

Washtenaw County Community Action Board

Zoom meeting

Wednesday, October 26, 2022

5:30 pm to 7:30 pm

General Session/Regular Meeting

Meeting Minutes

Members Present:

1. Danyelle Reynolds,
2. Alyshia Dyer
3. Rhonda Weathers
4. Cathryn (Cath) Antkowiak-Howard,
5. Cherisa Allen
6. Jason Towler
7. Ricky Jefferson
8. Justin Hodge
9. Mary Phillips Smith
10. Elizabeth Janovic
11. Jimmie Wilson Jr. (arrived late)

Members Absent:

1. Beth Dulka
2. Mark McBride
3. Linh Song
4. Juanita House

Staff Present: Katie Hoffman-Pariyar, Morghan Williams

Staff Absent: Teresa Gillotti

Guest: N/A

I. Call to Order

- Chair called the meeting to order at 5:37pm

II. Welcome and Introductions

- Roll call of CAB board members

III. Public Comments

- No public comments at this time

IV. Approval of Meeting Agenda

- A motion was made by Justin Hodge to approve the Agenda for October. Motion seconded by Cath.
- Roll call vote for October meeting agenda:
 - Danyelle, yes
 - Alyshia, yes
 - Rhonda, yes
 - Cath, yes
 - Cherisa, yes

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- Jason, yes
- Ricky, yes
- Justin, yes
- Mary, yes
- Elizabeth, yes
- o Motion carried/passes.

V. **Approval of April and September Meeting Minutes**

- Roll call vote for April and September meeting minutes, seconded by Cherisa
 - Mary, yes
 - Danyele, yes
 - Rhonda, yes
 - Alicia, yes
 - Cath, yes
 - Elizabeth, yes
 - Justin, yes
 - Ricky, yes
 - Cherisa, yes
 - Jason, yes
- o Motion carried/passes.

VI. **OCED Updates**

- Update from Morghan on Housing Access of Washtenaw County (HAWC) and coordinated entry:
 - o HAWC previously under the Salvation Army
 - o HAWC previously responsible for phone center, family hotel funds
 - o Coordinated entry
 - o Recognized system wasn't working
 - o In process of contracting with providers
 - o OCED is overseeing HAWC (cloud-based system)
 - o Quality assurance, opportunities for training
 - o Coordinated entry for families...individual assessor will be doing that
 - o Appointments are scheduled out far in advance
 - As soon as assessment contractors are onboarded, those appointments will be moved up rather quickly
 - o Various entities will come together for strategic planning – work plan to share out to community
- Winter shelter is still up and running (November 6)
 - o Shelter available for individuals immediately
 - o Prepared for families – hotel resources in play
- Jason - Comment– would like to connect offline to help families at school
 - o Helpful to have action words to communicate specific things about the process
- Ricky - Something was missing in the process - is there something being put in place to prevent it from happening again?

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- Morghan – Answer: What we found that it was too much work for one provider to do and shouldn't have been organized that way... but at the time, no one else stepped up to do the work
 - Thousands of calls not being answered.... Drastically changed the role of HAWC, i.e. assessments to make sure phone calls were prioritized
 - Switch from previous iteration (3 staff answering calls and 4 assessment case managers) >>> phones being answered and providers to step in while disengaging from Salvation Army

VII. **Board: New Business**

- Revisiting CAB mission, vision, and how we'll move forward as a group
- Thinking about our mission... alleviating poverty
- Recognizing that everyone on the board comes into this work with a different view on what poverty alleviation means, this meeting we will:
 - Spend time thinking about what poverty alleviation looks like in our county
 - What is our role in the county and how do we want to move forward in that work?
 - Prompt from Danyelle:
 - How are you thinking about poverty alleviation (take 5 minutes to think about what is poverty alleviation, and how are you thinking about it?)
 - Poverty alleviation looks and feels like in our county
 - What it looks like in the short term (i.e. decrease in people needing Barrier Busters
 - What it looks like in the long term?
 - Think broadly about this topic
 - Create 2 statements – informed by own experiences

5:48pm (break out to brainstorm individually) – Reconvened at 6pm

- *Question/Prompt for all board members: As you think about poverty in our county, create 2 sentences about what poverty alleviation is (informed by your own experiences, positions, etc). What is the vision of poverty alleviation that you bring to this Board?*
- Comm Hodge:
 - Washtenaw County becomes a place where everyone has equitable access to the resources that they need to thrive and be successful, such as affordable and healthy food, quality and affordable housing, quality public education, and good-paying jobs.
 - Washtenaw County becomes a place where your zip code does not determine the opportunities available to you. Everyone should have the opportunity to build wealth and the county should be a leader in combating generational poverty.
- Cath:
 - Increased accessible childcare especially workplace based care as a norm.
 - Guaranteed living wage consistent with cost of living, accompanied by reasonable/affordable rental and purchasable housing throughout Washtenaw County
- Elizabeth:
 - When I think about poverty alleviation in our county I think about:

