



## CAN Community Council Meeting Minutes, 5/15/2015

**Community Council Members in Attendance:** Cathy Brandewie, Rolando Delgado, Rhonda Douglas, Vincent Harding, Anne H. Harutunian, Kimberly Knox, Ara Merjanian, Melissa Orren, Blythe Plunkett, Gloria Souhami, Clint Smith, Eileen Schrandt, Ken Ripperger-Suhler, Terry Wilt, Michelle Zadrozny

**Community Council Members unable to attend:** Christopher Auruajo, Sylvia Blanco, Michelle Casanova, Crystal Crawford, Nancy Gilliam, Monica Guzman, Kirsha Haverlah, Molly Latham, Carmen Luevanos, Stacey Mather, Stephan Molina, Laura Poskochil, Ruthie Redmond

**Staff in Attendance:** Catie Bialick, Mary Dodd, Kevin Paris

**Others in Attendance:** Pia Villalon, Program Manager, Texas Center Point Veterans Services, Kimberly Layne, Director of Integrative Medicine, Hope for Heroes, Samaritan Center, Travis County Commissioner Brigid Shae

**Call to Order and Introductions:** Anne H. Harutunian called the meeting to order at 5:35 p.m.

**Citizens Communication:** None

**Approval of Minutes from April 20, 2015:** Vincent Harding made a motion to approve the minutes. Ara Merjanian seconded the motion. The minutes were approved unanimously.

**Updates from Community Council Chair:** Anne Harutunian provided several announcements and updates.

- *Board Meeting:* The Executive Director Search is ongoing. ATCIC is helping with search process. Mary forwarded the application as well as links with more information for the ED position, a link can also be found on [www.CANATX.org](http://www.CANATX.org). The Board is planning a regional summit for the end of October. The CAN Dashboard Press Conference is May 20th at 10am, in the Media Room at Austin City Hall. This week the new School Readiness Action Plan will be released, St. Edwards is hosting a walk in the USA Talk on Japan (Japan's Prime Minister will be in attendance), there will be a Property Tax Appraisal Forum on May 19<sup>th</sup>, and diversity training on June 19<sup>th</sup> from 9am – 12pm at ACC Highland location.
- *Subcommittee Update:* We have several volunteers to serve on the Person-Centered Care Summit planning committee, and are now trying to figure out how to structure the summit. The Liberating Structures Users Group is going to help brainstorm ways to structure the summit, but the committee is looking for additional models or suggestions. The July 20<sup>th</sup> Community Council meeting will be dedicated to planning the summit.

### **Commissioner Shea, Travis County Commissioner, Precinct 2**

Commissioner Shea came to Austin in 1988 to start the Texas chapter of Clean Water Action. Prior to that, she had been an award-winning journalist at NPR stations in Minnesota and Philadelphia. She served on the Austin City Council 1993-1996 and championed consumer, electoral and environmental reforms. Shea is the co-founder of SOS, Austin's historic law to save Barton Springs, has been an advisor to LCRA, Seton, the City of Austin, etc. and her work with a client recently won the TCEQ Environmental Excellence award. She serves on many boards, including the national board of Clean Water Action. She is a 2001 graduate of Leadership Austin and is a member of the Chamber of Commerce Clean Energy Council. She was elected Travis County Commissioner in 2014.

Commissioner Shea invited the council to a Property Tax Appraisal Forum, which will provide information on the current status of tax appraisals and efforts underway to balance the burden between residential and commercial property taxpayers. Speakers will address concerns and provide additional information on appeals, exemptions, and current legislation. Speakers Include: Brigid Shea, Travis County Commissioner, Steve Adler, City of Austin Mayor, Kathie Tovo, City of Austin Mayor Pro Tem, Bruce Elfant, Travis County Tax Assessor, Marya Crigler, Travis Central Appraisal District, Dick Levine, Center for Public Policy Priorities, Leigh Murrin, Real Values for Texas. Live stream of the forum: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=I12TE3zXGqA>.

Property owners can influence the equity discussion by paying attention to what council discusses at the property tax appraisal forum, especially on discrepancies between actual market value and appraised value. Most residential is appraised at 99% to 101% of market; commercial properties are paying much less, which shifts the burden on to residential owners if commercial properties aren't paying their fair share. Homeowners can also look into filing a protest if they feel that the appraised value for their property is not accurate. Many times, people qualify for exemptions, but they do not know about them and do not claim them. For example, Veterans injured in duty, spouses of disabled individuals, and surviving spouses over the age 65 are eligible for tax exemptions.

**Providing person-centered care to veterans:** Presentations available at [http://www.canatx.org/CAN-Councils/Community\\_Council/Presentations/](http://www.canatx.org/CAN-Councils/Community_Council/Presentations/).

