

CITY OF BELLEVUE  
HUMAN SERVICES COMMISSION  
MINUTES

January 6, 2009  
6:30 p.m.

Bellevue City Hall  
City Council Conference Room 1E-113

COMMISSIONERS PRESENT: Commissioners Beighle, Hoople, Huenefeld-Gese, Seltzer, Stout

COMMISSIONERS ABSENT: Chairperson Yantis

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

GUEST SPEAKERS: Sandy Ciske, Molly McNiece, Seattle/King County Department of Public Health

RECORDING SECRETARY: Gerry Lindsay

1. CALL TO ORDER

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

2. ROLL CALL

Upon the call of the roll, all Commissioners were present with the exception of Chair Yantis who was excused.

3. PETITIONS AND COMMUNICATIONS – None

4. ELECTION OF OFFICERS

Commissioner Stout turned the gavel over to Commissioner Hoople.

Motion to open nominations for Chair was made by Commissioner Beighle. Second was by Commissioner Seltzer and the motion carried unanimously.

Motion to nominate Commissioner Stout to serve as chair was made by Commissioner Beighle.

Motion to close nominations was made by Commissioner Beighle. Second was by Commissioner Seltzer and the motion carried unanimously.

The motion to elect Commissioner Stout to serve as Chair carried unanimously.

Commissioner Hoople turned the gavel over to Chair Stout.

Motion to open nominations for Vice-Chair was made by Commissioner Seltzer. Second was by Commissioner Beighle and the motion carried unanimously.

Motion to nominate Commissioner Huenefeld-Gese to serve as Vice-Chair was made by Commissioner Seltzer. Second was by Commissioner Hoople.

Motion to close nominations was made by Commissioner Seltzer. Second was by Commissioner Hoople and the motion carried unanimously.

The motion to elect Commissioner Huenefeld-Gese to serve as Vice-Chair carried unanimously.

## 5. STAFF AND COMMISSION REPORTS

Human Services Manager Emily Leslie reported that the severe weather shelter remained open until December 28. A brief report regarding all storm-related issues was presented to the City Council on January 5. Some 55 unduplicated residents were served while the shelter was open; most were single men, though there were three single women and two families with children who were also served.

At the January 5 meeting of the Committee to End Homelessness Dave Ramsey asked Bellevue to make a presentation at the monthly King County city manager's group regarding the severe weather shelter.

Ms. Leslie reported that several applications for the vacant Commission seat were received over the holidays.

Human Services Planner Alex O'Reilly said she attended the SOAR coordinating committee meeting earlier in the day along with intern Warren Leyh. The group received several reports, including an outline of the Governor's proposed budget that slashes health and human services programs along with other state expenditures. One program earmarked for a significant cut is the 2-1-1 information network. The group also received a report from the Children's Alliance that outlined how the Governor's budget would affect early learning programs.

## 6. DISCUSSION

### A. Presentation of the Communities Count Report

Ms. O'Reilly said she has enjoyed serving on the steering committee for Communities Count since the late 1990s. The steering committee works closely with public health staff who have the lead and who do an excellent job of pulling all of the data together.

Sandy Ciske with the Seattle/King County Department of Public Health expressed her appreciation for having Bellevue serve as a partner in developing the Communities Count report, which is produced every three years through a very collaborative partnership.

Ms. Ciske briefly reviewed the outline of the report. She noted that since the first report was released in 2000 there have been persistent inequities that show up in many of the indicators, none of which are getting better and most of which are in fact getting worse. There have been increases seen in the differences that occur by race, income and education.

Most of the data for the latest report was completed in 2007 when the economy was, at least in theory, doing better.

Commissioner Hoople asked where the mental health picture outlined in the report comes from. Ms. Ciske said there are a total of 38 indicators in the report. She explained that when the Communities Count program was being developed, there was a broad process utilized that captured information from telephone surveys taken of some 1200 people equally distributed across all areas of King County. Technical advisors were focused on finding measures that could be tracked over time, and there were some large forums conducted as part of the process. The goal was to add a picture of the social health of King County to what was known about environmental and economic conditions, which tend to be updated more frequently. No attempt was made to duplicate the kinds of reports generally put out by public health and mental health; the intent was to gain a broad sense of the issues that help people to have a quality of life and good social health. If there is a bias in the report, it is aimed at determining how to prevent problems over the long term.

