



City of San Marcos  
Human Services Advisory Board (HSAB)

September 29, 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  
Alison Duplechin, Voting Member  
Gloria Quinn, Voting Member  
Mariana Zamora, Non-Voting Advisory Member

**Member(s) Absent:** Monica Gonzales, Voting Member

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**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 7:07 PM.
- II. **Roll Call:** Parsons called the roll. At the time that roll was conducted four voting members were present, forming a quorum.
- III. **30 Minute Citizen Comment Period:** No comments were received.
- IV. **Consideration of Minutes for September 15, 2022, Human Services Advisory Board Meeting.** Alison Duplechin moved for approval of minutes. Gloria Quinn seconded the motion. Motion carried unanimously.

#### **V. Presentations:**

1. **Agency: School Fuel; Program: Weekend Food Support for Hungry Children in San Marcos Consolidated Independent School District (SMCISD)**  
Dianne Breedlove said their all-volunteer program helps kids stay in school to graduate and have an opportunity to overcome the cycle of poverty. The agency receives in-kind support from agencies such as Ace Relocation Services who delivers food bins on Fridays and Barry Aviation who has provided 38,000 food sacks. They rely on cafeteria personnel, parent liaisons, or teachers at the schools who work directly with these children. The agency requested \$35,475 which would provide aid for 165 children at \$215 a year. To date they have assisted over 1100 kids.

Parsons asked how many kids have been served. By the end of October, it will be at about 1000. Duplechin asked if they also provide weekend meals. They gather food on Thursdays; on Fridays it gets delivered to the schools. Quinn asked who gets assisted. Breedlove stated that they serve nine schools in the district which includes all the elementary schools, two middle schools and one high school. Quinn asked if they requested the same amount last year. Last year they requested \$21,500 which assisted 100 students.

## **2. Agency: CASA of Central Texas; Program: Advocacy for Abused and Neglected Children**

Trisha Schneider introduced herself as the chief operating officer at CASA of Central Texas. CASA is acronym which stands for Court Appointed Special Advocates. CASA trains and supports community volunteer advocates for children from the San Marcos community who have experienced abuse and neglect and as a result have been removed from their homes. A judge oversees all of the court and legal proceedings that involve the parents while the court is interacting with the parents. CPS then provides helpful services to the parents so they can eventually provide a safe and stable home for their children. CASA is appointed locally and is guardian ad litem, which means they are charged by the court to represent the child's best interests to ensure safe and permanent placement for the children. CASA advocates for the children's medical, mental health, educational, and housing needs, along with creating a long-term connection with family and community. They requested \$20,275 derived by a funding need that was not received from the CDBG program. They want to maintain the \$60,000 level of funding in order to be able to continue to support the children from San Marcos.

Nicole Douglas introduced herself as the Director of Development with CASA of Central Texas. She presented on a new initiative in collaboration with Child Protective Services System and other groups. The program is called Collaborative Family Engagement. The four elements that are core to this program are collaboration, cultivating, convening, and building connections with those who have been in the children's lives so they can continue to offer support throughout the process.

Garza asked how many children will be assisted. Schneider stated they are proposing to assist 43 and roughly serve a total of 120 to 140 children with assistance from the CDBG grant, Hays County, government funding and other private contributions. Quinn asked if the children come from foster care or have been permanently removed from the home. Schneider stated most of the children are in the temporary custody of CPS and about 10% of their cases will become permanent custody. Parsons asked if these kids are court appointed. Schneider stated the local judges are the ones who make the decision of whether or not to appoint CASA once the child has been removed from their parent's homes by CPS. The district judges are in a specialized court that hear only Child Protective Services cases. Quinn asked what sets these kids apart from other children to determine the need for CASA support. Schneider responded each case is different; ultimately the judge makes the decision about the child's welfare and their long-term placement. The judges review the complexities of each case such as siblings if any are involved that have varying needs and may not be placed together but placed in separate foster homes. Nicole elaborated further that the child's voice is amplified with a volunteer being appointed to the child.. CASA's position as guardian ad litem is not only determining what the child wants, but also what is in their best interest at that time.

### **3. Agency: Hays Caldwell Women's Center; Program: Non Residential Family Violence and Transitional Housing**

Agency representative Cari Borremans stated they work with local victims of family violence, dating violence, sexual assault, and child abuse. They have an emergency shelter on site that offers several different programs. Last year they provided services to over 800 victims of family violence and this year they expect to serve 898 with about 350 being San Marcos residents. They have been operating at capacity for over two years and now are having to place some of the shelter clients in hotels, so expansion of the shelter is necessary. They are building into their attic to add some additional private rooms. They are also working on their new transitional housing program, Marla's Place, which is basically an apartment complex with 18 different units designed for primarily women and children. When they leave the shelter, many are often not ready to sustain independent housing so they can stay at the apartment complex on site for up to 18 months. Currently there are 14 families living there. The Transitional Housing facility includes an onsite early Head Start program, which offers an encouraging environment for children. The entire facility is gated and monitored with a security system, which is needed for victims of family violence. A client testimonial included someone who spoke about the shelter advocates who were so caring and patient and she was thankful for the shelter and the services.

Earls asked what happens if a family has not found housing after the 18 months. Borremans stated that 18 months is not a hard deadline, and all of the residents work with a case manager to find sustainable housing. Quinn asked if the clients are required to pay rent. They do charge a flat rent depending on the size of the unit although if someone does not have a job they are not required to do so. She stated she did not know the exact number, but it was about \$100 for a one bedroom and \$200 for a two bedroom. They also include programs in the facility for residents such as job training and resume building. Quinn asked how they prioritize who gets an apartment and who does not. Borremans responded that residents have to meet qualifications in order to stay in the shelter. For example, if someone has experienced family violence, they are referred to the shelter. Quinn asked how many apartments are available at Marla's Place. They have 18 units and 14 are currently occupied because they just opened in August. Earls asked if the Transitional Housing Program partners with anyone else. They are currently partnered with Community Action which provides the Head Start program on the site. Quinn asked if they provide transportation to school. The bus comes to pick up the kids on-site and/or parents are responsible for taking them to school.

