

CITY OF BELLEVUE
HUMAN SERVICES COMMISSION
MINUTES

November 1, 2011
6:30 p.m.

Bellevue City Hall
City Council Conference Room 1E-113

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

COMMISSIONERS ABSENT: None

STAFF PRESENT: Emily Leslie, Alex O'Reilly, Joseph Adriano, Evita Almassi, Department of Parks and Community Services; Councilmember Chelminiak

GUEST SPEAKERS: None

RECORDING SECRETARY: Gerry Lindsay

1. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 6:31 p.m. by Chair Beighle who presided.

2. ROLL CALL

Upon the call of the roll, all Commissioners were present with the exception of Commissioner Plaskon who arrived at 7:43 p.m.

3. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

A. October 4, 2011

Motion to approve the minutes was made by Commissioner Yantis. Second was by Commissioner Bruels and the motion carried unanimously.

4. PETITIONS AND COMMUNICATIONS – None

5. STAFF AND COMMISSION REPORTS

Commissioner Stout reported that her neighborhood recently received an email regarding the possible location of a teen shelter just outside the neighborhood's borders at Grace Lutheran Church. The alert was written in a very unbiased manner and indicated that Friends of Youth would be willing to meet with the community association if asked. She said she sat down with Steve Roberts to get some details

and came away from the meeting feeling really encouraged. The intent is to operate the shelter only on weekends.

Councilmember Chelminiak said he was aware of some neighborhood opposition, even some who are members of the church. He said it was his understanding that the church has not yet made a final decision to take on the shelter given that a significant remodel of a part of their building would be required.

Commissioner Bruels noted that the new hospital in Issaquah had its official opening earlier in the day. He said the facility boasts a 24/7 pediatrician and will continue the tradition of Swedish relative to caring for independent women and babies.

Human Services Manager Emily Leslie reported that the winter shelter is moving closer to being a reality. It appears the two locations have been confirmed, though the Salvation Army board needs to give its final approval. St. Peter's United Methodist in Crossroads has agreed to house the men, and Salvation Army is close to final agreement to house the women and families. The shelter workgroup met on October 31 and agreed to push back the opening date to November 22 to give more time for planning. The city no longer requires temporary use permits for religious facilities; had the Crossroads Community Center been used, a number of regulatory requirements would have been kicked into play.

Grant Coordinator Joseph Adriano reported that on October 24 Chair Beighle and human services staff presented to the City Council the Commission's recommendations regarding the use of CDBG funds. The presentation took only five or ten minutes and very few questions were asked.

Councilmember Chelminiak said the matter will be before the Council again on November 7 for action.

6. DISCUSSION

A. Review Mid-Biennium Review of Human Services Contracts

Mr. Adriano reminded the Commissioners that funding allocations are determined for two-year periods and that at or near the midpoint a review of the contracts is conducted. He briefly outlined the review sheet used for each funded program and noted that the service units are the basis on which reimbursements are made. The review sheets also indicate the number of residents served under the program, the program's reimbursement status, and the annual outcomes report for the program.

Mr. Adriano said attempts have been made to get from the various agencies better outcomes statements. Some have gotten better, but there is still a long way to go in terms of getting useful outcomes statements and data. In many cases it continues to be difficult to link the outcome statements with program efficacy. The group focused on designing the unified application for the funding cities is especially focused on

identifying a core set of outcome statements that can easily be compared. The intention is to limit what agencies can submit in terms of indicators. At some point it may be necessary to withhold payment based on poor outcomes data.

Commissioner Stout asked if the on-site audits include taking steps to make sure that what is being reported by the agencies is actually what is happening. Mr. Adriano said agencies are asked during the monitoring visits to explain in detail their processes, from the provision of services to how they are recorded and how the data is used in requesting reimbursement. Some agencies report only their service units for which they will be reimbursed, while others report everything. The intent is to seek consistency relative to outcomes, and to limit service unit definitions.

