

CAN Community Council Meeting Minutes

Monday, May 17, 2021

Zoom Video Conference

Present: Laura Goettsche, Kelly Crook, Nora Comstock, Nancy Gilliam, Lisa Boyd, Hunter Ellinger, Lou Serna, Caroline Reynolds

Staff Present: Jelina Tunstill

Guests: Ara Merjanian, Katie Nye, Edwin Marty, Melinda Barsales, Patricia Longoria

Call to Order and Announcements	Nancy called the meeting to order at 6:06 pm. A quorum was not present. Each member introduced themselves. Quorum was present at 6:34 pm.
CAN Community Council Chair's Report	Summary: Nancy stated that we had a Board meeting Friday. The Dashboard releases on June 16 th . During the Board meeting the Central Health Equity Policy Council and Pandemic Health Equity Workgroup gave a presentation. They also broke up into small groups to discuss the role of CAN and discussed challenges for staff, leaders, and clients regarding information shared during the presentations.
Executive Director's Report	Summary: Raul was unable to make the meeting, so Jelina shared a prewritten Executive Director's report to the Community Council. The prewritten report stated that this year's publication of the CAN Dashboard has been scheduled to be released June 16 th . Raul also wanted to highlight that we will be having the Central Texas Regional Summit this year. We are having our first planning meeting this week and will be able to report more on plans for the Summit at the June meeting. It included a summary of work plan priorities for the year. There have been many community collaborations focused on the pandemic response and many challenges have been revealed as a result. It is important that we highlight ways to improve emergency response in the future to address inequities. So, we will continue to focus on these learnings. The Central Texas Regional Summit will provide an opportunity to focus on the economic recovery, which is very important, but which also raises many concerns relating to equity. Finally, the last area of focus for CAN until the end of the year, at least, will be community healing and mental health & wellness. This will connect well with the work of the Community Council mental health work group. There will be more to share about this in the coming months.

	<p>Q&A: Kelly asked where the Regional Summit would be happening this year? Jelina answered that the Summit would take place in Pflugerville. Nora asked if calendar invites be sent out soon for the CAN Dashboard Release and Regional Summit Planning meeting.</p> <p>Follow-up: Jelina will send out calendar invites for the regional summit planning meeting and dashboard release event.</p>
<p>Workgroup Updates</p>	<p>Housing Workgroup Summary: The housing workgroup had no updates. Nancy mentioned that she gave a brief update to the Board about the recommendations to come.</p> <p>Mental Health Workgroup Summary: Blanca stated that there will be a meeting later this week and they started a google doc to get organized about topics and presenters. Nora stated that Integral Care is sharing their Mental Health Toolkit via Zoom on May 19th from 12-1. She encouraged anyone who was able to go, to go and listen.</p>
<p>Approval of April 19, 2021, Minutes</p>	<p>The April 19, 2021, minutes were approved unanimously on a motion by Hunter with a second by Nora.</p>
<p>Presentations on Food Insecurity</p>	<p>Hunter provided an overview of what the food insecurity focused meetings will cover and how their workgroup approached the topic. He stated that some approaches are band-aid approaches and they had to consider how deep they wanted to dive into the topic, what would be most effective, and what would allow the most opportunity for CAN organizations to make a difference. The two speakers for today’s meeting will be Katie Nye with the Texas Hunger Initiative and the City of Austin’s Food Policy Manager Edwin Marty. Kelly added that one thing their group was conscious of when planning the food insecurity meetings, is the confines of the Community Council. Keeping in mind capacity and resources to make change. They wanted to look at what myths that exist around food security that they could de-mystify. They also wanted their speakers to address what other organizations or people can do about this issue. They wanted to focus on action rather than just information. Lisa added that they want to go beyond just analyzing data to putting action towards initiatives. We want to bring more awareness to different communities and do something different that bridges the gap between Austin residents and food insecurity.</p> <p>Katie Nye, Texas Hunger Initiative (THI) Presentation Summary: THI started in 2009 and then grew an umbrella organization, the Baylor Collaborative on Hunger and Poverty, and</p>

