

CITY OF BELLEVUE
HUMAN SERVICES COMMISSION
MINUTES

March 16, 2010
6:30 p.m.

Bellevue City Hall
City Council Conference Room 1E-113

COMMISSIONERS PRESENT: Chairperson Huenefeld Gese, Commissioners
Bruels, Hoople, Plaskon, Stout

COMMISSIONERS ABSENT: Commissioners Beighle, Yantis

STAFF PRESENT: Emily Leslie, Alex O'Reilly, Joseph Adriano,
Cynthia Sessoms, Department of Parks &
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 Chair Huenefeld Gese who presided.

2. ROLL CALL

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

3. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

A. February 18, 2010

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

4. PETITIONS AND COMMUNICATIONS – None

5. STAFF AND COMMISSION REPORTS

Commissioner Bruels reported that he and Human Services Planner Alex O'Reilly attended the recent Time Banking presentation. He said he was very impressed with the grass roots approach to community solving problems. Around the country, communities that have started time banking have met with great success.

Commissioner Hoople said he attended the King County Veterans Advisory Board meeting earlier in the day. New officers were elected for the new year and he said he was tapped to serve as vice-chair.

Chair Huenefeld Gese said she attended the Kindering Center lunch on March 4. It was an excellent event with a lot of good people involved. She said on March 5 she attended the Youth Link lunch at the South Bellevue Community Center where the main focus was a presentation on not texting while driving.

Human Services Manager Emily Leslie said she had attended the YWCA luncheon earlier in the day at the Meydenbauer Center. The event was very well attended. Two additional luncheons are planned.

Grant Coordinator Joseph Adriano said two funding workshops have been held for the upcoming application process. There were 17 cities involved. It was clear that the north and east cities that have already been through one round of the HSConnect process are more comfortable with the procedure. A meeting with the south county cities has been called for March 17 in Seatac.

6. PUBLIC HEARING

A. Human Services Needs and Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Funds

Motion to open the public hearing was made by Commissioner Hoople. Second was by Commissioner Plaskon and the motion carried unanimously.

Ms. Farlis Lewis with the Minor Home Repair Program of Senior Services thanked the Commission for its past support of the program. She said the joint application process is going to make the work of the agency much easier. She said to date in 2010 the program has served double the number of clients it served at the same point in 2008 and 2009. The increased demand is impacting the program's available funding. If the trend continues, the program will run out of money. Every suburban city along with Seattle and King County is looking at reducing their budget allocations. The team is working diligently seeking additional funding from private foundations and corporations, but that work is not going overly well. United Way will be making a \$200,000 cut in its allocation to Senior Services. Most of the major funding agencies are putting an emphasis on food and basic needs, which is pushing housing and housing repair to the side.

Ms. Joan Eads with Eastside Legal Assistance Program thanked the Commission for its past support. She said free legal aid is needed more in Bellevue currently than ever before. The downturn in the economy has triggered an increase in the number of requests for civil legal aid by low-income residents on the Eastside. In 2009, requests for legal aid by the survivors of domestic violence increased by 65 percent compared to 2008. Increases have been seen in the number of bankruptcies and

cases of landlord/tenant issues. The agency has been creative in its attempts to respond to the increased demand. A large recruitment effort brought in many more volunteer attorneys; some small local grants were received to help train the new volunteer attorneys. Three new clinics have been opened as a result, two of which are in Bellevue. A report released in June 2009 by the Washington State Office of Civil Legal Aid outlined the fact that the area is overwhelmed in terms of bankruptcies, wills, landlord/tenant issues, foreclosures, and issues of domestic violence. The state is not able to meet the needs of all those who require civil legal aid. In 2009 the program served 299 Bellevue residents in the advice clinics; 90 Bellevue residents with direct representation; and 621 Bellevue residents with other legal services. The agency is working to diversify its funding base, but the battle is an uphill one.

Ms. Chris Brandt with AtWork! thanked the Commission for the work it does to help make the community a better place to live, especially for citizens living with significant disabilities. She thanked the Commission specifically for the support it has given to AtWork! over the years. The economic recession has impacted the agency in significant ways: the number of resources available to people; the number of hours of services they can receive; and the number of persons who can be served. In 2009 a total of 237 people were served, 79 of which were Bellevue residents. Only 24 new people were brought in instead of the hoped-for 40. After high school, people with both cognitive and physical disabilities who require one-on-one support and who do not have jobs are falling through the cracks. Those without jobs have significant impacts on their families in addition to suffering from isolation and a lack of purpose. State funding has begun to dry up for those who do not qualify for the federal home and community based waiver. The down economy is causing many to lose their jobs, and people with disabilities are often the first ones to be let go. In 2008, only five people paced by AtWork! lost their jobs, but in 2009 16 persons did; to date in 2010 there have already been 11 people who lost their jobs. The program was able to place 20 new people in jobs in both 2008 and 2009, primarily because of the efforts of the community liaison funded by Bellevue. Because of the recession, more high school students with disabilities will be graduating with no services, which will cause the number of adults sitting at home to rise. AtWork! is continuing to provide services to those who lose their services and is conducting fundraising events and seeking additional sources of income. The community liaison is making a difference in getting volunteers on board; in 2008, 36 people volunteered, and in 2009, 90 people volunteered. During 2008, 14 new employers decided to hire persons with disabilities, and eight new employers signed on in 2009. The funding allocation from United Way to the agency has been cut drastically, and fundraising efforts are under way to replace those dollars. Bellevue dollars are leveraged to the greatest extent possible.

