

Work Session of the Sandy Springs City Council was held on April 16, 2024, at 6:00 PM, Mayor Rusty Paul presiding.

I. Staff Discussion Items

Mayor Rusty Paul called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.

A. 2024-078 Community Assistance Center Update

Francis K Horton, III, Chief Executive Officer, Community Assistance Center, presented an update on the Community Assistance Center.

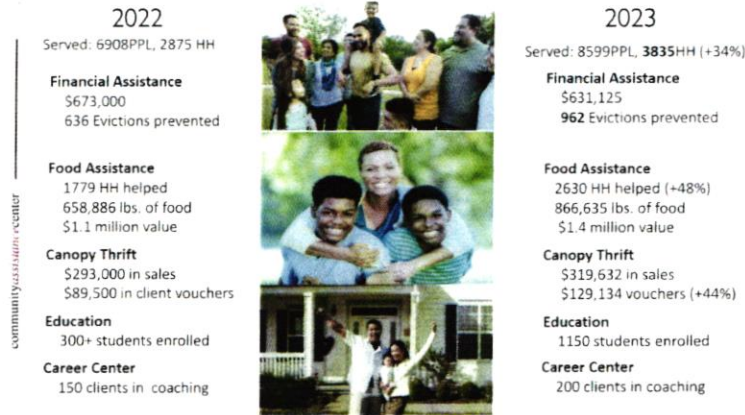
Community Assistance Center Chief Executive Officer Horton said this is a report of the use of funding provided to the Community Assistance Center (CAC). The CAC has existed since 1987 and the mission has been the same. Prevention is the best way to address homelessness and hunger. The CAC encapsulates what it does by activating hope and expanding opportunities for clients daily. Activating hope means providing basic needs such as food, shelter, clothing, and special provision. Expanding hope is more involved where clients learn how to become self-sufficient and financially stable through CAC's adult education program, career center, and the Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) program. A team of forty-three volunteers prepared five hundred tax returns and some homes will have a return, activating hope and expanding opportunities. This is also done for seasonal programs. We provided nine hundred thirty-six backpacks for school kids mostly in Sandy Springs. Last year eight hundred and thirty-five children received free summer school lunches, and it will be about the same this year. The CAC gave four hundred and fifty coats to kids last year and six hundred and twelve food boxes during Thanksgiving. There were one thousand five hundred and forty-two children adopted through the Adopt-a-Family program last Christmas. Also, more than six thousand kids benefited from the Teachers Supply Closet program where teachers can order supplies from CAC for their classroom. The CAC is in conjunction with the Sandy Springs education force, and it is an incredible benefit to those teachers and kids that ultimately receive those supplies. This is all done with volunteers. There are twenty-one staff members, and four hundred fifty volunteers used monthly to accomplish programming. Some clients who visited the CAC expressed gratitude to the volunteers who activated hope and treated them like a human being.

The CAC has several partners which includes the City of Sandy Springs and other cities, as well as corporate and civic partners. There are twenty-eight partner congregations that provide volunteers, in-kind donations, and funding. The CAC is working to build corporate partners as many corporations are coming here and should have an opportunity to help the residents of Sandy Springs. We need the City of Sandy Springs to help the CAC build relationships with them.

The CAC now has four operating sites. The facility at 1130 Hightower Trail contains the administrative offices and the career center. Also interviews for financial assistance, adult education, seasonal and youth programs are done there. The CAC's main pantry is located at the facility on 8607 Roswell Road behind the thrift store. It has been rebranded to convey to clients a place they can feel safe, be accepted, and find community. There is a smaller food pantry in Dunwoody. The newest is in south Sandy Springs and it is efficient and effective and serves a great need there. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, one in thirteen people in the City of Sandy Springs live below the poverty line. The CAC's data also shows that clients are changing and in 2023 56% were new and it is an indication of what is happening in the economy. It is also surprising that 67% of clients have a full-time job but need the assistance of the CAC. For example, a thirty-seven-year-old young man worked full-time and a serious illness limited his physical abilities,

but the CAC was able to help him. Also, he was the sixtieth client to receive financial assistance and the CAC celebrated that.

Comparison data shows what the CAC has done in the past couple of years. Most of the funding the City of Spring provides goes towards keeping families in their home.



About 70% of Sandy Springs residents and clientele benefited from CAC's efforts.



The CAC's programs work because after sixty to one hundred and eighty days, 49% of the clients contacted in 2023 said they resolved their crisis and 84% have stabilized housing, and we want these percentages to increase.

Last year, approximately \$1,859,868 was spent on direct services for Sandy Springs residents. Council approved \$180,000 for 2023-2024 and this helped families stay in their homes. As the needs of residents continue to rise, the CAC is requesting \$250,000 for 2024-2025 to continue to meet their needs and activate hope and expand opportunities.

