

# CAN Community Council Meeting

## Minutes

10/16/06

5:30 – 7:30pm

City Hall, Board and Commissions Room, 301 West 2<sup>nd</sup> St.

**Attendees** Al Perez, Debbie Wise, Nancy Neavel Willie Williams, Mitch Sudolsky, Barbara Cilley, Bruce Elfant, Jenny Martin, Laurie Seremetis, Clint Smith, Pat Dabbert, Myrna Meza, Terry Cowan Michelle Augustine, Anne Harutunian,

**Unable to Attend:** Jessica Flores, Penny Lichenstein, Clarence Bibby, Kathy Armenta, Linda Murphy, Barbara Smith, Susan McCormick, Glenn Gadbois, , Joe Jerkins, Sandra Gonzales, Leslie Hernandez, Amanda Arlitt, Barbara Anderson, Amy Wong Mok,

Meeting Called By: Community Action Network

Facilitator: Al Perez

Note Taker: Angel Del Rio

Timekeeper: Fred Butler

### Call to Order and Announcements

Al Perez

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

#### Announcements:

- On October 30 at 7:30pm, AISD will celebrate its 125<sup>th</sup> Year Anniversary with a concert featuring AISD choirs at Bass Concert Hall
- On November 8 at 7:00pm at LCRA, the League of Women Voters will hold a forum that will focus on mental health

### Citizens Communication:

**Jimmy Castro**, reminded members to vote in the November 7 election. The Austin City Council set the election for a \$567 million bond proposal. Propositions on the November bond election ballot will include: Proposition 1: Transportation; Proposition 2: Drainage and Water Quality Protection; Proposition 3: Parks Facilities and Parkland; Proposition 4: Community and Cultural Facilities; Proposition 5: Affordable Housing; Proposition 6: Central Library; and Proposition 7: Public Safety Facilities.

**Mark Yznaga**, from Housing Works, encouraged people to vote for proposition 5, the housing bond. He stated that affordable housing has become a primary issue that needs to be addressed in the City of Austin and through the service providers. He stressed the importance of educating people and organizations on how affordable housing affect every part of how we live and work. He recommended that members send e-mails and educate the community.

**Nominating Committee:** Pat Dabbert gave a report from the Community Council Nominating Committee. Nominations have been received for most of the open positions for the Community Council. Currently there are still the following openings without nominations: one for consumers, one on the professional level, and one on the community level. Pat encouraged member to suggest nominees for these openings. She also explained that the Nominating Committee would like to have nominations from other areas that can bring a diverse input into the community dialogue. These suggested areas are: transportation, health, business, and students. Terry Cowan was nominated for vice chair and he accepted. The full slate will be voted on at the November meeting.

### Review and Approve Meeting Summary

Al Perez

The September minutes were approved as presented.

### Community Forum: Addressing Mental Health Issues in Our Community -

**Susan Stone is the Coordinator of the Mayor's Mental Health Task Force.** This group is developing a national model for a mentally healthy community, an initiative that is not happening in any other place in the nation. To develop this effort a Monitor group was created to oversee the planning of the project. There are main purposes for the existence of the Monitoring Group: 1) To Coordinate the planning process so there is no duplication on the effort; and 2) To coordinate the planning in other areas where there is no planning currently happening, e.g. housing for individuals with mental illness.

The Monitoring Group has already identified six focus areas for their planning: access to mental service, housing, criminal justice prevention and diversion, community awareness, schools and youth, and faith based activities. The group has already developed concrete actions, time frame, and responsibilities for each focus area. There is a liaison (contact person) for each focus area. Every liaison reports to the monitor group and serves as a bridge between both groups.

There are two outcomes that the Monitoring Group is hoping to obtain from this project: 1) To be able to report to the City Mayor, twice a year, to document mental health progress in the community; and 2) to create a system mapping that will allow a picture of what the mental health looks like and the needs and the capacity in the community.

Other areas of concern for this group:

- Housing: There is an urgency to quantify the need of housing from homeless to mental health clients. Through an online survey and the help of various organizations they have been able to get an idea of the inventory and the services being provided to the mentally ill. Through long term planning, they want to document the entire realm of what is needed in housing: from transitional housing to full living.
- Crisis service and intervention: Their main concern is how to effectively provide a service without diminishing the day-by-day service offered to people who are not in crisis.
- Jail diversion: There is a need for a new criminal justice planning tool to find a cost effective way for jail diversion.

