efforts for the 13 communities that started last July, 2010. Within First 5 LA, Best Start is a multi-department effort. Commissioners would be hearing from the perspective of the work that was happening in the community as well as the family strengthening component.

Gisselle Acevedo, President & CEO of Para Los Niños, was welcomed by the Commissioners. Ms. Acevedo commented that when the Commission looked at the dollars invested in Best Start Metro LA, she wanted to make sure that Commissioners felt they were getting a return on their investment. Furthermore, she said that she wanted to be held accountable at every level. Ms. Acevedo stated that she would be presenting some good things, some bad and some ugly; and would answer questions as honestly and transparently as the Commission wanted. She was there to have a conversation with Commissioners rather than to speak to Commissioners.

Best Start Metro LA empowered community members and stakeholders to work together across geographical and cultural borders to build upon existing services and resources to ensure Best Start goals were met.
Para Los Niños has served the Best Start Metro LA community for most of their 31 year history. They were and remain excited to partner with First 5 LA to be at the forefront of a true community-driven place-based effort. Ms. Acevedo commented that she started her career in this community 30 years ago at Second Street Elementary School and grew up in Pico Union. This is her community. When she says that she is vested in this community, she truly has been.

Para Los Niños wanted to be at the forefront of this huge effort. It was not just an effort, it was a really courageous effort. What was being done in this community, has not been done anywhere in the country. She feels and knows very well that eyes are watching, even though people have not said this, a lot will be written about the work that is being done.

Para Los Niños saw this as a unique opportunity to engage and empower community members and stakeholders to work together in four very big quadrants. This is a large area with very different community groups—Koreans, special needs communities. All of these communities were at the table having discussions about the work that is going on.

Upon receiving the grant in 2009, the first effort was focused on building relationships and trust with community members. As the convening agency, a year was invested to outreach and bring together a diverse group of leaders, service organizations and parents that eventually informed the decision-making framework for Best Start Metro LA—the “Community Guidance Body.”

The Community Guidance Body is a cross section of the community, led by parent representatives and community leaders in housing, early and public education, social services, healthcare, the environment, workforce, non-profit, faith-based, business, and culture/the arts. The 100 percent volunteer members bring local resources, experience, expertise, credibility and connections. These individuals also bring the passion, the people, vision and trust.

Once established, the Community Guidance Board worked together to create guiding principles and a charter to set the policies and procedures for working together. An elected leadership structure was implemented to oversee activities, decisions, roles, and processes of Best Start Metro LA.

Six Task Forces (Parent, Communications, Place-Based Activities, Policy, Training and Technical Assistance, Community Mobilization and Sustainability) were formed as the engines for planning and implementing activities. Task force workgroups were made up of Guidance Body Members, community residents, and other partners responsible for the implementation of Best Start objectives.

The community action and decision-making efforts were partnered with contractors supported directly by First 5 LA and charged with sustainable change models in technology; direct service (California Hospital and MCHA for Welcome Baby); workforce development (Zero to Three); Community Based Action Research (Special Services for Groups) and evaluation (Urban Institute).

In the interest of time, the following key accomplishments were highlighted.
The initial year focused on community mapping and assessment, identification of community leadership and resources. To date, outreach has taken place with over 2,700 parents through parent engagement meetings, parent capacity-building workshops and parent-led place-based activities.

After identifying committed parents and local community leaders to create the governing body, the Community Guidance Body, with the support of Para Los Niños, implemented a multi-level, relationship-based model for parent outreach and involvement.

The Community Guidance Body created innovative, child-focused activities based on Best Start goals to take the place of traditional child-care at all Metro LA parent engagement events.

A Community Advisory Council was established made up of influential leaders within greater Los Angeles business, civic and non-profit leaders.

The Community Guidance Board, together with Para Los Niños support, facilitated meetings where parents identified their own training needs, including positive parenting practices and eating healthy on a budget.