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- the need for affordable and attainable housing - housing that is not only affordable but that people are aware exists and can easily apply to obtain.
- the need for public transportation that meets the needs of our citizens, is easy to use, and information on that transportation that is readily available - transportation for folks living on the other side of the county from where they work, folks who work late shifts, etc.
- Rhonda:
 - I believe it is important to ask people living in poverty what they need to move out of poverty.
 - Create vocational and educational opportunities to move people to a higher income level. Provide support for them to succeed in those programs.....rental assistance while in the program; food assistance; childcare; transportation, etc.
- Mary:
 - I focused on the homelessness population. Perhaps we can get funding for either more affordable housing or fixing up abandoned hotels.
 - Barrier Busters is not a one stop shop as it is designated. It appears that the people that really need it don't know how to get it.
- Jimmie:
 - We need to address housing, in regard to affordability and home repair programs. We could also address childcare as a means to help alleviate poverty.
- Jason:
 - Poverty fatigue has sunk on both sides of the ball, meaning people are frustrated with systems that are supposed to help them that are so hard to navigate as well as get support in a timely manner. Then people are supporting are not getting support or activity seeking new people.
 - There are also many silos in the county that focus on certain things but not all. hard to find people to counsel on all activities. Look at more things like social security counseling.
- Danyelle:
 - Everyone in our county has access to affordable, quality housing.
 - People have access to the resources that will help them and their families thrive (transportation, food, quality education, child care, and more) that is readily available, easily findable, and provided with dignity, community connection, and ethic of equity.
- Cherisa:
 - Removing any barriers, inequalities, or inequities in education...teaching our children more than reading, writing and math. making space for the creative arts, teaching children to work with their hands, (plumbing, gardening, farming, beautician, electrician) to name a few. Distributing wealth equally; removing the "rich get richer" scheme. Fair pay for everyone (minorities and women included), eliminate the housing crisis, everyone deserves a safe and stable place to live, removing income barriers, removing discriminating laws that would place a long-term barrier on living in certain areas or purchasing a home
- Alyshia:
 - Poverty alleviation to me is ensuring our legal system is not criminalizing poverty, trapping people in a poverty cycle, and is not used as a tool to further oppress and create more poverty. I bring experience working in the legal system, and believe that

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over policing, as well as the criminalization of poverty has led to severe inequity in opportunity in our county. I think we need to be intentional about looking at how law enforcement can be used to further cause harm, and work to reduce that harm. I also believe alleviation comes housing and employment access.

- Ricky:
 - o Poverty alleviation making sure resources are distributed to those who need the most help to help them thrive. Education, access to quality healthcare, support for the elderly, income equality and climate change are all underinvested issues in Eastern Washtenaw County. Adults need training for jobs that are in line with the new technical work environment. Our youth need more relevant workforce education designed for businesses that are finding it difficult to hire because of lack of talent.
- Alyshia:
 - o I really appreciate Rhonda's comment – more intentionality about reaching out to folks experiencing poverty and seeing what they need... not just defining what it means
- Cherisa:
 - o Making sure we're removing any barriers or inequities to ensure that all residents have a fair chance at education, in the workforce, or any area of opportunity
 - o Looking back at when RCTC were in schools – how to work with their hands – creative arts, trades
 - o We're so overfocused on testing and it's not focused on teaching
 - o I'm all for removing any barriers
- Danyelle:
 - o We often focus on the money when it comes to these conversations... but you're talking about the whole person
- Cherisa:
 - o Looking at our health too – we need to make sure we're also removing the barriers in healthcare
 - o The intersectionality of healthcare and unequal access to quality healthcare
- *Question/prompt 2: Where do we see our role as the CAB in this work? What do we need from OCED in order to do some of that work? /What does our relationship with OCED need to be to do this work? What do we see as our work in poverty alleviation? What do we need from each other in order to better understand and approach the things that we've shared today?*
- Danyelle:
 - o One need is sharing more about what's going on in the county, sharing with each other
- Jason: understanding what each of the board members do daily to interact with poverty alleviation; better utilizing the connections within the board
 - o Cherisa: homeless liaison – YCS – remove barriers for student experiencing homelessness from enrolling in school
 - Identifying homeless families
 - Discriminatory laws that are keeping people locked out of renting and buying housing
 - We don't have enough resources to get them a hotel, shelter, and/or housing, move-in costs

