

MARICOPA ASSOCIATION OF GOVERNMENTS
HUMAN SERVICES TECHNICAL COMMITTEE
MEETING MINUTES
JANUARY 11, 2007

MEMBERS ATTENDING

Carl Harris-Morgan, Town of Gilbert,
Chairman
_Judy Bowden, Mesa United Way
*Paige Garrett, Quality of Life Community
Services, Inc
Jayson Matthew for Kate Hanley, Tempe
Community Council
Jane Forino for Deanna Jonovich, City of
Phoenix
_Jim Knaut, Area Agency on Aging
Margarita Leyvas, Maricopa County
Joyce Lopez-Powell, VSUW
Bob Baratko for Dan Lundberg, City of
Surprise
Joy McClain, City of Tolleson
Jose Mercado for Doris Marshall, City of
Phoenix
Jeff Young for Sandra Mendez, DES/CSA
*Kyle Moore, DES/ACYF
*Sandra Reagan, Southwest Community
Network
Christina Avila for Sylvia Sheffield, City of
Avondale

Carol Sherer, DES/DDD
_Judy Tapscott, City of
Tempe
_Wayne Tormala, City of Phoenix, Vice
Chair
*Patrick Tyrrell, City of Chandler
Neal Young, City of Phoenix

OTHERS PRESENT

Brande Mead, MAG
_Brittany Lane, MAG
_John Hoag, DES
_Amy St. Peter, MAG
Cynthia Zwick, Arizona Community
Action Association

+Those members present by
audio/videoconferencing.

*Those members neither present nor
represented by proxy.

1. Open Meeting for Discussion

Chairman Carl Harris-Morgan, Town of Gilbert, welcomed everyone to the meeting
at 1:36 pm and introductions ensued.

2. Call to the Audience

No comments were made.

3. Approval of December 14, 2006 Meeting Minutes

Chair Harris-Morgan called for a motion to approve the September 14, 2006 HSTC
meeting minutes. Bob Baratko, City of Surprise, asked for clarification on the
discussion about evaluating the Community Action Programs and corresponding
survey. Ms. St. Peter said she had talked about the idea with Mayor Lopez Rogers,
Chair of the MAG Human Services Coordinating Committee. She reported that

Mayor Lopez Rogers was supportive of the project and HSCC would discuss it at their next meeting. Carol Sherer made a motion to approve minutes. Mr. Baratko seconded the motion. The minutes passed unanimously.

Chair Harris-Morgan asked the Committee for any amendments to the October 12, 2006 and November 9, 2006 Human Services Technical Committee Meeting Notes. There were no changes.

4. Fuel Fund Presentation

Cynthia Zwick, Arizona Community Action Association (ACAA), presented on the creation of a fuel fund with the purpose of achieving long-term objectives to increase people's incomes. Ms. Zwick stated that an Arizona Gas Case brought money back to that state with some specifically allocated to low income residents to help with utility assistance. The money is to be used for leverage resources. She reported that Arizona is the first warm state to receive such monies.

In December, 2006, the Community Action Association signed a contract with the Arizona Department of Economic Security (DES). They have received approximately 2.3 million in match funds to support the fuel fund. They received 100,000 dollars from the Stardust Foundation as seed money and to enhance relationships with utility companies. They also hired Jeff Jameson to bring the new program to fruition. Ms. Zwick reported they have had a great reaction from partners across the state and received \$50, 000 from Southwest Gas.

Ms. Zwick stated that they currently have a board in place which has three members. They hope to grow this board to at least 15 members by April 30, 2007. A policy group will be in place to decide how the monies will be distributed, help with fund raising, LIHEAP requirements, and how to grow the money for the next five to 10 years. They would like to have their strategic business plan by July 30, 2007 and hope to distribute funds by October 1, 2007.

The requirements for the gas funds include using the money for statewide services and to have the money administered through community based agencies like faith-based organizations (such as the Salvation Army). Every participating organization will be paid an application fee for every application they process. There is also a requirement in place for tribes to participate. Ms. Zwick said they are working to get a representative from the tribes on the board.

One of the goals for this program is to provide support and enhance people's ability to become self sufficient. Ms. Zwick stated that this program is not just bill assistance but for enhancing lives. The goal is for the fuel fund to be an independent non-profit agency. Another goal is for everything to be electronically managed. This will enable them to have a central data information center, to make case managers' lives easier, and to have an interactive internet based system while maintaining the confidentiality of client information. Ms. Zwick reported that a program called Mega Joul is an example of how the fuel fund can be used by utility companies as a business model.

