



CAN Board of Directors Meeting 6/11/21 Minutes

Location: Virtual Zoom Meeting

Present: **Edna Butts**, Austin ISD; **Perla Cavazos**, Central Health; **Chris Cervini**, Austin Community College; **Nora Comstock**, CAN Community Council; **Rosemary Dean**, (for Austin City Council Member and Mayor Pro-Tem Natasha Harper-Madison); **Amy Einhorn**, St. David's Foundation; **David Evans**, Integral Care; **Sherri Fleming**, (for Travis County Judge Andy Brown); **Simone Talma Flowers**, Interfaith Action of Central Texas; **Nancy Gilliam**, CAN Community Council; **Suchitra Gururaj**, UT Austin; **Elizabeth Johnson**, St. Edward's University; **Dan Leal**, One Voice Central Texas; **Jeremy Martin**, Greater Austin Chamber; **Rudy Metayer**, Pflugerville City Council Member; **Katrina Montgomery**, (for Colette Pearce Burnette, Huston-Tillotson University); **Jo Anne Ortiz**, Capital Metro; **Amy Price**, United Way for Greater Austin; **Ingrid Taylor**, Ascension Seton; **Brie Franco**, **City of Austin**.

Other guests: Peter Einhorn, Texas Senate Staff; Jimmy Flannigan, Immediate Past Chair; Ara Merjanian; Alison Ross; Julie Wheeler, Travis County

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.

Minutes: The 5/14/21 meeting minutes were approved, after a motion submitted by Dan Leal which was seconded by Sherri Fleming. The minutes were approved unanimously.

Community Council Update: Nancy Gilliam reported that on May 17 the Community Council met to discuss Food Insecurity. There were two presentations, one by Katie Nye of the Texas Hunger Initiative, and another by City of Austin Food Policy Manager Edwin Marty. Some of the topics discussed include issues around food security and convening school districts to have a regional conversation about how food insecurity is addressed. There was also discussion about the Blueprint to End Hunger from Texas Hunger Institute. The next two meetings will be focused on food insecurity, and the next few meetings will be about mental health. The report from the Housing group will be available shortly.

What can the CAN Board do to support the Community Council? Community Council is interested in talking with local school districts about best practices they have done in their role in addressing food insecurity during COVID. How can some of those conversations continue as we ease back into reopening.

2021 Legislative Session Presentations: Brie Franco, COA Intergovernmental Officer, shared a presentation highlighting developments at the 87th State Legislative Session including an overview of the Austin state delegation in the House and in the Senate. Bills that would be positive for the city include SB 73 (local health department Medicaid) and SB 224 (SNAP certification). Bills that could negatively impact the city include HB 1900 (city police funding), HB 1925 (camping ban), SB 1438 (disaster rollback), and HB 1927 (permitless carry). Franco also discussed bills that failed to pass. Bills that failed to pass that result in a net positive for the city include several disannexation bills (Lake Austin, West Rim, and Lost Creek), bills affecting homeless housing, bills affecting community advocacy, and others. Bills that would be neutral for the city include the omnibus storm response bill and a statewide broadband bill. In upcoming Special Sessions, legislative action relating to redistricting and federal COVID funds may be considered. Also to be discussed are election integrity and bail reform, but the date and additional issues for a special session are TBD.

Julie Wheeler, Travis County Intergovernmental Officer mentioned that the County will feel the impact of SB 23 on law enforcement expenditures. For the County, police are more dispersed than APD. HB 1869 will have impact on revenue. What did not pass also has a big impact. Preemptions on disaster declarations are an example. HB 3 did not pass, so we continue existing in a tenuous relationship with the governor as it relates to pandemics. The elections bill will also have a significant impact in terms of how we run elections, voter participation, and the cost to counties. One proposed initiative was a bifurcated election process, with separate processes for national elections and state/local elections. It would have required county to run two dual elections at a huge cost to the taxpayers. It might be considered as part of the special session. Bail reform is another important issue. For the County, a concerted effort is underway to get people out of jail as quickly and as safely as possible. The proposed legislation would have an adverse impact on local criminal justice reform efforts. SB 14 is another preemption bill that affects paid sick leave. Wheeler also highlighted 3 bills that passed: SB 790 which impacts access to certain ambulance services, HB 362 which impacts the electronic bidding process, and HB 295, which impacts funding for indigent defense services.

