



## CAN Board of Directors Meeting 2/12/21 Minutes

**Location:** Virtual Zoom Meeting

**Present:** **Tamara Atkinson**, Workforce Solutions Capital Area; **Eric Bustos**, Capital Metro; **Chris Cervini**, Austin Community College; **Nora Comstock**, CAN Community Council; **Simone Talma Flowers**, Interfaith Action of Central Texas; **Vanessa Fuentes**, Austin City Council Member; **Delia Garza**, Community Justice Council; **Juan Garza**, (for Mike Geeslin, Central Health); **Suchitra Gururaj**, UT Austin; **Tam Hawkins**, Greater Austin Black Chamber of Commerce; **Stephanie Hawley**, Austin ISD; **Kenny Hill**, Goodwill Industries Central Texas; **Elizabeth Johnson**, St. Edward's University; **Dan Leal**, One Voice Central Texas; **Jeremy Martin**, Austin Chamber of Commerce; **Rudy Metayer**, Pflugerville City Council Member; **Katrina Montgomery**, (for Colette Pearce Burnette, Huston-Tillotson University); **Becky Pastner**, St. David's Foundation; **David Smith**, United Way for Greater Austin; **Jeffrey Travillion**, Travis County Commissioner.

**Other guests:** Jimmy Flannigan, Immediate Past Chair; Ara Merjanian; Lawrence Lyman, Travis County; Walter Muse, Precinct One Commissioner's Office; Jessica Rio, Travis County; Dr. Tamey Williams-Hill, Austin ISD.

**CAN staff in attendance:** Raul Alvarez, Carlos A Soto, Jelina Tunstill.

**Call to order and Introduction:** Board Chair Suchitra Gururaj called the meeting to order at 1:03 pm and introduced the meeting. Members introduced themselves.

**Minutes:** The 12/11/20 meeting minutes were approved, after a motion submitted by Dr. Nora Comstock which was seconded by Rudy Metayer. The minutes were approved unanimously.

**Consider Appointment of CAN Board Vice-Chair:** Dr. Gururaj introduced the nominee, Tamara Atkinson from Workforce Solutions Capital Area. Raul Alvarez gave a brief overview of the selection process. After a message from the nominee, a motion was submitted by Council Member Metayer, which was seconded by Dr. Comstock. The nominee was approved without opposition.

**Community Council Update:** Dr. Nora Comstock mentioned that the Council has selected 3 areas in support of the work CAN is doing in 2020. The first area they will work on is housing (including eviction prevention and homelessness). The Council will then move-on to food security and mental health. The Council will explore each of the topics over 3 months, then bring recommendations to the CAN Board.

**Executive Director report:** Executive Director Raul Alvarez mentioned that part of what the Community Council is trying to do is develop an issue summary that includes data, what the Council learned from the panel presentations, resources available and recommended actions. The CAN newsletter went out this week highlighting local events. Tonight the Community Resilience Trust is having a town hall on their Latinx COVID Study. IACT, CAN Community Council, and the City have coordinated a "Remembrance for those we've lost" event, a communitywide event to remember those we've lost during the pandemic. The CAN Butler Awards and beginning of year celebration is scheduled for March 5. There may be a meeting to possibly take action on forming CAN as a TUUNAA. For the Butler Awards, we focused on the "Spirit of Collaboration" category this year. Awardees include Austin Justice Coalition, Austin Latino Coalition, Community Resilience Trust, Good Works Austin, Keep Austin Together, and the Travis County Census Complete Count Committee. The Annual Report highlights events, accomplishments, and collaborations from 2020.

Next, Alvarez provided an overview of the 2021 Work Plan. The plan includes a focus on Response to Emergent Crises (Health; Economic; Public Safety), and development of the Central Texas Language Access Fund. Alvarez highlighted work on data & engagement on Mental Health & Family Violence in collaboration with Integral Care & SAFE as well as working with other partners to develop tools for supporting the mental health needs of local non-profits. The work to establish the Central Texas Language Access Fund will include development of a fundraising strategy and initiation of community engagement with Spanish-speaking & Burmese-speaking communities. The plan is to schedule the Regional Summit for November and to establish the planning team next month. Another focus this year will be supporting the Central Texas Collective for Racial Equity by assisting in the development of their organizational structure and identifying and pursuing grant opportunities. CAN's work and the tools we have created reflect our focus on prioritizing issues based on data, engaging the community using new tools, and maintaining the focus on racial equity.

**CAN Partner Updates on Pandemic Response by CAN Goal Area:** Jessica Rio of Travis County provided an update on CARES Act Funding, FY 2021 Budget, and fiscal challenges ahead. County Attorney Garza provided an update on policies at the County Jail to help reduce risk of COVID by reducing the jail population. Council Member Fuentes mentioned that the Community Resilience Trust will have a Town Hall today to discuss a study they have conducted around COVID-19's impact on the Latino community. She will present on efforts by the Public Health department to address 70 recommendations that have emerged from the CRT. Council Member Metayer discussed the challenges for our local government entities and NGOs to respond to the pandemic, distribute vaccines, and collaboratively develop creative solutions. Eric Bustos of Cap Metro announced the launching of a pick-up service in some parts of Pflugerville next month. Cap Metro also started a Vaccine Access Program featuring complementary curb-to-curb service for folks that need a ride to get their vaccine.