Molly McNiece, also with Seattle/King County Department of Public Health, said the indicators for mental health include stress, social support, neighborhood social cohesion, and limitations due to disabilities. Those are conditions that set the stage for preventing or alleviating outcome conditions.

Commissioner Hoople commented that veterans returning to the local communities will require help in addressing post-traumatic stress syndrome, TBI and the need in the communities. Ms. McNiece agreed. She said to some degree it is possible to track those conditions through hospital admissions. Specific information regarding veteran status has not been part of the data-gathering process but could be added to future reports.

Ms. Ciske noted that the eastern part of King County as a region is faring better than other regions. Statistically, fewer people are reporting lack of money to buy food. Countywide, more young people reported running out of food than older people. The report indicates significant differences by race and by gender, and especially by income.

With regard to affordable housing, Ms. Ciske pointed out that a large number of people reported paying more than 30 percent of their incomes for housing costs. The trend holds true both for renters and homeowners; more than four in ten people are paying more than they should be for housing. In Bellevue specifically, low-income renters can afford a studio apartment, and median-income renters can afford two-bedroom units according to the formula. There are, however, no affordable units available in Bellevue. The highest number of affordable units in King County are in the southern region, and the lowest number are in the eastern region.

The housing affordability gap in King County is significant. A median-income family should be able to afford a house costing \$250,000, according to the formula. The area median home price, however, was \$455,000 at the time the report was drafted. The current economic problems have carved about 15 percent off the price of the median home in King County, which narrows the gap but not significantly. Those making 70 percent of area median income should be able to afford a starter home at \$175,000, which means the gap is even larger, as it is for those making even less.

Ms. McNiece said during the interviews there were many comments offered regarding transportation challenges. To a large degree, the comments were predicated on the fact that gas prices were at their peak. Many indicated they would be willing to use public transportation to get around, but expressed concern that doing so would significantly increase their commuting time. It was clear during the interviews that the middle income families were struggling and necessarily seeking ways to economize. Where they were choosing to make cuts varied widely; most talked about time to do the things that make their lives more fulfilling. Many talked about the value of having libraries and community centers along with good schools; the need for flexible work schedules and being able to work from home; and the need for a better public transportation infrastructure.

Ms. Ciske reminded the Commissioners that 200 percent of the federal poverty level has traditionally been marked as what a living wage is. It is clear, however, that incomes at that level are not enough. She noted that the report included a chart showing the minimum income needed to purchase the basic necessities without assistance from public programs and comparing those figures against what jobs in the region actually pay. She said since the number of jobs paying the minimum needed is limited, it is very important for government to offer subsidies in areas such as healthcare, child care and housing.

Commissioner Hoople referred to the chart in the middle of page 24 of the report and noted that in King County the number of African-Americans living below the poverty level increased from 19 percent to 29 percent between 1999 and 2008. During the same time period, however, the number of Hispanics and Latinos living below the poverty level increased only from 18 percent to 19 percent.

Ms. Ciske said the child poverty figures are also alarming. As of 2007, there were 56,230 children in King County living below 100 percent of the federal poverty level, and the trend is upward.

With regard to income distribution, Ms. Ciske pointed out that the poorest fifth of the population in 2007 had three percent of the income, while the richest fifth had 49 percent of the income. The remaining three fifths in the middle are all being squeezed; the only real increases are occurring in the top fifth. When the focus is on wealth, the top one percent hold more than a third of the total; the top five percent have almost 60 percent of the total wealth.

Ms. Ciske said the figures relative to freedom from discrimination were not statistically different between the 2004 and 2007 data. In Bellevue, 18.8 percent of the survey respondents reported experiencing some form of discrimination. The highest percentages of reported discrimination were in central Seattle and White Center.

Commissioner Seltzer asked if the figures relate to actual cases of discrimination or only the perception of discrimination. Ms. Ciske said the figures represent self-reported incidents. However, several studies have been done that concluded that self-reporting is very close to actual experience.

