

**Community Action Network  
Special Meeting of the Community Council**

Friday, April 25, 2008, 2:00 p.m. – 4:30 p.m.  
Alliance EAP  
4115 Friedrich, Suite100

**SESSION REPORT**

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**Community Council purpose Statement:**

**The Community Council will act as a community forum to gather, discuss, evaluate and incorporate community input and will work with the Resource Council to assure full implementation of the Master Community Action Plan in our community.**

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The purpose of this planning session was to begin answering questions about the overall role of the Community Council (CC) in relation to the larger Community Action Network (CAN), the Resource Council (RC), and the Issue Area Groups (IAG's). Prior to the session, approximately twenty members of the CC received an online survey designed to surface discussion points and session objectives. Eight persons completed the survey.

**Steve McKee, facilitator, summarized responses to the pre-session survey questions as follows:**

For discussion:

- *The role of Community Council (CC) in CAN structure...*
- *Role of IAG's w/ respect to CAN and CC*
- *Identifying what CC is doing well and what it needs to improve...*
- *Perceptions of the top 2-3 community issues we should be working on...*
- *Strategies for taking issues to action.*

Desired meeting outcomes

- *Arrive at consensus on direction, function and actions for CC*
- *Develop a plan for how we use the valuable information – move from research to action*
- *Clarify priorities: short and long-term goals, evaluation criteria*
- *Improve the structure and process for CC meetings including a method to consider and respond to presentations*

**Community Council members reviewed these additional documents:**

- *CAN Bylaws and Community Council Purpose and Responsibilities*
- *"Guiding Principles" (Social Well Being Agenda and Action Plan may be a starting point)*  
<http://www.caction.org/SWBAgendaActionPlan.html>
- *CAN Organization Chart (<http://www.caction.org/>)*

**Community Council members engaged in facilitated discussion about the purpose of the CC and noted the following:**

- There is presently no Master Community Plan as referenced in the CC Purpose Statement;
- Instead, there are many smaller plans dealing with specific issues that are created by CAN IAG's or special commissions or task forces.
- The Master Community Plan needs to be defined;
- The CC and RC should endorse having this done;
- There needs to be more community recognition of the CAN, its purpose and its accomplishments.

**There followed much discussion of the CC's role and relationship to the CAN, to the Resource Council of CAN, the IAG's and with the community outside the CAN system:**

The group discussed the Community Council's role in advocating for health and human services funding before the City Council, the Travis County Commissioners Court and the State Legislature. Members discussed the role of the Community Council to identify opportunity gaps and to let elected officials know the needs of the community. It was noted that during the current economic downturn, there will be pressures to cut social services, so a strong community voice to expand services will be important. The group discussed the need for CAN, through the Resource Council, to be engaged in the City and County budgeting processes. In addition to communicating needs to elected officials and the CAN Resource Council, the Community Council also plays a role in communicating the need for social services and the funding of social services to the public at large.

**CAN and CC Relationship with the RC:**

- CAN (clearly has) a role in representing to local elected officials the needs & the issues in HHS – Advocacy, opportunity, gaps;
- CC clearly has a role to educate, inform and make recommendations to the RC;
- Timing of recommendations is important;
- RC – CC recommendations, to RC to support a master plan.

**CC Relationship with the IAG's**

Members demonstrated consensus agreement that IAGs should continue to report to the CC. There was more discussion around criteria the CC should use in making recommendations with respect to the reports from IAG's:

- Recommendations from the CC should have both prevention and intervention components;
- Short-term goals should relate to the longer-term vision;
- Recommendations will address situations requiring immediate (12-month) response;
- CC will take a formal vote, with 2/3 voting to approve the recommendation;
- Honest & complete information (integrity) is valued and expected.

**CC Advocacy Role - What is the CC's role in advocacy?**

Members reached consensus that one role of the CC is to advocate for and make recommendations in support of issues, to the Resource Council, that the CC members agree should be addressed by the Resource Council.

**Discussion points around CC's possible role in advocacy outside the CAN system:**

- Providing advocacy outside CAN Community can empower consumers directly;
- Providing advocacy outside the CAN community may help align consumers to policy makers;
- For the CC to provide advocacy outside the CAN community will require buy-in from RC;

Members developed a list of conditions that should be met in order for the CC to provide advocacy outside the CAN system:

- A plan to address (increase) CAN Community Awareness should be implemented;
- Use the "current conditions" & the opportunity that televised meetings offer;
- (The issue) must be brought forward by the IAGS;
- Item is "tagged" as one that the CC thinks should be advocated externally
- Resource Council is offered opportunity to support the external recommendation/advocacy;
- The CC will have a standing agenda spot on the RC to report on work.

**What are the priority issues that the CC agrees should be advanced?**

Three issues were identified during a CAN Retreat in 2006:

- HOUSING
- TRANSPORTATION
- BEHAVIORAL HEALTH

More recently, the CC has heard reports from 9-10 IAG's and is scheduled to hear a total of twelve issue reports. Ruby Roa suggested that the Community Council act on a recommendation made during the housing presentation at the previous Community Council meeting that CAN join the National Low Income Housing Coalition. **Willie Williams suggested that the group recommend to the City Council and County Commissioner's Court that they devote general funds to make up the pending cuts in federal HUD CDGB funding. The motion was seconded and approved unanimously.**

**Improving the CC meeting structure**

Due to time constraints, the Community Council did not address take official action to change its meeting structure. The group discussed the option of reserving one-half of the scheduled meeting time to discussing appropriate action to be taken in response to forum presentations.

The special meeting was adjourned at 4:30 p.m.

**Parking Lot Issues for Follow-up**

- CC – What role does the Community Council (other HHS advocacy groups) have in the budget process with City & County Govt.?
- Is the City to make-up gaps left by United Way cuts?
- Determine meeting structure later
- Look at all 12+ issues & prioritize them, select the 3-5 most pressing
- National Housing initiative

**ATTACHMENT A: PARTICIPANTS**

**Attendees:** Michelle Augustine, Eric Blumberg, Barbara Cilley, Cynthia Colbert, Kevin Coleman, Terry Cowan, Pat Dabbert, Anne Harutunian, Penny Lichenstein, Nancy Neavel, Ruby Roa, Clint Smith, and Willie Williams.

**Unable to Attend:** Barbara Anderson, Amanda Arlitt, Carole Belver, Monica Beckford, John-Michael Cortez, Tara Dixon, Bruce Elfant, Jessica Flores, Leslie Hernandez, Shawn Lemieux, Susan McCormick, Amy Wong Mok, Laura Morrison, Linda Murphy, Al Perez, Maureen Siu, Barbara Smith, Mitch Sudolsky, Laurie Seremetis, Kathie Tovo, and Marquis Williams.

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

**Facilitator:** Steve McKee, MSSW, Organization Development Consulting