they have 9 field offices. THI Austin has been operating in the region for 8 years. The Blueprint to End Hunger was done in collaboration with Feeding Texas. They used it to springboard an increase of participation in SNAP. They calculated the gap by comparing the percentage of utilization for feeding programs and how much people were spending their own money on food. There is a lot of resistance in Texas to taking federal money. The newest document is an update of the blueprint and shows the rate of food insecurity and federal school nutrition programs. Through a public-private partnership they were sending food to rural areas and to reservations. Their report is county level but can be zip-code level. Charitable food programs were initially started to support people who were on the cusp on eligibility for most programs. In Travis County they are at the national standard for breakfast participation and have high participation in free/reduced lunch. Summer meals is usually a low participation program due to transportation. Taking all the requirements away during COVID, school food programs saw a dramatic increase in participation. Families could cut their food bill in half if they enrolled in SNAP. Hyper-specific and hyperlocal is their new approach. They are doing this in San Marcos focusing on seniors in college, veterans, and the homeless population. 54% of eligible people did not participate in SNAP in Travis County. WIC is underutilized as well. There is very low uptake for children, infants, and women. 67.4% were eligible and did not receive benefits. Regarding zip code level data for food insecurity, there are a lot hovering over the 35 corridor, but there are some spots on the westside people would not think to outreach. Katie stated that some of the reason people do not participate in these programs is because people think they will only get 20 dollars and do not want to do the paperwork for such little money. Utilization is low around the university because students do not know how to apply, how to use SNAP, and already have campus meal plans. Hunger free community coalitions have action teams, strategic planning, and incorporate people with lived experience. THI has a program for seniors and utilizes RX produce. Statewide coalitions include Double Dollar Incentive programs, Unidos/ Texas Latino Hunger Roundtable, and Texas Food Policy Roundtable. Innovative strategies include meal delivery, SNAP for online retail, fresh produce distribution and RX programs, and community markets. Policies that waive area eligibility, expand eligibility for child nutrition programs, making school meals free for all students, and viewing schools as food hubs would help to decrease food insecurity. Programmatic changes target SNAP application with marketing for specific ages, race, geography and needed.

Q&A: Nora asked how often does paperwork need to be filled out? Katie stated every three months. Lisa asked how location and hubs are qualified to operate and use the Double Up Program. Katie answered that in Austin there is private money to fund farm share. There is also Double Dollars Mobile Markets which are city funded. When these programs are being developed, we are looking at how they are funded and how much we need. Farm share has tried to pilot different locations. The barrier is the location itself, and the buildings allowing the farm share to be there, and then actually getting people to get to the farm share. Ara asked about state officials views on food insecurity. Katie answered that they have a staff person that shares the facts with state officials.

Edwin Marty, Food Policy Manager with City of Austin

Presentation Summary: Food policy has traditionally been regulatory and reactionary. Austin Travis County Food Policy Board has pushed for a more proactive equitable food system. Food system is a hypothetical idea that includes where food comes from, what happened to it before, during, and after its on your plate. Edwin is most interested in the policy perspective and how it could improve the food system to be more sustainable and equitable. Food is not a thing; it is a way of interacting with our environment and culture. Local policies must be careful of oversimplifying concepts and thinking one lever only has one effect. Local food system is impacted heavily by global market and global weather patterns. The US does not recognize food as a human right. Food insecurity is a measurement of how often a family will need to make sacrifices to get the food their family wants or needs. Food insecurity is a spectrum and well accepted. Food insecurity serves as a proxy for poverty. There is some interesting research showing that poverty is not the only indicator of food insecurity. Maternal depression is outside of poverty, but because a mother is not able to get food for her family would cause the family to be food insecure. You can be poor and not food insecure and food insecure but not poor. Austin is one of the most affluent but also the most economically segregated. Food insecurity does not sit proportionally against race/ethnicity lines. Black and Hispanic Austinites are disproportionately impacted by food insecurity and food insecurity is based on historical segregation. We must make sure we do not get caught up in the idea that more food or more food programs will solve food insecurity, just like more houses do not solve homelessness. Policy recommendations and support for programs need to consider the actual reasons behind food insecurity. SNAP is an anti-poverty program, and its primary purpose is to increase buying power in low-income populations. There is a SNAP gap where a portion of the

	<p>population is eligible for snap and a portion of people who are eligible but not enrolling. The number one reason people are eligible and not enrolled for the white community low income people do not think of themselves as poor and will not participate in programs for poor people. There is also cost-benefit, seniors in Texas do not get much in terms of funds and it is not worth the effort to enroll and stay enrolled. College students are not eligible or do not think they are eligible. Hunger on campus is an issue that needs to be fixed. He stated that there is a “SNAP gap” gap where people are food insecure, but not eligible for SNAP. College students and immigrants tend to fall in the “SNAP gap” gap. He suggested looking at how we measure success for local non-profits. We currently measure success by how much food is distributed, but should look at how organizations are reducing the underlying causes of food insecurity.</p> <p>Edwin suggested that food access plans should be included in emergency plans, municipally owned food hubs/ distribution centers/ subsidized grocery stores, strategic food plans, thinking about food as a utility like water could be ways to address the root causes of food insecurity. He also stated that direct financial assistance is the answer to food insecurity.</p> <p>Q&A: Ara asked if Edwin had any suggestions on strategies schools could do to help with food insecurity. Edwin answered that someone could convene school districts to have a regional conversation about what they are doing to address food insecurity. There is very little conversation where schools discuss how they provide food to their families or share best practices or consistency across districts.</p> <p>Hunter asked about what the city is doing regarding “better food” vs “more food”. Edwin answered that the public does not think much of ready to eat meals, but there is medically appropriate food, culturally appropriate food etc. Ready to eat meals do not meet everyone’s needs. We need to pay more for our food. Culturally we spend less on our food than any other culture. The government needs to subsidize good food.</p>
Adjournment	Nancy adjourned the meeting 8:02 pm.