

The Human Services Commission approved these minutes on March 18, 2014

CITY OF BELLEVUE
HUMAN SERVICES COMMISSION
MINUTES

February 20, 2014
6:30 p.m.

Bellevue City Hall
City Council Conference Room 1E-120

COMMISSIONERS PRESENT: Chairperson Perelman, Commissioners Bruels, Beighle, McEachran, Plaskon, Stout, Yantis

COMMISSIONERS ABSENT: Commissioner Perelman

STAFF PRESENT: Emily Leslie, Alex O'Reilly, Joseph Adriano, Jessamyn Findlay, Department of Parks and Community Services

GUEST SPEAKERS: None

RECORDING SECRETARY: Gerry Lindsay

1. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 6:30 p.m. by Commissioner McEachran who presided.

2. ROLL CALL

Upon the call of the roll, all Commissioners were present with the exception of Commissioner Plaskon, who arrived at 6:32 p.m., and Chair Perelman, who was excused.

3. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

A. February 4, 2014

Commissioner Yantis noted that in fact he had not called the meeting to order as he was not present for the meeting. It was noted the meeting was in fact called to order and chaired by Commissioner Perelman.

Commissioner Beighle called attention to the third paragraph on page 3 and asked to revise the third sentence to read "The count numbers were down for the Eastside, which was not surprising given the success of the winter shelter, but the counts in Seattle were up."

Commissioner Bruels pointed out that in the fourth paragraph on page 3 he was credited with having made a statement even though he was absent from the meeting. There was agreement to revise the sentence to indicate the statement had been made by Commissioner Plaskon.

A motion to approve the minutes as amended was made by Commissioner Stout. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Yantis and the motion carried without dissent. Commissioners Bruels and Yantis abstained from voting.

4. PETITIONS AND COMMUNICATIONS

Krischanna Roberson, Bellevue School District board liaison to Youth Link, informed the Commissioners that the Youth Link board held its annual retreat on October 19 at which it developed a list of priorities to be focused on for the year. One of the top priorities was youth engagement and she said to that end the board intends to reach out to disadvantaged youth, particularly kids who are not on the right track. Youth Link intends to work with the Bellevue School District on a pilot program that will bring a Youth Link group to the school level, beginning at Interlake High School.

Angela Navas, Youth Link board member, said she also attends Interlake High School. She said another priority will be to invite 30 to 50 professionals to link one-on-one with students. Another priority will be to create individual, business and organization sponsorships to help keep Youth Link going in light of recent budget reductions.

Po Bodin, Youth Link board co-chair, said he is a junior at Interlake High School. He explained that the Youth Link board also chose as a priority strengthening connections in the community and to continue working on strategic planning. An alumni network will be created along with a directory of past members of the Youth Link board. The board also intends to strengthen its ties with the City Council, the school board, Parks and Community Services, and the Human Services Commission, in part by providing regular updates.

Ms. Navas said Youth Link will be hosting or participating in several upcoming events. A Youth Involvement Conference is scheduled for March 7 from 8:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. The theme for the conference is Strive, Thrive and Survive. The We Day Conference will be held on March 21 at Key Arena in Seattle, and the annual Youth Link Gumbo Night will be held at the home of Sherry and David Grindeland.

Mr. Bodin said no date has been chosen yet for the Youth Link Network Your Future event. The pilot event will be fee-based and for one day students around the Eastside can have one-on-one mentorships and networking opportunities with local professionals representing a broad range of careers. The funds raised will be used to help support the operations of the Youth Link Board.

Commissioner Stout asked if members of the Youth Link Board come from all of the city's high schools. Mr. Bodin said there are members from Interlake, Newport and Bellevue high schools, and one board member from a private school. Ms. Navas added that the Bellevue Youth Council includes representatives from a number of different schools.

Ms. Andrea Simmons, from AtWork! said she was present to absorb what the Commission had to say.

5. STAFF AND COMMISSION REPORTS

Commissioner Stout said the Downtown Livability Initiative CAC met on February 19. She said progress continues to be made. The issues of affordable housing and allowing human services in the downtown will again be on the agenda for the April 16 meeting. She said it would be very helpful to have some testimony provided at the CAC meetings by members of the Commission in support of affordable housing and human services in the downtown.

Commissioner Bruels observed that the mainstream media recently has taken notice of some of the research that has been going on for the last 15 years relative to the economic costs of homelessness. They are finally sharing the research that shows allowing people to remain homeless costs society far more in terms of jail time, hospital care and other services than it does to simply provide housing options. That would be a good argument to make to the CAC.

