



## Community Action Network Community Council 3/17/08 Meeting Minutes

**Attendees:** Anne Harutunian, Barbara Cilley, Bruce Elfant, Carole Belver, Clint Smith, Cynthia Colbert, Eric Blumberg, John Michael Cortez, Laurie Seremetis, Michelle Augustine, Nancy Neavel, Pat Dabbert, Penny Lichenstein, Rudy Roa, Shawn Lemieux, Willie Williams

**CAN Staff:** Vanessa Sarria, Mary Dodd, Chantel Bottoms

**Unable to Attend:** Al Perez, Amanda Arlitt, Amy Wong Mok, Barbara Anderson, Barbara Smith, Jessica Flores, Kathie Tovo, Kathy Armenta, Kevin Coleman, Laura Morrison, Leslie Hernandez, Linda Murphy, Marquis Williams, Maureen Siu, Mitch Sudolsky, Monica Bedford, Susan McCormick, Tara Dixon, Terry Cowan

- I. **Call to Order, Introductions & Announcements:** Cynthia Colbert, Assistant Chairperson, called the meeting to order at 5:40PM.
- II. **Review & Approve Community Council Minutes:** Meeting minutes from February 11, 2008, were reviewed and approved as presented.
- III. **Citizen's Communication:** None
- IV. **Issue Area Updates (IAG'S) – Designation of Literacy Coalition of Central Texas as CAN IAG:** Vanessa Sarria announced that the Resource Council has approved the Literacy Coalition of Central Texas as a CAN IAG.

On March 3, 2008 the CAN A-Team approved the Capital Area Regional Transit Coordination Committee as a CAN IAG. This item will be placed on the Community Council's agenda for April 21, 2008.

V. **Supportive Transitional Permanent Housing Forum:**

- **JerriJean Houchins, Re-entry Roundtable:** JerriJean Houchins discussed that Austin/Travis County does not have adequate, quality housing with the supportive services necessary for successfully re-entry of offenders as they return to our community. She mentioned that the Housing & Urban Development (HUD) Department at the federal level is shifting funding to housing stock versus support services for those in housing. This means that local and state governments will need to help fund support services for persons in supportive housing. Communities that are able to bring dollars to the table for support services can draw down more HUD dollars for housing stock. Ms. Houchins mentioned that definitions related to supportive housing vary so it is important to consider the difference between federal and local definitions. JerriJean Houchins further discussed the importance of public housing for ex-inmates. The benefits of providing such housing include: (1) an increase in public safety as housing stability reduces recidivism and risk of re-arrest, (2) a reduction in cost for the community as the annual cost of public housing is lower than the annual cost of incarceration. To address this issue, the community must: (1) define local, state, and federal definitions of housing, (2) define relevant populations to assess, (3) identify current and future funding sources, (4) update existing data about available resources, (5) identify current needs and boundaries, and (6) assess gaps in service.

Barbara Cilley suggested that in addition to JerriJean Houchins' recommendations, it is important to begin working with apartment owners associations to break the barrier that former incarceration creates for housing.

- **Ed McHorse, Ending Chronic Homelessness Coalition (ECHO):** Ed McHorse presented data collected in January 2007 which estimated that there was a total of 4,468 homeless persons

in Travis County, 3,163 of whom were unsheltered. These numbers include 520 households with children and 372 chronically homeless persons. He also presented data illustrating the large unmet need for transitional and permanent supportive housing. He says that housing should be targeted towards those federally classified as having an extremely low income.

- **Carissa Dougherty, Behavioral Health Planning Partnership & Mayor's Mental Health Task Force:** Carissa Dougherty discussed the importance of supportive housing for persons with behavioral health issues. She mentioned a December 2007 study that was proposed which will demonstrate the cost effectiveness of providing housing to persons with behavioral health issues relative to the cost of hospitalization. She stated that a large proportion of the population with behavioral health issues is not currently being served. She listed the number of people on waiting lists for various housing units in Travis County: Shelter Plus Care housing vouchers and HUD 811 units – just under 200 people, HACA's section 8 waiting list – 4,952 people, and HATC's Section 8 waiting list – 852 people.
- **Frank Fernandez, HousingWorks:** Frank Fernandez discussed some systemic issues that must be addressed to solve the local housing crisis: (1) more funding needed for capital, operations, and services, (2) the fragmented & uncoordinated housing system, (3) need for stronger advocates for the homeless community, (4) lack of community understanding about the costs of homelessness, (5) incomplete grasp of specific homeless needs, and (6) need for a stronger continuum of care. He specified that HUD's shift in funding will remove at least \$1 million from support services and will reapply the \$1 million to housing and operations. Further, there is now \$55 million in bonds that will be used over the next 6 years.

Community Council members suggested that there be a presentation at a future Community Council meeting to discuss how the \$55 million of bonds will be used.

- **Walter Moreau, Foundation Communities:** Walter Moreau stated that the number of homeless children in Austin is unacceptable. He also noted that current monthly social security benefits are less than the average rent. Further, he said that Austin has not qualified for increases in federal housing funding for a couple of years.

Cynthia Colbert summarized that the forum collectively agreed that there is a need for: joint planning and assessment of needs related to housing, community education/advocacy related to lack of affordable housing, adequate/coordinated funding, and housing that is accessible by public transportation.

- V. **Follow-up to February 11, 2008 Community Council Meeting:** Vanessa Sarria stated that the Program Committee will be meeting on March 25, 2008 at 3:00. She stated that the Program Committee will discuss connecting the Community Council to consumers of health and human services. She presented a document that contained highlights of needs and/or issues identified through equity in opportunity forums convened in 2007 by the Community Council.

The Community Council expressed a need to discuss how to take action on issues identified through forums. A motion was made and unanimously supported for the Community Council to have a work session in April to address their role in mobilizing action to address inequities.

VI. **Other Business:** None

- VII. **Meeting Adjourned at 7:37 p.m.** Next Community Council meeting: Monday, April 21, 2008 at 5:30 in City Hall.