

CITY OF BELLEVUE
HUMAN SERVICES COMMISSION
MINUTES

February 5, 2013
6:30 p.m.

Bellevue City Hall
City Council Conference Room 1E-113

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

COMMISSIONERS ABSENT: None

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

GUEST SPEAKERS: None

RECORDING SECRETARY: Gerry Lindsay

1. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 6:33 p.m. by Chair Yantis who presided.

2. ROLL CALL

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

3. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

A. January 8, 2013

A motion to approve the minutes as submitted was made by Commissioner Beighle. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Stout and it carried unanimously.

4. PETITIONS AND COMMUNICATIONS

Xiaoning Jiang, Angela Navas and Annie Cheng invited the Commissioners to attend the annual Youth Link Board Gumbo Night on February 27 from 5:00 to 7:00 p.m. at the home of Sherry and David Grindeland.

Ms. Navas said the Kids Care Coat Drive was held at Crossroads Community Center on January 15, 2013. She said there were 46 volunteers, both youth and adults, participating. In all, 1500 coats were collected, 800 of which have already been

distributed; the remaining coats will be handed over to organizations who will in turn given them out to those who need them.

Ms. Jiang added that coats were collected at a total of 35 sites, 15 sites more than in 2012. The sites included the mini city hall, the city's community centers, private and public schools, local businesses, and several churches.

5. STAFF AND COMMISSION REPORTS

Commissioner Beighle called attention to the One Night Count report included in the Commission packets and pointed out that there had been a five percent increase in the number of homeless persons counted. She said her team conducted some counting outside the established boundary area and found additional homeless persons. Accordingly, the suggestion has been made to the coalition to consider changing the boundary.

Grant Coordinator Joseph Adriano noted that the One Night Count tally for the Eastside collectively was 30 percent higher than it was in 2012.

Commissioner Stout observed that the city has changed a great deal in the seven years since the One Night Count was first conducted in Bellevue. Development has removed options for the homeless in some areas, so they have moved elsewhere. It is not reasonable to continue counting only in the established counting areas. She noted that she had made the point in years past and would continue to do so until changes are made.

Commissioner McEachran reported that he attended the Comprehensive Plan and Transportation Planning meetings and discovered that human services are linked to those two issues in ways he would never have guessed.

Commissioner Stout commented that most of the Commissioners attended the two-hour Comprehensive Plan Workshop. She said the session was attended by a wide cross section of representatives of the city's boards and commissions and served as an opportunity to think about what kind of community Bellevue should be in 2025. She said it will be very interesting to see how things shake out as the work to update the Comprehensive Plan goes forward.

Councilmember Wallace said the Council has concluded that a Citizen Advisory Committee (CAC) should be appointed for the Downtown Livability Study. The committee will include a person from each of the city's boards and commissions.

Councilmember Wallace said the Council at its meeting on February 4 had a conversation about the growing trend of communities effort that is underway. Currently 130th Avenue NE is being studied and it includes an affordable housing component about which the Commission may want to keep apprised.

The efforts concerning planning for light rail continue to move forward. The Council is hoping to get some agreement regarding the land use overlay by the end of the February or March. Pinning down the alignment will follow that.

The Council received a presentation from ARCH regarding the agency's 2013 plans. Councilmember Wallace said it is good that ways are being found to deliver affordable housing units at much lower costs per unit.

King County Councilmember Reagan Dunn gave the City Council a report and among other things talked about the efforts under way to combat human trafficking.

Councilmember Wallace said a list of local organizations funded by Bellevue are being added to the list of groups that will benefit from the GiveBIGDay, the date for which has not yet been determined, but it will be in May. Every effort should be made to highlight the opportunity for funded agencies.

Councilmember Wallace pointed out that by unanimous Council decision human services has been made far more prominent on the city's webpage.

Finally, Councilmember Wallace informed the Commissioners that an article encouraging people to volunteer for human services will appear in the next *It's Your City*.

Commissioner Beighle said she recently was in Olympia and visited with former Commissioner Cyrus Habib. She said she also was able to speak with several legislators about the McCleary decision, which focuses on funding education first. The discussions are all centered on either finding new money or cutting funding for human services in order to give the money to education.

Human Services Planner Alex O'Reilly presented the Commissioners with information that was distributed at three workshops presented by the Washington State Department of Transportation on the topic of I-90 tolling. She noted that feedback can be provided online as well as by email, in writing or in person.

