

CAN Community Council Meeting Minutes

Monday, March 8, 2021

Zoom Video Conference

Present: Nora Comstock, Nancy Gilliam, James May, Caroline Reynolds, Kelly Crook, Anaami Pandit Haji, Hunter Ellinger, Blanca Alvarado, Laura Goettsche, Lisa Boyd, Lou Serna, Rachel Hampton, Donovan DePreist

Staff Present: Raul Alvarez, Jelina Tunstill

Guests: Commissioner Ann Howard, Nefertitti Jackmon, Ara Merjanian

Call to Order and Announcements	Nancy called the meeting to order at 6:03 pm. Each member introduced themselves.
Approval of February 8, 2021 Minutes	The February 8, 2021 minutes were approved unanimously on a motion by Nora with a second by Caroline.
CAN Community Council Chair's Report	Summary: Nancy stated that last month's presentations were outstanding, and that the housing workgroup is doing a good job planning speakers for meetings. She stated she doesn't have much to update because of all the meeting cancellations due to the winter storm.
Executive Director's Report	Summary: Raul stated that In March, the CAN Board typically doesn't meet due to SXSW, but this year we will do our Beginning of Year Celebration in March. We initially planned to have it the first week of March but because it was so close to the winter storm, we decided to push it back to the last week of March. Our lawyers and Integral Care's lawyers have come together and have agreed to move forward with the TUUNAA. Raul explained that Integral Care is currently our fiscal sponsor and CAN staff is technically Integral Care staff. We grappled with becoming a 501c3 or becoming a TUUNAA. The TUUNAA is an in between step. The TUUNAA allows public and private entities to be partners. The financial relationship between CAN, Integral Care, the City, and the County have been discussed. We will try to move forward as quickly as we can. We still need to create policies and procedures for CAN. We have a public input session March 9 th at 11 am, for feedback on the Race Equity Action Framework. The CAN Celebration will be March 29 th at 5pm. We are recognizing Austin Justice Coalition, the Complete Count Committees, Keep Austin Together, Good Works Austin, Austin Latino Coalition, and Community Resilience Trust for their work on basic needs, racial justice, and food security during the pandemic. Raul mentioned that he, Saatvik, and Nora helped

	<p>put together the community remembrance for people the community has lost during covid.</p> <p>Q&A: Nancy asked if anyone was interested in taking her place on the Dashboard Steering Committee and to email Jelina if they are interested.</p>
<p>Workgroup Updates</p>	<p>Food Insecurity Workgroup Summary: Hunter announced that the food insecurity workgroup is still working through planning details. There is a lot going on in the area. The City of Austin has a food insecurity group. Some of the efforts are related to COVID but not all. They had a conference a month ago that he attended. Kelly and Lisa are involved in the area personally. He hopes they will build panels on the work they do. He mentioned the visit to Del Valle a couple of years ago with the Community Council and the discussion of nutrition and teaching people how to make healthy meals. He stated that there are federal programs that help, and Donovan is involved in that part of the process. Another area to explore, that Lisa is involved in, is local agriculture. Kelly added that the group is trying to narrow down what topic within food insecurity that they want to focus on.</p> <p>Mental Health Workgroup Summary: The mental health workgroup is still in the early process of scoping. They wanted to get a feel for what was going on in the community. They spoke to David Evans, CEO of Integral Care. There is a Children’s Mental Health Plan that Mary Dodd worked on and will likely be one of our contacts. They want to talk to more partners the school districts, and iACT. He suggested to the food insecurity workgroup to also reach out to the Sustainable Food Center. Raul added that there are about 10 organizations trying to create mental health resources for non-profits. They are looking to create a toolkit for nonprofits that would give resources for how to best help their staff, how to perform in a trauma informed fashion, and how to provide mental health supports to executive directors. We are still working with Integral Care to get mental health data and will share it when we receive it.</p>
<p>Presentations on Affordable Housing – Moments of Crisis</p>	<p>Nefertitti Jackmon Presentation Summary: One of the programs she supports at the City is the rent program. Before COVID came they put out the Tenant Stabilization Contract. Only one non-profit responded. To date, since May 2020, 54 million dollars have been allocated to tenant stabilization. The City was ill prepared to provide the rental assistance people needed to keep them stably housed. During the first two rounds of funding, the City was trying to help as many people as possible, so they were only able to give 3 months of assistance. They are currently doing 6 months of</p>

assistance and are now planning for 12-15 months of rental assistance. Families need 12-15 months of assistance so they can get beyond worrying about rent to focus on other stuff (school for their kids, repairs from the winter storm, getting food etc.). She stated that it is so hard to believe that people working 40 hours a week have nothing extra or are losing money. They expected small households to have 3-6 months saved up to support themselves, but businesses weren't even able to do that. What we've see is that the government can respond and provide assistance during a crisis.

