



City of San Marcos
Human Services Advisory Board (HSAB)

September 22, 2022 at 7:00 PM
Virtual and San Marcos Public Library

Regular Meeting – Minutes

Members Present: JoAnn Parsons, Board Chair
Ruben Garza, Co-Chair
Mary Earls, Voting Member
Monica Gonzales, Voting Member
Alison Duplechin, Voting Member
Gloria Quinn, Voting Member
Mariana Zamora, Non-Voting Advisory Member

Member(s) Absent: None

Staff Liaison: Carol Griffith, Planning & Development Services, Community Development Manager

Recording Secretary: Lorena Escobar, Planning & Development Services, Housing Coordinator

Staff Present: Brandon Johnson, Planning & Development Services, Intern

- I. **Call to order:** The meeting was called to order by JoAnn Parsons at 7:01 PM.
- II. **Roll Call:** Parsons called the roll. At the time that roll was conducted five voting members were present, forming a quorum.
- III. **30 Minute Citizen Comment Period:** No comments were received.
- IV. **Consideration of Minutes for September 8, 2022, Human Services Advisory Board Meeting.** Monica Gonzales moved for approval of minutes. Ruben Garza seconded the motion. Motion carried unanimously.

V. Presentations:

1. **Agency: Nosotros La Gente; Program: NLG Coats Program**

Agency representative Joe Castillo is the vice president of Nosotros La Gente, which stands for We the People, founded in 1996. Their mission is to serve the community by providing essential needs that positively impact lives. The coats program is a new program the organization established late last year using American Rescue Plan funds it received from the City of San Marcos. Since December 2021, the organization has purchased 128 coats with approximate cost of \$1,891. The clients that were provided the coats were selected by the parent liaisons at the different campuses in the San Marcos School District. The liaisons purchased fleece jackets which were a little lighter, but still kept the kids warm so kids could

use throughout the wintertime and even into spring. They will continue to work with the parent liaisons to identify the kids that may need a coat in the next few months.

Parsons asked how much money they have left over from the American Rescue Fund. Castillo responded that about \$2,000 is left for this year. Parsons asked how many kids were assisted with the funding. Response was 128. Gonzales asked what the price range of the coats they bought last year was. Response was Castillo did not have that information available. Gonzales asked if there was a maximum amount given per coat. Castillo responded they covered the entire cost of the coat. Earls asked if they would assist kids at any time of the year. Response was they used to distribute in the month of December but now they distribute the coats throughout the whole year. So anytime a need is identified they will be doing multiple distributions throughout the school year.

2. Agency: Nosotros La Gente; Program: "Viva Zapatos" Shoe Drive

Agency representative Joe Castillo stated this year marks the 27th annual shoe drive and thousands of San Marcos CISD kids have received shoes. Out of over 8000 students, over 5000 of them are on free or reduced lunch. All the work is done by volunteers so the funding received will not be used for overhead expenses. In the past years, the shoe distribution took place the second Saturday in December at the San Marcos Walmart. An average of 1200 pairs of shoes were given each year to school children in need. To date, the organization has given over 23,000 pairs of shoes to the children in San Marcos. Last year they gave out 1656 pairs of shoes ending last December and so far, this year they have given a total of 225 and still have more shoes to give out. They have funding from last from the Human Services Advisory Board and also funding left from the American Rescue Plan. They also send out donation letters to different businesses or other contacts that they have. Therefore, they are waiting for additional revenue to assist those who live outside of San Marcos. The funds they receive from the Human Services Advisory Board are strictly for citizens of San Marcos or children that go to the San Marcos School District.

Garza asked how much money they receive from the county. Castillo responded that they receive about \$5,000 from the county to use towards medical, funeral, and rent assistance, with only a small percentage used for purchasing shoes. Quinn asked where the other \$5000 listed on the application comes from. Castillo stated it comes from the Hays County Commissioners Court since they get funding from the tobacco settlement. They also use the funds for medical and rental assistance.