The Community Guidance Board designed and implemented a Collaborative Partners grant process that was guided by parent-identified community priorities. Responding to these parent priorities, community organizations submitted proposals to the Community Guidance Board, which were reviewed and considered for funding. This resulted in the investments of over $500,000 in 21 community projects including parent-child cooking classes focused on nutrition; the addition of toddler-friendly improvements to a community garden; pediatric hearing, vision and speech screenings and parent education in topics ranging from childhood development to leadership skills in parents. This was not a hierarchical process designed by Para Los Niños but designed by parents.

Over the course of these past two years, there have been many challenges and lessons learned. The primary lesson learned was that sustainable placed-based efforts took time. Ms. Acevedo stated that key findings would hopefully serve the other 13 communities well.

Ms. Acevedo commented that one cannot assume when walking into a community that it is already a functioning, coordinated and cohesive place. The purposeful investment in relationship building was the foundation and it took time. What was found in Metro LA was that the community needed to be brought together on multiple levels. The levels included:

- One year of initial community outreach, mapping and assessment, identification of community leadership and resources.
- An additional year to engage and train parent leaders, develop a charter and structure for the governance body, and support parents in the process of identifying and prioritizing community needs.
- Subsequent time following to create a grant process, continue to engage parents and move parents to action through funding for place-based, parent-led community projects.
• The CBAR process has taken time, but it has been thoughtful and intense, with parents driving profound research about their own community.

Ms. Acevedo also shared additional challenges that were faced including:

• **Competition for Resources:** In prior community funding models, stakeholders competed for limited resources. Best Start required a paradigm shift, modifying how they worked collaboratively together. Now communities were being asked to come together and collaborate with unified funding.

• **Prior Experiences with Various Funders:** Community members expressed disappointment as they perceived prior funders had made empty promises and failed to fulfill deliverables.

• During the initial phases of parent engagement, Para Los Niños focused efforts on building trust with parents as they expressed concerns about past experiences with other projects coming into their community. Para Los Niños needed to build rapport in order to get the community to trust that this initiative was not like those of the past.

Because stakeholders work and send their children to schools in the catchment area, they have a unique credibility and are fully accountable to their colleagues, friends and neighbors. Often in these neighborhoods, promises were made and then abandoned when the funding was gone. Community Guidance Board members stay. The Community Guidance Board model represented sustainability and good stewardship of First 5 LA funding. Throughout this process, the Community Guidance Board members have been putting their reputations, connections, and resources on the line for Best Start, as well as dedicating 15 to 20 hours a week while holding full-time jobs. It would take years of penetration and on-the-ground involvement for funders to fill that role.

Para Los Niños was working from the value that all stakeholders make up “community.” Some groups were easier to outreach, while others, such as the Korean or special needs populations, have not always been included in community change initiatives, and may be more skeptical or reluctant. These groups required more rapport and outreach efforts. It was important to incorporate different outreach strategies, led by each individual community group, to bring them together so that all backgrounds and perspectives were brought to the table.

Parents and community organizations were now working together under one entity. This all-inclusive initiative implied that everyone came together with different skill sets and capacitates. Para Los Niños had to develop skills and capacity for all stakeholders in order to put everyone on a level playing field. This ensured that everyone’s voice was heard.

Early on a critical lesson was learned—the messenger needed to be the parent leaders. Parents and other community leaders were engaged in numerous gatherings, taking place in a variety of settings and forums, in which they were informed and educated about place-based activities and First 5 LA goals. Community members were able to identify and prioritize the needs in their own community. This helped to generate trust, create believers, and mobilize followers who are now being trained on how to build upon those initial successes.

This last year a place-based activities process was developed that was designed to move engaged parents to deeper involvement through funding for place-based, parent-led community
projects. These place-based activities provided a forum for parents to develop the skills and tools necessary for increased community capacity building.

Ms. Acevedo highlighted goals for the coming years which included:

- Increased community awareness of Best Start goals.
- Deepening the level of participation of engaged parents and community members in implementing the Four Best Start goals.
- Building opportunities for professional development in core competencies.
- Connecting parents and parents to resources and to each other.
- Developing and implementing a sustainability plan that involves the key decision makers in the business community to support these efforts.

