

## CAN Community Council Notes

March 23, 2026, 11:30 am – 1:00 pm

Zoom Video Conference

**Attendees:** Ara Merjanian, Nancy Gilliam, Pamela Garcia, Patricia Longoria, Caroline Reynolds, Donovan DePriest

**CAN Staff:** Raul Alvarez, Jelina Tunstill

**Guests:** David Balch, Allen Weeks

<b>Call to Order</b>	The meeting was called to order at 11:40 am.
<b>Executive Director's Report</b>	<p><b>Summary:</b> Raul shared that the CAN Celebration and Butler Awards will happen Wednesday the 25<sup>th</sup> at HACA. He announced that the Dialogue 2 Action trainings are set to start in April. In May there will be an Expanding Opportunity Forum on Skilled Trades, specifically electrician apprenticeships. He also shared an organizing framework for the Community Council and bylaws. In the bylaws, there is a section for the function of the Community Council and a section that addresses responsibilities of the council and this is the section that would be amended if the organizing framework is accepted. He shared that he can bring the framework and bylaws back next meeting for discussion and a vote.</p> <p><b>Comments and Suggestions:</b> Ara shared that he liked the three sections in the organizing framework and stated that our past work also fits somewhere in those three buckets.</p>
<b>Approval of minutes from the February 23, 2026 Meetings</b>	The February 23, 2026 minutes were approved unanimously on a motion by Ara and a second by Donovan.
<b>Where We Learn Presentation Austin Voices</b>	<p><b>Summary:</b> Allen shared that Austin Voices is a 23-year old education nonprofit that focuses on public school advocacy. They try different strategies for school improvement and provide wrap around supports. They convene communities by have community dinners to brainstorm strategies for campus-based improvements. They have 250+ block leaders which are parents that meet weekly that receive training. Many of their block leaders become CHWs. They host over 300 events in the community annually. They also host alliance meetings that bring partners together. Community for Austin Voices means a geographically bounded place, a group identity, "the other," and something that can be built and constructed. Communities can be short or long term, there are walking communities, you have to build community fabric, and religious leaders from different communities which can be divided. Who is at the head of the table when you are organizing? Austin Voices puts parents at the head of the table. Ideas for building community are "box/house" meetings, use churches and workplaces as hubs of community, block parties, and leadership training with ACC. He then</p>



	<p>shared some pictures of their block leaders making food and serving for PTA, teacher appreciation events, walking clubs, girl scout volunteers, and food bank volunteers. He also shared about the ENCORE Early College Conference that they host annually.</p> <p><b>Comments and Suggestions:</b> Caroline shared that she feels that building up communities with schools at the center is a smart and effective strategy. Nancy asked if there is a pitfall to avoid what that would be. Allen answered that it takes partners and perseverance and having people that are “multi-lingual” between the different sectors that are working together. Ara asked Allen to share more about the Promise Neighborhood and how we are approaching it in Austin. Allen explained that they got a federal grant to address northeast Austin schools. It was modeled after a project that happened in Harlem. A lot of the money goes to the schools but it also goes to supporting early childhood care to afterschool care in a specific area. The parent leaders share how the system works with other parents. Austin Voices would serve as the coordinator. 5 years from now Allen feels that we will have incredibly strong schools.</p>
<p><b>Selection of Speakers for Future Meetings and Forums</b></p>	<p><b>Summary:</b> Jelina stated that we need to select speakers for each of the pillars on the framework. The suggestions she showed were from Ara and Sona. She shared that there are 3-4 slots for presenters and asked the group to prioritize who they’d like to hear from.</p> <p><b>Comments and Suggestions:</b> Ara asked if we needed a presenter for the April forum. Jelina answered that the April forum doesn’t need a speaker CAN staff will be presenting the framework. Ara suggested having organizations or people that could present that can provide a broad community perspective. Jelina suggested having folks that could share the community perspective come for the forum and for meetings have folks that are topic specific. Pamela offered to reach out to Asset Funders Network. Ara asked if we would be open to having a panel. Jelina said some meetings may have enough time, but we want to start developing recommendations during the Summer. Raul stated that a panel would be appropriate for the second forum in August.</p> <p><b>Follow-up:</b> Jelina and Raul will look at the suggestions and map out a plan for presenters.</p>
<p><b>Adjourn</b></p>	<p>The meeting was adjourned at 1:05 pm</p>