### **4. Agency: Hays Caldwell Women's Center; Program: Roxanne's House**

Cari Borremans stated that Roxanne's House is their children's advocacy center, where they serve children who have experienced child abuse and their protective parents. This coming year, they expect to serve 611 children and 453 adults. Of the clients served, there are 154 children and 90 adults who are San Marcos residents. Last year, they recorded 533 forensic interviews. This interview is conducted by a trained forensic interviewer and law enforcement on site with a child who has experienced child abuse. The idea of this location is that the interview is at a child friendly facility. Borremans included some of the quotes from their clients. One was from a child who was glad to be back in counseling, and another said she was learning new coping skills to deal with stress and anxiety. Borremans stated that the motivation is to reach the children early and really make a difference with

counseling, advocacy, and getting them in a safe environment so that they can go on to live a normal, happy, healthy life.

Quinn asked what happens if the protective parent wants to get back into the abusive relationship. Borremans responded that the agency has no control over that, but parents are also meeting with a trained counselor advocate. A lot of times it's not necessarily a partner that is the abuser. It can be a trusted family friend, an uncle, or someone else in the child's environment. This varies with every child, but very often the abuser is also being pursued by law enforcement and there could be a case pending if the perpetrator is found guilty, possibly including jail time. Quinn asked about the kind of abuse they treat. Primarily it is physical or sexual abuse. Quinn asked if a follow up is conducted. They provide counseling and what they call court school, which prepares the children for court. The counseling generally is for six months, but it can go longer when appropriate. Quinn asked if they live at Roxanne's House. Borremans responded that this is not a residential facility. Quinn asked how counseling is provided. Typically, counseling is one hour, once a week for several months. Quinn asked who is at the counseling session. Borremans responded just the counselor and the child.

#### **5. Agency: Hays Caldwell Women's Center; Program: Sexual Assault and Abuse Program**

Cari Borremans stated on average, Hays Caldwell Women's Center receives about 500 helpline calls about sexual assault each year. Last year, they responded to 74 visits at local hospitals. They expect to serve about 762 victims of sexual assault next year and of those about 283 will be San Marcos residents. One client receiving counseling for sexual assault, said she felt safe speaking to her counselor. Another said she was glad the center existed. Their counselors are specifically trained to work with victims of sexual assault. The HEARTeam handles hospital calls regarding sexual assault. They ensure that an advocate is there when a victim arrives to start their path to healing.

Parsons asked if they go to the hospital to offer counseling. Borremans responded that they go to the hospital to help any victim of any age and after counseling they assess whether they are candidates for Roxanne's House or a shelter. Earls asked how many active cases and counselors they currently have. Borremans did not know the number of current active cases but currently they have about eight counselors, with three specific for sexual assault. Quinn asked if they always get notified by the hospital when a sexual assault victim arrives. They usually do receive calls because they foster relationships with all of the local emergency rooms in San Marcos as well as all of Hays and Caldwell County. When a client arrives at the hospital, they go to the hospital to meet with the victim and stay with him or her until that process is over. Quinn asked how many volunteers they have. Borremans did not know the exact amount but stated they have dedicated volunteers which go through an extensive 40-hour training course.

**VI. Discussion Items:** Parsons reminded everyone that this time is for board members to speak freely regarding the presentations heard and opened the floor for discussion. This discussion was facilitated by Carol Griffith, who asked board members if anything was memorable from the presentations.

Parsons stated all 5 of the programs are necessary and should be part of the fabric of the community. Parsons stated she has had friends go to Hays Caldwell Women's Center. Earls stated all the organizations work speak for themselves and applauds CASA for the job they do. She thinks we do not have enough shelters in town. She hopes to support CASA. Garza stated each program was very specific and that he supports CASA, which offers legal representation for abused kids. He feels all programs are essential to the community. He thinks Roxanne's House helps them psychologically and physically recover. He has referred several clients to Hays Caldwell Women's Center and as a result those referrals are doing well. He supports all the programs, and there are survivors because of programs offered by CASA and Hays Caldwell Women's Center. Garza stated due to inflation some people cannot afford food and he hopes to support School Fuel. Duplechin stated these programs are for the most vulnerable in the community. She thinks these were a great lineup of organizations that support the community. She does not like that more and more people need these services. She hopes that as funding continues these numbers will decrease over time. Quinn stated these programs are all essential and that is what was memorable to her. Zamora stated that she is familiar with CASA and Hays Caldwell Women's Center who have a strong record in helping the community. She strongly supports them and hopes to fund them.

**VII. Reports:** No reports were provided.

**VIII. Future Agenda Items:** No Items were received.

**IX. Question and Answer Session with Press and Public.** Tricia Schneider commented that she was there cheering on her colleagues from Hays Caldwell Women's Center and School Fuel. She thinks highly of them and appreciates all the good work they do. She says they are all great partners in the tapestry of social services.

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

There being no further discussion, the meeting was adjourned at 8:15 pm.

The minutes for the September 29, 2022, meeting of City of San Marcos, TX; Human Services Advisory Board are respectfully submitted October 13, 2022 by:

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Carol Griffith, Staff Liaison

*Approved By:*

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JoAnn Parsons, Chair