

CITY OF BELLEVUE  
HUMAN SERVICES COMMISSION  
MINUTES

September 20, 2011  
6:30 p.m.

Bellevue City Hall  
City Council Conference Room 1E-113

COMMISSIONERS PRESENT: Chairperson Beighle, Commissioners Bruels, Perelman, Stout

COMMISSIONERS ABSENT: Commissioners Habib, Plaskon, Yantis

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

GUEST SPEAKERS: None

RECORDING SECRETARY: Gerry Lindsay

1. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 6:34 p.m. by Chair Beighle who presided.

2. ROLL CALL

Upon the call of the roll, all Commissioners were present with the exception of Commissioners Habib, Plaskon and Yantis, all of whom were excused.

3. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

A. August 16, 2011

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

4. PETITIONS AND COMMUNICATIONS – None

5. STAFF AND COMMISSION REPORTS

Commissioner Bruels reported that earlier in the day he had attended the King County Alliance of Human Services meeting. He said over the summer there was a meeting of the minds focused on whether or not the Alliance should continue, and it was discovered that the organization enjoys a great deal of support, that there is a lot of work to be done, and that the Alliance should continue. The leadership submitted a strongly worded letter to the King County Council highlighting the impacts of the

recession, including increased homelessness among families and children, increased need at food banks and shelters, and the desperation of people without jobs. The letter demanded a solution that will be preventative long term and will meet the needs of the community. The letter offered the cooperation of the Alliance in identifying a permanent funding solution for human services. The County was faulted for having a public safety sales tax on the ballot without including human services; for refusing to repurpose the hotel/motel and car rental taxes to fund community health and human services; and for not supporting an enhanced Veterans and Human Services Levy.

Councilmember Chelminiak commented that he along with several members of the Commission, a member from the Parks and Community Services Board, and members of staff spent the United Way Day of Caring on a project from Housing at the Crossroads across from the Lake Hills school. The crew focused on sprucing up the grounds of the duplex and the results were impressive.

Grant Coordinator Joseph Adriano provided the Commissioners with a memo concerning the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 which yielded \$191,000 for Bellevue. The Commission approved allocating the funds to a short list of programs, and the memo provided a brief update regarding the progress of the programs. The budget for administration was at about \$9500, but over the course of the last two years just over \$4000 of that has been spent. HUD was asked if the balance of the funds could be transferred to the Major Home Repair Program and permission was granted.

Motion to approve the recommendation of the staff regarding the CDBG-R award was made by Commissioner Stout. Second was by Commissioner Bruels and the motion carried unanimously.

## 6. DISCUSSION

### A. Presentation on Hispanic Heritage Month

Human Services Manager Emily Leslie welcomed the panel members and indicated the Commission's interest in knowing more about the Latino/Hispanic needs in the community, the services that are being provided, the issues that are being faced, the trends that are being seen and how they are being addressed, how the various agencies are partnering with each other, and what role the city should play.

Diana Moshe with the Cultural Navigator program explained that although the program is under the auspices of Chinese Information and Service Center, it includes a number of different ethnic communities, including the Hispanic community. Services are provided to families and youth as well as to the elderly, and the services include literacy and naturalization, employment training, computer and technological skills training, and assistance to crime victims.

Ms. Moshe said immigrants of every ethnic background face challenges with regard to culture shock, language barriers, social insulation, financial insecurity, employment, and a general lack of information and resources. They often seek help from family members, friends, and from social service agencies. Their common needs are for medical insurance, housing, employment, education, ESL training, and translation and interpretation services.

The Cultural Navigator Program provides assistance for limited and non English-speaking individuals and families by connecting them with appropriate services and by helping them navigate through the various service systems. The program makes referrals, provides reference materials, provides assistance in completing application forms, provides family support services and follow-up. Interpretation and translation services are provided on a limited basis. The focus of the program is on building the capacity of clients to access and navigate systems and existing organizations through consultation, collaboration and the sharing of resources. The overall objective is to help immigrants and refugees on the Eastside become better connected with the resources available in the area, and the objective is carried out by connecting clients with someone who knows their language and understands their culture. The target populations are Spanish, Russian, Vietnamese, Chinese and East Indian communities, though services are provided to anyone in need of assistance.

