

Better Together Board Meeting: Agenda

Friday, July 21, 2023 - 12 pm - 1 pm
School of Social Work, Room 203 / Zoom

Purpose: hear about the Downtown Master Plan, coordinate networking efforts with community partners, discuss developing plans to address mental health needs, get a head count for the trip to Falfurrias

Called to order 12:03. Quorum established. Those attending in person: Dr Avant, Jordan Bridges, Dr Dies, Anna Donihoo, Tracie Estep, Carlos Palomo, Terrence Reeves, Mario Torres, Erin Windham. Those attending virtually: Amelia Ruiz Fischer, Hart Hintze joined late. Michelle Key and Cinessa were having connection issues.

1. Approval of minutes for last board meeting...minutes approved by board.
2. Visitor: Jessica Sowell with City of Nacogdoches...could not attend. Mario to contact her about doing a virtual meeting.
 - a. Downtown Master Plan
3. Networking Efforts
 - a. Re-cap of meeting with city officials + NEDCO (July 10)...Anna and Erin reviewed feedback from this meeting. Participants in the meeting felt like economic development in Nacogdoches was in a good place and that Better Together should address the “mental health crisis” instead. This was defined as the issue with people experiencing mental health crisis and there not being enough places to send them for treatment.
 - b. Burke Center + Adult Probation (July 26, virtual)...Anna, Jordan, and Terrence will be at this one.
 - c. City Police (in the works)...Anna spoke to Dan Taravella to about Better Together mission and recent networking activity. Dan was going to pass the information to his co-worker. He said they are working with Burke Center and the hospital to stream line their response to people in crisis. They are also aiming to get more officers trained as certified mental health officers.

The board engaged in lively discussion about the mental health crisis and city police efforts to address the issues. Amelia recommended BT consider joining the movement to advocate for rights of individuals engaged in criminal system who are also experiencing mental health issues. Different parties will have a different take on the solution...we could add more rooms in the jail, but they would just fill up quickly. The local mental health authority needs more people to do evaluations. Mario recommended that we aim for sustainable and measurable solutions. Erin added that we want to partner with agencies to come up with the solutions so it doesn't come from us alone. Andrew suggested engaging the community in a “diversion conversation” because not everyone needs counseling. He talked about the SFA community's set up with counseling for those most needing it but then a peer support network as an intermediary step. Jordan said he has been working on bringing NAMI resources to the Nacogdoches community but has met resistance d/t stigma associated with mental health services.

The board also discussed the need to approach this problem from both a preventative and reactive perspective. We want to do what we can to help people avoid crisis and also improve how we deal with people in crisis.

- d. Hospitals...Anna removed from agenda d/t time restraints
- e. Mental Health Providers...also removed for same reason
- f. United Way (Anna has reached out to Caroline Garner)...also removed
- g. Nacogdoches ISD Middle School request for funds to create a calming resource box for every classroom as well as training for teachers (Erin). Board approved \$500 for this venture. Erin

will let the department know the board is open to further supporting this as there are board members with helpful expertise willing to assist. Board discussed the portability of such an intervention, making available to other school districts in the county.

4. The Big Picture...Anna gave quick update on this project. Crystal Hicks with the Nac Public Library was familiar with this project and will reach out to the county schools about using the lessons this year.
 - a. Efforts to re-engage with Nac Public Library to finish rolling out this project Dr Cooper had started...this is a set up virtual lessons on using cell phone (or digital camera) to take pictures of the community to generate dialogue about the things we like and don't like about our community.
5. WRC Annual Grant Partner Meeting...Anna will be going to this. So far no one else is able. Anna is talking with Hogg Foundation about the possibility of using virtual platform to make parts of the experience available to the board.
 - a. Will be held in Falfurrias, TX on August 30-31 (Wed and Thur)
6. Hiring process: Dr Avant reported that d/t cyber attack the position has only been posted a few weeks. We have had no applicants thus far. Board discussed possibility of adjusting the position to acquire someone passionate about the cause and then contracting out for the grant writing needs.
7. Vision Planning meeting: Discussed possibility of revisiting our strategic planning in the fall after the WRC annual grant partner meeting. Anna has given Dr Avant a list of possible consultants to bring in and is waiting for a response from Hogg Foundation for other recommendations. The goal of this activity would be to help give the board direction in its work as well as suggestions on how to engage the community following turnover in city leadership.
8. Board agreed to meet again in August on the 18th to avoid the week SFA starts back.

Meeting adjourned at 11:59.