REGULAR COMMISSION MEETING MINUTES
Monday, September 22, 2025 at 9:00 a.m.
First 5 Monterey County (F5MC) ♦ 1125 Baldwin Street ♦ Salinas, CA

Call to Order: Chair Chris Lopez called the meeting to order at 9:02 a.m.

Pledge of Allegiance: The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

Roll Call: A legal quorum was present. Commissioners present: Chris Lopez (Chair), Clarisa Reyes-Becerra (Vice-Chair), Relindis Diaz, Roderick Franks, and Miriam Mendoza-Hernández. Monica Lal (Secretary) arrived at 9:52 a.m. and Ralph Gómez Porras arrived at 10:16 a.m.

Staff in attendance: Francine Rodd, *Executive Director;* Ramona McCabe, *Director of Programs*; Jenn Rigney, *Director of Evaluation and Learning*; Rebeca Zuniga, *Communications Coordinator*; Kris Curtis, *Director of Finance*; Ana Duran, *Finance Assistant*; Carlos Vera, *Data & Evaluation Specialist;* Carlos Bacerlos, *Community Care Hub Manager;* Sonja Koehler, *Director of Bright Beginnings;* Cristina DeOrta, *Program Support*; and Joanna Jensen, *Operations Manager* (Recorder)

Mindfulness Moment: Commissioner Diaz led the mindfulness moment.

Additions or Corrections: No additions or corrections were made.

Public Comment Period: *Members of the audience desiring to address the Commission may do so during this time. Public comments on items not already on the agenda will be accepted. Protocol for action includes staff presentations, questions from the Commission, public input, deliberation, and voting/referral by the Commission.*

No comments were made.

Consent Agenda Items: *Items on the consent calendar are considered routine and will be enacted by one motion followed by a vote. There will be no separate discussion of these items unless the Commission, audience, or staff request specific items be removed from the consent calendar for separate discussion and action. Any agenda item removed will be voted upon following the motion to approve the consent calendar.*

ACTION: A motion was made by Commissioner Franks and seconded by Commissioner Mendoza-Hernández to approve Consent Items 1 - 4. The motion was unanimously approved (Gómez Porras and Lal absent).

1. **June 23, 2025, Regular Commission Meeting Minutes –** APPROVED
2. **Financial Statements for Q3 FY 24/25 (January through March 2025) –** APPROVED
3. **Bright Beginnings Report –** APPROVED
4. **Deputy Director Recruitment Incentive –** APPROVED an additional recruiting incentive payment of $2,000 (for a total of $4,000) for the Deputy Director position.

Action Items: *Protocol for action items includes Staff presentations, questions from the Commission, public input, deliberation, and voting/referral by the Commission.*

5. **First 5 Monterey County Annual Audit for FY 24/25 –** *Monica Lal, Finance/Personnel Committee Chair; and Brooke Baird, Partner - Brown Armstrong Accountancy Corporation*

Brooke Baird, Partner with Brown Armstrong Accountancy Corporation, reviewed key highlights of the FY 24/25 Audit and noted that First 5 Monterey County received a clean audit opinion.

ACTIONS:

a. Conduced a Public Hearing - Chair Lopez opened the Public Hearing. No comments were made. Chair Lopez closed the Public Hearing.

b. A motion was made by Commissioner Mendoza-Hernández and seconded by Commissioner Franks to adopt the F5MC Annual Audit for FY 24/25. The motion was unanimously approved (Gómez Porras and Lal absent).

6. Budget to Actual Statements for FY 24/25 – Monica Lal, Finance/Personnel Committee Chair, and Francine Rodd, Executive Director

Items 6 and 7 were heard after Item 10.

ACTION: A motion was made by Commissioner Mendoza-Hernández and seconded by Commissioner Franks to accept the FY 24/25 Budget to Actual Statements. The motion was unanimously approved.

7. Contract Amendment for Biren (Ratnesh) A. Nagda, as sole proprietor of IDEA Leadership LLC –

Items 6 and 7 were heard after Item 10.

Commissioner Diaz and Commissioner Mendoza-Hernández recused themselves from this item.

ACTION: Amotion was made by Commissioner Lal and seconded by Commissioner Gómez Porras to approve and authorize the Executive Director to execute an amendment to the existing FY24/25 - FY25/26 contract with Biren A. Nagda (Ratnesh), as sole proprietor or IDEA Leadership LLC, to increase the not-to-exceed amount from $110,000 to $172,000, a net increase of $62,000. The motion was unanimously approved (Diaz and Mendoza-Hernández recused).

Information Items: *These are purely informational and do not require any action from the Commission.*

8. Executive Director Report by Strategy - *Francine Rodd, Executive Director*

F. Rodd reviewed highlights of the Briefer for Item 8.

9. Policy, Advocacy, and Communications Team Monthly Report – *Rebeca Zuniga, Communications & Outreach Coordinator*

R. Zuniga reviewed highlights of the Briefer for Item 9.

10. CalAIM Orientation and Briefing - *Ramona McCabe, Director of Programs and Oscar Flores, Home Visiting Manager*

R. McCabe, provided a briefing on CalAIM and Medi-Cal alignment efforts, highlighting project progress and next steps.

Staff Comments/Announcements – *All Staff*

- J. Jensen expressed appreciation for the Medi-Cal overview presented by Ramona, noting that it helps better understand the overall system and to see the bigger picture of this complex topic.
- R. Zuniga announced upcoming community events including Ciclovía Salinas on October 12 and Ciclovía King City on October 19, and invited Commissioners to attend.

Commissioner Comments/Announcements – *All Commissioners*

Receive Commissioner reports/updates on items relevant to early childhood development.

- Commissioner Mendoza-Hernández congratulated staff on achieving a clean audit, recognizing the collective effort across the organization and commending the finance team for their leadership. She noted that receiving the highest audit opinion with no findings is an exceptional accomplishment and reflects strong adherence to policies and procedures.
- Commissioner Reyes-Becerra shared that she is now serving as Managing Attorney with the California Immigration Project and expressed enthusiasm for continuing to support First 5 and its partners in this new role. She offered to serve as a resource on immigration issues affecting families and expressed appreciation for the Commission's positive impact on community and public health.

  She also shared that her organization is partnering with UCSF Law to provide technical assistance to Medi-Cal and Community Health Worker ECM providers. She also acknowledged the Social Services and Health Departments for their leadership in coordinating local efforts around upcoming Medi-Cal changes.
- Commissioner Lal shared insights from a Rotary training on literacy, emphasizing the importance of early exposure to books and reading. She commended First 5's efforts in promoting early literacy and shared a book from a community member.
- Commissioner Diaz shared positive feedback from Behavioral Health staff, noting they were deeply impacted by the recent training and expressing appreciation for the quality and impact of the work done. She also shared that she is participating in a free Psychological First Aid training through the National Child Trauma Network, noting it could be a valuable resource for those supporting others in crisis situations.
- Chair Lopez shared updates on the new South County space, noting it is being actively used by community partners such as the Health Department and remains available for others to reserve. He highlighted upcoming positive developments for South County to be announced on October 8
- Commissioner Gómez Porras noted growing concerns within schools regarding recent immigration and visa developments, as superintendents and principals are beginning to see impacts on students and families. He shared that the County Office of Education is closely monitoring the situation and will continue coordinating efforts to support affected families

Adjournment: Chair Lopez adjourned the meeting at 11:01 a.m.