Ms. Moshe said the main issue facing the Hispanic community is the need for employment. Many have lost their jobs due to the economy, and finding new employment is often difficult because of limited English proficiency and lack of computer skills. Interpretation and translation assistance is often needed, and many clients do not understand how to access the school system. There is a big need for housing. Many in the Hispanic community share housing as they cannot afford it on their own. Those who do find work often find they need more than one job just to make ends meet.

There is a need for ESL classes, and clients are encouraged to learn English. Many clients are interested in becoming citizens and Cultural Navigator staff assist in filling out the forms.

The search for jobs and housing remains the top trend for Hispanics. One area in which the city could help is in the creation of more affordable housing. Bellevue certainly is a desirable place to live for a variety of reasons, but housing in the city is very expensive.

Ms. Moshe said the police have been very kind and welcoming toward the Hispanic community. The Hispanics, however, often do not know what their rights are, and many are hesitant to talk openly about crimes that have been done to them, particularly domestic violence incidents.

Alicia Martinez, an early intervention social worker for Kindering Center, said the agency is committed to the provision of services to children aged birth to three with

special needs, are medically fragile, or who are at risk. The goal is to help the children be successful.

Ms. Martinez said Kindering Center is improving its ability to offer its services in Spanish. Weekly evaluations are offered in Spanish on Thursdays. The Spanish-speaking staff include an educator, a social worker, an occupational therapist and a speech therapist; when necessary, interpreters are brought in. About 91 percent of the children who come to the Kindering Center are eligible for services.

Funding for the early intervention services comes from the federal government, the state, the school district, the DDD and from private donations. Some families have insurance that covers all or part of the services.

Ms. Martinez said Kindering Center has seen a significant increase in the number of Latino clients. They used to come in just to have their children evaluated and to receive speech therapy, but now they come with a number of complex problems. Lack of transportation continues to be a chronic problem; many of the children are medically fragile and cannot travel by public transit. Some parents simply do not have the money needed to use public transportation.

Limited English skills is also a continuing issue. Sometimes families do not seek help from Kindering Center because they misunderstand what a school nurse tells them. Kindering Center works diligently with its community partners to encourage parents to bring their children in. The other needs most often seen range from legal issues to counseling, housing, transportation and special foods for the children.

Immigration often results in the separation of families, parents from their children and children from their parents. Separation triggers a number of different issues, including behavioral issues in the children and fear on the part of parents. Separated families can result in mental health issues as well, not the least of which is depression.

Kindering Center is very conscientious about hiring bilingual and bicultural staff. Classes in Spanish were held once a week at first but now they are offered four classes per week. Cultural and linguistic services for Latino families are offered by the Spanish-speaking staff.

Kindering Center is focused on cultural competency training. Ms. Martinez noted that along with some eight other early intervention centers in King County, Kindering participated in a cultural and linguistic competency self-assessment process.

The list of partners includes the city of Bellevue, particularly mini City Hall, Youth Eastside Services, the Cultural Navigator Program, Hopelink, the Bellevue School District, the medical community, and many others. Kindering collaborates and shares information with its partners in an attempt to avoid duplicating services. It is hoped

that the city will continue to support and fund the programs offered by the Kindering Center.

When asked, Ms. Martinez said most Latino families pay for services rendered by the Kindering Center with medical coupons. The medical coupons available through Hopelink can be used to cover interpretive services as well.

Ms. Martinez said the Kindering Center opens its doors to tours every other month and noted that the next one was slated for September 21 from 9:00 a.m. to 10:00 a.m. She invited the Commissioners to attend.

Lourdes Salazar, City of Bellevue Probation Volunteer Program Coordinator, said she also works with a group called Eastside Latino Leadership Forum, an organization that was put together by Advance Bellevue, an organization that has since changed its name to Leadership Eastside; the group will celebrate its tenth anniversary in 2012. The mission of the group is to empower the Eastside Latino community and to advocate for issues critical to education and healthcare. The group strives for social justice and promotes awareness of and appreciation for the Latino community. The group does not provide direct services, rather it listens to the community and provides referrals.

Ms. Salazar said a mentoring program for Latino kids has been developed in conjunction with the Bellevue School District. Statistics show that Latino girls and African American boys in middle school have the highest dropout percentages. It has been shown that chances are very high that kids who do not pass one class in their first year of high school will not graduate. The mentoring program focused on middle school girls has been very successful; the school counselors have reported that the dropout rate has been reduced, fewer girls are having to go to the principal's office, and attendance rates are up.

