



CAN Board of Directors Meeting

12/09/22 Minutes

Location: Virtual Zoom Meeting

Present: Sundal Ali, Austin ISD; Tamara Atkinson, Capital Area Workforce Solutions; Chris Cervini, Austin Community College; Devon Darden, Greater Austin Hispanic Chamber of Commerce; Viola Eddington, WFS Capital Area; Amy Einhorn, St. David's Foundation; Jacqueline Evans, CAP Metro; David Evans, Austin Travis County Integral Care; Simone Talma Flowers, Interfaith Action of Central Texas; Vanessa Fuentes, Council Member, City of Austin; Suchitra Gururaj, UT Austin; Rachel Hampton, CAN Community Council; Kelly Hyten, Ascension Seton; Jeremy Martin, Austin Chamber of Commerce; Rudy Metayer, Pflugerville City Council Member; Pilar Sanchez, Travis County; Annette Tielle, Del Valle ISD;

Other guests: Edna Butts, Austin ISD; Sarah Eckhardt, Texas Senate; Peter Einhorn, Texas Senate; Brie Franco, City of Austin; Valerie Gomez, City of Austin; Hal Katz, Integral Care; Cicely Kay, Travis County; Lawrence Lyman, Travis County HHS; Julie Wheeler, Travis County;

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

Call to order and Introduction: Tamara Atkinson called the meeting to order at 1:05 pm. New members introduced themselves.

Minutes: The 10/14/2022 CAN Board minutes and 11/18/2022 Retreat notes were approved, after a motion submitted by Hal Katz which was seconded by Suchi Gururaj. The minutes were approved unanimously.

Nominations & Selection – CAN Vice Chair: Tamara Atkinson discussed the results of the selection process for a new vice chair. She announced the nomination of Liz Johnson from St. Edwards University for CAN Vice Chair for 2023. There were no other nominations. The Chair called a vote by the board, and the members approved the selection unanimously.

Community Council Update: The final meeting for the year of the Community Council is scheduled for next Monday, where they will have a guest speaker about mental health during the first half. The remainder of the meeting will focus on the work Community Council will do to produce a report to be released in the spring. The Community Council is also welcoming nominations for new members. Please use the nomination form to submit recommendations. Last month the Community Council heard about the needs of communities of color relating to mental health. The Council is also looking at ways it can better support the Board's work in the coming year. One idea is to develop a community-based needs assessment to support the effort for an equitable economic recovery. The Council would also like to hear from the board about ways they can prioritize their time.

Executive Director's Report: Raul is working with the Executive Committee on the budget for next year as well as on the development of a work plan for 2023 based on learnings from the retreat. Last month, CAN released the updated CAN Community Dashboard Report, available for download on the [Dashboard website](#). It includes updated data that was just released by the Census Bureau in late September. The [We CAN! ATX](#) website has also been updated, in collaboration with the Language Access Action Team, with a resources section translated into 9 different languages. Users can access tools such as iSpeak cards, the city's emergency alerts page, and a series of new community resource guides to help community members navigate certain systems in our community. These resource guides are available in text and video form, to make them accessible to as many people as possible. CAN will formally launch these community resource guides in January.

Legislative Preview - Senator Eckhardt: Senator Eckhardt mentioned she and her staff looked at the updated dashboard and framed her conversation around the dashboard indicators. The expectation is for a regular legislative session, with no special session. Starting with the Safety and Justice section, bail reform is an important

topic. Gun reform is another challenging topic. Sen. Eckhardt will work with Senators. Blanco and Gutierrez and Rep. Goodwin to close the loophole in criminal background checks, take high-capacity rifles out of the hands of children, and to have red-flag protective orders. There is also work being done to expand voting access to people who have been previously convicted but are currently on parole. The (negative) impact of the Election Security Bill needs to be documented and analyzed. There is also work to allow local jurisdictions to carry out ranked-choice voting, and to prevent poll watchers from covering their faces.

Regarding basic needs, poverty and wealth disparity continue to be pressing issues. The biggest impacts would be from expanding MEDICAID and the quick, effective utilization of ARPA money. More work can be done on SNAP eligibility requirements to improve food security. Housing is a complicated issue. The state needs long-term, sustainable investments in housing, and services that support keeping people housed, such as transportation, healthcare, and education. There is a flat-dollar homestead exemption bill that Eckhardt is trying to get heard. There are also bills working to reduce landlord discrimination and other restrictions of housing voucher holders. The transportation bond and the federal infrastructure bill will help keep us on track with transportation goals. Homelessness continues to be an issue across the US. Part of the issue is lack of affordable housing, but an important factor is lack of affordable mental health and substance use care.