This will allow them to see return investments as high as 500 percent. This can help companies to gauge risk management and related costs. Ms. Zwick stated that they are also approaching water companies and municipalities that control water for a cooperative system to ensure everyone is served and there are no shut offs. Ms. Zwick stated that they are starting to articulate a plan to the legislature to support these efforts. The plan will include looking to the private sector for support as well.

Margarita Leyvas asked for clarification on whether or not the money would be used for emergency notices. Ms. Zwick stated that money is available for both for utilities and homeless services.

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5. Earned Income Tax Credit Presentation

Wayne Tormala, Vice Chair, presented information about the City of Phoenix Earned Income Tax Credit program. Mr. Tormala started his presentation by stating that EITC is the largest federal tax benefit program with up to \$36 billion in tax refunds. These work incentives help people pay bills, make significant purchases like houses and autos, and to pay for education and training. However, there are challenges with this program. There is a large lack of awareness about the program, high transaction costs within the private sector, and predatory practices like high commercial fees, rapid-refund loans, check-cashing operations. There is estimated \$25 million to \$64 million dollars in unclaimed EITC benefits last year with approximately \$1,800 per family in Phoenix. Mr. Tormala stated that the goals of the EITC campaign are to promote public awareness, offer free tax filing, and to provide financial education. There will be seven new tax preparation sites, outreach to people with disabilities, as well as community ownership of tax sites and financial education programs. The working poor, businesses, banks, and local and state governments all benefit from the EITC program.

Chair Harris-Morgan asked if it was too late for other cities and towns to publicize the EITC program. Mr. Tormala said that it is never too late for publicity but that it is too late to start a tax preparation site. He stated that the hotline on the flyer is managed by Community Information and Referral.

Chair Harris-Morgan also asked if the Governor's Office has brochures. Mr. Tormala stated that they do. The contact person for the EITC brochures at the Governor's Office is Naimah Sumler. The best way to contact her is by email at nsumler@az.gov. Margarita Leyvas complimented the City of Phoenix and the City of Tempe on their efforts.

Jayson Matthews stated that he would like to see a MAG map on how much money the community will be generating with the EITC in order to celebrate this accomplishment.

6. MAG Human Services Coordination Transportation Plan

Amy St. Peter reported on the development of a plan to coordinate human services transportation. Ms. St. Peter stated that the human services transportation is being developed as part of the Arizona Rides initiative, new SAFTEA-LU regulations, and as a key issue identified by the 2006 Regional Human Services Plan. Authors of the plan were transportation providers, non-profit agencies, and consumers. The plan will respond to immediate needs as well as develop long-term strategies for overall coordination.

Ms. St. Peter said that of the coordination strategies, a centralized call center or regional services zones were recommended by the stakeholders group drafting the plan. A call center would coordinate the information and possibly lead to the booking of trips. The regional service zones would break transportation down to sub-regional levels. Ms. St. Peter stated that the Valley Metro paratransit study, funding, and community feedback will be taken into consideration in updating the plan.

Ms. Sherer stated that it is critical to be able to identify barriers such as city to city planning, transferring buses, and the fact that people with disabilities can need special accommodations.

Joyce Lopez-Powell stated it can be very difficult for elderly people to cover the cost of using public transportation. Ms. Lopez-Powell said input on feedback and participation should also be solicited from ValueOptions and the behavioral health community because of their access to transportation and to ensure their population is represented in the plan. Ms. St. Peter responded stating that ValueOptions agencies have been included in the dialogue.

Jim Knaut asked if territorial issues remained with the cities. Ms. St. Peter replied that people are starting to realize that their dial-a-ride systems are so overloaded that they cannot operate as they are, and will not be able to operate in the years to come. Cities are acknowledging that the current system is not working and this seems to motivate increased collaboration.

Chair Harris-Morgan questioned whether or not the regional services zones will be able to help with the current issue. Ms. St. Peter stated that they will help alleviate some the problems and cited the East Valley Dial-A-Ride as a model. Ms. St. Peter also mentioned that when people were asked about how they would feel about coordination or cooperating, many were honest in stating that did not want to participate. This attitude will need to change if the plan is to be implemented successfully.

Margarita Leyvas stated that she heard all of the communities were at the table, but wanted to know what level of government the people represented. Ms. St. Peter replied that there has been a large cross-section of people including elected officials, transportation staff, human services planning staff, consumers, and Valley Metro.

Jayson Matthews asked how much of the plan was being coordinated through MAG and if buy-in was needed from the MAG Regional Council. Ms. St. Peter responded that MAG is responsible for the planning process and has worked collaboratively with the municipalities, transportation providers and non-profit agencies. The final plan will be presented to the MAG Regional Council for approval.