Research shows that with community change initiatives, better results are achieved. With attaining community ownership, there are lasting outcomes for children and families.

Para Los Niños or First 5 LA could have moved the ball toward the goal post faster but it probably would not have been an authentic, community-driven, place-based process. Building a sustainable community movement, one that can exist with organization support, takes time.

The novelty of a major funder trusting the community leadership and parents to drive the agenda is, in part, why the Community Guidance Board members joined this effort. This was authentic, and now it was tangible.

Commissioner Martinez thanked Ms. Acevedo, her staff and the wonderful people participating in this effort. She knows that it was really hard when people are working and going to school as well as volunteering. For people to do this was a terrific thing. Commissioner Martinez stated that she was really glad to be able to hear about the lessons learned and that the Commission should take them to heart as it considers expanding to the other place-based initiatives. She has always said that when planting a tree, it takes two years for a tree to actually hold and take firm through mulch, watering and nurturing. Commissioner Martinez stated that she could only imagine the process when dealing with a lot of different personalities. She applauded the work that Para Los Niños was doing.

Commissioner Martinez commented that now that the Commission knew what it really took to get this type of work done, obviously it took a long time to go out and meet and build the level of trust needed. She questioned how this would get done in some of the other place-based initiatives where the Commission did not have an institution like Para Los Niños that was really making the strides to put everything together. She wanted to make sure that staff and/or CEO Martinez would come back to the Commission; and based on what now was best management practices, the Commission should reassess what was being done with the place-based initiatives. If the Commission needed to look at adjusting timelines to allow these efforts to really take root, Commissioner Martinez asked that the Commission do so immediately so that these efforts do not get tagged as failing because it would be hard when reaching out to the communities. She wanted to make sure that the timeline was adjusted. Commissioner Martinez also reminded the Commissioners that this was the exciting part about place-based efforts. Oftentimes, the Commission is challenged or intrigued with the idea of moving toward a more County-wide approach because the Commission has dwindling dollars and really wants to be able to touch as many people as possible.
Commissioner Martinez also said that when you see a program like this, an initiative like this, it really tells you that the Commission is doing the right thing in areas that are really underserved and challenged. The Commission is not only providing services but is also creating a cultural shift and putting together an infrastructure while putting together a leadership course so that if three or five years from now, the Governor was to take all the Commission’s money away, it would not matter because what has been left behind is a leadership that will fend for themselves. This leadership will have the tools to get other grants, to put things together, and to help each other out. The more that the Commission is part of correcting its neighbor’s problems, the better the Commission will be. The Best Start Metro LA pilot was a really good testament.

Commissioner Martinez asked how Para Los Niños built in early wins given that it took so long so that the community, non-profits and parents did not get frustrated about not seeing immediate results. What has Para Los Niños done or what can the Commission do so that it starts to get some early wins to make the hard-working people feel like they are getting some results back and also for elected officials and for the Commission to feel like change is being made. She asked if there were any lessons learned that the Commission could implement in the rest of the programs.

Ms. Acevedo responded that trust should be placed on parents. Parents are consistent. Parents are not in it for the money. Parents are not in it for who they are or who has what degrees or are in a power structure. Parents are involved because what is at stake is the future of their children. The more time that can be spent with parents in terms of creating opportunities for training and consistently letting parents know that as the institution you are not making those choices for them and that they are making the decisions. The more decisions that are parent-led as opposed to First 5 LA-led decisions, which is very hard as the funder to do. Para Los Niños has stepped back and let the parents make the decisions. The process has been organic and the decisions have been born of and with the parents and with the community members. Para Los Niños was there to implement a lot of their decisions. The consistency really made a difference for parents since parents were being heard. The parents are the sustainability factor of the program. Funding will be sought from foundations but the parents who are vested in their community is what is going to sustain the program. Parents are tired of not having green space and going to the other side of town for medical care. It is not easy to get healthy food. It is not easy to go to the park because of gang violence. It is amazing what parents are willing to do.

