Ozark Opportunities, Inc.
Board of Directors Meeting Minutes
September 30, 2013

The Ozark Opportunities, Inc. Board of Directors met at the Vada Sheid Community Development Center at Arkansas State University in Mountain Home, Arkansas, at 6:15 p.m. on September 30, 2013.

Board Members Present:
Jim Sprott Paulette Hill Judy Schenk
Hon. Terry Ott Hon. Mickey Pendergrass Hon. Kenneth Hooper
Paula Crawford Ron McPherson

Board Members Absent:
Hon. James Norton Donna Grinder Danny Griffin Kristen Smith

Staff Members Present:
Richard T. Atkinson Shirley Richesin Jane Bueg
Terri Beard

Guests Present:
Jessica Coonce, Head Start Policy Council Board Liaison

I. Meeting Called to Order:

The quarterly meeting of Ozark Opportunities, Inc. Board of Directors was called to order by Jim Sprott, Board Chairperson at 6:15 p.m., who led with The Pledge of Allegiance. A quorum was established. Mr. Sprott welcomed everyone to the meeting.

II. Acceptance of prior meeting minutes & ratification of actions

Mr. Sprott presented to the membership Executive Committee minutes and actions to be ratified by the Board.

- Ron McPherson moved to accept the minutes of the September 24, 2013 Executive Committee Meeting and to ratify the actions of the Executive Committee meetings held on July 25, August 29 and September 24, 2013. Judy Schenk seconded. Motion carried unanimously.
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III. Executive Directors Report

Mr. Atkinson, Executive Director, read the Mission Statement of Ozark Opportunities, Inc. He noted that several seats on the Board are vacant, and encouraged the members to recruit candidates for the following positions:

- **PUBLIC OFFICIALS:**
  - Newton County & Searcy County

- **REPRESENTATION OF LOW INCOME:**
  - Boone County (Trudy McManus recently resigned) & Newton County

- **REPRESENTATION OF PRIVATE GROUPS AND INTERESTS:**
  - Baxter County & Searcy County

Mr. Atkinson introduced Jessica Coonce, who is serving as Head Start Policy Council Board Liaison. The first meeting of the 2013-2014 School Year Policy Council met on Thursday, September 26, 2013 and has already proven to be an engaged group of invested parents.

A. Strategic Planning Update and Discussion

Mr. Atkinson engaged the Board in a discussion on continued Strategic Planning for the agency. A list of “Initiate” items was distributed, with notes on progress and staff responsible included. Two highlighted items are tagged for removal: “Extended Educational Opportunities (internet access),” which has been judged to have been met, as internet accessibility has proven to be less of a barrier than expected. The other item was “Creation of a Unified Housing Plan” - this item will be merged with “Inadequate Available Housing,” where OOI efforts will continue to progress.

A new item, “Lack of Nutritional Food” has been identified as an ongoing need; discussion followed on the Commodity Distribution (TEFAP) food items- Mr. Atkinson noted that there has been a deficiency in quantity and compatibility of food items offered, the items are unrelated and cannot be combined to make appetizing meals. A “Maintain” List is in production, and will basically reinforce our commitment to continue to do what we do, do it well, and continue to improve our current programs.
B. **By-laws Update**

Mr. Atkinson presented to the Board for consideration and approval of changes in the By-Laws; including minor language changes, removal of the prohibition on Representatives of members representing the Public from voting, including electronic or teleconferencing as methods for attending meetings, and allowing the Secretary-Treasurer to delegate authority of duties to proper staff members if necessary.

- Hon. Pendergrass moved to accept the revisions to the *Ozark Opportunities, Inc.* By-Laws as presented. Hon. Terry Ott seconded. With 2/3 of the Board present and voting, motion carried unanimously.

IV. **Agency & Program Reports** (reports provided prior to the meeting)

In the (approved) absence of Rebecca Hanlin, Community Services Director, Mr. Atkinson updated the members on **Community Services**.

- A $50,000 grant application targeted at combating Generational Poverty was submitted to the Aspen Institute. This type of focus meshes well with our Head Start Program and can have major impact on the quality of life of future generations.
- Application has been made for four (4) AmeriCorps VISTA positions, which will be based in the outreach offices. No response received yet from the Little Rock office of the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS) office.
- LIHEAP, including Crisis Intervention Program (CIP) is out of money; all programs end on September 30th. Staff are meeting with Delia Farmer and her staff at Office of Community Services (OCS) to foster changes in the Energy Assistance Programs. We are optimistic that the outcomes of these meetings will benefit both our clients and the agency.

Mr. Atkinson stated the Governing Board Report is now titled the **Agency Report** and is presented to both the Board of Directors and Policy Council as part of the Shared Governance Plan.

- Hon. Hooper moved to accept the Program Reports as distributed. Paulette Hill seconded. Motion carried unanimously.
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Head Start Sequestration Plan Update

Mr. Atkinson, as Executive and Head Start Director, put before the Board a recommendation to amend the OOI Head Start Sequestration Plan. He noted that a vote to close additional classroom was on the agenda, but that request will not be made at this time.