Commissioner Stout said there are now some 10,000 people living in downtown Bellevue. The city assisted in the organization of a downtown neighborhood association and the group held its first meeting recently. The group has voiced concerns about the homeless and the shortage of services for them in the downtown, in addition to concerns about drag racing in the downtown.

Commissioner McEachran reported that the visit to the Eastside men's winter shelter on February 4 was an eye-opening experience. He noted that it was a very cold night and it was fascinating to watch the men arrive, find a space, and be served a very nice meal. In addition to the Commissioners, the Mayor, the interim City Manager, and other Councilmembers were present.

Commissioner Beighle said the visit brought home to her the face of homelessness on the Eastside. She noted there were young men, older men, men who were not well dressed, and at least one who was wearing a suit. Everyone seemed to get along well.

Human Services Manager Emily Leslie reported that United Way has elected to allocate close to half a million dollars for crisis response programs. They have already committed \$46,000 of it to Congregations for the Homeless. Congregations for the Homeless intends to use \$36,000 of the funds to extend the winter shelter

provided negotiations with Sound Transit regarding use of the building go well; the rest of the funding will be used to extend the winter shelter in North Bend. Sophia Way will likely compete for some the United Way crisis response funds.

Ms. Leslie reported that a company located near the men's winter shelter has voiced concerns about issues related to shelter residents littering in the form of paper, alcohol bottles and cans, as well as syringes. Shelter residents have also used the company's restrooms, one passed out in the lobby, and have on occasion banged on the company's windows at night. Steve Roberts with Congregations for the Homeless met with the company's representative to calm the waters. The police have agreed to increase their presence at night, and Congregations for the Homeless has agreed to hire part-time morning and evening monitors to keep an eye on things. As is often the case, the problems have resulted from the activities of only a few of the shelter residents.

Ms. Leslie said the ARCH housing workshop has been rescheduled to March 6 at St. Luke's Lutheran Church.

Human Services Planner Alex O'Reilly brought to the attention of the Commissioners a free training seminar put on by Harborview Medical Center regarding sexual assault and traumatic stress, with a particular focus on social media and stalking. She noted that the event would be held at Youth Eastside Services.

Commissioner Plaskon reported that one of the foster care bills he highlighted at the February 2 Commission meeting is still alive and will be voted in soon in the Senate. The companion bill in the House never made it out of the appropriations committee. As currently drafted, a foster child will be afforded representation once they have been in the system for six months, with the entire cost to be shouldered by the state.

Ms. O'Reilly said the Commission will be given a full briefing once the legislative session ends.

6. DISCUSSION

A. 2015-2016 Funding Focus Areas

Ms. O'Reilly reminded the Commissioners that for the last two funding cycles the focus has been on basic needs in response to the recession. She noted that while the economy has improved, there are still folks who are struggling. She asked the Commissioners to comment on the draft funding focus areas document compiled following the Commission's previous discussion.

Ms. Leslie noted that the statement "The Commission reaffirms that the city's policy is to support the full spectrum of community needs" has been an overarching statement that has been included in every supplemental. She said the statement is taken from the Comprehensive Plan.

Commissioner Yantis said the struggle the Commission has always had relative to having focus areas has been what to do with them once they are agreed to. Theoretically they are used to make the more difficult funding decisions, but on their face they also tend to pull funding away from those areas that do not fit into the funding areas, such as early education, domestic violence and legal services. One alternative would be to name everything and thereby highlight the interest of the Commission in serving everyone, but such a document would be of no value whatsoever in making the difficult decisions.

Commissioner Bruels voiced support for mentioning the growing elderly population in Bellevue. He allowed, however, that there might be other vulnerable special populations that should be highlighted.

Ms. O'Reilly said there have been funding cycles in past years when the need for having focus areas was clear to support what was going on relative to human services in the city. In other years, however, there has been no real reason to have them.

Ms. Leslie added that the whole purpose behind the Needs Update is to identify where there are needs and gaps. Bellevue is fortunate in that it employs a funding formula, so for the coming cycle funding for human services is likely going to increase, making new money available to address program requests. The Commission also always has the option of talking directly to the Council about the need for additional funds where there are specific needs that otherwise will go unfunded.

Commissioner McEachran commented that the Needs Update serves as the community's best shot at identifying specific needs and clearly should be relied on in making funding decisions. He voiced support for using the words "stability" and "sustainability" in the draft. Stability is the concept of righting the ship while sustainability embodies the concept of moving the ship forward. Of equal importance are the concepts of collaborative impact and stewardship of the public funds.

