

# CAN Community Council Meeting

## Minutes

2/27/06

5:30-7:30pm

City Hall Boards and Commission Room

<b>Attendees</b>	Al Perez	Glenn Gadbois	Nancy Neavel	Anne Harutunian
Susan McCormick	Debbie Wise	Penny Lichenstein	Amy Wong Mok	Kathy Armenta
Barbara Anderson	Sandra Gonzalez	Barbara Smith	Dale Simons	Jennifer Martin
Laurie Seremetis	Bruce Elfant	Michelle Augustine	Terry Cowan	Leslie Hernandez
Clint Smith	Joe Jerkins	Myrna Meza	Willie Williams	

### Unable to Attend:

Linda Murphy Amanda Arlitt Fr Larry Stehling Paul Ellis Clarence Bibby Kurt Koegler Mary Wambach  
Pat Dabbert Jessica Flores Mitch Sudolsky Barbara Cilley

Meeting Called By: Community Action Network

Facilitator: Al Perez

Note Taker: Sam Woollard

Timekeeper: Fred Butler

### Call to Order and Announcements

Al Perez

Meeting was called to order at 5:30 pm by Chair Al Perez

### Announcements/Activities:

- Welcomed new member Leslie Hernandez
- On February 28, at Mount Zion Baptist Church, there will be a community conversation and planning session between the Sheriff's Office and the community.
- The Gray Panthers are focusing on the Put People First campaign
- From Friday March 17-Sunday March 19, DAWCAS will present Comings and Goings, the 3<sup>rd</sup> Annual V Day Play at the First Unitarian Universalist auditorium, 4700 Grover, Ave. Go to <http://www.dawcas.org> for more information
- On March 23 at 6:00pm, the UT School of Social Work is sponsoring "The REAL State of Our Union: Grassroots Organizing and the Poor People's Economic Human rights Campaign" at the School of Social Work Utopia Theater. Contact Sara Comstock [comstoss@mail.utexas.edu](mailto:comstoss@mail.utexas.edu) or call Kathy Armenta at 471-8230 for more information
- On March 1, the League of Women Voters is sponsoring a forum featuring AISD Superintendent Pat Forgione that will focus on the proposed changes in AISD schools

### Review and Approve Meeting Summary

Al Perez

Approved January 2006 minutes as presented.

### Citizens Communication

**Amy Wong Mok** reported that AISD created a series of recommendations to the AISD regarding the proposed changes for pre-K. Amy encouraged members to review the white paper and provide feedback to members of the AISD Board of Trustees. The CAN Resource Council has already passed a resolution in support of the white paper.

**Elaine Cohen, US Census Bureau**, reported that the US Census has chosen Austin as an urban census test site. One aspect of this is that the US Census Bureau is trying to hire 1,500 temporary census workers to conduct the census. This includes \$10 million in payroll. Ms Cohen asked that CC members refer interested people to <http://www.census.gov/2006censustest> There will be a training at the Palmer Events Center March 10,11,& 12

### Hurricane Update

Sam Woollard

Sam provided an overview of the most recent developments for evacuees which include an extension for at least 30 days for people who are living in the Public Assistance Program. The latest federal funding for workforce training is focused on providing skills that will assist with reconstruction along the Gulf Coast. Through a United Way Capital Area grant, a Coordinator has been hired: Shawn Lemieux. 54% of the evacuees report that they plan on staying in Austin.

## Community Forum: Show Me the Money: Building Wealth for Low Income Residents

*Elizabeth Colvin, Claudia Conner, and Caroline Alexander*

Panelists focused on ways in which wealth can be created by people with low incomes. **Elizabeth Colvin, Foundation Communities**, outlined the work of the **Community Tax Centers**. The Community Tax Centers provide free tax preparation for individuals who made less than \$20,000 a year or families making less than \$40,000. Last year over \$31 million in Earned Income tax Credit was not dispersed as people who qualified did not file for it. For more information, go to <http://www.communitytaxcenters.org> Elizabeth also discussed **Individual Development Accounts (IDA's)**. IDA's are savings accounts that can be used for specific things such as buying a home, costs for college, and starting a small business. Their unique characteristic is that they have a matching component. Over the last 9 years, Foundation Communities has provided over 200 IDA accounts and they are offering 10 through the Community Tax Centers. While IDA's have proved successful at building wealth and moving people to self sufficiency, they are expensive to implement and require matching funds. CAN members were asked to encourage people to use the Community Tax Centers. **Claudia Conner, BigAustin**, outlined the microlending opportunities that BigAustin provides for small businesses. They provide loans up to \$15,000 for new businesses and \$50,000 for existing businesses. In addition, they provide educational opportunities on issues such as credit issues and business planning. BigAustin also works with the other local microlending organizations in the community to provide a continuum of service. Big Austin has an approximately 4% default rate. The low rate is credited to the loan closing orientation that occurs and the follow up with borrowers. **Caroline Alexander, Financial Literacy Coalition (FLC)**, stated that the FLC partners with employers, after-school programs and non-profits to teach money management skills. They focus on wants vs needs, reaching financial goals and credit – what it is and how to build it. They work to dispel common myths and to create a forum for participants to share skills with each other.

**Discussion:** In response to a question, Elizabeth stated that one goal of the Community Tax Centers is to be able to turn EITC money into an IDA. Members were also reminded that every year at Federal budget time, the Earned Income Tax Credit is one of the items that is discussed for removal or reduction, so members were asked to advocate for it to remain in the budget. Elizabeth also stated that several of the tax volunteers have taken special training to provide Hurricane evacuees with tax support. On Fridays from 10:00am-4:00pm at WorkSource, evacuees can get their tax returns completed with these trained volunteers. Members recommended that 2-1-1 be made aware of the Financial Literacy Coalition and BigAustin and the three organizations were also encouraged to partner with each other. Amy Wong Mok also agreed to advertise the Community Tax Centers on the Asian American Cultural Center website. One of the challenges for people using the tax centers is that they currently don't provide instant rebate loans and some people don't want to wait the two weeks to receive their refund. This is an issue that the Tax Centers are working on. In response to a question about predatory lending, Caroline stated that the reason that the FLC was formed was because of the increase in available credit, Identify theft and predatory lending. None of the groups present focused their efforts on saving for college, however, it was pointed out that AISD and the Greater Austin Chamber are sponsoring some financial aid workshops.

### Program Committee

*Al Perez*

Glenn will e-mail out the proposed calendar for programs. Issues already identified include: mental health in Travis County, Medical Needs of the Community, Education & Poverty, Success By 6, and Affordable Housing. In addition, members suggested the following topics also be considered: status of Single Point of Entry, 10 Year Plan to End Chronic Homelessness, African American Quality of Life Survey, Impact of Living Wage, Investing in Prevention, Updates on Legislative Activities (including the possible impact of proposal to cap appraisal taxes), Diversity/understanding our community, Revisiting the Equity Commission report Recommendations, and how to get everyone a job in the community. Glenn asked members who are interested in joining the committee or in a particular program to contact him.

### CAN Goals Committee and Task Forces

*Fred Butler*

Fred reminded members that they have the opportunity to become a liaison with a CAN Issue Area. At the march meeting, CAN Community Council members will be asked to review and provide input to the CAN Strategic planning work. Members were encouraged to use the Voters Guides that were provided.

**7:25PM**

**Adjourn**

*Al Perez*

**Next meeting: Monday March 20, 2006, City Hall Boards and Commissions Room**