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**MEETING MINUTES  
September 8, 2026  
CM Carlucci on 2026-0673**

Council Member Matt Carlucci called the meeting to order to discuss pending legislation 2026-0673, which proposes a \$204,000 appropriation for the Exchange Club Family Center. Carlucci noted that these funds are derived from debt service savings and will not impact the current city budget. He emphasized that the legislation needs to be passed by the 22nd of the month. He welcomed Council Members Holder and Amaro to the meeting.

Sue Watson, representing the Exchange Club Family Center, explained that their organization fills a specific niche by focusing on parent education and behavior modification rather than treating just the children. They operate a minimum six-month evidence-based home-visiting program. The center works alongside the State Attorney's Office on a diversion program for parents arrested for child abuse or neglect whose cases are not being formally prosecuted.

Council Member Amaro asked a question to clarify how the organization primarily works with parents while tracking metrics per child, Sue Watson explained that reporting requirements for the Department of Children and Families are structured around per-child measurements even though the direct intervention targets the parents. Addressing a question about who would benefit most from the requested funds as the Exchange Club serves all of Northeast Florida, Mrs. Watson noted that the appropriation would directly support families in Duval County while freeing up alternative funding streams to assist families in Clay and St. Johns counties. Regarding the reach and potential capacity of the program, Mrs. Watson stated that the minimum target is fifty families, constrained by an evidence-based model limiting active caseloads to twelve to fourteen families per worker at any given time, with broader projections aiming to serve over five hundred children and approximately two hundred sixty-one families throughout the year.

Council Member Holder also asked about the staffing structure, inquiring about the distinction between the administrative roles and the personnel who visit homes. In response, Sue Watson explained that the organization previously operated with five staff members aligned with the school year and recently hired five additional staff members to support their expansion.

Ms. Watson shared that since 2023 they have handled 90 referrals. Out of those, 75 families completed the program. She stated that 100 percent of the families who graduated have had no involvement with the Department of Children and Families a year after completion. The program

operates at a cost of approximately \$1,800 per child annually. This is compared to foster care costs which can range from \$40,000 to \$100,000. If the \$204,000 direct contract is approved, they expect to serve a minimum of 50 families and hope to reach 261 children this year.

Bill Delaney from the Mayor's office confirmed that the program aligns with the Mayor's objectives regarding child and family care. Dr. Tracy Polson spoke in support of the initiative highlighting that working directly with parents is crucial to interrupting the cycle of child abuse and teaching alternatives to corporal punishment.

Carlucci concluded by requesting that Exchange Club staff and board members reach out to Council Members ahead of time and for his colleagues to advocate for the legislation during the upcoming committee week when he will be out of town.