6. DISCUSSION

A. Single Adult Shelter Task Force Report

Human Services Manager Emily Leslie said one result of the Mid-Plan Review of the Ten Year Plan to End Homelessness was the need to take a closer look at the system of providing emergency shelter, particularly for single adults. She said the Funders Group took on the issue by setting up a Task Force headed by Dannette Smith, director of human services for the City of Seattle, Jason Johnson representing South King County, and with her representing North and East King County. The Task Force has been working for the past 18 months and just recently released its report.

Ms. Smith said the governing board was asked to affirm the recommendations that single adult shelters should be an investment priority of the Committee to End Homelessness Funders Group along with housing production, the family initiative, the youth and young adult initiative, the work being done relative to the veterans five-year plan, and the performance measurements. It was acknowledged right up front that there are still many people who are not sheltered in the King County communities; many continue to live in encampments, in tent cities and in vehicles.

Ms. Smith said effort is constantly being put into connecting with those persons who are unsheltered through surveys, outreach strategies, and other ways to encourage them to come in so they can move through the process of becoming self sufficient. From the data collected in 2009 as part of the single homeless needs assessment it was learned that demographically 93 percent of those surveyed were male, 57 percent were people of color, and 60 percent were being treated for some type of mental health issue. In many instances some sense of a disability also served to keep many from being housed.

Street outreach has been proven to be an effective means of engaging unsheltered individuals. Winter shelters also offer the opportunity to engage with people and provide them with assistance in moving toward self sufficiency. Day centers and hygiene centers also serve as contact points.

Ms. Smith said the Task Force members worked consistently to draft the final report, and each left their own territorial tendencies at the door in favor of serving the best interests of the homeless and unsheltered. The group met for a period of 18 months in all. Three areas were specifically focused on: an inventory of shelter, a coordinated entry response, and winter and severe weather shelters.

The charge of the Single Adult Task Force was to assess opportunities for transitioning of folks from the shelter system for single adults to either diversion programs or permanent housing situations. There was agreement early on that it would be necessary to prepare a system for change; to explore where an infusion of resources could result in measurable outcomes; and to acknowledge the important role shelter plays in the Ten-Year Plan. The Task Force was also asked to look at three additional components as part of its work: the needs of the unsheltered; efficiencies that could be found in the existing system; and a variety of different housing models. The final report acknowledges the fact that much still needs to be done to address the needs of those who are unsheltered. In particular, more work waits to be done relative to housing models.

Mr. Johnson said the Governing Board, which has oversight of and directs the Committee to End Homelessness, was asked by the Task Force to include a shelter strategy as part of the Ten-Year Plan. The Ten-Year Plan, which has been active for about seven years, is primarily focused on getting chronically homeless persons off the streets and into housing. Over the time since the plan was initiated, much success has been realized in terms of housing production, but the 5000 units brought

online have not been sufficient to meet the current need. The Task Force sought recognition of that fact from the Governing Board.

Mr. Johnson said the final report from the Task Force includes a single page that lists all of the recommendations. The recommendations are what local jurisdictions and agencies are being asked to carefully consider. Nearly every time the Task Force has made presentations regarding the final report and the recommendations it includes, there have been requests to prioritize the list. In responding to that request, the Task Force first recognized that there are many communities in King County that offer no shelter facilities at all. Accordingly, increasing shelter capacity in the county outside of the City of Seattle heads the prioritized list.

Secondly, the task force found that some persons who spend very long periods of time in shelters are taking up most of the available shelter capacity. To address that issue, outreach and resources need to be focused on assisting long-term stayers in getting out of shelter and into housing.

In order to review the data, it was necessary to define emergency shelter. The Task Force used the definition that most are familiar with, which is the federal definition that refers to a facility with overnight sleeping accommodations aimed at providing temporary shelter for homeless persons. Programs like tent cities and safe parking programs claim to provide shelter, but they do not meet the federal definition, so persons taking part in those programs are counted as unsheltered.

Mr. Johnson said the overall system currently has the capacity to assist 1704 individual adults each night, but 91 percent of the beds are in the city of Seattle. Shelter capacity expands in the winter months but contracts beginning in the spring; during the winter months, almost 700 units of housing come online that then go away in the spring.

Before asking the Governing Board of the Ten Year Plan to think about incorporating shelter as a strategy in the plan, it was necessary to highlight the role shelter plays in the continuum. The Task Force concluded that shelter plays four specific roles: it contributes to a safe, healthy and civil community and society; it provides basic services to increase safety; it provides a safe place for engagement and access to services; and it provides a pathway to housing.