Commissioner Stout voiced her support for the first part of the draft document but suggested the specific focus areas listed in the second part are the right ones. She said they do not evoke the notion of urgency. It is wonderful to consider services for older adults to enable them to remain in their homes, but the truth is there are very few agencies really providing those kinds of services. Additionally, the Commission is already doing as much as it can with regard to funding mental health and substance abuse programs; the same can be said about funding employment support services.

Ms. O'Reilly said she drafted the document based on the Commission's discussion on February 4. There was clear consensus around the need to focus on affordable housing with services for a variety of reasons.

Commissioner Bruels reiterated his support for highlighting services for older adults to enable them to remain in their homes.

Commissioner Yantis said if in fact the Commission ends up with new money to allocate, it should be allocated to a priority area. He suggested affordable housing would be a logical area to focus on. He agreed, however, that he was swayed by the fact that employment support services and services for older adults are high on the list of needs in the Needs Update.

Commissioner McEachran reiterated his desire to see the word "vulnerable" used. There are in the city many vulnerable people who need the opportunity to move toward sustainability. For those agencies and organizations that are seeking to be funded, the Commission should ask them to provide some insight into how their programs might help advance the goals. The Commission may have to tell some that funding will be put into areas that are more credible relative to the delivery of services. While that may make some unhappy, at some point the choices will become a statement of fact to the Council.

Commissioner Beighle asked if there should be any statements about helping to fund programs regionally in partnership with the other cities. Ms. Leslie said other funding considerations and alignment with regional initiatives are called out as criteria for funding.

Commissioner Yantis said one option would be to indicate a desire to focus on those people who might be the most vulnerable, but leave open the option of interpreting how it might relate to specific programs, rather than to call out specific programs as bullets. Commissioner McEachran said that is the approach he prefers.

Commissioner Beighle suggested that approach closely mirrors the direction taken for the 2011-2012 funding where the focus was on overarching needs.

Ms. O'Reilly said the last sentence of the introduction paragraph could be changed to read "A number of overarching factors have also been identified by the Commission that should be noted" and then a fourth bullet could be included that captures the idea of vulnerable populations to serve in place of specific focus areas.

Commissioner McEachran proposed rewording the introduction paragraph to read "Even as the economy improves, the Bellevue Human Services Commission recognizes that there are many Bellevue residents who are vulnerable and continue to struggle to provide basic needs for themselves and their families. The Commission believes that support is needed to help residents integrate back into the community to regain some of the stability, security and sustainability that they have lost."

Commissioner Beighle suggested that the bullets in the introduction are redundant to the focus areas.

Commissioner Stout pointed out that one thing the Downtown Livability Initiative CAC has been struggling with is the difference between low-income housing and affordable housing. For the downtown what is needed is affordable housing. Low-income is not something anyone would try to put in the downtown because of the price of land.

Commissioner Beighle proposed including a definition of affordable housing in the focus areas bullet. Commissioner Yantis said his preference would be to keep from being too specific.

There was agreement that the first focus area bullet should read "Housing with services, particularly for those moving from homelessness, including prevention programs that intervene early to stabilize people at risk of homelessness."

With regard to the second focus area bullet, Commissioner Stout cautioned against including the phrase "that pay a living wage." She suggested including it could open an argument regarding what constitutes a living wage.

There was agreement that the second bullet should read "Support for employment and those skills and services that promote a productive workforce."

There also was agreement to revise the third focus area bullet to read "Services that allow older adults to remain secure in the community."

Commissioner Yantis proposed eliminating the fourth focus area bullet and the Commissioners concurred.

Commissioner Beighle argued that having three bullets as part of the introduction followed by three focus area bullets makes it appear as though there really are six focus areas. Commissioner Yantis agreed and suggested that the three bullets in the introduction should simply be put into narrative format. The Commissioners concurred.

Commissioner Stout questioned including the last sentence of the last paragraph of the introduction section. She said the term "collaborative impact" is not used in the application materials and could leave some confused.

Commissioner Bruels said he did not have a problem with the term. He said he would be interested to see how providers define the term for themselves. If they do not have a clue what the term means, that will be information for the Commission.

There was agreement to reword the sentence to read "The Commission strongly affirms the need for collaborative impact in which agencies demonstrate how they are

specifically working together to achieve common goals without unnecessary duplication."

The staff were directed to incorporate into the first sentence of the last paragraph of the introduction section the concept of stewardship.

7. NEW BUSINESS - None

8. PETITIONS AND COMMUNICATIONS

Ms. Andrea Simmons, from AtWork! voiced appreciation to the Commission for giving serious consideration to what is going on in the community.

9. ADJOURNMENT

Commissioner McEachran adjourned the meeting at 8:13 p.m.

Secretary to the Human Services Commission

Date

Chairperson of the Human Services Commission

Date