3. Agency: Rough Draft; Program: Superhero Art Project

Agency representative Brooke Pillifant stated the Superhero Art Project focuses on providing art programming to incarcerated individuals in Hays County. She stated that research has shown that programs centered on art making can help advance participant's self-directedness, which affords an increased chance of redirecting their life and potentially resisting re-offending. Researchers also found that for incarcerated individuals, art making fosters self-confidence by making them feel productive, normal and human. It also works to increase their sense of value and their importance not only to themselves, but to their community as well. The program wants to utilize three different forms of art. It would be visual arts, drama and creative writing. Pillifant said that when producing visual art, the act of creating and designing something actually has impacts on the brain by changing its neural pathways, which helps to transform how people think and feel not only about themselves, but about the world around them. The idea of using drama and role-playing activities is to

help increase social cognitive skills like empathy and theory of mind. The idea of working with creative writing is extremely beneficial for mental health. It helps people cope with trauma and foster resilience and opportunities to process trauma because just being incarcerated in and of itself is trauma. They would like to offer 10 to 12 classes repeatedly in the participating facilities. The classes would run 60 to 90 minutes and would take place within the detention facilities. The curriculum design employs a theme called Superhero Therapy backed by Dr. Janina Scarlett. They want to utilize the superhero origin story, which often focuses on overcoming trauma and tragedy, to find inner strength and power, and couple that with a form of art in order to help people process their own. Right now, they are the only programming being offered at the county jail besides Alcoholics Anonymous (AA). They also want to expand out into shelters and maybe look at fostering programs to be able to incorporate as many juveniles as possible.

Parsons asked what the doctors name was who authored the therapy model. Pillifant responded Dr. Janina Scarlett. Duplechin asked about the 300 to 400 youth and adults supported and where they are from. Response was the program ran in Travis, Hays and Tarrant County. Quinn asked how many classes they will be offering. Response was they will offer 48 classes every 3 months for a total of over 100 classes per year. Quinn asked what the funding will be used for. Response was for staffing and for supplies. Zamora asked about the curriculum that will be utilized and how it will meet the needs of the population being served. Pillifant said the curriculum designers come from a variety of different backgrounds, and some have been previously incarcerated. A lot of them understand, not just from a theoretical perspective, but from actual life experience perspective.

4. Agency: Any Baby Can; Program: Early Childhood Intervention Program

Agency representative Guillermo Lopez presented the Early Childhood Intervention Program, or ECI. This program subcontracts with Health and Human Services Commission to help families with children up to age three, with developmental delays and disabilities or certain medical diagnosis that may impact their development. They also provide services to children who have a medical diagnosis, such as cerebral palsy, Down's syndrome, autism, and over 100 other diagnoses. If a child is presented with a developmental delay without a medical diagnosis, they do have to qualify for services for ECI. They need to have a significant delay or a standard deviation, in order to be eligible for the program. Referrals come from physicians which are about 75% to 80%. They also get referrals from CPS, Community Action, Early Head Start Program, and daycares. They offer occupational, physical, and speech therapy. They are unique in having state credentialed early intervention specialists who are experts in coaching parents with activities to increase opportunities for a child to practice new skills. Each family has an assigned service coordinator who helps the family access and receive services and resources they need to support the child's development. The service coordinators also help with transition planning to special education services with local school districts. The coaching model is critical and what they do is based on an educational family paradigm. They strongly believe that the biggest way to make a difference is to educate the caregivers in the knowledge they need to be experts in their child's life.

Garza asked if the program qualifies for insurance reimbursement. Lopez responded yes, they receive about 54% to 57% reimbursement from Medicaid and about 30% from private insurance. Garza asked how much they receive from insurance companies. Response was they get two million from medical billing revenue. Garza asked how much the total budget

was just for San Marcos. Lopez responded he did not have that information, but the funding is used to pay salaries and rent.