Commissioner Au commented that she was so excited because she still remembers the planning and conversation when it was really a concept that was evidence-based. Commissioner Kaufman had done research on the successful projects in England. It was clear at that time that the Commission needed to do something different with its time limited resources; and the Commission needed to focus on communities that were going to be able to mobilize and actually celebrate their inherent strengths. Commissioner Au really applauded the work, especially the fact that Best Start Metro LA maintained, sustained and persevered because it was not easy work. The Commission truly knows this. Commission Au said she knew this because of her work being in the community as well. One of the components that she predicted was going to be an issue was that in the service provider arena, there are different cultural paradigms. One of the things with Best Start was the Commission wanting to connect the healthcare folks, the hospitals and the pediatricians, with the mental health folks, with the social service folks, with the law enforcement folks. The folks that are in supervision of the probation people that live in many of these neighborhoods that present challenges to families.
Commissioner Au asked if Para Los Niños had been able to begin to address this issue. One of the things not listed in the contract were the kinds of folks that are in the community that were supposed to be there as servants of communities and oftentimes forget this.

Ms. Acevedo commented that the Community Guidance Board was poised to take that next step. The Community Guidance Board has self-identified that very issue. After identifying gaps, it was their responsibility to do this next piece and have begun to address these issues, these major gaps and have begun to pull those people in one by one.

Commissioner Dennis commented that as the Commission looked at the last two years, Para Los Niños had been facilitating the organizational togetherness in the Metro community. He asked what the Commission and staff could have done different to make the process more efficient and effective. Furthermore, he also commented that when the budget was developed for Best Start, it was developed out of ignorance. The Commission had no idea of what it would cost. Commissioner Dennis asked if Para Los Niños had anyone looking at what it will take to do what is needed over the next five years, at least in the Metro community as far as a budgetary perspective because those amounts decided by the Commission were arbitrary having no clue.

Ms. Acevedo commented that she always needed to remind herself that hindsight was 20/20. She could easily state today that when the first director was hired that such person need to have a certain level of skills known today. This was a community initiative and community initiatives, are by their very nature evolving. Ms. Acevedo said that she could hear the rumors, how the Commission was unhappy that the program was not moving fast enough. However, the Commission chose Para Los Niños to do this work and it needed to trust it. This is an evolving process and felt that today things are very stable. Ms. Acevedo said this was the first time she had seen this level of sustainability and commitment. She asked for continued trust by the Commission of the Community Guidance Board. The role of Para Los Niños has been to step aside and let the community make its decisions. Para Los Niños appreciated the funding and would truthfully communicate to the Commission what has happened with Best Start Metro LA. When something is not going right, it will be communicated. This is primarily because of the trust that has been established. The budget is a very complex issue. Ms. Acevedo did not want to say that Best Start Metro LA needed more money because this was the wrong response any time for community initiatives. A lot more discussion is at hand and a better answer will be provided. Budget discussions are really prevalent at this time.

Commissioner Kaufman complimented Ms. Acevedo, the community and others for some fabulous work. It was quite exciting to be seeing some fruition of what was talked about and dreamed about together a while ago. When thinking about a place-based strategy there could be three components, perhaps others, that look at service delivery—service integration, coordination, efficiency and environmental context. Environmental context says is it a place where people feel safe. It is a place where they feel connected, where they can have a sense of well-being, where they can walk safely, where they can get food that is healthy. Commission Kaufman did not only mean environment in terms of toxins. He was curious, fascinated and frustrated by understanding the proportion of effort that should go to the actual delivery of service for this kind of project. Not in terms of the entire continuum of what children receive, but how much of the project should go toward integrating coordinating services to make them more efficient and effective. One way to look at this is the $500,000 in 21 grants that are put out. It was mentioned that some were grants were for service and some were for context—toddler park, hearing/speech screening, which is a service. Commissioner Kaufman asked what
was Ms. Acevedo’s sense of what that balance should be. He asked if she felt like there was balance between those three dimensions; and if adding four or five more dimensions made it more complicated. Commissioner Kaufman stated that his concern always had to do with there being no one who advocated for context and environment. It was very easy to advocate for more services. It was very easy to advocate because it is needed. It was easy to advocate for coordination and integration. It was much harder to advocate for the environmental context which to Commissioner Kaufman was the hallmark of a place-based approach. He asked for assistance in understanding what had happened in the first couple of years and what was expected in the next five years.