Commissioner Ann Howard Presentation Summary:

Commissioner Howard began discussing the recent winter storm we went through during the pandemic. She mentioned that the City was queuing up freezing weather centers and she wasn't pleased with how long the lines were outside and how long people had to wait in those lines. She stated that we have big city problems and the county struggles with homelessness. Homelessness happens when there is a crisis and there are no funds for housing. It can be that someone lost their job, they had an addiction, they came out to their family, or the end of a relationship. It doesn't mean that because you have "xyz" issues that you will be homeless, but we know that most people dealing with homelessness also struggle with mental and physical health. There is also a connection with the criminal justice system. Having a criminal record makes it difficult to get a house or a job; and people of color are overrepresented in those systems. The county has authority in a lot of these systems, and even though she represents the west side, she helps govern the entire county in partnership.

Q&A: James asked what systemic issues are barriers to getting housing that need to be addressed. Commissioner Howard stated that a barrier in Austin to securing housing is income. One way they were able to get people into housing was to make deals with landlords to reduce the requirement of having 3 times the rental amount in income and to accept vouchers.

Lisa stated that she has noticed that a lot of second chance apartments in Austin have changed their status and they are unable to accommodate people with controversial history. Is there some type of protection or is it up to each property? Commissioner Howard answered that she can't make a blanket statement. She stated that the City Council passed a law that they have to take vouchers or discriminate how people pay. The State came along and told the City that they can't do that. Mayor Adler helped form a nonprofit to get private dollars, buy affordable apartments, and

keep them at the affordable level. There's a lot being done but there is a lot working against the City.

James asked about the impact of Project Connect on East Austin and what the City is doing to prevent displacement. Nefertitti answered that the City has set goals around affordability and increasing the number of affordable units in each district so affordable units are evenly dispersed. Meeting those goals is going to take partnership. ACT is one effort. Increasing the capacity of Community Development Corporations is a long-term strategy. Guadalupe Neighborhood Development Corporation has the community land trust and are located in East Austin. It is not practical without the support of the City to continue to purchase units in East Austin.

Blanca asked if there a tracking system in place to track families who have been helped with housing during the pandemic? How many families do you think have been helped with housing during the pandemic? Nefertitti answered that they have a dashboard <https://app.powerbigov.us/view?r=eyJrIjoiNDE5MTc3YjQ4ZmNWE0liwidCI6IjVjNWUxOWY2LWY2YWI0NS1iMWQwLWJINDYwOGE5YTY3ZiJ9> , but they have helped more than 4,800 families since RENT 2.0 and that doesn't include RENT 1.0. They average over 2 months' rent assistance. They expect the number of months assistance given to families to increase.

What are the non-profits/ mutual aid organizations doing and how can we better leverage those efforts? Commissioner Howard answered that through the money raised by non-profits, federal money, philanthropic money etc. they were able to help people. The non-profit community does great efficient work. Nefertitti added that the rental program has been made so much more robust from the advocacy and challenging from non-profit organizations. She stated the government needs to seek direction from non-profits and people working on the ground and develop policies around how people live and how they experience tragedies.

Raul asked if there is a way to provide ongoing supports to these families. Nefertitti answered that long-term solutions would be the rent relief program.

James asked what the county has learned from the winter storm. Commissioner Howard Answered the winter storm put a microscope on what isn't right. She stated that to be ready we have to make sure people are insured, schools are at peak performance, people have housing, the criminal justice system doing the right thing, if everything was closer to peak performance we could better deal with crisis.

<p>Presentation Reflections</p>	<p>There was consensus that there was a lot of information to digest. It would be helpful to follow a structure similar to the Board, where we ask presenters for a specific ask from the community or the Community Council. Raul added that we need more of a targeted approach of where we put assistance, like neighborhood hubs, so families aren't having to navigate 5 different programs. Caroline stated that if the Council or Capital Metro continues to do the same things that they have historically done we will not see a change. Nancy stated that in order to leverage funds we could link together the issues we are seeing in housing, mental health and food insecurity and paint the picture of the impact to the Board. If we can show how many dollars it takes to help one person that's a powerful picture to paint. Hunter added that it would be good to identify where there are actions being taken that we could build into a sustained effort. Lou stated that we should start to focus about post pandemic/ post crisis resources. Right now, there is a lot of effort and focus on right now. Donovan suggested that we come with ideas on how to do things better and think about the resources and capabilities within the Community Council. Laura added that spreading information to combat misinformation is a powerful tool. A lot of assumptions about homeless people aren't based on fact.</p>
<p>Adjournment</p>	<p>Nancy adjourned the meeting 8:02 pm.</p>