



Community Action Network Community Council 07/19/10 Meeting Minutes

Attendees: Sylvia Blanco, Rebecca Cobos, Nancy Gilliam, Kirsha Haverlah, Anne H. Harutunian, Linda Kokemor, Stefan Molina, Mary Moran, Jim Reed, Ruby Roa, Marquis Williams

CAN Staff: Chantel Bottoms, Mary Dodd, Cristell Laurel, and Vanessa Sarria

Unable to Attend: Michelle Casanova, Kevin Coleman, James Cornish, Terry Cowan, Jason Earle, Shawn Lemieux, Penny Lichenstein, Gloria Mejia, Amy Wong Mok, Lesley Ramsey, Esther Reyes, Clint Smith, Kelsey Stutzman, Helen Watkins, Willie Williams

Call to Order, Introductions, and Announcements: Marquis Williams, Chair, called the meeting to order at 5:35 p.m. Sylvia Blanco of the Housing Authority of the City of Austin (HACA) announced that HACA was awarded a grant through the Texas Student Loan Coalition which is intended to target middle school students, high school students, and adult learners. HACA will be releasing a Request for Proposals (RFP) soon. CAN will share this RFP through CANews. Mary Moran announced that on August 24th, 25th, and 26th announced that Travis County Criminal Justice Planning's Workforce Development Program will provide training for people working with ex-offenders about helping them to find employment. Vanessa Sarria announced that in 2008 the Community Council made a request of the CAN board to maximize enrollment in public assistance programs. What resulted was a year-long vetting and planning process about how to best achieve this goal. CAN is currently working on a grant application related to this initiative.

Citizen's Communication: None.

Approval of Minutes from June 21, 2010: A typo was noted on page three of the minutes. On page four "Close Neighborhoods" should be revised to read "Choice Neighborhoods." Sylvia Blanco noted that this proposal was recently rejected. Rebecca Cobos stated that her dialogue was left out of the minutes and asked to strike a phrase in the minutes alluding to a comment she made. A quorum was not present at the meeting so the minutes were not approved.

Report on CAN Board Meeting:

Where do we stand on this indicator and what are the disparities and gaps?: Annette Gula of [Workforce Solutions](#) presented on the State of the Workforce based on an analysis by Brian Kelsey of [CAPCOG](#). She stated that the Austin-Round Rock MSA has consistently had lower unemployment rates than the State and the Nation (with the exception of the dot com era). There has been an overrepresentation of black unemployment claimants compared to the percentage of the population that they constitute. There is an underrepresentation of Hispanics in unemployment claimants, but this could be because they are such a youthful population. The education level of "Some College, No Degree" constitutes the highest percentage of unemployment claimants. Together, that group and those with a high school diploma constitute 71% of unemployment claimants. This points to the need for post-secondary credentials. In 1950 one in five jobs were "skilled," but by 2018 56% of job in Texas will require post-secondary credentials. Youth traditionally have higher unemployment rates, but make up a smaller percentage of unemployment claimants. Unemployment claims were high for the professions of sales and office and administrative support. Production claimants, computer and math professions, and installation, maintenance, and repair are also overrepresented. The overrepresentation of computer and math claimants is likely related to the recent Freescale and Samsung decline, which might be more cyclical than a permanent trend. This demonstrates that the recession impacts every industry sector. To impact the unemployment rate, we must increase the percentage of persons who get their high school diplomas and complete a post-secondary credential.