Commissioner Stout noted that some agencies reported the number of residents served to be much higher in the first quarter than in the other quarters. Mr. Adriano said the agencies are asked to report the number of unduplicated residents served for the given contract year. The reports for the first quarter are, therefore, always higher because the agency will have clients already on their service rolls that get carried over. Other agencies fail to grasp what they are supposed to report and will underreport the number of service units. That is particularly true of programs that operate on a school year which consider the beginning of their year to be September and which may not count their service units until the following quarter.

Mr. Adriano noted that the Emergency Assistance Program operated by Catholic Community Services is funded through the General Fund but also received some additional recession impact funding. He pointed out that the clients served with the recession funds were called out separately by quarter.

Commissioner Stout asked if the progress toward the goal figure of 434 percent reflects the fact that the agency set its goal too low. Mr. Adriano said the figure refers to the number of clients served relative to service unit costs identified in the contract with Bellevue. Ideally progress toward goals should be should relative to all funding sources, though it would appear the agency set its sights a bit low in that regard also.

Commissioner Yantis said it was his recollection that agencies tend to allocate Bellevue funds earlier in the process rather than equally throughout the year. Mr. Adriano allowed that some agencies take that approach, but not all of them. Some contracts are paid based on budget line item reimbursement; that includes personnel, office supplies, space rent and utilities. Some agencies will divide their costs quarterly and bill for a quarter of their contract award, while other contracts are reimbursed based on service units. Additionally, contracts are not marked as having been paid in the city's database until the payment has been processed; in that regard, the reimbursement status probably shows only the second quarter activity.

Commissioner Yantis said the reported numbers are somewhat confusing. He allowed that while the Commission is really only interested in Bellevue's share of the total, having the big picture helps show whether or not an agency is healthy overall,

which is why it is helpful to know how the agency is doing relative to its overall goals. The numbers, however, appear somewhat skewed for some reason because it is difficult to believe that the program is serving more than four times the number of clients the program was intending to serve. Mr. Adriano clarified that the report indicates the agency has provided 434 percent of the value of the units purchased by Bellevue.

Ms. Leslie commented that the reviews have been conducted in different ways in the past. One approach was to check in on every contract to see how each was performing. At other times staff simply reported the information to the Commission and highlighted only those contracts that were underperforming, or specific issues being faced by an agency. Information from monitoring visits during the previous twelve months was always shared with the Commission in summary format. The award letters sent to the agencies after the funds are approved always include the caveat that the funds are contingent on funds being available, contract performance and outcomes. That gives the city the option of cancelling a contract for cause.

Mr. Adriano suggested that if the exercise of going through the contracts one by one will not prove useful to the Commission, it is not necessary to spend three meetings on it. Commissioner Yantis said he was not trying to derail the process but suggested that there should be discussion about what the process is intended to yield for the city. Mr. Adriano said it was not too late to redefine the process. He said information could be replaced or added in an attempt to have something useful.

Ms. Leslie suggested that Mr. Adriano could simply highlight which of the programs in the first batch should be given the most attention; the same could be done for each of the goal areas. She said the mid-biennium reviews also help to educate new Commissioners about the various programs and agencies funded by the city.

Mr. Adriano said what he looks for in the reports regarding each contract is whether or not the agency has done what they said they would do with Bellevue funds. He said when he sees good numbers in a report he is content that the contract is on track.

Commissioner Stout pointed out that by funding various agencies the city is not asking them to offer identical products. Too often funding agencies get lost in assuring exact outcomes. The focus should be on making sure money is not wasted and that the funded agencies are well managed and have good staff. At the midway point, less attention should be paid to what percentage of funding has been spent in a given period. What will matter is whether or not by the end of the contract the dollars allocated by Bellevue have gone to deliver services to Bellevue residents as outlined in the contract language.

Commissioner Bruels agreed. He said at the end of the day each contractor must be held accountable for services rendered without getting into micromanagement.

