

CAN Community Council Meeting

Minutes

4/17/06

5:30 – 7:30pm

City Hall, Board and Commissions Room, 301 West 2nd St.

Attendees Debbie Wise, Willie Williams, Bruce Elfant, Myrna Meza, Dale Simons, Jenny Martin, Michelle Augustine, Amanda Arlitt, Laurie Seremetis, Nancy Neavel, Clint Smith, Amy Wong Mok, Susan McCormack, Barbara Cilley, Glenn Gadbois, Terry Cowan, Joe Jerkins, Al Perez, Fred Butler, Pat Dabbert, Sandra Gonzales, Barbara Anderson

Unable to Attend: Jessica Flores, Mary Wambach, Mitch Sudolsky, Penny Lichenstein, Clarence Bibby, Kathy Armenta, Leslie Hernandez, Linda Murphy, Anne Harutunian, Barbara Smith,

Meeting Called By: Community Action Network

Facilitator: Al Perez

Note Taker: Julia Cuba

Timekeeper: Fred Butler

Call to Order and Announcements

Al Perez

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

Citizens Communication:

During the Citizen Communication slot on the agenda, the Open Records City Charter Amendment discussion took place with guests Bill Bunch (SOS) and Kathy Mitchell (ACLU).

Bill Bunch spoke about how the charter amendment is an opportunity to build a healthy and prosperous city. The vision is to use technology to manage city business, which would be accessible with a password – to the greatest extent practical. The benefit would be that the community could see who city officials are meeting with and how they are spending their time. Bill continued to speak about the neighborhood permitting process becoming public, which would allow community members to access applications online and post comments for viewing. This allows neighborhoods to be on the same playing field as developers. The cost of such an idea is minimal. He stated that the cost of such an idea would be minimal. The internet is widely used which means this is more efficient.

Kathy Mitchell spoke about the civilian oversight process' impact on budget effectiveness and police accountability. She asked what the next step is to move the civilian oversight system to an online public system. Kathy said the amendment opens up the tax abatement process which is very controversial. Are tax abatements well used, or even necessary? Kathy talked about how there are no standards for writing guidelines or for implementing guidelines by city officials. With the amendment there would be an opportunity to standardize guideline writing and implementation. Kathy reminded the Council that this amendment is a form of community leadership and was created by activists from many regions, reviewed nationally and by thousands of voters. She mentioned that the Gray Panthers have this on their agenda as well.

Discussion: One member pointed out that the city decides what is practical in the rule making process and that the only enforcement in the amendment is that a non public item which needs to be public possibly draws a \$500 fine for non-compliance. Another member asked if there are other cities which have accomplished open government and Kathy said there are cities which are aggressively pursuing it and she will send information regarding those cities and their progress. Kathy can be contacted at mitcka1@myway.com. Discussion by the membership followed noting differing points of view on both Bill's and Kathy's comments. No conclusions were reached and both were thanked for their time in coming to present.

Review and Approve Meeting Summary

Al Perez

The March Minutes were approved as presented

Community Forum: What does it Take to Make Sure Every Child Has Access to Healthcare Toby Hooper and Anne Dunkelberg

Toby Hooper and Anne Dunkelberg spoke about healthcare access for children. Toby described Insure-a-Kid and said that it assists families(not just children) in applying for health insurance through CHIP and Medicaid. It helps families identify eligibility and actually go through the steps to apply. The families can go through a screening on the phone or they can apply at the Insure-a-Kid office. He noted that the hands-on application process through Insure-a-Kid is more often successful. Applications are less likely to be returned with a need for additional information, so the acceptance time is quicker. www.insureakid.org. There is an online eligibility screening tool that is used where the family is led through a process to choose the appropriate application. Insure-a-Kid will fax the application (which is most effective) and the length of time for a CHIP response is on average about two weeks. The main barrier to accessing CHIP and Medicaid systems are knowledge and awareness that they exist. There are no ads for CHIP and Medicaid, so many families do not know about them or how to apply for them. Anne Dunkelberg mentioned that CHIP enrollment is declining every year. Medicaid #'s have declined by 79,000 children in just three months. CHIP is the lowest since April 2001. The attempted renewal rate is in the 50's, which is a red flag that there is a problem. The contractor is Accenture Company. Is there quality control? There are no standards for CHIP because of the block grant program, and USDA hired its own consultant to oversee the role out.

Discussion: One member mentioned that if people do not go through Insure-a-Kid they are asked for more and more documentation and the time to apply lasts longer. There was some discussion about the Accenture Company and their poor past performance. One member pointed out that they have lost contracts in certain regions due to their poor performance.

Nominating Committee

Dale Simons was accepted as the newest member of the Resource Council.

Hurricane Impact

Fred Butler

Many people are still seeking assistance. Many are utilizing FEMA Public Assistance which will end on May 31, 2006 (pass through dollars.) FEMS's Private Assistance will go directly to families at that point – no more city conduit. Individuals will then sign leases with their landlords instead of the City signing the leases. Public assistance covers rent and utilities, private assistance does not include utilities, which means a lot of people will need more assistance. . There are not a lot of alternatives. 1800 families are currently covered by the City of Austin through the Public Assistance program at a cost of \$1.2 mil per month. Up to 400 families may be eligible for private assistance, which means no rent or utility benefits and probable eviction. The community is working on a plan through the Community Recovery Committee which is sponsoring a May 2nd meeting on housing system alternatives. Members noted that there is already no space for our existing homeless population, and very little affordable housing for anyone. .

Effort is being made through the Louisiana Front Porch initiative to provide networking opportunities for evacuees about issues here and back home. Shawn Lemieux is working with evacuees.

Program Committee and March Response

Glenn Gadbois

Upcoming – continued discussion on health care, health care for everyone. Next month guest is the Director of the Hospital District, Trish Young Brown. Please forward any responses or comments you have about this multi-meeting discussion to the Program Committee.

Next Program Committee meeting is Wednesday, April 19, 2006 at 3 PM at Swedish Hill Bakery.

Announcements:

Fred Butler

Announcements: Envision Central Texas is having their first annual Community Awards Celebration. The Ray Marshall Center is hosting a focus group on Travis County area priorities for health and human services directly following tonight's meeting.

5:30PM

Adjourn

Al Perez

Next Community Council meeting: Monday May 15th, 5:30pm, City Hall