Ms. Acevedo commented that the beauty around Commissioner Kaufman’s complex question was that when people spoke earlier, especially the two mothers, they were referring to environmental context. No one came up and asked for more services. They were identifying the services and where they wanted them geographically. It had been a much more different dialogue or conversation with the families as they came to Para Los Niños and said this was what they needed and this was where it was need. The fact that families are being empowered with a voice, was unheard of. People who are poor and people who are in really tough communities are coming and self-identifying how it is they plan on opening childcare centers, how it is that they want that funded. Crystal Stairs is sitting at the table, teaching them how it is that they would create something like that. Lots of people are sitting at the table where they are suddenly empowered with one another to have conversations.

Commissioner Kaufman commented that he fully respected and really did believe in community and parent generated approaches. The simple example he would give was that if he was an individual who a year from now was destined to have post-partum depression, a mild case of it, someone could either make sure that I got to a psychiatrist or gave me a friend. Someone could make sure that he had the support by a loving family who would be there help him or he could be given medication. As a depressed, post-partum mom, he would want medication because he knew that would help him right now; but in the long-run, he probably would have been better if a year ago he would have gotten these other things. Commissioner Kaufman said that he was exaggerating to make a point. Yes, people know what they need at that moment but we all live in the moment and part of the role in organizing this kind of a thing is to help expose some of those things that are not in the moment. Prevention for example, never gets the same emphasis as treatment. It is just the nature of people as humans. Commissioner Kaufman said he was always fascinated and asked for any information that could help the Commission understand the way that the structure was set up. The way that Para Los Niños set up the engagement made it more likely to get the kinds of things that are in the preventive end that are on the context and environmental end so that is what individuals realize in the long run—that this is in their best interests and their community’s best interests.

Commissioner Stockwell stated that her questions were not complex but wanted to understand more the mechanics. She wanted to know details about the Community Guidance Board—do they have veto power and how was Para Los Niños selected for this project. She complimented Para Los Niños and one of the most important things that she was taking away from the presentation was the recognition of the importance of building relationships. A good relationship can propel you and lousy relationship can bury you.

Ms. Acevedo mentioned that a packet of information was distributed to all Commissioners. She hoped that the information would answer some of their questions.
Vice Chair Fielding thanked Ms. Acevedo for her very inspiring presentation.

Public Comment:

Brenda Chour, Promotora Communitaria  
Guadalupe Garcia, IDEPSCA  
Sam Joo, Koreatown Youth & Community Center  
Luis Pardo, Worksite Wellness LA  
Marlom Portillo, IDEPSCA

4. PRESENTATION: Best Start Communities

Randi Wolfe, Director of Best Start Communities, reviewed the PowerPoint slides with Commissioners that were in the meeting packet and talked Commissioners through it so that if anything was confusing, it could be better understood, and those points that needed clarification could be clarified.

Director Wolfe also said that she was really glad to have this opportunity to really give the Commission an update on what has been happening with Best Start over the last year because she felt like in some ways it has been a mystery. People have not quite understood it and, hopefully, this would become clear through the presentation.

