



Contra Costa County Economic Opportunity Meeting Minutes

Meeting: Economic Opportunity Council General Meeting
Location: 40 Douglas Drive, Martinez



Date: 5-18-11 Time Convened: 7:00 pm Time Terminated: 8:00 pm Recorder: Michelle Cooper

EOC Members & Staff Attendees: Fred Jackson (Chair), Kathy Jones (Vice-Chair), James Sullivan, John Jewell, Deborah Polk, Tracy Fraas, Melissa Alfaro, Deatra Pope Sherman, Caylin Patterson, Michelle Cooper, Mary Withers

Absent: Domingo Delgadillo, Jerome La Torre, Lydia Ned-Jones, Delphine Smith

Public Attendees: Kali Jon, Leslie Wood, Joanna Mezquita, Radhika Bajaria, Ashley Daniels, Egidia Bollini, Paula Kent, Shayne Kaleo, Joe McFerran, Dora Segura, Hilda Hernandez, Christine Sevier, Betty Geishirt Cantrell, Enid Mendoza, Sharee Ramirez, Keri Banks, Trisha, Guadalupe De la Cruz, Mike Van Hofwegen, Dawn Miguel, Susana Lona, Reyna Navarro, Karen Shreve, Diana Estrada, Joanna Garcia

Agencies Represented: Anka Behavioral Health Inc., Catholic Charities, CCC Head Start Policy Council, Contra Costa Transition Age Youth, Contra Costa Youth Continuum of Services, EHSD Community Services Bureau, Fred Finch Youth Center, Hand to Hand Collaborative, Michael Chavez Center, New Hope Church, Opportunity Junction, Salvation Army of Concord, Single Stop USA, SparkPoint West Contra Costa Center

TOPIC	RECOMMENDATION / SUMMARY
Review Desired Outcomes	Caylin provided an overview about the Public Hearing.
Introductions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Economic Opportunity Council (EOC) members introduced themselves. • Comment cards were handed out for the public to add comments, ask questions, or request additional information about programs • A handout listing tentative Community Action Plan goals and strategic priorities was distributed
Economic Opportunity Council Overview	Kathy shared information about the EOC and Community Action via a PowerPoint presentation.

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<p>Community Action Overview</p>	<p>Tracy shared information about the Public Hearing and our tentative goals and objectives via a PowerPoint presentation.</p>
<p>Public Comment</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>John Jewell</u>: The Byron Boys ranch is located in Byron, and it serves about 400 teens that are undereducated. The Byron Boys Ranch funding comes from local funding, superior courts, and vehicles licensing fees. If funding is cut within the next 6-7 months, about 400 teenagers will not have a place to go. The ranch makes education mandatory, they have guidance counselors, and the ranch teaches the youth how to care for animals and plants. It's important that people know that the Byron Boys ranch exists and the funding may be cut off. The ranch serves juveniles that can't be housed with adult prisoners because they're under age. They have to stay. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ <u>Tracy Fraas</u>: Would you say that this is about services for youth? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ <u>John Jewell</u>: The root of poverty is that the youth are lost and many come from single parent households, and the funding comes from many places. ○ <u>Christine Sevier</u>: How are they helping the youth; in what ways? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ <u>John Jewell</u>: There are many volunteers from manufacturers that help the kids. When they leave the ranch, they don't revert to their old ways. Community action program grants sometimes come in, but not always. • <u>Christine Sevier</u>: I would like to also add that youth are an underserved population. I work with youth who haven't made it to the Byron Boys Ranch yet. They're at-risk and don't have access to career planning, college planning & assessment, and sports. If we want to keep the kids of the street, not selling drugs and employed, we must engage them early on. There are after school programs, but after a certain-age they no longer go to the programs and they want something more. They want to learn arts such as writing/reading music. At one point, I was doing college workshops out of my garage. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ <u>Tracy Fraas</u>: Have you seen any programs or interacted with any program/s that does that type of outreach? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ No, I hope I was the first! I was fortunate enough to have the program and the support of my pastor at New Hope Church. • <u>Joanna Mezquita</u>: Hand to Hand Collaborative is a home visiting program in West County that teaches parents about child development; I'm a program participant. The program is in danger of losing funding. I want everyone to know that it really helps mothers like me who've been in bad