With the assistance of Terri Beard, OOI Head Start ERSEA (eligibility, recruitment, selection, enrollment and attendance) Mr. Atkinson detailed conversations held between OOI and Head Start Region VI representative Joseph Laster regarding the effects of Sequestration funding cuts to our Head Start Program. Mr. Laster’s recommendation is to focus on quality and providing program enhancements that are unavailable in other Pre-K programs. Mr. Atkinson emphasized that no other state in the nation has a Pre-K program that is state-funded like Arkansas. OOI Head Start has to offer something ABC does not, we need to be different. Next year (PY 2015, beginning March 1, 2015) will require a whole new vision for OOI Head Start. We need to start now with building a foundation for a “Cadillac” program.

The first step is to amend our Sequestration Plan to revise the number of enrollment slots from 471 to 440. Our current enrollment is 442, with 426 children attending (the difference is due to the 30 day rule for replacement of children.) Despite vigorous recruitment efforts, we have been unable to meet our current enrollment requirement of 471. At this point in time, reducing enrollment slots will not result in classroom closure or classroom staff reduction; however, we will need to lose 2 classrooms by the 2014-2015 school year.

OOI Head Start Policy Council agreed to update the Sequestration Plan to request the decrease in slots at their September 26, 2013 meeting. The action will enable OOI to regain and maintain enrollment compliance and continue the Sequestration Plan.

Hon. Hooper asked for an explanation of the economics of reducing enrollment.

- Mr. Atkinson, Ms. Beard and Ms. Richesin shared their collective knowledge, expertise and experience on the dynamics of Head Start enrollment; thousands of dollars in staff time, advertising and outreach have been spent on filling current vacancies, the population base is not there, even other Pre-K programs are experiencing unfilled slots. Ms. Beard noted that OOI Head Start locations in Mountain Home and Harrison typically fill up and establish a waiting list; this year Mountain Home has just reached enrollment capacity and has no waiting list, and Harrison has vacancies and no waiting list. Some centers, Jasper for example, is under-enrolled and not meeting the Head Start recommendation for minimum class size of 15.
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Hon. Hooper asked what is the advantage of losing two (2) classrooms?

- Mr. Atkinson and Ms. Richesin responded that OOI Head Start Program is currently understaffed at the management level, and at risk of not being in compliance with program standards; particularly in the areas of Parent Involvement (including Policy Council) & Volunteer involvement (including In-Kind). The program is operating without a Program Manager, full time Head Start Director, or Parent Involvement/Volunteer Specialist. Also unfilled is a Family Service Worker position. These positions are in the current grant application, but have not been filled due to a combination of Sequestration funding cuts, under-enrollment (and the historical concern that funding levels are tied to actual enrollment and may be recalled if enrollment is not met).

Mr. McPherson inquired as to which classrooms are targeted for closure.

- Mr. Atkinson responded that he will present information and data to the Board and Policy Council that will enable them to make informed and rational decisions on closure. Right now we need to replace Head Start staff to provide the manpower necessary to meet the Head Start Performance Standards and mandates beyond the classroom level.

Hon. Hooper responded that we must find innovative ways to get things done. He requested a report of staffing patterns since 2010 to further advise the Board on the matter.

- Ron McPherson moved to request Region 6 to amend the OOI Head Start Sequestration Plan to reduce enrollment from 471 to 440 slots. Judy Schenk seconded. Chairperson Sprott opened the floor for discussion.

Discussion followed, with Board Members expressing their feelings on the subject; including explanation of the decrease in office and support staff.

Ms. Coonce (HS Liaison) observed that with reduced slots we would have a better chance of keeping the program. If we lose it all there will be many angry parents; she would rather make enrollment reductions now than risk losing the entire program. Hon. Hooper requested a roll call vote.

V. Finance:

Chairperson Sprott reviewed the previously submitted Finance Reports for the Board. He observed that reporting of the Head Start budget at .3% over budget is an illustration of the phenomenal Finance Department at OOI. The Finance Reports were reviewed and accepted by OOI Board of Directors Executive Committee on September 24, 2013 and ratified by this body earlier in the meeting.

Shirley Richesin, Financial Officer, presented to the Board for their review, consideration and approval revised OOI Financial Policies and Procedures. Hon. Pendergrass offered further revision and clarification on page 14.


VI. Corporate Services Update:

Chairperson Sprott shared with the Board the results of Mr. Atkinson’s annual Performance Evaluation. His average score were 4.5 – 4.7 (out of 5), and his performance was declared “exemplary.”

Jane Bueg, Corporate Services Director, requested the changes to agency Sick Leave Policy be withdrawn until changes in Federal Law mandate new language. Chairperson Sprott declared the issue tabled.

Chairperson Sprott extended thanks from the Board to Jessica Coonce for her attendance and input. After insuring there was no other business, Adjournment was declared by Chairperson Sprott at 8:18 p.m.

\[\text{Signature: } \text{Spina} 8/6/2013 \text{ Date: } 10/31/2013\]

Board Officer \hfill Date