Ms. Ciske said the data in the report concerning school readiness was captured in 2008. She noted that within the Bellevue School District, the highest number of students who are not ready in one or more than one category are from the Lake Hills and Sammamish neighborhoods. In all five of the readiness categories, children who attended pre-school scored markedly higher, indicating that school readiness is a modifiable outcome. Outreach needs to be done, but in a way that will be sensitive to the families.

Ms. Ciske said the eastern part of King County is doing a very good job of reducing incidents of major violent crime. She noted that violent crime is down generally in all areas is but quite low in east King County. Motor vehicle thefts, however, have risen.

The Bellevue School District is at the good end of the spectrum when it comes to teen pregnancies. The incidence of teen births is much higher in Seattle and in the southern portion of King County. Teen pregnancies by Latinas has not gone down, however.

The east region does well on a number of the indicators, but not so much when it comes to overweight and obesity. Seattle leads the pack for that indicator. In all areas, overweight rates have remained stable for the most part; the increases have been in the obesity category, which from a health standpoint is not good news.

Ms. Ciske said 8.4 percent of the Bellevue respondents indicated they do not have health insurance. The highest area was in Burien with almost 25 percent. The

differences by race and ethnicity indicate that Latinos are not doing well at all; 49 percent of Latinos indicated they are uninsured. Beginning in 1993, there were declines in the number of uninsured adults; that trend bottomed out by 2002 and has risen again in almost every region to about the 1993 level.

Ms. Ciske said the category of neighborhood and social cohesion is somewhat complicated. The measure refers to the degree to which people feel they can trust the people in their neighborhoods and intervene for the common good. The east region has a significantly higher number of residents who report higher levels of social cohesion.

Ms. Ciske referred last to the category focused on the degree to which people participate in arts and culture through making music, playing instruments, dancing, writing, reading, and participating in arts and crafts. She noted that countywide people report strong activities in the category. What is striking is that there is very little variation by region.

## 7. DISCUSSION

### A. 2009 Human Services Commission Work Plan

Ms. Leslie said the major work items for 2009 will be development of the *2009-2010 Human Services Needs Update*; conducting a public hearing on human services needs in the spring; review of the CDBG applications for 2010; conducting a mid-biennium review of agency contracts; and in the fall conducting a public hearing on the 2010 CDBG funding recommendations. Another major work item will be the review of the two Reserve Fund contracts, Sophia Way and the Severe Weather Shelter.

Other possible agenda topics include updates on state and federal legislative issues; briefings on best practices and promising practices; briefing on service systems, such as emergency services, mental health and substance abuse treatment, homelessness, child care, school readiness, health care, domestic violence, and aging and disabilities; updates regarding the 2-1-1 system and how it is functioning in Bellevue; updates on the fundraising climate for non-profit agencies; presentations on Parks & Community Services activities, including the Cultural Diversity Plan; agency tours, especially new contracts or those where there were issues/questions during the funding review process; updates on changing demographics, including services for immigrants and refugees; and updates on affordable housing from ARCH and the home repair programs.

Ms. Leslie noted that the 2005-2009 Human Services Plan included goals outlining issues to be worked on. They included partnering with other cities in the East King County subregion through the Eastside Human Services Forum to update "Eastside Story: The Changing Face of Need on the Eastside;" continued review of current studies that show how much money the use of prevention services saves compared

to the cost of intervention; updating Outcomes Alignment Group efforts; and promoting a speakers bureau.

Commissioner Huenefeld-Gese stressed the need for the Commission to be kept informed with regard to how state and local budget cuts are leaving service gaps.

Commissioner Hoople suggested that if ARCH conducts another tour of affordable housing in the region the Councilmembers should be encouraged to participate.

Chair Stout thought it would be helpful for the Commission to receive an update regarding progress toward accomplishing the goals of the Ten-Year Plan to End Homelessness. It was agreed consideration should be given to inviting other boards and commissions from neighboring jurisdictions to participate.

8. OLD BUSINESS – None

9. NEW BUSINESS

Commissioner Beighle asked if any new information has been received about new homeless encampments in the city in preparation for the One Night Count of homeless on January 29th. Mr. Adriano said parks staff have been asked to check that out, but as yet there have been no reports received.

10. PETITIONS AND COMMUNICATIONS – None

11. ADJOURNMENT

Chair Stout adjourned the meeting at 8:18 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