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- situations, and they have taught me about how to take care of my baby. West County doesn't have many of these services; unlike Concord, Pleasant Hill, and Antioch. If we cut Hand to Hand we are limiting resources for West County residents. I just want to say that I hope you guys keep helping.
- Leslie Wood: I'm here on behalf of Opportunity Junction, and I'm an Alumni of their job training program. I understand that the Community Action helps them a lot. The program is a great program. About 4 years ago I was a welfare & food stamp recipient taking the bus to get to program. I completed their 90-day classes that taught life skills and computer skills, and I completed my internship. They provided me with paid training while I looked for a job. Now, 4 years later, I've been off of welfare & food stamps for a long time. I got off of Section 8, and 6 months ago I bought a house. They have a lot of success stories. They take people with a multitude of things holding them back from being successful whether it's addiction or other things.
 - Keri Banks: I believe that there should be more help for people to get jobs and find jobs. A lot of people are in poverty because they can't get jobs, and need more help.
 - Caylin Patterson: What do mean by 'helping people get jobs'; what does that look like?
 - Keri Banks: I was a foster youth and was homeless when I turned 18 and I had to live in Calli House. I was in a program called Independent Living Skills Program or ILSP. The program had lots of classes, teach you about life, and show you how to get a job. I think there should be more programs like ILSP. But not just for youth, but for people 25 and up; because I'm 25 and I can't go back to ILSP for help. It's sad that I can't be in a program like that anymore because I haven't found another one like it.
 - Trisha: I was laid off 2 years ago and I'm a single mom. Throughout this time, I've used up all of my resources. Childcare is a problem even though I had my child in a half-day program at Head Start. Looking for a job these days is a fulltime job, and it has put me back. I've been substituting, but only on-call and only when I can find someone to babysit. I don't qualify for Cal-Works because I have too many assets, but my assets are going away. Then the school year will be over, and I will be out of work again. I make just enough to pay my Cobra and I live with my mother. I'm now taking away from her assets because we are considered low-income.
 - Tracy Fraas: So do you think that the childcare issue is a barrier to you finding a job?
 - Trisha: Oh it's a big problem! I even talked to the school and they would not put him in full-time care. The reason I looked for support was because I couldn't afford childcare.

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- Keri Banks: There is help for childcare. You should go through the Childcare Eligibility List.
 - Trisha: I went through them but I make too much money with unemployment. Now that I'm receiving no aid, they still won't help me. With CalWorks, you can get free childcare, but I have too many assets for that, such as a 401K.
 - Caylin Patterson: Thank you for opening up. One of my colleagues, Katherine Mason, would be happy to speak with you about childcare after the hearing.
- Radhika Bajaria: I work for the Fred Finch Center in Richmond and one issue we are having is working with youth in transition, ages 18-25. Currently we have a youth that doesn't qualify for healthcare because he recently turned 26. We try to help the youth find resources but the resources are limited. There are not a lot of job training programs. Many of the employers don't want to hire youth with certain backgrounds. It's becoming a catch 22 because they can't work without work experience, and they can't get the experience they need. We definitely want more services around job opportunities & housing.
- Keri Banks: Are there any unemployment offices in this area?
 - Caylin Patterson: We have One-Stop service centers placed all around the county and they help with resume building and job finding, and interviewing skills.
 - Keri Banks: Maybe you guys should do more to let people know about that because a lot of people have never heard about that; I have never heard about that. Maybe you can make it more open and let people know.
- Christine Sevier: As a small business owner, I think that it's not a matter of businesses not wanting to hire people, but it's more about businesses having the resources to hire at this time due to the economic decline. We can teach people how to create resumes and find jobs but it is very competitive in the job market. When you have people in East Oakland lining up at 8am in the morning to work at McDonalds, obviously there is something wrong with the economic climate. I think we need to get back to innovation and teach people how to create their own jobs.
- Karen Shreve: I'm representing the Salvation Army in Concord; we serve Central County down to the Dublin area. Our biggest issue is that homeless folks needed resources; they come to us wanting food & shelter. We can help people once per month with food, but we don't have the resources to do more than that. Most of clients are homeless & elderly. I had one elderly lady

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who is 90 years old and comes in pushing a cart to receive what we consider 3 day supply of food, but she considers it to be a week's worth. There are no more soup kitchens in our area. The Salvation Army has a "Don't Feed the Bears" policy so we aren't allowed to feed the homeless in the parks, and there are city ordinances as well. We believe that there needs to be more resources in the community for feeding elderly and homeless people regardless of what their addictions or problems are. The hungrier they are, the more disturbances they will cause, such as theft and other crimes. We would like to see more soup kitchens. Personally, I make sandwiches out of my own pocket to help.