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- Calling HAWC can be scary... parents worried about calls from Child Protective Services (CPS)
 - Loss of food, gas prices too high, domino effect when it comes to family budget
 - People have no clue what "Homeless" looks like...they assume that everyone that is homeless is lazy, worthless, unemployed, uneducated, playing the system...NOPE not at all.
- Jason:
 - does similar work as Cherisa with students
 - It would be very eye opening if we all tried to call HAWC ourselves
- Alyshia: Services available can further harm, i.e. calling CPS
 - The idea that we're not going to provide services until something happens
- Ricky: dealing with homelessness since 2010 when I became a city counsel
 - Public housing renovations is a band aid – they only last so long and then often becomes market rate
 - Not a permanent solution – temporary solution
 - Federal, state, and county need to find a way to create more affordable housing
 - Get calls all the time about landlords now wanting to sell homes and pushed out
 - Pushing out low-income families
 - Need policy change – no rent regulation
 - CAB should be an advocate for the county and state for these policy and system changes
 - Understanding the *need*
 - Different municipalities within county need to come together to address issues around poverty together
- Cath: we're a small group and there are other groups/agencies talking about this... but we're not collaborating
 - How many different groups are talking about these issues?
 - What would be accomplished if we were all talking with each other?
 - Competing for dollars
 - Solution-based work
 - Experience in trauma-informed treatment and cross-cultural competencies
 - Trauma informed treatment becoming more of a reality throughout the system
- Justin: Flip the question – ask OCED what they want CAB do to support their work?
 - Community Action Agency – 4 counties that have government agency as the Community Action Agency (most municipalities are non-profits)
 - Different funding struggles that non-profits have
- Morgan: continue to have these conversation
 - Based on conversation, use your collection power to advocate for certain things that at OCED doesn't have the ability to do
 - HAWC as a good example – the limitations around the work (limited funding)
 - Changing the narrative around homelessness, poverty and the stigmas around it
 - CAB to "push" where OCED cannot
- Justin: legislative action days (pre-pandemic)
 - Example: trying to get to certain amount of funding for Wx funding (federal match in dollars – 15% match)
 - Not enough advocacy at the state level

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- Filling gaps in staff capacity limitations
- Cath:
 - Human trafficking course – there's money if you help a person under the age of 18 to help them leave being trafficked... over 18, there are no funds to support victims (for housing)
 - Unless you find something else, that victim will end up back in the same situation
 - No supports in place to assist them
 - Revolving cycle
- Danyelle: helpful to share advocacy opportunities
 - November meeting – helpful to talk about what are people doing? What are some of the opportunities for advocacy?
- Morgan: State Association for Community Action Boards
 - Through association – legislation days
 - Get support for advocacy
 - Do work with CAB for training
- Justin: State Commission meeting – state level equivalent of the CAB
 - State association website – policies that they are advocating for (PDFS)
<https://mcac.memberclicks.net/advocacy-government-affairs>
- Ricky: find a way to get connected to Lansing and what's going on as it relates to our work
 - Targeting specific work and initiatives
- Cath: I think one area that might be something to consider is WHO needs to become more aware and educated about the realities of poverty - Who are the targets for increasing their awareness and encouraging them to become political/social and economic allies
- Danyelle: How can we take our own learning and support advocacy opportunities?

Another resource for those interested in Affordable Housing – Affordable Housing Education Series presented by HHSAB: <https://www.washtenaw.org/3521/Affordable-Housing-Education-Series>

VIII. **BOC Representative Report**

- Budget process – last working session
- Amendments that commissioners have – items they want to see in the budget
- Community priority fund – second vote
- Two categories left
 - Comm Jefferson – Opioid Funds
- Substance Use Disorder Oversight Board
 - Connection with CMH service board
 - Money coming from Opioid settlement
 - \$400,000 over 18 years
 - Presentation in November from SUDOB, CMH, Public Health
 - Commissioners will be getting insight for how to use these funds
- LOI signed
- YMCA starting to look at community engagement and design

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- Federal dollars set aside from Debbie Dingell's office, Parks and Rec, Superior and Ypsi Township – funding as well
- Questions/comments:
 - Cath asked when Augusta Township will be served by the LIHWAP Program?
 - Answer: LIHWAP staff have been unable to get MOU signed by Augusta Township
 - Ricky -- Next month's meeting – meeting in person? We'll check in with you (Tuesday, Nov 22)

IX. **Public Comment**

- No public comment at this time

X. **Adjourn**

- Meeting adjourned