

CITY OF BELLEVUE
HUMAN SERVICES COMMISSION
MINUTES

March 19, 2013
6:30 p.m.

Bellevue City Hall
City Council Conference Room 1E-113

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

COMMISSIONERS ABSENT: Chairperson Yantis

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 6:31 p.m. by Commissioner Perelman 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. STAFF AND COMMISSION REPORTS

Commissioner Beighle reported that she attended the Friends of Youth fundraiser luncheon where they raised over \$368,000. The event was very well attended.

Commissioner Stout said she attended the Child Haven luncheon. Nearly 1000 persons attended and they raised over \$600,000. The main speaker was a man who had been brought to the organization at the age of two, who lived in many different foster homes, and who is currently the assistant track coach at UCLA.

Human Services Manager Emily Leslie noted that she had also attended the Friends of Youth Luncheon and had attended the Youth Eastside Services breakfast earlier in

the day. The speaker was Christopher Kennedy Lawford who spoke about his life in recovery. She said she did not know how much the event raised.

5. DISCUSSION

A. Joint Commission Meeting: Follow-up & Preparation for March 28, 2013, Meeting

Ms. Leslie reminded the Commissioners that a joint meeting was previously held with the human services boards and commissions from Bellevue, Kirkland, Redmond and Issaquah. There was interest expressed in getting the groups together again after the respective funding processes. Staff from the four jurisdictions have been meeting to brainstorm ideas; they met most recently a week ago to develop the agenda for the joint meeting scheduled for March 28.

Grant Coordinator Joseph Adriano said much of the drive to have the four cities working together has revolved around ways to make joint funding decisions. In the most recent joint staff meeting there was agreement to keep things open ended so the commissioners can determine what the agenda for the rest of the year should look like. Human Services Planner Alex O'Reilly will kick off the discussion with a review of the Needs Update which has elements of interest to all Eastside communities. Ms. Leslie will follow that up with a review of regional issues. The floor will then be opened for a general discussion regarding the direction the joint boards and commissions should take.

Ms. Leslie said the issue of funding will undoubtedly come up and suggested the Commission should discuss it first given that the other bodies have not been established for as long and therefore are less experienced.

Commissioner Perelman noted that in past conversations the Commission has expressed caution about sharing funding. There are a number of different processes and there are no guarantees that one city will actually give funds to another. Bellevue certainly has more funds to allocate, and the Commission has decided to focus those dollars on certain areas. In any case, the other cities should not expect Bellevue to pick up the slack and fund what they cannot afford to fund on their own.

Commissioner Bruels asked what the relative commitment to human services funding is for the other cities and if they have experienced funding cuts over the last few years. Ms. Leslie said the level of funding for each jurisdiction is determined during the respective budget cycles. Kirkland staff approach their Council every two years with a Plan A and a Plan B. Issaquah is currently investigating the idea of establishing a funding formula along the lines of what Bellevue has. For the most part, all of the cities have increased funding for human services.

Commissioner Stout said there are broader issues at stake than just funding. There is no wall separating the various Eastside cities. The issues are regional by their very

nature and they should be treated as such by having all the jurisdictions work together. She said it is irritating to try to count the number of people served in Bellevue who may go to school in Redmond and who have family in more than one city.

Ms. Leslie said there have been attempts over the years to take the global view, beginning with a couple of pilot agencies funded through a pooled contract. The agencies, instead of having four contracts with four cities had only a single contract. Currently there are 17 contracts administered by Bellevue for all of the cities.

Mr. Adriano added that the approach was inaugurated as an administrative efficiency for the agencies and the smaller cities. For example, the cities of Kenmore and Sammamish have no human services staff; in both cases the persons in charge of budgeting and monitoring are assistant city clerks. The pooled contracts are structured to monitor the number of units provided to residents of the individual cities based on the percentage of the total funding each jurisdiction provides. The approach can be limiting in that programs are not allowed to serve more residents of a particular city than they are contracted to serve, even where need can be demonstrated. In the five years since the pooled approach was launched many have wished the approach used was similar to the ARCH program in which the member cities contribute but where the projects are located in where there is opportunity and where it makes the most sense. Ms. Leslie noted that ARCH works on a parity formula that highlights for the member jurisdictions what their fair share contribution should be.

Commissioner Plaskon suggested it would be interesting to compare the allocations made by the individual cities acting on their own with the allocations made through the pooled funding approach. Ms. Leslie said no formal analysis has been done, but she pointed out that the Commission during its allocations process does look at what the other cities are doing.

Answering a question asked by Commissioner Beighle, Mr. Adriano said if pooled funding approach involved a true single pot of money to which all the jurisdictions contribute, there would not need to be any differentiation in the contract by residents served by each city. The issue, however, is that those who put in the most want to see their dollars serve their residents proportionally.

Commissioner Stout suggested that a population-based formula would form a logical base for equitable distributions. Ms. Leslie said when the pooled funding project was kicked off, representatives from each of the cities met together to review the applications. They then reported back to their respective commissions. That approach was only used once because it was complicated to carry out. It would be even more difficult now that there are 17 contracts for the pooled funding.

Commissioner McEachran said the trust and the integrity Bellevue's human services approach has created over the years is something that should be shared with the

other jurisdictions. That is not to say that the other jurisdictions should be allowed in to take over the kitchen. There should, however, be an opportunity periodically for the various human service boards and commissions to get together to share ideas and comments.

Commissioner Bruels said the groups could work together through a variety of methods. One way to keep in touch with the other cities would be to share agendas, and where an issue of interest to the Commission is going to be discussed, a representative could be sent to hear the conversation. Beyond that the leadership of each group could get together twice a year or possibly quarterly. Having the full groups meet together regularly could also be done possibly once or twice a year. At the far end of the spectrum would be a process by which the groups meet together to make funding decisions during the allocation process.