Director Wolfe said that as Commissioner Dennis said earlier, when the project was launched a year ago, it was with good ideas and good intentions but very little practical information other than what was being learned from the Metro LA pilot project. Now a year later, the Commission actually has some concrete experience about what has been done, what has worked, what has not worked; and all of this information along with has been learned from Metro LA is guiding the current decisions and the future plans for how Best Start will continue to roll out. The goals of the presentation is to give Commissioners a quick overview of Best Start in terms of where it has been, where it is and where it is heading, focusing particularly on the next year, not on the four years. Director Wolfe also mentioned that while Metro LA has been an integrated and integral part of this project, the presentation was focusing on the other 13 communities, partly because of the very detailed presentation they just heard but also because they are on somewhat two parallel tracks, although those tracks were beginning to converge.

The first six months was the introductory period, which is to say that First 5 LA was introducing the notion of Best Start to the communities. First 5 LA was making the initial outreach efforts to the communities and were trying to identify and engage all of the key stakeholder groups. By February, the planning phase begun. Director Wolfe shared a slide that reflected the community meetings and number of people reached between February and June. Most of the communities are having community meetings at least every three weeks and all of the communities are having fairly astounding results in terms of attendance, considering how short the time has been that they have been active. The numbers represent the varied differences between communities—strengths, struggles, challenges.

Director Wolfe also described, in detail, the Best Start systems map that is comprised of internal staff, contractors, vendors, trainers and consultants. This systems map has been
developed since First 5 LA is not a social service agency. A whole team has needed to be built to touch the lives of 13 communities which present one and a half million people.

Director Wolfe also described the four levels of community engagement.

- Community At Large - Parents, residents and stakeholders that live within a community’s geographic boundaries.
- Best Start Community - Parents, residents and stakeholders familiar and/or affiliated with Best Start, but not consistently or actively engaged in all Best Start Activities.
- Partnership - Parents, residents and stakeholders who consistently participate in Best Start planning meetings through sub-committees, work groups, etc.
- Leadership Group - Elected representative decision-making body of community parents, residents and stakeholders.

In reference to the concept of providing communities with a menu of services to choose from when spending their program funding, Director Wolfe shared a slide that identified the four Best Start goals as well the four strategies that were articulated in the strategic plan. Looking through a lens with an early childhood perspective ranging from health, education and welfare, a list was compiled showing the crosswalk between how the goals are addressed, and how the strategies are implemented within the five program areas. When the communities begin to look at their community strengths and needs, and begin to think about what will be funded, by looking within the five program areas (home visiting/family support, family literacy/parent education, nutritional/physical activity, early education/school readiness, child safety/prevention of abuse and neglect), Best Start will address all that was intended in both the goals and the strategic plan. Part of the training that will be done with the community leadership and the partnerships is infusing in them a family strengthening framework. So when they think about this project, they come to it from a family support and family strengthening mindset and not just from what service is missing in this picture.

Director Wolfe said that timing was everything in the sense that you cannot rush a community, no more than a child can be rushed to start walking than you can rush a community to feel a sense of trust and connection. There has to be some time to nurture this. She presented a sense of a timeline that would take the Commission from the present day to June, 2012. From looking at the timeline, four components were identified as occurring simultaneously during each quarter. What could be seen was that First 5 LA was trying to do certain things such as conducting the community assessments while building the capacity of the community around things like what is a Best Start partnership, what a governance structure was going to look like, how are communities going to make decisions, how to build parent leadership. Decisions will also be made about how the partnership will function, who will be in the leadership group, and what the community plan will look like.

Regarding the issue of early wins that Commissioner Martinez brought up, in the coming year First 5 LA wants to give the communities enough chance to move forward in their development and their relationships and in their sense of who they are anywhere they are going. But to give them some early wins, not only for their own spirit and sense of accomplishment but also for the experience of it, the intention is to give them a relatively small amount of funding this year so that they can get their feet wet and figure out and learn how to award funding and make those decisions. The grants will get increasingly...
larger so that by next fiscal year, the communities will have the experience, insight and judgment to make increasingly larger financial awards.