Mr. Johnson said the Task Force sees creating more shelter outside the City of Seattle and getting long-term shelter stayers into permanent housing as equally important; both need to happen at the same time in order to build capacity in the shelter system. It is clear that more beds are needed, and communities need to see the need and help address it. Investments also need to be made in “backdoor” strategies that will get people out of shelters and into housing. Through the Safe Harbors program it is possible for the first time to look at how long people are staying in shelters.

In 2011 more than 7000 individuals were sheltered in King County using the available 1700 beds. For the most part, that statistic indicates that the system is working as designed. Of those served in shelters, half stayed for less than two months. Those who access shelter and continue to access shelter for more than 180 days find it the most difficult to leave. They tend to be older and have a much higher rate of physical and mental disability.

Mr. Johnson said the use of outreach and resources to assist long-term stayers is needed because so many shelter programs do not have case management or service providers. Many such shelters are only open from 9:30 p.m. to 6:00 a.m. Without services to connect with, without someone to help them connect to benefits or housing, the likelihood of seeing reduction in long-term stays is diminished. Investments need to be made in strategies that will create a pathway to housing for those individuals.

Ms. Leslie said one overarching recommendation or policy of the Task Force is that all shelters should become a pathway to housing. All of the shelters on the Eastside have been doing that for a number of years, but the same cannot be said of all shelters in King County. The City of Seattle has released its Seattle Investment Plan which is aimed at guiding investment in homeless services. Recently the Seattle City Council approved an additional \$1.5 million to enhance homeless services for all populations, not just for single adults. Bellevue and other Eastside cities expanded their funding allocations for the Eastside Winter Shelter program and the new day center for homeless persons at the First Congregational Church in Bellevue. In south King County, funding has been expanded for their shelters and day services as well. United Way and King County both stepped forward and added one-time funding that added 135 winter shelter beds; 100 of the beds are in Seattle, and the remaining beds are in a new winter shelter in North Bend that is rotating between three churches. All shelters are being encouraged to adopt the philosophy that a step into a shelter is a step toward being out of homelessness.

Mr. Johnson explained that because the long-term stayers remain for so long in shelters, they are literally using over 75 percent of the available bednights. Ms. Leslie said discussions are under way with those who operate the shelters where some of the long-term stayers are residing to see what it would take to move them into permanent housing situations, and the focus is on strategies and housing models that will work for those who are used to living for long periods of time in shelters. Freeing the capacity will reduce the need to bring new beds online, particularly in Seattle. More beds are clearly needed outside of Seattle.

Ms. Leslie said the Committee to End Homelessness Governing Board did not disagree with any of the recommendations of the Task Force. They pointed out, however, the investment priorities focused on housing production, family initiatives, youth and young adult initiatives, and veterans initiatives, and questioned where the funding would come from to invest in single adults. The Funders Group will need to wrestle with that issue given that no new money is coming in.

Ms. Leslie said the other issue raised by the Governing Board had to do with the unsheltered population, which is quite large in Seattle but also exists on the Eastside. The Governing Board needs to consider if tent cities should come under the definition of shelter, and that issue will need to be resolved.

Ms. Leslie said the report was presented the day before the One Night Count. An article was subsequently written in the Seattle Times that made it sound as though the results of the One Night Count were the impetus for the shift made to single adults. That was not in fact the case. The Governing Board is adding single adults as an investment priority, but not because of how the count came out or because the Ten-Year Plan has not been successful.

Answering a question asked by Commissioner McEachran, Mr. Johnson said shelter is sometimes nothing more than an open door, a warm place to sleep, and possibly a hot meal and does not include any services. Most such shelters revert to their normal functions during the day.

Commissioner McEachran noted that the shelters operating in Bellevue are excellent models of how things should be done and he asked how others can be mentored. Ms. Leslie said it was very helpful to have Congregations for the Homeless and The Sophia Way serving on the Task Force because they were able to give firsthand knowledge of how they move people out of shelter and into housing; those organizations have never had long-term stayers. The networking that took place among the Task Force members will prove to be of very high value. Some of the long-term stayers using shelters in Seattle have been flying under the radar for years; they do not cause trouble, they are not in jail or in a sobering center or an emergency room. The model that has been in place has in fact been to keep the homeless off the streets and to keep them safe; the model did not include services, but it is clear that every shelter needs case management and better tools to get people into housing. Part of the bottleneck is having places to move the chronically homeless into and finding the subsidy funds needed to keep them there. Congregations for the Homeless is using a shared housing model that is proving to be quite successful.