Answering a question asked by Commissioner Perelman, Ms. Leslie said the reviews essentially only focus on four things: how much the city has given the agency, the service units delivered, how many people have been served, and the outcomes that indicate what difference the services are making in the lives of those who receive them.

Commissioner Stout commented that city staff as well as the staff from all the contract agencies had put a lot of time and effort into producing the mid-biennium reports. She said she did not want to see that work go to waste but did want to see a truly useful approach developed.

Commissioner Yantis stated that in past reviews there have been agencies flagged for underperforming on their contract goals. When it came time to review applications in the next funding cycle, those flags were revisited. He went on to say that the staff generally are aware of problems within an agency or with a particular contract long before the review datasheets highlighting the problems for the Commission are put together. The data is vitally important to the review and application processes, and is what the Commission needs to hone in on. To the extent reports are produced that show contract goals are being exceeded, the Commission does not need to review them. The Commission has a very high level of trust that the staff are on top of what is happening with each agency and knows that where problems exist they will be brought forward.

Mr. Adriano suggested that prior to the next meeting he would focus on the problem programs and ask representatives to come and answer questions.

Commissioner Bruels said while data is great, anecdotes and success stories speak to the heart in terms of the politics of how everything plays out. He suggested the Commission should hear those stories.

There was agreement to focus the review on the contracts that are underperforming.

With regard to application #114, Friends of Youth Homeless Youth Services, Mr. Adriano noted that the zero percent figure listed for the number of therapeutic foster care bednights was explained in the notes on the second page of the review. He said he has asked the agency to consider revising the contract goal of 40.

Commissioner Stout said she found it hard to believe that there are no Bellevue children between the ages of 11 and 17 in foster care. There was agreement to ask the agency to send a representative to the next Commission meeting to answer questions.

Commissioner Yantis asked about the 35 percent figure relative to progress toward goals for all funding sources in application #11, Emergency Feeding Program of Seattle and King County Hunger Relief Program. He asked if given three quarters of data the target should be 75 percent. Mr. Adriano said that was correct. He said he

had no concerns relative to the program spending Bellevue dollars and suggested the agency as a whole is healthy. He agreed to ask the agency to verify or explain the 35 percent figure.

Mr. Adriano called attention to application #27, St. Andrew's Housing Group Andrew's Glen, and reminded the Commissioners that during the funding process it was made clear the program would not start providing services until July 2011. The zeros in the report reflect the fact that the agency did not send in its report until after the reviews were printed for the Commission. In reality, the program has provided 59 units, which is 14 percent of the contract goal. The expectation is that the program will continue to ramp up through the remainder of 2011 and that some of the funds will be carried over to the second year of the contract.

Commissioner Stout said it would be very helpful for the Commission to receive an update from the agency. Mr. Adriano said he would ask to have a representative attend the next Commission meeting.

Commissioner Bruels turned to application #9904, Society of St. Vincent de Paul of Seattle/King County, and asked about the five percent figure shown for progress toward goals relative to all funding sources. Mr. Adriano said it appears that the funding being provided to the agency from Bellevue constitutes the bulk of what the agency is using for financial aid. He agreed to seek a clarification from the agency regarding that figure as well as the zero shown for the number of residents served in the first quarter. Ms. Leslie pointed out that the program is very specific to a very specific area of Bellevue. Mr. Adriano said it could be that the agency is intentionally only reporting the numbers that are related to Bellevue funding.

Commissioner Yantis asked if the agencies would be asked to provide the same amount of data if the focus was simply on making sure the agencies are doing what they are supposed to be doing. Mr. Adriano allowed that they would. Mr. Adriano said in that case regardless of the information the Commission wants to see, the time and expense required by both the agencies and the city staff would be the same. He said many of the funding cities use a similar review format and collect the same data from the agencies. In the future a different way of asking for information from the agencies should be identified, along with a different way of holding agencies accountable. Counting service units is not necessarily the best way to do things. There are some models where funding is predicated on demonstrating program efficacy.