By the end of this fiscal year, there will be three key milestones or deliverables that every community will be able to show:

1. **Communities** will all have granted $100,000 in projects because the first step grants are $15,000, the second step grant is $35,000 and third step grant is $50,000.
2. **Communities** will all have developed a three-year community plan. This is sort of a strategic plan that will get them from now through June, 2015 with an eye toward the next five years of funding after this.
3. **Communities** will submit an implementation plan for FY 2012-13 which will include in the neighborhood of $1.5 million per community. The idea is for communities to submit the implementation plan with a higher level of specifics so communities can hit the ground running next year on a new path.

Upon completion of the Best Start Communities update, a brief update was provided by Elizabeth Iida, Program Development Director, on the Welcome Baby component.

Director Iida commented that she was going to briefly speak on family strengthening as she had been asked to limit her talk to two minutes. She introduced Barbara DuBranks, Senior Program Officer, who has been the lead on developing the family strengthening program of Best Start, considered to be direct services in the Program Development Department.

Director Iida presented on the integration of the newborn universal assessment project with Welcome Baby and intensive home visitation. She walked the Commissioners through what has been crafted as the integrated family strengthening program from a Best Start and non-Best Start families perspectives based on the stage of fetal life.

At the conclusion of both presentations, Vice Chair Fielding commented that the presentations would elicit a large number of questions that would largely surpass the time allotted for the meeting. He also mentioned that he had a few questions but would be happy to take his answers offline in the form of written responses that could be shared with the other Commissioners.

Vice Chair Fielding asked the following questions with the understanding that he would receive answers afterward.

1. Is place-based synonymous with Best Start in terms of First 5 programmatic allocations; if not, please clarify the difference between the two.
2. There was a demographic migration study in the July 14th Commission Meeting packet. How much is First 5 LA spending on it and how much did First 5 LA previously spend as part of the planning efforts to profile the 14 communities? What is the purpose and expected return on additional research with it?
3. Not entirely clear on what role “promotoras” have as part of the overall effort. Are they going to be hired directly or are they going to be hired through other organization? What kind of qualifications do they have?
4. How much allocation for Best Start in the programmatic budget goes directly to community-based organizations in the 14 communities and how much goes to consultants?

5. When will the Best Start Communities be actually up and functioning and what implications does the start date have for the current contractors in PFF, Family Literacy and SRI within the 14 communities?

6. On page 26, on the left hand side of the slide, the strategic plan intensive family strengthening strategies are listed, one of which is home visitation. On the right, there are a bunch of other program areas—home visiting/family strengthening. Are these the same? What about the other programs listed—family literacy/parent education, nutrition/physical activity, early education/school readiness—how do these programs relate to the direct service? Or, are they community capacity building? Where do they fit budgetary and programmatically? Are these the menu of activities that are to be implemented? In essence, is this the menu and in every case, are we promoting evidence-based strategies?

Commissioner Au experienced a real difference and contrast between the presentation between Best Start Metro LA and presentation regarding the remaining 13 communities. The part that she was concerned about was the part about the parents—the role of parents—and the empowerment piece because clearly it was not present in the presentation regarding the implementation of the 13 communities. The reason for this was that there seemed to be more of an imposition of structure, requirements, standards and direct service components. For her, this was not the way to start out. Based on the Best Start Metro LA presentation, obviously, the same spirit of their process being more driven by the parents was not apparent in the second presentation of the other 13 communities. The other contrast, based on Commissioner Fielding’s question about where the money was going in terms of the implementation of place-based. Commissioner Au asked if the funding was going to the community or was it going to consultants because looking at the relationship that was heard clearly from the Best Start Metro LA presentation was that the trust had to be built not only among the parents but between the parents and the community facilitator. This was vital and key. A community-based organization that had already a presence in that community, that could then build upon that relationship, and to even deepen it further. In fact, what was heard from Para Los Niños was that there was a profound change that occurred within their organizational structure, referencing paradigm shift. This was what First 5 LA was going for. What Commissioner Au was seeing was that all of the work, in terms of organizing the communities around Best Start with the remaining 13 communities, was really between community and First 5 LA’s consultants. She expressed real concerns about this and perhaps the Commission really needed to rethink about how to implement Best Start among the remaining 13 communities.

