



CAN Board of Directors Meeting 9/10/21 Minutes

Location: Virtual Zoom Meeting

Present: **Joseph Allen**, (for Dr. Stephanie Hawley) Austin ISD; **Tamara Atkinson**, Capital Area Workforce Solutions; **Chris Cervini**, Austin Community College; **Nora Comstock**, CAN Community Council; **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; **Vanessa Fuentes**, Council Member, City of Austin; **Nancy Gilliam**, CAN Community Council; **Suchitra Gururaj**, UT Austin; **Kenny Hill**, Goodwill Industries Central Texas; **Jeremy Martin**, Greater Austin Chamber; **Jo Anne Ortiz**, Capital Metro; **Ingrid Taylor**, Ascension Seton; **Jeffrey Travillion**, Precinct 1 Commissioner, Travis County;

Other guests: Blanca Alvarado, Community Council; Ashton Cumberbatch, Seton Healthcare Family; Hunter Ellinger, Community Council; Jimmy Flannigan, Immediate Past Chair; Rachel Hampton, Community Council; Patricia Longoria, Community Council; James May, Community Council; Ara Merjanian; Alicia Ramirez, City of Austin; Misaël Ramos, Anti-Displacement Action Coalition.

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

Call to order and Introduction: Board Chair Suchitra Gururaj called the meeting to order at 1:09 pm and introduced the meeting.

Minutes: The 8/13/21 meeting minutes were approved, with edits, after a motion submitted by Tamara which was seconded by Sherri Fleming. The minutes, with edits, were approved unanimously.

Community Council Update: Nancy Gilliam reported that, in addition to publishing the evictions report, they also had their first meeting on Mental Health featuring David Evans, Sherri Fleming, Ellen Richards, and Laura Peveto. The next meeting is scheduled for September 20th, and they will discuss trauma informed care.

Executive Director's report: Raul Alvarez introduced the report with an important question that frames our work: how do we make the most of our resources and align our efforts to have a bigger impact? In addition to a focus on economic recovery, CAN Work Plan priorities include learning from the pandemic response, and community healing (mental health & wellness). Another area of focus has been the Community Council Evictions Report. In terms of mental health, we are working with One Voice and Mission Capital and about 15 more organizations to identify and develop resources to support non-profit leaders and their employees. We have also reached out to our Chamber partners and other folks in the private sector around how do we support businesses in supporting their employees. Mental health and mental health support for businesses and employees is also one of the follow-up conversations to the regional summit. On the topic of economic recovery, we have the Central Texas Regional Summit on the calendar for November 5. Later this month we have some Lunch and Learn sessions planned to share the Race Equity Action Framework. The first session next week is sold out, there is another session planned for the last week of September. Next, Alvarez provided an overview of the Race Equity Action Framework (REAF).

Central Texas Regional Summit: Tamara Atkinson articulated a priority to align and spotlight our partners work where possible, such as the Community Council. Another priority is to spotlight our partners, like City of Pflugerville, at the Summit. From a workforce development perspective, there is a high volume of activity right now. We have 6.5 times more job openings than we have active job seekers registered in our system right now. This motivates the important conversation we plan to have around equitable access and success. Workforce Solutions Capital Area and Rural Capital Area will also be featured, as well as a panel presentation and discussion featuring innovative public private partnerships helping to advance an equitable economic recovery in the region. We still plan this to be an in-person event at an event space in Typhoon Texas in Pflugerville.

Raul mentioned that part of our conversation today will be focused on developing a list of individuals or organizations that may be good presenters or examples for other organizations in the region. If we can do profiles of these public private partnerships that are having an impact, we can have some of that ready for the summit. We also already have a list of a few issues that we are organizing around as follow up to the summit that we are going to announce. We see this as a springboard for conversations that will go on for a longer time. Some of the follow-up conversations are about: how we ensure success for women and women-owned businesses; how we ensure success for racial minorities in minority-owned businesses; and how we address mental health in the workplace. If there are other conversations that relate to an equitable economic recovery that you would like to see, like childcare, or other issues of interest, please reach out. Part of the idea is that the summit is the beginning of the conversation and the follow-up community forums dive deeper into issues.

One challenge faced by elected officials and some of our constituent members is that there are segments skeptical of private involvement in public good. We want to ensure that concerns about privatization are acknowledged and addressed. It may be helpful to keep the conversation centered on the benefits that engaging private business brings for the broader economic well-being of our community. Examples of successful PPPs include the Erwin Center and the Major League Soccer team. From the County's perspective, housing is important, along with resources available for folks such as effective after school programs, transportation to and from school, decentralized after school programs, effective childcare, ensuring the workforce board has a presence near public housing.

CAN Community Council Housing Evictions Report: In its deliberations about housing needs, the Community Council's Housing Work Group narrowed its focus to evictions. The report includes a information about what the council knew going in, what they learned, and the recommendations they are sharing with the Board. The COVID-19 pandemic caused businesses to shut down and people to lose jobs. Eviction moratoria were put in place, leading to a delay in evictions and a deferral of rent payments. These payments were only postponed, so they accumulated. Rental assistance programs became overburdened and evictions moratoria have expired or will soon expire. Evictions have a lasting, disruptive impact that may endure for years.

Nancy shared a graph of monthly eviction filings showing the increase in fillings over the past few months and the gap between this year's filings and 2020's. The group also undertook an examination of the history of housing, homeownership, and renting in Austin that included a consideration of how factors such as the I-35 divide, gentrification of East Austin, and the 2008 Housing Crisis contribute to the issue. They discussed details about the benefits of instituting an Evictions Right to Counsel program. Recommendations include expanding emergency rental assistance, expanding legal representation at Eviction Court, establish eviction right to counsel, establish an eviction history shield, and establish a one-stop shop for accessing available programs and resources.

Given the certainty of the ending of evictions moratoria, we must proactively prepare to increase support to tenants for rent and rent arrears (recommendation 1). A platform for private fundraising would be a helpful complement to federal and local funds. Although there is an existing program that connects lay advocates with folks facing evictions (recommendation 2) is to fund legal representation instead. A lay advocate is not an attorney and there is no empirical evidence that a lay advocate improves outcomes. An additional layer of protection is the eviction right to counsel (recommendation 3), which will ensure folks can negotiate at evictions court more effectively. This has been shown to reduce the number of evictions filed, number of persons evicted, and cost to the system. Establishing an eviction history shield (recommendation 4) protects tenants from being denied housing solely due to eviction history. Finally, community council recommends establishing a one-stop-shop to improve engagement and service delivery to households and residents (recommendation 5). This recommendation reiterates what has been previously discussed at the city and county level regarding "resiliency hubs" and "re-imagining public safety." Ashton Cumberbatch and Misael Ramos were available to respond to questions about the Anti-Displacement Coalition proposal for a community resource center that was included as an attachment to the report.

Adjournment: Dr. Gururaj adjourned the meeting at 2:53 pm.