5. Agency: Austin Habitat for Humanity; Program: Housing Counseling Program

Bertie Samilpa stated Austin Habitat for Humanity brings people together to build homes, community and hope. Austin Habitat for Humanity has built more than 500 homes since 1998 and repaired almost 400 homes in the area. They have empowered over 12,000 community members with housing, education, and housing counseling and all the families assisted are low to moderate income. They are working families earning up to the 80% of the area median income. They build high quality new homes and sell them at an affordable cost to families who complete the process, including housing counseling as well as sweat equity volunteering. The benefits of homeownership and stable housing include better health, education, achievements, and asset building over generations. Habitat has built 22 homes in San Marcos for local families. The Restore store on I-35 serves the San Marcos community and generates revenue, including \$130,000 in sales tax revenue in 2021 and \$170,000 for 2022. They partner with local leaders such as McCoy's and Amazon to support their work in San Marcos. The housing counseling program is the first step for all habitat homebuyers including San Marcos families. Each family receives group education and a one-on-one counseling to identify and overcome barriers to success, like low credit scores or high levels of debt. In addition, they also offer those services to the community free of charge. They have served in San Marcos since 2019 through CDBG support, reaching more than 100 city residents. The \$16,635 requested will cover direct program costs. They have seen an increase in clients served in San Marcos by 50% and expect about 75 participants during this period. They want to continue partnership with the San Marcos Library to host workshops and counseling services at no cost. They are currently building two San Marcos homes during this grant period for families who are completing housing counseling. The CDBG funding will be reduced for the 2023 year and they hope to receive this funding to continue growing. Presenter Robert Watts added that due to reduced funding they need this grant to provide housing counseling services but also for overall program services.

Earls asked if they provide other services such as building ramps for wheelchair accessibility. Watts stated they have not done that here in San Marcos. Garza asked what kind of profit was made from the store last year. Watts responded he didn't know what that amount was but that the profit goes back to the community. Earls asked how McCoy's assists them. Watts stated that McCoy's helps fund land purchases. Most homes cost \$130,000 to build not including the land. Garza asked about the client who is going through the process and if she is getting a loan or being given a home. Watts responded it is a loan and no homes are given for free. Families go through an application process, and it is based on income and family size. Habitat looks at their work history and credit report to prepare the family for the 30-year commitment. They look at 30% to 35% of their gross monthly income to qualify them. Garza asked about the average cost for a house. Samilpa responded it was \$185,000.

- VI. Discussion Items:** This discussion was facilitated by Carol Griffith who asked board members if anything was memorable from the presentations. Duplechin stated these were great presentations and wanted to see more programs for juvenile and adult incarcerated people. She was glad to see variety from the agencies that presented today. Quinn asked what other agency can help children after they turn three. Griffith stated the school district helps a child after they turn three. Earls stated they will be identified when they get to school. Gonzales stated school

districts have programs for children with specific needs. Earls stated that the Habitat program is much needed to help renovate older homes in low-income areas. Quinn asked what the funding requested by Austin Habitat was for. Zamora stated they requested funding for housing counseling programs. Zamora stated that Habitat for Humanity is making homeownership accessible to get people to stay here. Zamora stated that its good to know Nosotros La Gente is assisting kids by purchasing shoes and its great they help them through out the year. She felt that Rough Draft was very knowledgeable and is glad they are using evidence-based curriculum. Earls stated Nosotros La Gente can help with shoes, jackets and even food. Garza talked about Nosotros La Gente and stated that he likes the direct services they offer. Garza stated he does not consider the housing offered by Austin Habitat for Humanity as affordable. The prices at their Restore store are higher than McCoy's. Garza said Any Baby Can is getting millions of dollars in insurance money. He stated he supports all the agencies but at some point, due to limited funding hard decisions will need to be made. Gonzales stated that Nosotros La Gente is being fiscally responsible with their funding to meet the needs of the community. Griffith asked the board members to consider what impact these agencies will have and on whom. How will they categorize and score the different organizations? Griffith will create a spreadsheet that will show the low, medium and high scores so everyone can see what everybody else scored. Griffith clarified that an agency can't receive more than 50% of the agency budget.

VII. Reports: No reports were provided.

VIII. Future Agenda Items: No Items were received.

IX. Question and Answer Session with Press and Public. No questions were received.

X. Adjournment: Garza moved to adjourn meeting. Gonzales seconded. Motion carried.

There being no further discussion, the meeting was adjourned at 8:21 pm.

The minutes for the September 22, 2022, meeting of City of San Marcos, TX; Human Services Advisory Board are respectfully submitted September 29, 2022 by:

Carol Griffith, Staff Liaison

Approved By:

JoAnn Parsons, Chair