**Andres Guariguata , EMerge Program.** EMerge provides mental health in the city health clinics around the county. The staff is licensed and bilingual. A Full-time psychiatric was recently hired. Their vision is to address the health of the people holistically by addressing the behavioral state of the person to his/her emotional and physical state. Health issues are directly related to behavioral health issues (e.g. depression caused by severe illnesses). Their services are currently present on 13 clinics. Most of the clinicians will see a person for as long as the person needs the service, if possible. Through this service people are able to receive a diversity of treatments in one place. The majority of people served are Spanish speaking of which 60% of them are women. They also provide screening services for substance abuse though they do not provide direct service for substance abuse.

**Sherry Blyth, Psychiatric Emergency Services (PES).** PES operates as a psychiatric Emergency Room, assesses everyone that comes in with an emergency, and triages everyone. The staff is fully licensed with at least a master's degree. There is a 24-hours on call Psychiatrist and one full-time Psychiatrist. Most of the clientele do not have any resources so PES becomes their only option. PES also works closely with the State Hospital. They screen people to see if they need to be hospitalized and sent to the State Hospital, and also facilitate hospital admission. Most clients are admitted to the hospital through PES's intervention. The main challenge PES faces with the State Hospital is that there are not enough psychiatric hospital beds to the current demand. PES serves over 800 people per month, an increase of over 200 people compared to 650 per month last year. PES assisted 400 children last year alone. They are also assisting Katrina clients. PES also works closely with the law enforcement departments. Many clients come from interventions made by APD and the Austin Sheriff Department.

**David Evans, ATCMHMR Center:** ATCMHMR Center can now only serve individuals who meet the four mental health diagnoses deemed by the state. ATCMHMR Center has 3,400 adults in services and an additional 295 on a waiting list. In the past several years, Travis County has experienced the closing of five psychiatric hospitals and has only 58 designated beds at the state hospital which greatly strains the system.

**DISCUSSION:** Members wanted to define and clarify the role of the Travis County Health Care District (HCD) in mental health services. The HCD is actively sponsoring these initiatives as they look for systemic solutions and has increased capacity by buying beds at Shoal Creek. HCD is also increasing medication availability to this segment of the community. The long-term challenge of needing more Psychiatric services and medical facilities will be considered in the HCD strategic planning process. The System mapping and inventory of services that are currently offered will also inform this work. The system planning is supposed to be finalized by October 27, 2006 when it will be presented to the Mayor of the City of Austin.

There was a question raised regarding the possibility of reallocating funds for mental health under public safety as a way of truly understanding mental health as an integral part of public safety in the city. Jail diversion takes longer planning and implementation before its cost effectiveness can be noticed (it takes at least 16 months to see the benefits of jail diversion). Nevertheless, it was suggested that this is something that should be tried and implement in Austin. Finally, it was suggested that a good way of supporting this effort is by strengthening planning partnerships among the various organizations.

#### **Executive Director Report & Retreat Results:**

*Fred Butler*

Fred presented an overview of the **results of the CAN retreat**. The retreat last Friday was a very upbeat experience which resulted in strategies that will help CAN delineate the energy and efforts through this year. The areas that were identified to prioritize on the 2007 frame were: Cross cutting issues (affordable housing, transportation and mental health), Educating the community of economic benefit of Taking Action (what does it cost if we don't take effective action, how much are we spending in the critical areas), Supporting the Issue Area Group.

**Discussion:** The Community Council (CC) group had a very productive time discussing the areas selected at the retreat.

The importance of bringing the IAG's to the table with the CC was highlighted so that they can share their information, report on their actions. It was suggested to allow IAG's 15 minutes of each agenda, or find any other creative way to bring them into the conversation with the CC. There was an interest in focus on the return on investment for the issue as well as asking: Is addressing the a bill of savings (revenue) or is it a check on what we spend (expense) in the community?

It was suggested that at the November or December meeting the Council dialogue about what Return on Investment will look like as a tool of conversation and action in every aspect of CAN?

**5:30PM**

**Adjourn**

*Al Perez*

**Next Community Council meeting: Monday November 20, 2006, 5:30pm, City Hall**