The need for adult education services: Meg Poag of the [Literacy of Coalition of Central Texas](#) presented based on information published in [Literacy in Central Texas: A Snapshot of Conditions](#). One in five adults cannot read well enough to fill out a job application. People with low literacy are at high risk

for unemployment and are overrepresented among those who are laid off. Fourteen percent of the Central Texas population ages 18 and over have no high school diploma. Low literacy is underrepresented in Census data because this population is not likely to fill out Census forms. Thousands of high school seniors expected to graduate from Central Texas school each year end up dropping out instead. Twelve percent of adults who are 16 or older do not have the minimum literacy skills necessary to enroll in a GED test preparation class. Many ESL and GED programs are provided by organizations where literacy is not their sole purpose. People with low literacy levels have been exponentially increasing. Twelve percent of adults 18 and older struggle with the English language. Eighteen percent of students in Central Texas counties do not speak English at home. The estimated regional service capacity is limited. The need is far greater than the number of people who are being served. There are alarming trends that we can expect in the future. For example, by 2040, 321,000 Central Texas adults will be eligible for adult education services. Adults with the lowest literacy skills earn approximately \$200 a week compared to \$600 a week for others. The average annual income taxes paid by a high school dropout is half of what is paid by those with a diploma which is also half of what is paid by those with a higher degree. Half of all people who are incarcerated are functionally illiterate. Children with basic literacy skills are three to four times more likely to drop out of school. What works in serving low literacy populations is a holistic approach that combines literacy programs with other support services. The challenge is that literacy students have changing needs in a complex world and programs struggle to meet those needs. The Literacy Coalition has a free referral line (1-866-518-READ), conducts outreach to those in need, does volunteer recruitment and referral, provides literacy instructor trainings, and does networking events. The Literacy Coalition stated that CAN partners can assist in these efforts by providing mentoring opportunities for adult learners, by offering on-site literacy programs in partnership with an area provider, and by training staff of direct government assistance programs to better identify those who might have literacy needs so they can be directed to the Literacy Coalition's hotline to receive program referrals. CAN partners could also provide tuition reimbursement for employees to receive literacy education or provide tangible resources for literacy providers such as space for literacy classes or computer donations.

Labor Market Supply: How to we match workforce skills to employer needs? Hector Aguilar, Executive Dean, Continuing Education, [Austin Community College \(ACC\)](#) presented. He cited the [2009 Austin Community College Progress Report](#) as a source of information. ACC had about 37,850 students enrolled in the fall. More than 11,000 people were enrolled in their continuing education programs. They've seen an enrollment increase of 24% over the past five years. The [2009 Austin Community College Progress Report](#) challenged ACC to increase their enrollment to approximately 47,000 students by 2015. Within a little more than five years, ACC could become the largest higher education institution in the region. They are creating a large campus in Round Rock and are planning on building five new campuses in upcoming years. They plan to build colleges in the outlying communities that currently do not have access campuses. ACC has a goal of making college accessible and affordable. In the State of Texas, 60 hours at a private school costs \$41,000. For this region the costs are \$18,836 for the University of Texas, \$15,680 for Texas State, and \$3,480 for ACC. ACC can educate nearly twelve students for the price of one at other colleges. ACC offers courses for transfer students, training for workforce skills, education for people who are pre-college level (ESL, GED), and continuing education. Of 23 Travis County high schools, data has found that ACC ranked number one for all high schools for where their high school graduates chose to go for college. Most local students coming out of high school are going to ACC. One challenge for ACC is that many students need remedial coursework. They often become frustrated and don't stay at ACC. To combat this, ACC now assigns counselors to students that need remedial coursework to increase the probability that they can get through that stage of college. ACC does a good job of recruiting students, but needs to do a better job of retaining students. ACC has a goal of increasing the number of students studying technology related coursework. ACC currently has 200+ programs that each have industry consultants so that classes are developed in partnership with industry. ACC recommends that CAN partners and other businesses in the community encourage annexations of their territories into ACC. Without tax revenue ACC cannot offer workforce programs as effectively. ACC also recommends that CAN partners encourage more companies to work with ACC in developing better curriculum for students.