**Pia Villalon**, Program Manager, Texas Center Point Veterans Services

- Center Point's Texas Veterans Program provides outreach, assessment of needs, vocational readiness training, housing assistance, job placement and referrals to job skills training programs for homeless Veterans in the Austin area. Through funding provided by the U.S. Department of Labor, at risk Veterans may access an array of services that significantly improve their quality of life.
- Since 2010, Texas Center Point has served vulnerable Veterans and their family members in South Central Texas counties. Texas Veterans Services promote stability and successful community and family reintegration through innovative, individualized, on-site services and coordination with community partners for assistance with ancillary needs. Staffed by Veterans, services are immediate, responsive, comprehensive and gender specific.
- 93% of clients seek help with financial problems, 68% family issues, 61% unemployment, 85% homeless or at-risk of homeless, and 47% have problems obtaining VA benefits.
- The organization focuses on person-in-environment case management and provides comprehensive social services using a one-stop service model. Their primary goals are job placement and community reintegration. The organization tries to always look at the person's environment, and hone in on any underlying issues, in finding the best way to serve each individual.
- One of the organization's main goals is to help individuals find a job within 3 months. They partner with agencies such as the Texas Veterans Commission and Goodwill Industries. Once a vet has meaningful employment, Center Point stays with them for a month, makes sure they are stable in the job, then follows up periodically over the next 9 months.
- Three Wishes: The first wish is that Austin had greater availability of housing; there is always a waiting list, even for the housing authority. ECHO is doing a "PIT" count (point in time) for veterans later on this month. A new initiative, called OneKeyATX <http://austinecho.org/the-solution/onekeyatx-2/> encourages landlords to commit to housing at least one vet. The second wish would be to get rid of the stigma of homelessness. Specifically, that employers would be open to giving second chances. Many veterans have criminal backgrounds. Employers can be

proactive in helping the community. The third wish would be that organizations and individuals know all programs and non-profits available to serve the community within the community. The Central Texas Veterans Services Coalition was created about a year ago to bring together non-profit organizations serving the veteran population. There are currently 90 participating organizations going into the coalition.

**Kimberly Lane**, Director of Integrative Medicine Hope for Heroes, Samaritan Center

- The Samaritan Center has been saving lives, healing emotional wounds and giving hope to individuals and families for over 40 years. The Center's mission is to improve the mental, physical, and spiritual health of children and families in Central Texas. The organization provides professional counseling, integrative medicine, and psychiatric services that are accessible and affordable for all, especially vulnerable populations such as uninsured or underinsured low-income families, and veterans struggling with the emotional wounds of war.
- The Samaritan Center serves adults, children and families from 16 counties around Central Texas, in 2013 they added a field commission piece and now serve the entire state of Texas, last year they served 1600 individuals and 45% of clients are service men and families, 42% of which are below the poverty level.
- Provide a comprehensive list of services and continuously expanded to meet the needs of the growing and changing Austin community. Person centered services provided include family, individual and child counseling, military and form care trainings and EMDR which is very good for processing through traumatic services. The organization also offers acupuncture, herbal medicine, bodywork, and Swedish massage. They regularly cross-refer and provide feedback for other specialists.
- Organization provides person entered approach by making services as affordable as possible, no one gets turned away for inability to pay. The organization is primarily funded through grants, then private donations and large fundraisers. Approximately 25-30% of funding comes from fees from service (insurance or private pay).
- The organization believes services provided should be highly individualized, and that treatment should not take a one size fits all approach. They also strongly believe the family serves with the individual, which is why services are provided on a reduced fee scale for family members.
- Provide staff trainings that are relevant to the needs of individuals in this community, EMDR training, family assistance approach training, etc. The organization has multiple partnerships with multiple agencies – Flatwater Foundation, Caritas, ATCIC Children's fund, Texas tech, big brothers big sisters of Austin.
- Outcome measurement system measures client success in real time, overtime pull aggregate information and able to determine the individual clients progress and individual therapists success, also have suggestive reporting and see people making progress, -- pain, sleep, anxiety, depression, big measure is ability to go off of medications
- Often refer clients to life works, child guidance center, mostly because of demand for child therapists in the community.
- Three Wishes: Primary obstacle is the stigma associated with mental health issues, more people would get the helped they needed if it weren't for this. The second wish would be greater awareness in the community of mental health issues. The third wish would be for additional funding to keep services affordable.

Questions:

- How can employers get involved? Organizations exist to help get employers involved, Austin Human Resource Management Association, Workforce Solutions, Force Readiness, are all about getting people ready to work, and have a focus on veterans. Individuals need assistance getting jobs and staying in those positions. There is a workforce readiness conference Thursday.
- What is a veteran's spouse needs help? Veterans Foreign Wars (VFW) always has funding for emergency situations and serve families of veterans. Starting in July, Texas Centerpoint Veteran's Services will have financial assistance with emergency rental, tools, and uniforms for new jobs, they will also be able to assist in identifying fee waivers for education, utility payments, and car registration.
- Do we have a sense of how many of Austin's homeless population is homeless? What proportion of this population are we serving now? Do we have the capacity to serve more? Most veterans who come into program are referred from VA, Caritas, Salvation Army and Goodwill. Case managers also do outreach to other agencies, and partner with organizations like the Texas Veterans Commission who focus on outreach. The Point In Time count focuses solely on veterans on the streets and camping for one specific night, so it may not be entirely representative of the homeless population in Austin. Organizations are limited by funding to serve more; they also need more people to serve more. 231 vets are currently homeless in the Austin area.
- The majority of referrals come from the VA, or word of mouth. Some counselors do have waitlists. Again, additional funding is needed to hire more counselors.
- Do programs take veterans who have a dishonorable discharge? Yes.
- Can you tell us more about the difficulty veterans have accessing VA benefits? Are backlogs and disability claim issues being processed more efficiently and accurately? The VA is actually doing a lot better. The key is referring people to the right person. The Texas Veterans Commission actually deals with benefits. Ali Hope and Susan Lewis help with benefits. Heroes Night Out is another great organization that will sit down with veterans and have an open discussion to ask where they are at and what they need.

**Adjournment:** Anne H. Harutunian, Chair, adjourned the meeting at 7:23 p.m. Next month, the Community Council will be hearing from organizations that serve the child and youth population. All future meetings will be held in Multipurpose Room B at 700 Lavaca. Future 2015 meeting dates are: June 15, July 20, August 17, September 21, October 19, November 16, no December meeting.