Mayor Paul said this is one of the best presentations I have seen. I visited all the facilities except for Dunwoody. The City appreciates having a contract with CAC for these services which is how we must do business, and it is a comprehensive report. Thank you for highlighting the magnificent work the CAC does.

Councilmember John Paulson asked what is the biggest challenge the CAC has? Is it money or something else?

Community Assistance Center Chief Executive Officer Horton said as long as rent increases, evictions are filed, and people cannot work forty hours a week to pay their bills, the CAC needs money to help people. About 67% of people walking in are hardworking and have a job. Career advocates step in to help them find a career path that will lead to financial stability. The CAC had a career Expo in March and two hundred and fifty people attended and about twelve were hired on the spot. When the workforce and workplace come together in the same space, good things happen. CAC pushes for self-sufficiency.

Councilmember Jody Reichel thanked **Community Assistance Center Chief Executive Officer Horton** and staff for the work they do. A volunteer shared with me how much they get out of their experience at CAC. Do apartment complexes partner with the City when receiving checks for residents facing an eviction to weigh fees and to keep them in the apartment?

Community Assistance Center Chief Executive Officer Horton said the CAC had good relationships with the management of complexes in Sandy Springs it deals with. There is a good record of letting them know when a client will be able to make a payment and working out a payment plan to provide the client a grace period. Most complexes were willing to do that, but with changes in management over the last couple years many are not interested in working with the CAC.

Councilmember Reichel asked how much are the fees that are added on?

Community Assistance Center Chief Executive Officer Horton said most of the time it is half to three quarters of the rent and it is amazing that sometimes the late fees are double the rent.

Councilmember Reichel asked do fees start after payment is late five days?

Community Assistance Center Chief Executive Officer Horton said yes and there are late fees on the rent and other smaller late fees. They add up when payments are thirty days late.

Councilmember Reichel asked is there a list of fees from the different complexes that Council can review?

Community Assistance Center Chief Executive Officer Horton said that information is not available tonight but it will be provided to Council.

Councilmember Melody Kelley said childcare is a barrier to families. Does CAC provide financial assistance for this?

Community Assistance Center Chief Executive Officer Horton said CAC does not specifically provide financial assistance for childcare, but mainly for rent and utilities. If there is a catastrophic event such as car repair, temporary childcare assistance can be provided.

Councilmember Kelley asked does CAC find that providing financial assistance for childcare is becoming more of a barrier?

Community Assistance Center Chief Executive Officer Horton said it has been a huge barrier for two years, and especially for single working mothers. The CAC tries to partner with some organizations to cross that barrier and it is sometimes successful.

Councilmember Kelley asked what organizations are attempting to address the barrier?

Community Assistance Center Chief Executive Officer Horton said I am not aware of one in the City of Sandy Springs but there is an organization in the City of Roswell that has a sliding scale fee structure to help people.

Councilmember Kelley asked does the CAC also see transportation as a barrier?

Community Assistance Center Chief Executive Officer Horton said it was a barrier during the peak of COVID but has slowed down, and CAC does not see this on the rise like other needs. The CAC sites are located near the MARTA line to prevent transportation as being a barrier for clients to get there. About two years ago, the CAC gifted a vehicle to a single mother with two children. She expressed gratitude for the vehicle which reduced her commute to two different schools and work from two hours to forty minutes.

Councilmember Kelley asked what proportion of the 67% of clients with full-time jobs work in Sandy Springs and other cities? Does the CAC have this data available?

Community Assistance Center Chief Executive Officer Horton said that data is not required and is limited to the extent it is provided, but CAC can give this information to Council.

Councilmember Kelley asked is it part of CAC's process to collect proof of employment?

Community Assistance Center Chief Executive Officer Horton said CAC does collect proof of employment but location of their employer is not required.

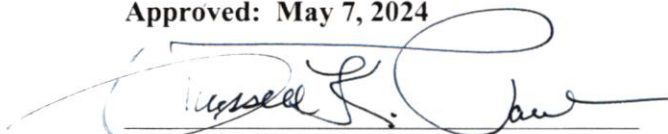
Councilmember Kelley said I am interested in knowing what percentage of CAC's clients work in the City of Sandy Springs and other information such as types of jobs.

Mayor Paul said the CAC is one the most important organizations in town and one of my favorites. It is an amazing organization providing great services for the City of Sandy Springs.

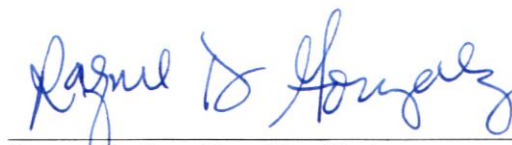
II. City Council Discussion Items

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 6:20 p.m.

Approved: May 7, 2024



Russell K. Paul, Mayor



Raquel D. González, City Clerk