Bellevue and Redmond were the first school districts to reach out to the program with questions about how to work with their Latino students and their families. In Bellevue Cafesitos, or coffee times, were started and continue to be very successful. A group of parents started a group called Impuso, and their focus is on recruiting more parents to the leadership program.

The Eastside Latino Leadership Forum works with Jubilee Reach, Hopelink, and other organizations. The Forum uses donations to provide summer school scholarships for students who need to catch up in a class or who want to take a specific program their parents cannot afford. One student was funded to serve as an intern in Olympia for a local senator.

The first Heritage Celebration event was conducted in 2002; it has been held annually ever since and has proved to be very successful, except that the event was not held in 2010 due to lack of funding.

One of the reasons Eastside Latino Leadership Forum is working with the school district is that a lot of Latino boys are getting into trouble, with some joining gangs and leaving the area for Seattle, Everett and other areas. Many parents do not know what to do with their children and where to go to get help. To a large degree Eastside Latino Leadership Forum serves as bridge between the families and the police department.

A number of school-aged children are being left at home alone because their parents have two or more jobs. There are fewer after-school programs, transportation to and from the programs that do exist is chancy, and so the kids stay at home, with the older kids directed to take care of the younger kids.

Chair Beighle asked if Eastside Latino Leadership Forum works with teens regarding safety, sex education and teen pregnancies. Ms. Salazar said it does not outside of the schools. She added, however, that in the program for middle school girls an upcoming topic will be on not taking risks. The Eastside Pathways program likely will include the topic in their program.

Chair Beighle said Latino kids often do not feel like they can talk to their parents about social issues, including sex. As such many have nowhere to go to get information. Parents often sign documents that keep their kids from taking sex education courses in school, so the kids get no information at all. She asked what the community is doing to address those serious issues. Ms. Salazar said in a recent meeting with the police department one of the topics raised was that young girls are being attracted by older men. In the Latino culture that has always been an issue, though no one is willing to talk about it. The issue is, however, being raised more and more, and hopefully that will eventually lead to an open discussion.

Ms. Martinez said once a year Kindering Center offers a class for parents with experts in different areas, including Planned Parenthood. The focus is on encouraging parents to talk openly with their children.

Hector Martinez with the Department of Social and Health Services said he sees in his work the same issues previously addressed. He said the mission of the department is to help the poor and needy. He allowed that DSHS is facing a lot of financial challenges at a time when more and more people need services. Currently the department has 10,000 applications for medical but it does not have the staff to process the applications in a timely manner. All of the department's programs are facing reductions, but programs for families with children will suffer less than other programs.

Mr. Martinez said the Latino population is continuing to grow in the state of Washington and across the nation. Many of those who come to the United States are undocumented, but their lives in Mexico are so hard that they take the risk in seek of whatever work they can find.

Too often those who are newly arrived from Mexico are preyed on in various ways. Someone will sell them a car but the interest rate will be so high that they will never be able to pay it off. Others involve them in schemes that deprive them of their money. Those who are new to the country need to become educated in a variety of ways to avoid becoming victims.

Mr. Martinez said he participated in the 2010 Census and at a number of homes found only children at home with nothing to do but watch TV and play video games without any controls. That is what leads so many to get into trouble. Many skip out on school as well. As teens they are easy targets because they have no particular direction in their lives. The needs in Bellevue are equally as great as those in Seattle.

Commissioner Stout said it has been exciting to see the leadership that has come out of Advance Bellevue. At the time the organization was started, the Hispanic community was not really visible on the Eastside. To see leadership emerging from all communities is very rewarding.

Bellevue Police Chief Linda Pillo said there are 216 total positions in the department, 177 of which are commissioned officers. The department is separated into two divisions: operations, which handles the lion's share of the front line duties; and administrative services, which includes records, the volunteer program, the crime lab, and the investigation section. The department has carved out a good balance between proactive and reactive services. Patrol officers serve primarily in a reactive role, but the bike officers, the community station officers and the school resource officers (SRO) all serve a proactive role.