Edna Butts of AISD mentioned that last session was a good one with the passing of HB 3. This most recent session was more challenging. For school districts across Texas, the priority was to fully fund HB3. In the end, SB 1 did fully fund HB 3. However, the way the state funds education continues to be a problem in that the recapture amount continues to grow. Austin ISD's recapture payment continues to increase. HB 3 lessened the amount of money AISD would have to pay. Another issue is that the legislature supplants what they would be paying for public education with federal money. As it relates to per-student spending, Texas is in the bottom 10 states across the country. HB 999 expands access to graduation for some students, and HB 4545 removes grade promotion requirements tied to grades 5 and 8 STAAR exams and establishes accelerated learning committees and instruction for students who do not perform satisfactorily in grade 3, 5, and 8 reading and math End of Course exams. A controversial bill related to Social Studies curriculum in public education is HB 3979.

Perla Cavazos of Central Health mentioned that there were similar concerns for them, and they monitored many of the same bills already mentioned. One issue they were hoping would receive attention was Medicaid expansion. In the end it did not happen, but there were some bills that went through that expand coverage for some populations. These bills are HB290 (which was amended to HB 2658) with the goal of keeping children enrolled in Medicaid, and a bill to expand post-partum care for women. HB 4 helped expand access to telehealth and telemedicine services, which was pivotal during the pandemic. HB 5 expanding broadband internet access will be helpful for rural communities. Since Texas lacks Medicaid expansion, it has the 1115 Waiver, which was extended for 10 years just before Biden took office. Central Health found out that the Travis County hospital district was not eligible for any of the programs proposed. This means a loss of \$50M annually to our low-income uninsured population. Now the waiver has been rescinded and HHSC must go through public comment process.

There is a subset, an uncompensated care pool that was approved, that includes \$500M dollars per year, out of which local health departments and behavioral health authorities can bill. The current administration, with the hope of Medicaid expansion, rescinded that approval. There are hearings across the state to build a case for the state to resubmit. Franco and Wheeler then discussed some of the parameters of the police funding bill. Regarding the camping ban bill and the language that stipulates the State must approve a designated campsite, it is unclear what the process or procedure is to have a campsite designated by the state. Although the broadband bill does not bring an immediate positive impact to Austin, it does bring attention to the digital divide. The digital divide in Austin became quite visible during the pandemic, where districts had to supply laptops and mobile broadband so students could access their distance learning curricula. The Disaster Declaration bill made it so that only hurricanes qualify as natural disasters under which communities can reach the maximum tax rate (8%), but the tax rate can only be at the maximum for one year.

2021 Legislative Session Partner Reports:

The Legislature passed the second half of the Austin State Hospital construction (\$120M), some grants have been passed through from federal funds for mental health to build additional capacity within the county. There are also \$30M assigned that will help fund added capacity for acute care psychiatric hospitalization.

The Community College budget fell short of what the schools asked. The Texas Reskilling and Upskilling Through Education Initiative authorizing bill passed, but it was unfunded (asked for \$50M). They are hoping to access federal funds through COVID relief initiatives. Some of the legislation that passed has a positive effect on postsecondary education in that it allows for the expansion of baccalaureate degrees available in applied workforce fields through ACC. SB 989 allows community colleges to get success point funding for certain workforce credential completions. The legislature also passed a community college finance commission to study how community colleges are financed and if there are ways to improve this. For private universities, the funding for the Tuition Equalization Grant (which comes up every biennium) was satisfactory. Regarding education issues, there is an opportunity for school districts to collaborate more deeply, thoughtfully, and strategically.

Executive Director's report: Executive Director Raul Alvarez announced that the Dashboard Report is scheduled to be released on August 4, 2021. We are also looking at dates for the Regional Summit which will focus on workforce, economic recovery, and opportunity. Potential dates are Oct 27, 29 November 3 or 5. If your organization has anything big planned for those days, please inform CAN staff.

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