



CAN Board of Directors Meeting 4/09/21 Minutes

Location: Virtual Zoom Meeting

Present: **Tamara Atkinson**, Workforce Solutions; **Eric Bustos**, Capital Metro; **Nora Comstock**, CAN Community Council; **Rosemary Dean**, (for Mayor Pro-Tem Natasha Harper-Madison); **Amy Einhorn**, St. David's Foundation; **David Evans**, Integral Care; **Sherri Fleming**, (for Commissioner Margaret Gomez, Travis County); **Simone Talma Flowers**, Interfaith Action of Central Texas; **Vanessa Fuentes**, Austin City Council Member; **Juan Garza**, (for Mike Geeslin, Central Health); **Dr. Suchitra Gururaj**, UT Austin; **Rachel Hampton**, CAN Community Council; **Kenny Hill**, Goodwill Central Texas; **Jeremy Martin**, Greater Austin Chamber; **Katrina Montgomery**, (for Colette Pearce Burnette, Huston-Tillotson University); **Ingrid Taylor**, Ascension Seton.a

Other guests: Eric Carter, City of Austin Office of Homeland Security and Emergency Management; Jimmy Flannigan, Immediate Past Chair; Alan Freedman; Lawrence Lyman, Travis County; Jo Anne Ortiz, Capital Metro; Juan Ortiz, City of Austin Office of Homeland Security and Emergency Management; Eli Russ.

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

Call to order and Introduction: Board Chair Dr. Suchitra Gururaj called the meeting to order at 1:05 pm and introduced the meeting.

Minutes: The 2/12/21 meeting minutes were approved, after a motion submitted by Tamara Atkinson with a second by Sherri Fleming. The minutes were approved unanimously.

Community Council Update: Rachel Hampton mentioned that Community Council is trying a different structure in this year where they tackle 3 big issues in groups. The 1st issue selected is evictions. They will be looking at it through different lenses and bringing in experts to provide an overview of the current situation. This includes an analysis of how COVID and winter storm Yuri impacted housing access. At the last meeting, people came in to talk about the structure of evictions, how it works in the court system as well as what is and isn't being done. It was noted that most folks who go to eviction court do not have actual legal support. All they have is a community advocate. The housing committee has a rough draft of the first set of recommendations that will hopefully be ready to present next month. The next topic they will work on is food insecurity, followed by a focus on mental health. They are excited to share progress in this new format (call to action) since they will not wait until the end of the year to give a report. Instead, the CAN Board will receive feedback as each of the three teams finishes its work.

Executive Director report: Executive Director Raul Alvarez highlighted the recipients of the Butler Awards at the Beginning of Year celebration. Selecting a handful of organizations from the many that work arduously to improve our community. He announced that the Central Texas Language Access Fund is established at the Austin Community Foundation. This fund will facilitate the engagement between service providers and community members seeking services. The fund will facilitate the creation of tools and opportunities for community members who speak languages other than English to connect with services more effectively. Initially, the focus will be translation, engagement, and training. In December, along with the CAN budget, we adopted the budget for this fund. Raul provided an overview of the work CAN has done over the last two to three years and outlined future directions that are possible given current community needs. This includes: prioritization of issues based on data through the CAN Dashboard and Race Equity Action Framework (REAF), engaging the community using new tools through the We CAN! ATX website, CAN Podcast, and the REAF; and maintaining the focus on Racial Equity through the Central Texas Collective for Racial Equity, the REAF, and the Equity Blog. Raul noted that supporting the Workforce Plan,

especially as we come out of the pandemic, will be another important area of focus for this year with the Regional Summit serving a good vehicle by which to identify an appropriate role for CAN.

Discussion and Possible Action: Establishing CAN as an Informal Association: For more than 25 years, CAN has operated under the fiscal umbrella of Integral Care. The arrangement has done CAN a great service but is not ideal for either party. Raul noted that because CAN operates under the fiscal umbrella of Integral Care, it is not an actual entity under state law. Thus, CAN has no written agreement with Integral Care and no way to formalize the relationship. After a long period of conversations and engagement with the Executive Committee, Board members, and other stakeholders, we are ready to formalize CAN's organizational structure by establishing it as an unincorporated non-profit association per the Texas Uniform Unincorporated Non-profit Association Act (TUUNAA). David Evans mentioned that Integral Care has been happy to provide the support to CAN in the spirit of collaboration and that this move towards establishing CAN as an unincorporated non-profit association signals the maturing of the organization. Integral Care is completely onboard to support and assist with the transition. The Executive Committee is recommending establishment of CAN as an unincorporated no-profit association since it seems to serve as an effective organizational structure for our vision of a public-private collaboration. We also expect to see some leveraged opportunities because of CAN becoming a free-standing organization.

