



Community Action Network Community Council 1/14/08 Meeting Minutes

Attendees: Al Perez, Amy Wong Mok, Anne Harutunian, Barbara Anderson, Barbara Cilley, Bruce Elfant, Clint Smith, Cynthia Colbert, Eric Blumberg, Kathie Tovo, Laurie Seremetis, Monica Bedford, Nancy Neavel, Laura Morrison, Rudy Roa, Terry Cowan, John Michael Cortez, Willie Williams, Vanessa Sarria,
Unable to Attend: Linda Murphy, Barbara Smith, Pat Dabbert, Marquis Williams, Penny Lichenstein, Amanda Arlitt, Jessica Flores, Kathy Armenta, Leslie Hernandez, Michelle Augustine, Mitch Sudolsky, Maureen Siu, Susan McCormick, Shawn Lemieux, Kevin Coleman,

- I. **Call to Order, Introductions & Announcements:** Terry Cowan, Chairperson, called the meeting to order at 5:40PM. Brief discussion and informal vote to have next meeting start at 5:30 p.m. instead of 5:40.
- II. **Review & Approve Community Council Minutes:** Meeting minutes from November 19, 2007, were reviewed and approved as presented.
- III. **Citizen's Communication:** None
- IV. **Issue Area Updates (IAG'S)** Brief discussion of Literacy Coalition of Central Texas becoming an officially recognized IAG of the C.A.N. Terry Cowan asked that we spend some time at the Program Comm. Meeting discussing and also discuss at next C.C. meeting in February to have official vote. Barbara Cilley mentioned strength of adult continuum of services of Literacy Coalition. Vanessa will forward Literacy Coalition info to CC members. Literacy Coalition has already been presented to the Executive Team (EC) and Assessment & Planning Committee before coming to the CC. The RC reserves the right for final approval but encourages the CC to voice opinions, concerns, and support. Handout describing Literacy Coalition passed out.

Terry discussed attending Resource Council (RC) meeting presentation of Essential Needs delivered by Celia Hagert which is part of tonight's CC Program and RC also discussed Transportation issues. Vanessa and Terry discussed how the format for CC programs has changed for 2008 and that 6 meetings will be televised with new programs and 6 meetings will not be televised and be devoted to developing follow up and recommendations to take to A-Team and RC. The type of meetings will alternate for appropriate follow up to new presentations. It was emphasized that the developing process for recommendations would go to the A-Team first to be further assessed, developed, and reviewed before being presented to the RC. The A-Team will be receiving recommendations from many areas, not just the CC. The CC has focused on IAG presentations, but the CC is an open forum that may hear concerns from any area of the community.

- V. **PROGRAM: Equity in Opportunity Forum on Basic Needs:**
Presenters: Ellen Baltazaar with Any Baby Can & 2008 Chair of Basic Needs Coalition (BNC) to provide overview, Celia Hagert w/ CPPP to focus on Family Budgets, Cynthia Colbert w/ Catholic Charities to present Food Security, and Kathie Navine to present Housing Stability

Ellen Baltazaar presented an overview of the Basic Needs Coalition (BNC) and recognition of Poverty Awareness Month. This is an outreach program developed and sponsored by the BNC now in its third year. Includes the following events:

"Images" kick-off event to be repeated Monday, January 21 (MLK Day), 11-3:00 @ The Old School 1604 East 11th St. Presentation of American Community Survey, January 24 BNC meeting, 9:00 a.m. @ United Way Waterloo room. Faith Community Poverty Roundtable, February 13, 9:00 Mexican American Cultural Center

Some facts given where: Poverty rate for Travis County still over 15%, more than 2% higher than U.S rate, people with disabilities, physical or mental are more likely to live in poverty, single moms with young children very likely to be in poverty (39%).

Celia Hagert discussed The Family Budget Estimator (FBE) Project that provides a realistic picture of how much it costs Texas families in different areas of the state to meet their basic needs. It was explained that the FBE is a better way of measuring poverty because the methodology for determining the traditional standard of the “federal poverty level”, also known as (FPIL standards) was established in the 1960s, based on 3 X the cost of food and it is no longer an accurate measure of need or the ability of families to get by. Household expenses have shifted drastically since then and it does not account for regional variation.

Celia continued to explain that the FPIL needs to be changed because it is used to estimate the number of poor and provides an inaccurate picture of the poor. FPIL is also used to determine eligibility for public work supports and “safety net” services. Most federal/state programs define the needy as those with incomes below the poverty line and as a result, many low-income workers do not qualify for government aid even though they may earn too little to support their families. FBE guidelines assess that in each of Texas’ metropolitan areas, necessary household income is at least \$15 per hour to cover basic expenses for a two-parent, two-child family. Across Texas’ metro areas, half of all jobs (or 5.6 million) are in occupations with a median wage under \$15/hour. Specifically in the Austin Round Rock area median wage for all occupations in the area is \$14.38/hour and a two-parent two-child family *with* employer- sponsored health insurance needs to earn \$22/hour to cover cost of living. Childcare costs in the area for two children is \$841/month. A two-bedroom apartment costs at least \$836/month. Celia also explained that “Work supports” are public benefits that help low-income families make ends meet such as earned income tax credits, public health insurance, food Stamps, childcare subsidies, and housing assistance. Work supports play a critical role in bridging the gap between earnings & expenses. Unfortunately, “Work Supports” are based on FPIL standards and furthermore many people that qualify do not apply or are impeded in the application process due to low staffing with the State and incomplete applications.

