



Community Action Network Community Council 01/11/10 Meeting Minutes

Attendees: Sylvia Blanco, Michelle Casanova, Rebecca Cobos, Kevin Coleman, James Cornish, Terry Cowan, Jason Earle, Nancy Gilliam, Kirsha Haverlah, Jacinda Johnson, Linda Kokemor, Shawn Lemieux, Gloria Mejia, Stefan Molina, Mary Moran, Lesley Ramsey, Jim Reed, Esther Reyes, Ruby Roa, Clint Smith, Kelsey Stutzman, Helen Watkins, Marquis Williams, Willie Williams, Amy Wong Mok

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

Unable to Attend: Anne H. Harutunian, Shawn Lemieux, Penny Lichenstein

Call to Order, Introductions, and Announcements: Marquis Williams, chair, called the meeting to order at 4:00 p.m. He welcomed new members.

Citizen's Communication: None.

Welcome and Introductions of New Members: New members introduced themselves.

Approval of Minutes from November 16, 2009 and December 21, 2009: Minutes were reviewed and approved as presented.

Review Letter to City of Austin Regarding Community Council Input for Comprehensive Plan: The letter was approved and forwarded to the City's Planning Commission.

Dashboard Indicator – 32% of all people in Travis County are low-income:

a. Where do we stand?

- i. % low-income – Chantel Bottoms spoke. She stated that most researchers and policymakers agree that a family must earn at least two times the federal poverty level to meet basic needs. A family is considered to be low-income if they earn 200% of the federal poverty level or \$42,400 for a family of four. Under this definition in 2008 approximately 33% of Travis County residents were low-income. This rate is better than the City or the State, but worse than the MSA and the Nation. In Travis County approximately 41% of the under 18 population was low-income in 2008. This compares to 30% of adults aged 18-64 and 20% of older adults aged 65+. Children living with single parents were more than twice as likely to be low-income as children living with two parents. In 2008 64% of Travis County children living with single parents were low-income compared to 27% of children living with two parents.
- ii. Basic Needs Coalition (BNC) 2010 Poverty Fact Sheet: Ellen Balthazar of the Basic Needs Coalition's Advocacy Committee spoke. She stated that January is Poverty Awareness Month. In order to raise awareness about poverty in our community, the BNC has created the 2010 Poverty Fact Sheet. The fact sheet, which uses data from the American Community Survey, states that in 2008 one in seven Travis County residents were living in poverty. The presentation included slides on poverty that were created by Travis County's Research and Planning Department and area available here: http://www.co.travis.tx.us/health_human_services/research_planning/documents/Travis_County_Snapshot_ACS_2008.pdf. Ellen Balthazar stated that most families in poverty in our community do not receive government assistance.
- iii. Basic Needs FAQ: A Focus on Childhood Poverty – Ellen Balthazar of the BNC Advocacy Committee spoke. One in five children and youth in Travis County are living in poverty. One in three children raised in poverty remain in poverty as adults. Boys raised in poverty are twice as likely to be arrested and three times as likely to be incarcerated. Girls raised in poverty are five times more likely to bear a child out of wedlock prior to the age of 21. Childhood poverty costs us \$57.5 billion dollars annually in Texas. The key issues that affect children in poverty are food, housing, education, transportation, healthcare, childcare, and living wages.

b. What is being done?

- i. The Basic Needs Coalition of Central Texas mobilizes agencies for creating solutions that secure the basic resources – food and housing - for our neighbors in need. Katie Navine, chair of the Basic Needs Coalition spoke. She presented a list of the many BNC member organizations focused on eliminating poverty. All who are concerned about poverty are welcome to join the BNC. They use a two-pronged approach to battling poverty by working to provide a safety net and a ladder up to those in need. They have many collaborative efforts including Best Single Source, a safety net program that provides housing assistance to those households in financial crisis that are in danger of becoming homeless. Eighty-six percent of families served by this program successfully remain stable for at least a year. The BNC has provided long-term hurricane relief and addressed the needs of people affected by Hurricanes Katrina and Rita by providing case management. Their collaborative Rapid Re-Housing program aims to move households out of temporary housing and into affordable housing very quickly. Homeless Prevention & Rapid Re-Housing Program provides services and financial assistance to prevent people from becoming homeless or to help re-house and stabilize homeless persons. Katie Navine extended her thanks to the agencies that dedicate their time, to the funders who provide monetary resources and expertise, and to CAN for providing research on the issues of poverty.

c. What more needs to be done?

- i. What policy changes could improve the lives and opportunities for people living in poverty? – Frances Deviney of the Center for Public Policy Priorities (CPPP) spoke. She invited Community Council members to visit the CPPP's website at www.cppp.org. She stated that poverty is structural, not individual. More than one of every four Travis County dropouts lives in poverty. To increase economic opportunity the CPPP wants to: increase post-secondary completion, support unemployment insurance modernization reforms, and expand programs such as *Bank on Central Texas* (www.bankoncentraltexas.org) that restrict or eliminate payday lending. Contact Don Baylor with the CPPP at baylor@cppp.org for more information on economic opportunity in Texas. Texas needs to improve its safety net. We currently only reach low-income children, elderly, and the disable. Safety net services typically serve less than half of low-income children. National Health Care Reform provides the best opportunity to make sure low-income Texans have access to quality and affordable healthcare. Call your members of congress today. Visit www.contactingthecongress.org to find contact information for your legislators. Short-term opportunities for action include encouraging congress to enact a smaller scale follow-up to the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act and supporting the current development of new state programs to improve health affordability of health insurance such as the Healthy Texas program and low-income subsidies for high-risk individuals. In the long-term people can continue to advocate for improvements in the affordability of coverage gained through health reform and work for consumer-friendly implementation of health reform.

Questions & Discussion: Marquis Williams opened the discussion for community council members and asked for recommendations that could be taken forward to the resource council. CPPP representatives recommended talking to Eva DeLuna about what can be done locally to affect poverty and to discuss whether Homeless Prevention and Rapid Rehousing requests should be proposed for potential future follow-up dollars to ARRA. There was some discussion about the benefits of a state sales tax and CPPP recommended talking further with staff expert Dick Levine if the Community Council is interested in learning more. The CPPP hosts revenue coalition meetings and Community Council members interested in issues of state income tax are welcome to join. The Texas Early Childhood Education Coalition is the go-to organization for increasing the affordability of childcare. Their website can be found here: www.tecec.org/. Issues of quality childcare will likely be discussed further during the next Community Council meeting where there will be a forum on education indicators. The Basic Needs Coalition thanked CAN for including a poverty indicator on the community dashboard. The BNC plans to continue sharing their poverty documents and advocacy efforts with the community in Poverty Awareness Month and beyond. You can learn more by visiting their website at www.basicneedscoalition.org.

Other Business: None.

Meeting adjourned at 5:57 p.m. Next Community Council meeting: Thursday, February 18th, 2010 at 3:30 in City Hall.

Presentations and other information from Community Council meetings are available online at: <http://caction.org/Councils/CommunityCouncil/index.htm>