Simone Talma Flowers of IACT mentioned that a big challenge is rental assistance, food, and basic needs. They have been doing a lot of work to support refugee families. They plan to continue working remotely until next year. However, there are folks who are falling behind and need support & technical assistance. David Smith of United Way mentioned that they were able to distribute an additional \$5M to childcare providers. This is important because the #1 reason cited by most of the over 800,000 women that have lost their job since the start of the pandemic is lack of childcare. The pandemic accelerated the need and the usage of ConnectATX, a site that complements 2-1-1. Currently inquiries to 2-1-1 and Connect ATX are mostly related to COVID resources such as food, testing, mental health, vaccination information and more. Dan Leal of One Voice thanked City and County officials for their support in 2020 in bringing in additional CARES funding for nonprofits. They are seeing a lot of resilience and innovation in the nonprofit community. CAN's Action Plan for 2021 aligns very much with One Voice's equity and diversity work lead by Simone TalmaFlowers. In terms of regional alignment, One Voice is starting to have conversations with San Antonio and the nonprofit council there about ways the two can work together to jointly advocate and bring the needs of the nonprofit community to the state level more effectively.

Tamara Atkinson of Workforce Solutions shared a presentation highlighting their work in building a more stable, skilled Travis County middle class. Over the course of their work, they found that, locally, that the economic damage stemming from the pandemic is concentrated among groups that are already facing challenges. Unemployed residents need training to secure high-demand jobs. Certain skills are in high demand, for example in the construction industry which is an industry that has not lost its workforce. Atkinson also highlighted RE:WorkNow, a program offering 260 full scholarships for rapid, safe training programs. This program currently has 146 enrollees who are already seeing success in terms of employment and earnings. WFS has also worked hard to support parents, families, and childcare providers.

Kenny Hill of Goodwill Central Texas reports that they developed a 3-year Strategic Plan focused primarily on self-sufficiency. The RISE Grant has finished, primarily focused on people who had financial hardships due to COVID. Now Goodwill is working on implementing the Fatherhood Grant, a 5-Year \$1.1M per year grant focused on fatherhood, family, marriage, and other factors. Goodwill Central Texas is engaging with local stakeholders to

carry out a community needs assessment. They are also working on building a Mission Service Plan that will build off that community assessment.

Dr. Tamey Williams Hill of Austin ISD mentioned that the district has increased mass COVID testing at the Central Office and begun working with APH to get staff vaccinated. AISD has also been providing meals to students and their families, and mental health services to students. The district has also tried to help with rental assistance issues. Board Members approved a \$1000 retention incentive for employees. AISD is also expanding testing, opening it up to the community through the Performing Arts Center. Chris Cervini of Austin Community College updated the board on a fast-track program he mentioned in the Fall. Dr. Gururaj mentioned UT is busy trying to support their students providing basic needs, housing, and testing. The current plan is to partner with Workforce Solutions to spend 2021-2022 not only preparing students for changed landscape in workforce but also collaborating with partners here to get the workforce landscape ready for students.

Becky Pastner from St. David's mentioned that through the COVID recovery fund launched in 2020, they were able to invest \$10M in close to 200 nonprofits in the Central Texas region. Looking ahead, they are engaged with the vaccination effort and support equitable distribution of vaccines by looking at issues of vaccine expediency and racial equity. The current focus is in supporting the vaccine hubs in the region and clinic grant partners, so they have the capacity to receive and deploy the vaccines efficiently.

**Discussion:** What conversations, particularly around helping our low-income community, have been had with the corporate sector in terms of where or how they would be brought to the table to get them to pitch in? Maybe that's part of a regional conversation about engaging with the business sector in meeting some of our core needs. Some of the "Spirit of Collaboration" award recipients included private sector partners. So far, the corporate sector has been very helpful to individual nonprofits. There might be an opportunity to bring the corporate sector to the table to help contribute towards solving big community needs and conversations. A while back there was an initiative to bring the corporate sector in to help with the homelessness situation, but that effort did not reach its initial objective. We may need to rethink how we engage the private sector: what we ask them to do; and how the effort fits with their corporate mission and their goals.

Another part of the solution can also be individuals who have the time and/or means to help. There are also lots of folks in Austin that would like to help but have not figured out how to do that yet. A way to connect these folks with folks that could use their help would be very useful, especially at the neighborhood level. In Pflugerville, the Pflugerville Community Development Corporation (PCDC) has partnered with Skillpoint Alliance to align efforts and combine resources.

**Adjournment:** Suchitra Gururaj adjourned the meeting at 3:00 pm.