Ms. Leslie said there is no real consistency among the 18 funding cities in terms of reporting requirements. The north and east cities requirements are similar. The cities have agreed to talk about consistency in reporting, and already they have reached agreement to streamline things in the new application, which will result in receiving less information. Ways are always being sought to make things easier for the agencies, but at the same time it is necessary to guard the use of public funds, which includes accountability.

Chair Beighle referred to application #3, Catholic Community Services Harrington House, and asked if the residents served figures per quarter represent individuals or families. Mr. Adriano said he would take a closer look at the demographic report submitted by the agency to see if he could answer that question definitively.

Commissioner Stout observed that several years ago the program was not reaching very many Bellevue families and said the report is not clear about whether or not overall more services to Bellevue residents are being delivered. Mr. Adriano said the program has nine family units, so the numbers reported could equate to a single family per quarter. He said he would ask the agency to clarify the numbers with regard to if they represent individuals or families.

Commissioner Stout called attention to application #7, Eastside Interfaith Social Concerns Council Congregations for the Homeless Housing, and questioned the 3400 percent figure shown under Other/Specify: Rent Subsidies. Mr. Adriano said the contract funds a single rent subsidy, so that is the goal for the program. To date the program has provided 34 rent subsidies with all funding sources.

Commissioner Yantis said most programs funded with Bellevue dollars represent only a small percentage of the services delivered by the agency. Because dollars from other funders are mixed in, most agencies will report performance above and beyond their contractual obligations with Bellevue. For the ones that do not show themselves as delivering more services than contracted for, there is more of an agency issue with the program than with the Bellevue funds portion.

Commissioner Bruels pointed out that while the reported numbers are practically meaningless, the outcomes are in fact excellent. Only one person has dropped out of the program, which exists for the very purpose of getting homeless men off the streets and into permanent housing. In that regard, the agency is doing a fantastic job.

Commissioner Perelman asked why no outcomes statement or measurement indicators were included for application #10, Eastside Interfaith Social Concerns Council Sophia's Place. Mr. Adriano explained that programs are asked to report for the year ending June 30. Because 2011 is the first year the program was funded by Bellevue, they were not required to submit an outcomes report.

Chair Beighle asked staff to clarify with Eastside Interfaith Social Concerns Council why for application 9, Sophia's Home, the report shows no residents served in the third quarter. Ms. Leslie said one possibility could be that the shelter was full. Mr. Adriano agreed to follow up with the agency.

With regard to application #16, Hopelink Avondale Transitional Housing and Emergency Shelter, Commissioner Stout observed that the report shows no results for one of the three outcomes listed. Mr. Adriano said that could be a database glitch

but agreed to check on it. Commissioner Stout also questioned the figure of 637,297 clients served as shown in application #18, Hopelink Emergency Service Program, under their first outcomes statement. Mr. Adriano said it could be a typo but agreed to verify the number with the agency.

Mr. Adriano said if the primary concern is to make sure agencies are meeting their contract goals with the funds given them by the city, the report should only reflect the funds spent and the units purchased with those funds. Commissioner Yantis said the problem with that approach is that agencies are not able to easily separate one group of funds from another from an accounting standpoint. The numbers in the submitted reports are confusing but they do demonstrate whether or not the contract requirements are being met and in that regard they are useful. The overall health of an agency is of great importance to the Commission, especially during the allocation process when decisions are made about which agencies should provide the services needed in the community.

Mr. Adriano noted that the mid-biennium reviews revolve around the quarterly data collected and reported. The data is largely useless in determining the overall health of an agency. The question is whether or not the mid-biennium report helps the Commission see the big picture, or if it should be abandoned in favor of simply having staff share pertinent information about each agency, either as it becomes known or as part of the application process. Commissioner Yantis said if an agency is in trouble, the Commission should be informed; the Commission should know why, what the agency's current status is, and what is being done to correct their course. Mr. Adriano pointed out that not meeting contract goals is the best indicator of an agency being in trouble. Commissioner Yantis said an agency letting three full-time employees go without replacing them could be an indicator of trouble within the agency; that is the sort of thing the Commission needs to know. The knowledge may or may not result in a contract modification.