With regard to health, expanding Medicaid, and Medicaid home service rates, would help. Upgrading and modernizing our IT infrastructure in our social service agencies is imperative so that these agencies can more effectively carry out their mandate. At the intersection of policing and mental health, there will be a bill to require police officers to report an interaction with someone they believe has a mental health issue or an IDD. Our lack of healthcare and education may be a factor contributing to local obesity levels. Our state has a lot of work to do with climate and air quality issues. Climate resiliency, severe weather, grid security, and reliable energy are items that are important to advance. Water quality is linked to air quality because in many cases it's the same entities that are polluting both. Working to establish an Office of Environmental Justice may be helpful.

For education, it would be helpful if the State would raise the basic allotment and index it. If, for school funding, the state paid 50% and local government paid 50% then that would be a great help. Currently the State pays less than 40% and local pays more than 60%. In the 1980's the State share was 60% and local paying 40%. The [TRUE program](#) in the Tri-Agency Workforce Initiative is continuing, but it needs to be strengthened. This would help improve unemployment rates. We need to ensure people have access to attaining post-secondary credentials, licensure, and other requirements without unnecessary barriers or restrictions. A bill for an "Academic Fresh Start" for folks that may have dropped out of post-secondary programs and who may lose credits before they come back. A DFPS program that exempts kids in foster care from tuition and fees at state school is underutilized and needs better promotion.

Legislative Preview – CAN Members: Annette Tielle, Superintendent for Del Valle ISD, mentioned the need for an increase in the basic allotment. The 2019 House Bill increase hasn't kept up with rising costs and inflation and is no longer enough. End Of Course and STAAR testing online is an issue for many kids, especially special needs students or English Language Learners. Data shows that students do more poorly when taking online tests compared to their peers who take the paper/pencil version. There is a lot of money invested in online testing that influences decisions at the State level.

Edna Butts, Julie Wheeler, and Brie Franco presented together. Brie Franco mentioned that the 88th Legislative Session will have 19 Republicans and 12 Democrats in the Senate and 86 Republicans and 64 Democrats in the House. Pre-filing of bills began on November 14, with 920 bills filed on the first day and over 1,000 in the first week (compared to 540 bills on the first day and 735 in the first week of pre-filing for the 87th legislative session). The last day to file bills will be on March 10 and adjournment is scheduled for May 29.

Issues influencing the 88th session include abortion, gun violence, the power grid, school finance, budget surplus, redistricting, LGBTQ+ legislation, and parental rights (vouchers, books, race discussions, history). Issues that may negatively impact cities include ETJ regulation, dis-annexation, fees, Austin Energy, revenue caps, noise ordinances, Austin Water, tenant rights, super pre-emption, community advocacy, employee's rights & benefits, and guaranteed income. Of the key bills impacting Austin, HB 714 proposes to transform the entire City of Austin into the District of Austin, with the legislature acting as Mayor and Council, while HB 880 proposes for DPS to replace APD.

Julie Wheeler outlined legislative priorities for the County that include voter: registration and elections; public notices; county advocacy; workforce benefit selection; emergency services; environmental enforcement; de-annexation; land development permits; maternal health support; affordable housing; overdose prevention; judicial and prosecutorial discretion; gun violence prevention; infrastructure; funding limitations and debt issuance; property appraisal reform; and broadband affordability and expansion.

Edna Butts mentioned that Austin ISD's main overarching priority is dealing with recapture. Three overarching priorities are: parental & family involvement; comprehensive accountability system that looks beyond high-stakes testing; and bond/TRE ballot language that is clear, transparent, and understandable. Four overarching priorities the district opposes are: vouchers, tax credits, taxpayer savings grants, etc. that divert public dollars to privately run schools; unfunded mandates & infringements on local control; increased language for bond ballot language or limitations on dates for elections, or threshold turn out; and measures that would make INS funds subject to recapture.

The legislature has filed almost 1300 bills so far, Edna is tracking around 175 of them. School funding proposals that look at enrollment versus average daily attendance could be beneficial, as would increasing the basic allotment, especially if adjusted annually for inflation. HB 337, HB 83, HB 680, and HB 37 deal with student and/or teacher assessments and would help make these more equitable. HB 631, HJR 38 and SB 165 are bills on parental rights that would restrict districts. HB 187, HB 622, and SB 221 deal with bond elections. Bills related to school vouchers are HB 557, HB 619, and SB 176. Bills HB 170 and HB 175 have to do with public entities or political subdivisions and their hiring of lobbyists. Austin ISD has [a page with their legislative priorities](#).

Legislative Preview – Other Members: Chris Cervini of ACC mentioned they are tracking the Community College Finance Committee, which worked during the prior year developing recommendations. It is possible that we will see a fundamental change in how community colleges are financed moving forward. There will be focus on ensuring that community colleges are funded equitably and that local Central Texas students get their fair share. Councilmember Metayer mentioned that for Pflugerville, changes in ETJ regulations are of particular interest.

Adjournment: Tamara Atkinson adjourned the meeting at 2:50 pm.