

Town Childcare Committee Meeting Minutes

Date: 6/30/25

Location: In- Person, Mason Library, Great Barrington

Time: 12:00pm

Attendees:

- Jenise Lucey (virtual)
- Ryan Seers (virtual)

- Mary Stephen

- Ruby Chang

- Kate Tucci

- Kate Van Olst

1. Call to Order and Roll Call

The meeting was called to order, and a roll call was conducted. All listed members were present.

2. Updates and Discussion

Survey Development and Outreach

- Kate Tucci and Kate Van Olst collaborated with Amy Richman to develop a community survey.
- The survey is tentatively scheduled to be sent out in August.
- The group discussed the importance of capturing data from homeschooling families, private schools, and Montessori programs.

Data Gathering Efforts

- JP Okun has circulated a survey focused on the childcare needs of BHRSD families. The committee will request access to this data.
- Kate Tucci and Kate VO held meetings with Head Start to explore possibilities for program expansion.
- Both Kates are participating in a special needs camp committee in collaboration with Families Like Ours.

Relevant Research and Reports

- The committee discussed the *United Way's "Strategy for Economic Vitality in Berkshire County"* report, which highlighted a 1% average profit margin for childcare providers nationwide.
- The importance of collaborative funding models was emphasized.

Program and Training Opportunities

- Childcare of the Berkshires (CCB) may offer training for family child care providers. The committee considered promoting this opportunity locally.
- Mary Stephen will follow up to gather more information from CCB.
- Kate Van Olst reported attending a state EEC meeting about a new family licensing pilot program in Spanish and Portuguese. Expansion depends on the pilot's success.

3. Strategic Planning

Town Budget & Resource Alignment

- Jenise raised a question about the town's ability to support childcare initiatives in the absence of a dedicated budget line item.
- Kate Van Olst proposed a concept: using childcare access to support tenant preservation and reduce housing costs.
- Vouchers and financial aid systems were identified as barriers due to complexity and limited availability. The committee discussed whether Leigh Davis could advocate for

change.

End Goals and Next Steps

- Targeting a joint presentation to the Selectboard and Finance Committee in late November.
- Presentation will outline:
 - Existing childcare landscape
 - Identified needs
 - Short-term action items (e.g., increasing infant/toddler spots, supporting new family child care sites)
 - Clear call to action

Employer Engagement

- The committee aims to reach out to large employers to assess how childcare challenges are affecting workforce recruitment.
- Potential for employers to offer childcare stipends as part of benefits packages was discussed.
- Ruby expressed hesitation about engaging with Fairview due to broader compensation and housing concerns that may outweigh childcare benefits.

Structural Consideration

- The idea of recommending the creation of a town-sponsored nonprofit was briefly discussed as a potential long-term strategy.
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4. Action Items

- **Kate Tucci and Kate Van Olst** meet with BUW

- **Kate Tucci to introduce Mary to Amy Hall** (CCB contact).
 - **Mary Stephen:** Connect with Childcare of the Berkshires.
 - **Ruby Chang:** Research grants; reach out to the Nonprofit Center of the Berkshires.
 - **Jenise Lucey:** Contact Berkshire Taconic to explore funding opportunities for family and private child care providers.
 - **Ben Elliot:** Reach out to Chris about economic development grant opportunities.
 - **Ryan Seers:** Approach the Board of the Chamber of Commerce about surveying members on the impact of the childcare crisis; explore connections with MassHire and MagnetWorks.
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Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at [Insert Time].

July meeting: July 28, 2025