Raul outlined the documents that will need to be approved to establish CAN as an unincorporated non-profit association. The collaborative agreement outlines the purpose, powers, participation, responsibilities, and rights of the members of the association. The collaborative agreement is analogous to the articles of incorporation. At this April meeting of the CAN Board, the focus is the member agreement. Before we create the association, we plan to get all members to sign the agreement to be a part of that association. Once we get this individual commitment from members to form the association in this way, we can approve the establishment of this organizational structure. We will not act on member agreements today. We wanted to note that the rights and responsibilities of CAN members will not change, but will only be reaffirmed.

Discussion: Winter Storm Yuri Crisis Response: Challenges & Opportunities: Juan Ortiz, Director of the City of Austin Office of Homeland Security and Emergency Management (OHSEM), and Eric Carter, Chief Emergency Management Coordinator at the OHSEM, introduced themselves. After a brief overview of their individual experience and roles, they provided an overview of the Austin-Travis County Emergency Operations Center (EOC). The facility activated on March 1, 2020 and has been in activation mode since then. For over a year now, they have been engaged in a pandemic response while at the same time maintaining their capacity to respond to other emergencies that may emerge. In the summer they supported the police response to the protests, as well as the state in its efforts to evacuate coastal communities in response to Hurricane Laura. In the fall they completed an annual winter weather seminar with all EOC partners. On Feb. 8, the EOC focus shifted from COVID-19 to Winter Weather. It facilitated regional coordination between City, County, and state agencies, proving especially useful to those agencies and organizations that have less experience working on complex collaborative efforts. Over 25 agencies collaborated on the Winter Storm Yuri response. The EOC shifted to 24-hour operations on February 14. Some staff stayed for 8 days, working long shifts (sometimes 16-20 hours). It is important to note that some emergency responders were also impacted by weather with loss of access to power, transportation, and water breaks.

This was a very stressful event for the entire community. The folks that were best prepared showed the most resiliency. According to the National Weather Service, the storm broke several records. Since storms such as this will likely happen again, we must ensure we learn as much as we can to prepare for the next one. EMS reported that they received their top 5 highest call volumes during the winter storm. They provided shelter space for over 3000 residents across Travis County. Cascading impacts due to cold weather and power outages disrupted the food and water supply chain, impacted communications and internet, and limited emergency medical care and fuel access. Critical facilities requested assistance such as generators or water. The experience with Winter Storm Yuri

highlights the EOC focus on a whole community response, together with more than 100 volunteer organizations, private businesses, and individual efforts.

Next, Ortiz discussed the four steps to take to be prepared which are: make a plan, build a kit, know your neighbors, and stay informed. Making a plan includes making a family emergency plan, helping your neighborhood make an emergency plan, and use the ready.gov resource. A basic emergency supply kit should include supplies for yourself, family, and pets. The kit should be assembled now since demand may make some items unavailable when emergency or event actually transpires. The April 24 to 26 tax free weekend is a good moment to stock up. The recommended 3 days of emergency supplies was not enough for this disaster, so the recommendation will shift to 7-day emergency supplies. Knowing your neighbors helps develop a network of mutual aid in case the event is of such severity that support from agencies is initially unavailable. To stay informed, sign up with Warn Central Texas, which provides an email, text, or phone call during an emergency to deliver emergency information. There were also social media tools from different agencies, and an app introduced last fall. The app, Ready Central Texas, is available for Apple and Google devices. Local media and weather radio are other good sources of emergency information.

Discussion: CAN is a collaborative of organizations, many of whom worked alongside with you during the winter storm effort. Do you have any ideas of how we can better connect with you all or support your effort in the good times before any crisis may arise? It is extremely important for every organization to conduct an internal review of how they were impacted and what things they can learn so they can better prepare for the next event. Some changes may be “low hanging fruit” and others may prove more challenging. The point is learning and improving, because our experience as a community shows it was a community effort that depends on strong links in the network of support chains.

During the beginning of the winter storm, the response was mostly focused on homeless cold weather shelter. The City attempted to centralize the response in a way by calling all homeless individuals in need of shelter to the Palmer Events Center. There proved to be several challenges to that approach, one of which was that people who lived very far from Palmer Events Center were not able to get there. Reasons such as these make the distributed approach more interesting and resilient.

For this event, it was evident that more effective communication was necessary. Although city officials, meteorologists and other experts sounded the alarm for a week prior to the storm, the gravity of the situation was not grasped by a large enough segment of the public. It was not clear to members of the public that they may be without power for 3 days or more. Clear and effective communication is a must going forward so that we have a greater level of preparation.

David Evans noted that collaboration was key in navigating the disaster. The conditions made it difficult for Integral Care staff to support individuals at the Palmer Auditorium as they were called to do, but everyone did their best. Integral Care received many donations (food, supplies, money) from the public that helped to meet the needs of the individuals they serve. Integral Care is incredibly grateful for that public support.

Adjournment: Dr. Gururaj adjourned the meeting at 3:02 pm.