

April 20, 2023 Committee on Childcare in Minot

Committee on Childcare in Minot – April 20, 2023 AT 1:30 P.M.

Members Present:

Scott Burlingame, Amy Jenkins, Rianne Kuhn, Lisa Olson, Keli Rosselli-Sullivan, Harold Stewart, John Van Dyke, Becca Oswill

Members Absent:

Terry Schumalz, Rianne Kuhn, Heather Cymbaluk

Also Present:

Mikayla McWilliams (City Clerk)

The meeting was called to order by Chairman Scott Burlingame at 1:31 pm. Mayor Ross addressed the committee discussing how this is a standing committee on the importance of childcare. There are surrounding communities giving childcare attention. Communities who want to create quality, affordable, and accessible childcare so the workforce can be grown. Mayor Ross thanked the volunteers for the committee.

Alderwoman Olson wanted to update the committee on further discussions she had with a Minot Public Schools staff member for CLC. She confirmed the idea of CLC being an educational enrichment program. Minot Public Schools have eleven CLC sites with some of them being grant funded. Parents in need of financial assistance can fill out an application in order to get some of the weekly fees waived and the financial assistance is income based. The committee decided to leave CLC on its own and focus on the rest of the childcare needs.

Minot AFB childcare issues are mainly due to having multiple varying shifts that include weekends and nights. The MAFB is not a normal 8 am – 5pm job. Base readiness is an issue due to these factors. Military childcare requires licensing from the State of ND and the military. There are stricter rules on the kid to caregiver ratios. Amy Jenkins has two home environment providers who focus on base staff and offer overnights and weekend care.

Alderwoman Olson broadened the view by mentioning it is not only the base that deals with the shift issues it is the hospital, law enforcement, fire department, oil field, etc. A majority of the childcare providers in Minot serve the Mon-Fri work weeks and this is an issue across the state. There is a possibility of a center that has received grant funds looking for space in Minot.

Mayor Ross mentioned the issues with employment might be a larger issue. He asked if wage was the problem. Alderman Burlingame reiterated the starting wage for a childcare employee is \$10.50/hr. Becca Oswill replied stating the issue is with applications and people not showing up for the interviews. She is getting calls from people wanting to be on a waiting list because they are possibly moving to town for a job but her waiting list is too long. Right now, Becca has 5 open positions and until she can fill those spots she cannot take any more kids.

Amy Jenkins discussed how the ratio of kids to personnel has not changed much over the years in her experience as a licensing specialist. The state is stuck because it has to match the federal government regulations. Harold Stewart was concerned about the issues of the educational requirements, low average wage, and the market competition in childcare. Becca Oswill discussed how she offers free daycare services for the children of employees as an extra benefit. She has heard of other daycares offering discounted daycare rates for employees also. The only issue with this process is the employee children that are either free or offered discounted rates count towards the child to provider ratio.

Alderwoman Olson wanted to learn about if businesses were thinking of setting up their own childcare/daycare for employees. Amy Jenkins stated that is an option for any business to do. The committee always came back to the staffing issue for childcare. Becca said wage was a big issue, the amount of training is also an issue, and start up costs factor into this as well. Alderman Burlingame added that background checks can take 2-3 weeks and more time if the person has lived out of state. Childcare providers are offered free background checks for employees now through the State of ND.

John Van Dyke brought up issues with workforce disruptions such as busing for the school systems not being provided. There are jobs that do not allow the flexibility for parents to drop off and pick up after school. Keli Rosselli-Sullivan mentioned that employers need to become flexible. Becca is having the same issues with busing as well. She has employees that have to leave and pick up children of their own but that requires fill ins in order to keep the numbers. Military staff have the same issues as well if they live in Minot and work on the Minot AFB.

The committee discussed if Minot High School still had the program which brought in children for a couple hours a day. They discussed talking to Pam Stroklund about sharing with the committee about the school training program. Keli mention Golden Path, out of Fargo, which was a work-based program of shadowing/internships. There is also the Women's Business Center in Bismarck that offered the 10-week program, which offered education in the business aspect of childcare. Amy Jenkins also mentioned now that her department moved from a County level to the State of ND they are streamlining the paperwork to be online and want to be more focused on the programming done in childcare.

Alderman Burlingame mentioned the committee would reschedule the discussion on the Minot AFB issues. The next meeting will be Tuesday, May 2, 2023 at 1:30 pm at the new City Hall (10 3rd Ave SW). There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 2:28 pm.