Mr. Johnson commented that adding the single adult investment priority and saying that anyone accessing a shelter is on a pathway to housing will bring to bear a lot of pressures on the initiative to bring more housing units online. There is a great interest in looking at different housing models across the country to see what is working and how units can be created for less cost. For one thing, someone who has been living in a shelter for years probably does not need their own bedroom and kitchen.

Commissioner Stout commented that while the notion of creating housing for all unsheltered individuals is daunting, the money needed is there in Bellevue and on the Eastside; all that is needed is a way to get the message to the very rich.

B. Feedback on 2013-2014 Human Services Needs Update

Ms. O'Reilly called attention to the timeline included in the packet and noted that it was similar to past years. Some 2000 letters have been sent out to Bellevue residents inviting them to take the survey, either by phone or online. A sampling approach for getting information from the faith community will be utilized, and staff are working with Councilmember Wallace on ideas for increasing participation from the business community. In the coming months briefings will be provided to the City Council and some of the city's boards and commissions and feedback will be sought from them. The data collection process will continue through early June.

Ms. O'Reilly noted that the last three Needs Updates have included a focus chapter, with the last two focused on the effects of the recession. She said the decision has been made to have the focus chapter center on the Affordable Care Act.

A draft of the Needs Update, absent the appendices, will be ready for the Commission in late August. The schedule calls for having the draft finalized by the last week of October. In November the Commission will review and approve the final draft. Tweaks will continue to be made up until the document is forwarded to the City Council in January.

Ms. O'Reilly also called attention to the matrix of community conversations that were completed in 2011 that were used for the last report. She asked the Commissioners for suggestions relative to groups or key informants that should be contacted for input.

Commissioner McEachran suggested forming a focus group around the topic of homeless veterans.

Commissioner Beighle said it would be interesting to hear from the Eastside Baby Corner and groups involved with teen health.

Commissioner Plaskon noted that the Needs Update is heavily relied on by other communities and suggested that input from representatives in those communities might be useful.

Commissioner Stout said some baseline information should be gathered relative to physical health and then tracked over time as the Affordable Health Care Act ramps up. The mental health aspect should be expanded beyond just Hero House if possible. Ms. O'Reilly said enrollment for the healthcare exchanged and Medicaid will start in October ahead of full implementation in 2014.

Commissioner Stout proposed that as immigration legislation goes forward it would be good to track what is happening with undocumented populations relative to healthcare. She said SeaMar would be a good group to make contact with. Ms.

Leslie said another group in that category is International Community Health Services, which is expanding into Bellevue from its base of operations in Seattle.

Commissioner Beighle said she would like an update from Therapeutic Health Services on their methadone clinic.

Commissioner Perelman said some information about how things will change under the new marijuana law might be useful to have. Ms. O'Reilly said she has heard from staff at Youth Eastside Services who hold the opinion that they will see a big increase in kids in need of substance abuse services. There is a bill before the legislature that would earmark some of the tax proceeds from marijuana sales for substance abuse treatment.

Commissioner Perelman pointed out that a growing number of persons do not identify themselves with any faith community. She said their opinions need to be heard as well.

7. OLD BUSINESS

Ms. Leslie proposed canceling the February 21 meeting due to the number of Commissioners who will not be able to attend. The Commissioners concurred. Ms. Leslie said the Commission will have two regular meetings in March in addition to two joint meetings with other groups.

8. NEW BUSINESS

Ms. Leslie said the Seattle/King County Coalition on Homelessness, the group that conducts the One Night Count, typically conducts an advocacy workshop following the count. She said one of the workshops will be conducted in Bellevue on February 9 at Sophia's Place at St. Luke's Lutheran Church from 2:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m.

Ms. Leslie reported that she has been asked to serve on the King County Health and Human Services Transformation Panel that is focused on creating a plan for integrating health reform, public health and human services. Representatives from a number of provider agencies, King County and various cities will also serve as members of the panel. The panel members have been appointed by the King County executive and the group is charged with having a report completed by June 1.

Mr. Adriano reported that Helen Leuzzi, executive director of Sophia Way for many years, has retired. An interim executive director has been appointed and that person is working to keep the organization's relationships with the cities going.

Commissioner Stout expressed an interest in being appointed to the Downtown Livability Initiative Citizen Advisory Committee.

9. PETITIONS AND COMMUNICATIONS - None

10. ADJOURNMENT

Chair Yantis adjourned the meeting at 8:31 p.m.

Secretary to the Human Services Commission

Date

Chairperson of the Human Services Commission

Date