Ms. Lopez-Powell stated that in the Transit Subcommittee of the West Valley Human Services Alliance organized a summit about human services transit. This event brought together the human services community, DES, planners, and transportation providers together. She thought this activity helped the efforts to create this draft plan. Ms. St. Peter said there has been activity on a few levels that have benefited this work.

Jose Mercado asked if there was any one of the concepts was being favored. Amy St. Peter stated that the call center and regional zones are currently the favored concepts. She explained a final recommendation would be made after the RPTA paratransit study was concluded. At this time, this plan would be updated to reflect the findings of the other study and a concept would be confirmed that was congruent with both the RPTA study and this coordination plan.

Ms. Lopez-Powell stated that the West Valley Transit Summit recommended making better use of AZ 211. She believes that there is no need to create a new number and information line when there is already one in place. Carol Sherer added to make sure AZ links and benefits checkups are included as well.

Ms. St. Peter asked whether the Committee thought a call center or regional zones were good ideas. Ms. Lopez-Powell said that she would hate to duplicate efforts by putting in another call center. The Committee discussed having a current call center take on the responsibilities as detailed in the plan. Margarita Leyvas asked if the long term plan for the call center would eventually lead to dispatching and trip reservations. Ms. St. Peter affirmed that it would given agreement with the paratransit study. Ms. Leyvas said this would necessitate Valley Metro needing to take the lead on the call center as opposed to it being folded in with AZ 211. Mr. Knaut stated that he thought it was a good concept, but that there might be turf issues.

Jeff Young would like to see a web-based scheduling program. Ms. St. Peter said this is included in plans for the call center. Joy McClain stated that the hours of the call center should fit the needs for domestic violence victims. Margarita Leyvas added that overall non-traditional hours should be implemented for domestic violence victims as well as others needing extended week night and weekend hours.

Mr. Matthews stated that the regional partners should be completely on board before putting the infrastructure in place that will be needed to implement the plan. Ms. St. Peter replied that infrastructure is being kept in mind and it is recognized that the

West Valley is not as developed as the East Valley. She said hopefully the zones can be used to tailor transportation options to meet the needs of the sub regions.

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7. Regional Human Services Summit Update

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Ms. St. Peter announced that the MAG Human Services Summit would be held on June 7th, 2007 at Arizona State University-West on 47th Ave and Thunderbird. Ms. St. Peter stated that the event would last just over a half of the day, from 8:30 a.m. until about 1:30 p.m. The key note speaker will be Rick Lowe, an artist from the Houston area, who combined art with social service/social action programs and won the Heinz Award. Ms. St. Peter noted that facilitators for the Human Services Summit were in the process of being confirmed and that the Summit is to focus on using the resources currently available.

Margarita Leyvas asked if the audience of the Summit would just be members of the MAG committees or if there was an effort to include members of the community or members of the West Valley Alliance. Ms. St. Peter stated that the intention is to send the list out to as many people as possible in order to have a wide variety of people attend. The primary audience is the members of the MAG human services committees. The secondary audience is the general public.

Mr. Matthews asked if the Summit was to be open to all elected officials or just the ones who serve on the human services committees at MAG. Ms. St. Peter reinforced that everyone is welcomed and wanted. She also stated that Mayor Marie Lopez Rogers, Councilmember Greg Stanton, and Mayor Mary Manross will be speaking at the Summit.

8. Announcements

John Hoag announced that federal legislators want to move on to 2008 business; therefore they will propose to fund the Social Services Block Grants through continuing resolutions. They would like one continuing resolution to bring SSBG funding to the end of the fiscal year so they can move ahead to other issues. He stated that he will keep the Committee posted.

Margarita Leyvas stated that she would like an updated SSBG fact sheet. She is attending a conference in Washington, D.C. and is bringing fact sheets on WIA, Head Start, and other human services programs. Ms. Leyvas stated that the committee always needs to be vigilant and keeps things update so that new people can be educated. Ms. St. Peter announced that replies to the Committee's advocacy letter about SSBG funding were emailed out to members and included as handouts at the meeting today.

Ms. St. Peter commented that topics for the next meeting will include goals from the MAG Human Services Coordinating Committee, West Valley Human Services Alliance, and the Family Advocacy Centers.

9. Adjourn

The meeting adjourned at 3:12 pm. **The next Human Services Technical Committee meeting is scheduled for Thursday, February 8, 2007 at 1:00 p.m. at the MAG offices, second floor, Saguaro Room. * Please note the change in the room.**