Cynthia Colbert presented on Food Security as researched by the BNC and reported: Texas ranks higher than the U.S. average for food insecurity. In TX, 15.9% of households in 2004-06 were food insecure compared to 14.9% in 2001-03. In the U.S. 11.3% were food insecure in 2004-06 and 2001-03. Cynthia reported that rates of food insecurity were substantially higher in households with incomes below the official poverty line (36%), household with children that are headed by a single woman (30%) or single man (17%), African American households (22%), Hispanic households (20%), and overall households with children reported food insecurity at about double the rate for households without children. Cynthia went on to describe the network of providers for meals and food in the Austin Travis County area and the gaps that exist. The BNC has a list of the following recommendations to address the food issue: **Increase** the capacity of **existing pantries** collaborations between pantries, increase **pantry access** for working people by expanding hours of operation to include more evenings and weekends and/or creating pantries in area with apparent need, **Increase/improve** the types of food available at **pantries** and determine where the lack of **transportation** poses an obstacle to **pantries and other food programs**. Facilitate a dialogue among **hot meal providers** to explore **expanding hot meal provision** from downtown Austin to the rest of the county to address unmet need, work with the BNC to **establish indicators** with which to measure progress toward becoming a food secure community, and **update the report(s)** every other year and publish the results.

Kathie Navine presented Housing Stability report from the BNC: she stated that 123,370 Travis County households (or 36.5% spend more than 30% of their annual income on housing). Rents in the Austin-San Marcos MSA are higher than in any other area of the state. The 211 assistance line in Texas cites rental assistance as the third most frequently requested need among its callers (utility assistance and food are at the top). Kathie also stated costs to the community increase dramatically when families lose their housing compared to keeping a family in housing. The Housing Authority of the City of Austin has 5,451 people on its waiting list and 5,111 are on the Section 8 waiting list.

Kathie discussed the Best Single Source program of the BNC with a case management approach to working with families connecting them to resources in the community. It has served over 1500 families and has an 88% rate of success and meeting goals.

A planning session prioritized four action items: inventory & evaluate the community's housing arena, research current needs, and special populations, develop a pilot program similar to BSS for a new targeted population, develop a clearinghouse of information on available affordable housing.

Ellen Baltazaar wrapped up the presentation with some areas of action that can may be taken to mitigate the effects of poverty: engage your agencies in outreach and application assistance, help clients understand rules and submit **complete** applications so they get benefits quickly, follow up with applicants and problems, and contact CPPP for training volunteers on eligibility rules/application process. Encourage clients to take advantage of the EITC and other tax refunds/credits for low-income workers, call 2-1-1 (option #1) to locate a Community Tax Center that offers free tax preparation, see CPPP's web site for EITC materials. <http://www.cppp.org/research.php?aid=742>

The presentation was well done with good insight into the status of the local community, provided statistics and details, and tangible action items for groups and individuals. The notes here come directly from the power point presentation and that can be sent via email for more information.

Dialog and Questions with CC and Presenters included addressing the stigma of poverty, concern with the term "working poor" as a stigma and concern with the TAANF program and its barriers to assisting people to get out of poverty. The question of what centers or locations can people be directed to apply for services and the answer was the Capital Area Food Bank.

Insight into working with city and county officials before the preliminary budget is created to provide feedback on how to spend tax dollars. Perhaps a statement could be developed from the CC or C.A.N. It was stated that 65% of tax dollars goes to public safety and some of those dollars may be better spent with programs on preventing poverty which often lead to crime. Discussion of a graduated income tax and state income tax.

CAN Executive Director's Report: Vanessa Sarria presented the Framework handout from the C.A.N newsletter including Basic Needs in the area of Working. The FrameWork ties into developing a process to systematically assess and evaluate recommendations and actions items that will be brought to the Resource Council (RC) and policy makers. Handout describing two motions that where approved by the RC on 10/19/07: 1. A motion for the Administrative Team to lead a process involving IAG's and other stakeholder organizations to review existing data in the context of the ED's proposed FrameWork, recommend next steps and report back to the RC by February 2008.

2. A motion to revisit the functions of C.A.N and the structure (so that form follows functions). This includes consolidation of by-laws. Concluding in February 2008.

- V. **Meeting Adjourned at 7:42 p.m.** Next Community Council meeting: Monday, February 11th, 2008 at 5:30 in City Hall.