Labor Market Demand: What is being done to create more jobs? Dave Porter of the Austin Chamber presented. He stated that our community's greatest asset for economic development is our

workforce. He described how the Chamber markets Austin and its workforce to other parts of the world. There is a five-year strategy called Opportunity Austin that strives to create 117,000 new jobs by 2013 and produce a wage growth of \$10.8 billion. Austin was already up 10,000 new jobs in the past year. Austin is the only major metro area in the country that is adding jobs like that. The Chamber's strategy is to capitalize on existing strengths, recruit and target diverse industry sectors, stimulate entrepreneurship, market Austin/Central Texas, and improve regional competitiveness. The Chamber learns about our workforce and our community's needs for growth or obstacles to growth. Chamber representatives often travel to business headquarter locations to encourage basing jobs in Austin. They ask how our community can help them to expand in Austin. The Chamber also responds to regional business requests and helps local companies to grow and expand. Their targeted industry sectors include convergence technologies (semiconductor, software, wireless), creative media, green industries, life science/healthcare, and corporate/professional headquarters. In 2009 and 2010 35 companies have relocated to Austin. Of the 35, only 4 received incentives to relocate here. A lot of the companies are coming in from California. The Chamber works with the Governor's office to develop entrepreneurship opportunities through Texas Emerging Technology Funds which assist start-up companies that have "breakthrough technologies." The Chamber embarks on 20 annual marketing trips, works with an international public relations firm based in New York City, advertises in certain publications, and invites key decision makers to red carpet tours of Austin every year. Austin has the best performing economy in the county right now. Mr. Porter stated that low taxation promotes a pro-business environment.

Stakeholder Panel: What 2-3 community solutions could do the most to move this indicator in the right direction? Meg Poag of the Literacy Coalition stated that many literacy services do not have waiting lists for services because the need for their services is so high. There is also still a need for living wage jobs for folks who are low-literacy or re-entering the workforce from prisons. Dave Porter of the Chamber stated that the incentives that the City and the County offer to companies are based on how high their wages are. They only provide incentives for jobs that pay above \$50,000. There are not incentives for companies paying entry level wages. The Community Council discussed that incentivizing companies providing entry-level jobs could be well-worth the return on investment. There needs to be some targeting of folks with low reading levels. They questioned how we can address the literacy needs of people who don't speak English or Spanish, children in the juvenile justice system, people in prison, or other populations with high need. Meg Poag stated that ESL classrooms are generally English-only so that it does not matter what the native language of participants is. It is an evidence-based teaching structure for adults. There are a lot of GED and learning programs in the prisons, but there are some issues of limited access to that population. There have been some good partnerships between literacy providers and prisons. Increasing literacy resources in prisons is more of a public policy issue. The Community Council questioned why so many high school graduates need remedial classes when they enter college and wondered what our community could do about it. They also wondered if there were more efforts such as the Hispanic Futures Conference that provide educational outreach. Mr. Aguilar stated that ACC does conferences for students of all ages and that it would be a good idea to have a comprehensive list of all of the conferences and educational outreach events that ACC hosts. Aguilar also noted that ACC offers customized trainings for interested companies. The Community Council questioned whether there was some way to increase our tax base to fund social services and still have a pro-business environment. Dave Porter of the Chamber stated that this is unlikely. The Community Council stated that a couple of months ago they recommended to the CAN Board that classes be offered to high school students that peaked their interest in areas of the workforce. They asked who could lead the charge on this recommendation. Dave Porter stated that the Chambers has a talent and education department where a lot of money goes toward working with regional school districts to build common goals and some money goes to mentoring students. He stated that Drew Scheberle is the Chamber contact who is more familiar with this. Workforce Solutions provides some educational funding for people who are looking for jobs and Capital Idea provides significant educational funding to their clients. There are solutions to help better educate populations and move them into jobs. The Community Council stated that it seems that there should be more connectivity between the school districts and higher education.

Adjournment: Marquis Williams, Chair, adjourned the meeting at 7:35 p.m. The next Community Council meeting will take place on August 16th from 5:30-7:30 at City Hall. All Community Council documents can be found online here: http://www.caction.org/councils/Community_Council/index.php