Commissioner Kaufman suggested continuing the discussion to the September meeting, six weeks from now, where Commissioners could get answers to the questions being raised.

Vice Chair Fielding commented that was a reasonable suggestion but it would be dependent upon what was on the agenda. Vice Chair Fielding asked if this issue should be referred to the Program & Planning Committee or if, in fact, it needed to come back to the Commission in September.

Commissioner Kaufman commented that it could be referred to the Program & Planning Committee if Commissioners chose to do so, but he felt that talking about this issue before
approving the programmatic budget would be very helpful because a lot of questions of the programmatic budget have to do with the answers to the questions being raised. He said that a Program & Planning Committee meeting could take place prior to the September Commission meeting, although the committee was not scheduled to meet in August, a meeting could be called.

Commissioner Kaufman raised the following questions.

1. On page 26, there is not another page about the impassioned conversation with Gisselle Acevedo about the depressed mother and needing a friend. He asked staff to please be sure how page 26 relates to the other because he did not see that at all in any of the discussion.
2. Regarding the family strengthening partner entities, he asked if these will be decided by November 2011? What was the date—when it got started or when it got finished? Since solicitation will be out by November and intensive home visit solicitation will be out by April, 2012, he asked if there was any reason it had to go at that pace rather than at a quicker pace even. There was nothing that would keep next steps from starting sooner other than the communities were already doing other stuff because it takes it takes time to find them. The way to answer this is to bring it into the programmatic budget vote in September with a quicker pace.

Commissioner Stockwell raised the following questions.

1. On page 7, after hearing the presentation from Gisselle Acevedo, she wondered if there was room and a need around the table for community and stakeholders to involve some of the former First 5 LA investments. If the Commission is learning about lessons learned, then they should be at the table.
2. What can First 5 LA do to support the communities that have had such low attendance at community meetings? And, does the attendance reflect repeat parents or is it a whole new group of parents that show up? Certainly, the Commission wants to building a community, it is important that there be sustainability in terms of “glue” to get the same parents back over and over again. So what is being done along those lines?
3. On page 10, regarding the leadership group, is it intended that this is the key group that will make all the decisions for that community? This needs to be explained.
4. On page 14, when looking at the group of Best Start parents, is the criteria geographic or does it mean poverty? This needs more explanation.
5. If a parent fits the criteria and goes on to enroll in a NFP, is this a home visitation program and why that program only and not others?

Commissioner Williams raised the following questions.

1. Is there a lead agency in each place-based community?
2. Is there a lead-based agency possibly deriving from a community effort or community interest or preference? Are there some naturals coming forward?
3. There is a diversity of results. At least right now, the Commission is looking at attendance as one of the things that is diverse. Is there a quality control around that diversity? Who will help the Commission know why and what is going to be done about it?
4. On page 24, the community outreach workers have not been hired. Why?
5. Are Commissioners going to have an opportunity for access to individual communities, either as volunteers or by assignment? Are Commissioners going to somehow see the inter-workings of a place-based community? And, how are Commissioners going to work through that process of making sure that Commissioners really understand what is going on?

Commissioner Arroyo raised the following question.

1. Is there some strategic plan to bolster the attendance at community meetings because a couple of those communities have a lot of members who are high-risk for various problems?

5. Public Comment

Luz Chacon, MCH Access

6. Adjourn to the Next Regularly Scheduled Meeting of the Commission on Thursday, September 8, 2011 for a Closed Session at 12:30 pm and Regular Meeting at 1:30 pm

The meeting adjourned at 4:06 pm.

The next regularly scheduled Commission meeting will be on:

September 8, 2011 at 1:30 pm
Multi-Purpose Room
750 N. Alameda Street
Los Angeles, CA 90012

Meeting minutes were recorded by Maria Romero.