- Karen Shreve: We are also finding more youth needing childcare. We probably have the cheapest school-age childcare in Contra Costa County but our program isn't full, and we can't figure out why. Our program is called Kid's Club, and we advertise in the schools & Penny Saver. Kid's Club provides year-round childcare for \$200 per month and less if you have more than two kids; our program also provides transportation to pickup the children. Also, the illegal immigrant population seems to be afraid to use our services, but they should not be.
 - Joanna Mezquita: I think that people don't always use childcare because of age. Many of the daycares cater to school-age children, and not infants/toddlers. I think that there should be more daycare for non school age children.
- Deborah Polk: Record numbers of people are applying for Cal Fresh (formerly known as food stamps). I encourage you to tell people to come in and submit applications for Cal Fresh.
 - Karen Shreve: We currently have the applications. Many of our clients are illiterate and can't fill out the applications, and we spend several hours a week helping people fill out applications.
- Tracy Fraas: One of our strategic goals is access to healthcare; does anyone have any comments about that?
 - Joanna Garcia: I had a relative who had a baby that had Medicare. After the baby turned one year old, the baby was taken off of Medicare, and she could no longer receive foods stamps because the child's father was employed. But the father's job did make enough income to provide for the family and the job was not reliable, but he made too much to receive help. It seems like if you don't have a job than you can get help, but if you work and the job pays very little, you get no help.
 - Sharee Ramirez: I'm with Contra Costa Youth Continuum of Services and also Fred Finch in West County. Project Homeless Connect is coming up on June 15th. The

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event will provide resources for homeless & veterans such as health services and dental care on-site. I also encourage you to remind people to use 211. 211 is a phone access line that lets residents speak to a person and is very helpful.

- Dawn Miguel: I'm a resident of Pleasant Hill. My husband and I own a business that prevents us from being on public assistance. However we don't make enough to pay for healthcare premiums for our family of 7, and we will lose our coverage. Some of my children are special needs and we can't afford the medication. We went to apply for Medi-Cal the other day, and we were told that our income was just barely over the limit and we could not receive help. I believe that healthcare benefits should be accessible to a larger group of low-income people.
- Karen Shreve: RotoCare is a program that is headed by rotary clubs. They do mobile clinics and one of the clinics will be in our (Salvation Army – Concord) parking lot every Thursday, from now until the summertime. Anyone who is uninsured can come and get help.
- Melissa Alfaro: Healthy Families is for people who have an income but don't make enough to pay expensive healthcare premiums. A small fee is required.
- Betty Geishirt Cantrell: I'm the Director of the West County SparkPoint Center that will open on June 6th. The East County SparkPoint Center will open on May 19th. We provide free services for families and people around building their financial resources. That could be helping you with credit counseling, helping you to buy a home, etc. Bay Area Legal Aid is one of our collaborators, so we also provide some legal services. We are located in the Brighter Beginnings building at 2027 MacDonald Avenue in Richmond. Our number is 510-779-3200.
- Mike Van Hofwegen: I'm with the Michael Chavez Center and the Monument community in Concord. I've really enjoyed listening to everyone. We've been conducting a Needs Survey for the residents businesses in the community. Many of the residents have expressed a need for employment & safety. This may be related schools & businesses. What's happening in our community is that those who can't make it are going under, and those who can make it are leaving to live in other communities. I think the more vacant buildings and communities you have the more problems you have. At the Michael Chavez Center, we do job searches, computer training, case management, and small business development. All classes are in taught in English & Spanish.
- Diana Estrada: I'm from San Pablo. Alameda County has the "sliding fees scale" that provides discounts and often coverage for labs and prescriptions. There is also Family Pack for men &

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	<p>women, which is for family planning.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Dawn Miguel</u>: I think that drug education & treatment programs should be added to your list because drug use contributes to poverty. I think there should be a program that reaches youth at a young age.
<p>Next Steps</p>	<p>Mary reviewed the next steps:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Input will be reviewed and included in the final Community Action Plan (CAP). • Poverty is a huge issue – no one agency can solve it alone. Information will be shared with other agencies to let them know what the community has identified. • Goals will be developed to maximize leveraging opportunities. • The final CAP will be posted online at www.co.contra-costa.ca.us and will be reviewed & approved by the Board of Supervisors by June 30th. • Members of the public may submit a comment card for additional comments/question and/or request for resources, and the EOC will be sure to respond. • You may contact CAP Contra Costa: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Email: CommunityAction@ehsd.cccounty.us ○ Address: 40 Douglas Drive, Martinez 94553 ○ www.Twitter.com/CAPContraCosta ○ Facebook: CAP Contra Costa • Fred thanked everyone for participating and encouraged everyone to keep up the fight. <p>The EOC will hold their next monthly public meeting on Thursday June 9th from 6pm-7:15pm at 40 Douglas Drive in Martinez; public comment is welcome.</p>
<p>Adjournment</p>	<p>Adjourned at 8:00pm</p>