Chief Pillo said most police forms are available in Spanish. In partnership with the Redmond police department, some public service announcements were produced for local Spanish radio stations; the spots cover things such as how to report a crime and domestic violence law.

The Diversity Focus Group was formed in 2008. While specifically aimed at the Latino community, the goal is to help build bridges with the city's diverse communities. Chief Pillo said the group serves in an advisory capacity to her. Community forums are hosted a couple of times each year as a means of reaching out to the entire community.

A flyer is currently being developed that talks about what to do and what not to do when pulled over by an officer. The flyer will be published first in Spanish and then in other languages. How to report a crime will also be covered in the flyer.

Chief Pillo said the community forum held in the spring at Highland Middle school was specifically for the Hispanic/Latino community. The police department was joined by the school district and several social service agencies, including Jubilee Reach. At the event parents voiced fears about their children facing bullying in the

schools, the increased perception of gang activity, and an increase in the use of drugs and alcohol. The city's budget difficulties made it necessary to cut the middle school SRO position, but the good news is the city is in the process of working with the school district to have the position restored using school district funding.

Chief Pillo said officers on the street have also reported an increase in the number of unsupervised youth in the community, as well as an increase in drug and alcohol use by young people. People want to live in Bellevue where the schools are great, but to do so requires a lot of money, so parents often work more than one job, which means their children are often unsupervised. There are some after-school programs available, but lack of transportation often means the kids cannot access the programs.

Bellevue has not seen an increase in gang activity regardless of the perceptions of many. The main gang in Bellevue has been maintaining about the same number of juvenile members. However, regional gang activity and violence is on the upswing, and that trend makes it necessary to keep a close eye on things in Bellevue. Police in King County, Kent, Federal Way have all seen marked increases, and they are working very closely with the prosecutors who handle juvenile high-impact offenders in an attempt to get the kids behind bars where they can get the help they need.

Commissioner Bruels asked what Bellevue does in terms of providing cultural competency training for its officers and making sure their skills stay sharp and relevant. Chief Pillo said through the Diversity Focus Group a video was produced that gave officers a number of tips. For instance, when pulling over a vehicle that appears to be Muslim, the wife might be driving but the husband probably will answer for the wife. A woman from that culture will not shake a man's hand, and a man will not shake a woman's hand. The department offers in-service cultural competency training on a regular basis that involves various scenarios. Every attempt is made to avoid stereotyping the various diverse cultures that are present in Bellevue, and the department very rarely receives complaints of racial profiling from citizens.

Jeremy Vargas with Sea Mar Community Health Center in Bellevue said the primary goal of the community based organization is to advocate for the Latino community. The organization was founded in 1978 and has evolved over time into a multiservice organization providing medical, dental, behavioral health, housing, and ancillary services and programs.

The Bellevue facility is open Monday through Saturday. Patients are seen regardless of whether or not they have insurance coverage. A sliding fee scale is in place. In 2010 the center was seeing an average of 20 new patients per week, but to date in 2011 the average is closer to 60 new patients per week.

Mr. Vargas said one of the challenges facing the center is space. Another facility needs to be found in which to provide care at the demand level; the intention is to find a place in the same general area. Transportation continues to be a challenge for the

patients. The number of Russian-speaking clients has been on the rise, so to provide better services a Russian-speaking receptionist was hired. From time to time interpreters are needed to address clients in other languages.

Grant Coordinator Joseph Adriano allowed that it is often difficult to find space in Bellevue and asked if Sea Mar has discussed moving to Redmond or if it is committed to staying in Bellevue. Mr. Vargas said there is already a community health center in Redmond, adding that the best thing would be to remain in Bellevue and especially in the Crossroads area. The best location would be inside Crossroads Mall. The Bellevue facility does not currently offer dental services though there is a definite need, and it would be best for the patients to have everything located in the same building.

7. OLD BUSINESS

Ms. Leslie reminded the Commissioners that for the first time ever a Naturalization Ceremony will be held at City Hall on September 23 in Council Chambers at 11:00 a.m.

8. NEW BUSINESS – None

9. PETITIONS AND COMMUNICATIONS – None

10. ADJOURNMENT

Chair Beighle adjourned the meeting at 8:36 p.m.

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Secretary to the Human Services Commission

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Date

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Chairperson of the Human Services Commission

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Date