Commissioner Plaskon asked how troubles within an agency usually come to the attention of the staff. Mr. Adriano said the reports certainly can raise flags, but staff turnover also raises questions. Bellevue staff is in regular contact with staff from other cities, and if someone mentions an agency is not turning in its reports, is experiencing high turnover rates, or is reported to be in financial difficulty, a meeting is usually set up with the agency to get to the root of the problem.

Ms. Leslie said the mid-biennium review could be truncated down to staff providing the Commission with a list of agencies that appear to be meeting their contract requirements, and making the Commission aware of any concerns based on monitoring visits or other means. Mr. Adriano said the traditional report essentially is a list of the agencies that are doing fine, so the review should only highlight those agencies or programs for which there are concerns or questions.

Commissioner Stout called attention to the outcomes measurement indicator in application #23, Refugee Women's Alliance Basic Food Outreach and Assistance for

Refugees and Immigrants, and asked what percentage of the people who apply for DSHS assistance are approved without the aid of the agency. She suggested the 50 percent figure in the application is very low, noting that even with the help of the agency the expected failure rate is 50 percent. Ms. O'Reilly explained that the agency works with clients and assists them in filling out the forms, but they do not have control over who DSHS approves. Applications can be denied by DSHS simply because the forms are not filled out properly, and the intent of the agency is to make sure the forms are filled out properly, thus increasing their client's chances with DSHS. Refugee Women's Alliance staff seek clients in the waiting rooms of food banks, including Hopelink, and at Crossroads Community Center. Information provided by the clients could be wrong in some respects, leading to DSHS denial.

Commissioner Bruels suggested it would be helpful to have some data about the number of applications DSHS rejects in general. That would help determine the efficacy of the Refugee Women's Alliance program. The Commissioners agreed. They also agreed that a representative from the agency should be asked to come to a Commission meeting and answer some questions.

Commissioner Stout asked if the Renewal Food Bank operated by World Impact Network used recession impact funds from the city to hire their food bank coordinator and whether the agency has plans for sustaining the position beyond using the one-time funds. Mr. Adriano said it was his understanding that hours were added to the food bank coordinator position, but no new staff were hired. Commissioner Stout said she would at least like to know if and how the agency plans to sustain those additional hours, and suggested that could be done by email rather than by visiting with the Commission.

Commissioner Yantis suggested that some good questions were raised by the Commissioners as a result of the review process, and asked if the same questions would have been raised in some other way, such as during the application process. Commissioner Plaskon suggested that during the application process the Commission has to wade through a great deal of data about the various agencies in an attempt to compare agencies and their programs. He said the review process is the best method for digging deeper into the workings of individual agencies.

Commissioner Bruels said he gains a lot of information from reading over the mid-biennium reports but said he did not think it necessary to fully discuss each one. He agreed, however, that the best approach would be to have staff submit to the Commission just a highlights report.

There was agreement to cancel the Commission meeting tentatively scheduled for November 8 and to continue the review process at the November 15 meeting.

7. OLD BUSINESS

Ms. O'Reilly reported that the Annual Legislative Forum hosted by the Bellevue Network on Aging would occur on November 2 at City Hall from 4:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m. The Kirkland Senior Council will co-host the event. Representatives from the four districts in East King County have been invited to attend.

8. NEW BUSINESS – None

9. PETITIONS AND COMMUNICATIONS – None

10. ADJOURNMENT

Chair Beighle adjourned the meeting at 8:51 p.m.

Secretary to the Human Services Commission

Date

Chairperson of the Human Services Commission

Date