Commissioner Plaskon said a joint process certainly could build in efficiencies and make things easier for the agencies, but every effort should be made to avoid having Bellevue become the funding giant for the region. He added that the Commission could benefit from seeing a printout of what the other cities elected to fund during the last funding cycle.

Commissioner Beighle said she has full and complete trust in the process that has been developed by Bellevue, which includes going to great lengths in reviewing all contracts. It is apparent the other cities do not follow the same course and as a result it does not take them very long.

Commissioner Stout suggested that at the joint meeting on March 28 the group should look for common big issues. Those issues should be tracked jointly throughout the year so that each group is hearing the same information at the same time. Things might have turned out differently had the groups all worked jointly on homeless-related housing issues in identifying solutions.

Answering a question asked by Commissioner Plaskon, Ms. Leslie said as things stand, should the joint groups decide funding should be based on population, Bellevue's share would still be far greater than the other jurisdictions.

Commissioner Stout pointed out that one reason Bellevue has so much more to put into funding human services is because the city has a large tax base. She added that a lot of the tax revenues come from the pockets of people who live elsewhere on the Eastside.

Ms. Leslie stated that there has been and continues to be a great deal of collaboration at the staff level. There is, however, a disparity in funding levels between jurisdictions.

Commissioner Bruels asked how powerful it would be for the joint commissions to visit personally the various city councils to talk about funding issues. Ms. Leslie

stressed that the politics are different in every city. Commissioner Bruels allowed that the collective could not force anyone to listen, but it could certainly communicate the message.

Commissioner Stout shared that she had lunch earlier on with former Bellevue Councilmember Nan Campbell. During the conversation Ms. Campbell talked about how hard it was to get the city and the City Council in the early 1980s to even consider having a human services commission. Their thinking was that there were no human service issues in Bellevue. Ultimately good decisions were made. Bellevue should remember that it is farther along than some of its neighbors.

Ms. Leslie said she has for many years been encouraging staff from the other cities to urge their decision makers to form human service commissions. Bellevue does not have more dollars to allocate because staff lobbies the City Council; it has more because the city has a Commission. The other thing every city needs is a needs assessment, which is the documentation for making funding decisions.

There was agreement to explain to the collective group on March 28 the formula Bellevue uses to determine how much funding will be available each year for human services as one tool in the kit, and to stress how important the Needs Update is in determining how to allocate the funds. It was also agreed to talk about how working together across jurisdictional boundaries will better serve the collective communities while making the work of the agencies easier and more efficient. Ms. Leslie reminded the Commissioners that the agenda does not anticipate focusing solely on funding issues.

Ms. Leslie said one thing the Bellevue Human Services Commission does is develop panel discussions from time to time to learn more about specific issues and programs. She said her counterparts in the neighboring jurisdictions have expressed an interest in having some of those panel discussions during joint meetings so everyone can benefit. Ms. O'Reilly added that the groups have been invited to the basic training event on April 25 regarding human trafficking.

6. OLD BUSINESS

Ms. Leslie asked the Commissioners to comment on the joint meeting held with the Planning Commission on March 13.

Commissioner Perelman said there was a great deal of information shared. There was a lot of public comment, all of which was very insightful.

Ms. Leslie said she found the comments made by Steven Kasner of the East Bellevue Community Council about housing vacancy rates was compelling. He noted that empty homes could be used for transitional housing.

Commissioner Perelman said that the way some of the data was interpreted by ARCH director Arthur Sullivan could be interpreted in other ways and draw different conclusions.

Commissioner Bruels said he found the Planning Commission members to be fairly skeptical about the housing information that was shared.

Commissioner Plaskon suggested it would be beneficial for the Human Services Commission to annually draft and forward to the Planning Commission a memo outlining housing and other issues being encountered in the city. Ms. O'Reilly said a good first step would be to send to the Planning Commission the Needs Update once it is completed.

Commissioner Stout asked what is known about the next CDBG allocation from the federal government. Ms. Leslie said the latest information is that with the sequestration there will be a five percent reduction. She said she was continuing to monitor the situation through the National Community Development Association.

Ms. O'Reilly said the focus groups and community conversations are continuing as part of the process to update the Needs Update. She said the online and telephone surveys have been completed and the information should be available in a month or so.

Ms. O'Reilly said she has also been participating in the focus groups for the Downtown Livability Initiative. She urged the Commissioners to participate as well.

Commissioner Stout said after an informal conversation with Camron Parker and another with two Councilmembers, nothing whatsoever has happened with regard to making appointments to the livability CAC. When the issue came before the Council, a Councilmember questioned why the Human Services Commission and the Arts Commission should be involved in the study at all. The scuttlebutt is that several attempts have been made to hire outside consultants, but everyone contacted to date has had conflicts of interest, so a firm from Chicago is being considered.

7. NEW BUSINESS

Commissioner Beighle asked if it would be possible to get The Landing on the list of organizations that could apply for emergency funding. Mr. Adriano said the reserve fund criteria is based on the funding cycle timeline and emerging needs. The fund is not widely advertised because it is limited in size and as such it is not tapped very often.

Ms. Leslie said it has come to her attention that both Chair Yantis and Commissioner Perelman will not be able to attend the April 16 Commission meeting. She proposed having just the one meeting in April and the suggestion was agreed to by the Commissioners.

Mr. Adriano reported that Renewal Food Bank has officially spun off from World Impact Network. The program has not changed, just the organizational structure.

8. PETITIONS AND COMMUNICATIONS - None

9. ADJOURNMENT

Commissioner Perelman adjourned the meeting at 8:07 p.m.

Secretary to the Human Services Commission

Date

Chairperson of the Human Services Commission

Date