



Planning Council Meeting
December 12th, 2016 - 12:00pm – 1:30pm
700 Lavaca, Room 1.112
Minutes

Attendees: Helen Gaebler (UT Law School), Rebecca Farrell (Truth Be Told), Laura Griebel (Goodwill Central Texas), Darwin Hamilton (Community Representative), Lisa Howard (TDCJ), Karen Keith (Community Representative), Jaime Rodriguez (U.S. Bureau of Prisons), Daniel Smith (Travis County Sheriff's Office), Doug Smith (TCJC), Reggie Smith (RAP Member), Laura Sovine (Austin Recovery), Mia Sneed (TX HHSC), Louella Tate (Community Representative), Kenneth Thompson (TX DFPS), Pete Valdez (City of Austin Downtown Community Court), Bree Williams (ECHO), Sara Worthington (TRLA)

Guests: Michelle Collins attending for Sherry Blyth (Austin Travis County Integral Care), Greg Glod (TPPF), Latosha Taylor (Leadership Austin)

Support: Caity Barillas (WNA), Lauren Johnson (Fellow), Kelly Nichols (WNA)

I. Introductions (Helen Gaebler)

Helen Gaebler welcomed attendees and facilitated introductions.

II. Approval of November 2016 Minutes (Helen Gaebler)

ACTION: Kenneth Thompson moved to approve the November 2016 minutes, Lisa Howard seconded, and attendees unanimously passed the motion.

III. Vote on Update to By-Laws re: Proxy Voting (Helen Gaebler)

ACTION: The proxy designation form passed by a unanimous vote.

IV. Vote on WNA Contract (Helen Gaebler)

ACTION: Kenneth Thompson moved to approve the WNA contract renewal, Laura Sovine seconded, and attendees unanimously passed the motion. Pete Valdez and Lisa Howard abstained from the vote.

V. Discussion: 2017 Legislative Session

a. Overview of Legislative Process: Sarah Worthington

Sarah Worthington gave an overview of the legislative process. See PowerPoint for details. It was noted that there is a separate budget process that should be followed to understand the full process of how a bill is passed. **Action Item:** Caity Barillas will send out the presentation to Planning Council members.

b. Discussion on Legislative Priorities: Greg Glod, Lauren Johnson, and Doug Smith

Greg Glod, Lauren Johnson, and Doug Smith led a discussion about the top legislative priorities for the Smart-on-Crime Coalition for the 85th Legislative Session. Below are the priorities that were discussed:

- **Raise the Age: Keep Kids Out of Adult Jails and Prisons**

This focuses on raising the age of criminal responsibility so that 17-year-olds can be treated in the juvenile justice system when appropriate, but allow judges to transfer those younger than 18 into the adult system on a case-by-case basis.

- **Abolish Texas' Driver Responsibility Program**

While the Driver Responsibility Program (DRP) was a well-meaning idea created in 2003 to fund trauma centers, it has many unintended consequences. DRP is creating economic hardship, putting more unlicensed drivers on the road, and limiting employment opportunities.

- **Smart Sentencing**

- **Reduce penalties for certain minor nonviolent crimes**

Lowering penalties for minor nonviolent offenses will allow more people to be put on probation and will create opportunities for them to avoid future interactions with the criminal justice system.

- **Use probation instead of incarceration for certain minor nonviolent crimes**

Probation is significantly less expensive than incarceration in county jail or prison. It should be the first punishment choice in many minor nonviolent cases.

- **Reduce probation revocations**

When people on probation commit a technical violation, such as missing a meeting, their probation term may be revoked and they may be sent to prison, costing the state nearly \$250 million annually.

- **Increase Education and Training to Reduce Re-Incarceration**

This focuses on prioritizing educational and vocational programs for individuals that are proven to reduce re-offending and increase workforce participation. It is also critical to ensure that criminal records made available to potential employers are accurate.

- Greg Glod noted that The Texas Public Policy Foundation (TPPF) is working on legislation around court laws that require full transcripts of hearings, legislation around loss of forfeitures, and legislation around retroactively making low level drug laws class c misdemeanors.
- It was noted that legislation around mental health is being covered by the Texas Coalition for Healthy Minds and Senator Whitmire.
- Attendees discussed probation revocation and its impact on fees.
- Attendees discussed the legislation around the Swift and Certain Sanctions Act and criminal records. It was noted that compliance with the Department of Public Safety for record accuracy, record privacy, record sealing, and other alternatives would be addressed in the 85th Legislative Session.
- Attendees discussed that employment and housing bills would be addressed from a broad perspective. It was noted that HB1530 was not as effective as hoped in the last session and would be addressed in the upcoming session again.
- It was noted that important filing dates can be found at <http://www.capitol.state.tx.us/>.

VI. **Misc. Announcements and Roundtable**

Lisa Howard announced that The Department of Criminal Justice is requesting \$12 million for TCOOMI. They are requesting additional reentry specialists.

Lauren Johnson announced that on December 20th at 8:00am a Women in Reentry

performance and panel discussion will be held and invited attendees to the event.

Next Meeting:
January 9th, 2017
Noon - 1:30pm
700 Lavaca, Room 1.112