Ms. Mary Ellen Zemla with the VIBES program thanked the Commission for its continued support of the program and the students who benefit. She said the program has seen impacts from the economic recession. Some volunteers have been gained, some of whom are out of work and thus have more time on their hands;

on the other hand, some volunteers have been lost. The search is always on for new volunteers. There has been an increase in the number of students qualifying for free and reduced lunch. The growing diversity in Bellevue is clearly being reflected in the schools and in the number of matches being made with volunteers. Between 2008 and 2009 there was an increase in the number of one-on-one matches for African American, Hispanic and Asian students, and a decrease in the number of one-on-one matches for Caucasian students. A new program called Legacy Leadership Initiative is being piloted in response to the performance gap for African American, Hispanic and South Asian students; the program targets students during their middle school years and brings them together with like-faced community leaders. The mentors meet with the students for full-day workshops three times per year. The goal is to provide strong role models who will inspire students to set goals for themselves and to stay motivated through high school and on to college. The program is being initiated in stages. The schools with the highest percentage of free and reduced lunch students have the highest number of volunteers. To date, the VIBES program has not experienced a significant funding reduction. The Lake Washington, Issaquah, North Bend and Northshore school districts are all starting their own volunteer programs modeled on the VIBES program.

Mr. John Edwards with Hopelink thanked the Commission for its past support of the Hopelink Employment program. He said when the economy began to fail there was a scramble to adjust. The shock has worn off and people are beginning to understand the need to have different kinds of skill sets and educational backgrounds to build their long-time employment plans. The majority of clients in the Hopelink Employment program are single female heads of household. The general Family Development program has worked with a number of women whose husbands have left them. Many of the women have been stay-at-home moms who must all of a sudden find their way back into the jobs scene while continuing to care for their children. Some of them at the same time are recovering from abusive relationships.

Ms. Terry Pottmeyer with Friends of Youth pointed out that the significant amount of support the city gives the agency is appreciated and is positively impacting youth and young adults in the community. The Healthy Start program for young people who become parents under the age of 21 provides parent education and support home visits for up to three years. The Landing, the only overnight shelter for homeless young adults on the Eastside, serves youth between the ages of 18 and 24 and is now open five days a week. The street outreach van travels throughout the area assisting homeless youth with clothing, blankets, first aid, bus tickets, hygiene supplies and referral information. The transitional living programs offer support to young adults between the ages of 18 and 24 who need extra help finding safe housing and case management. The agency operates two emergency shelters for homeless youth between the ages of 11 and 17 who are experiencing family crises; one of the shelters is located in Bellevue. The Foster Care program develops foster homes and makes placements. The economic recession has increased the number of youths experiencing homelessness. The overnight emergency shelter operates at or beyond capacity most nights. In response to the increased need, the agency is

actively seeking ways to create a drop-in center for homeless youth and young adults during the daytime, and to offer shelter services seven nights a week; those services are currently offered only five nights a week. The street outreach program has seen an increase in the number of contacts with homeless youth and young adults. The programs offered by Friends of Youth directly address the Commission's goal areas. The state's funding to the agency for the shelter programs were cut \$100,000 in 2009; that affected the ability to offer case management support. In general, the agency has experienced a decrease in funding across the board.

Ms. Ellen Hagenauer with Catholic Community Services thanked the Commission for its past support of the agency's programs. With regard to Harrington House, a transitional housing program for pregnant women and women with very young children, she said the program began in 2001 and serves on average about 20 women per year. Between 50 and 60 percent of the clients are successful after they exit the program.

Ms. Audrey O'Neal said she was a client of Harrington House who has found success after going through the program. She said there are not enough places to go for pregnant or homeless women, most of whom find it difficult to find employment when pregnant. The facility is welcoming and very appropriate for children, and everyone works hard to help the clients find homes of their own. She said she found Harrington House when she was pregnant, had no money, had no spouse, and was dealing with a mental illness. She said she received love and support at Harrington House and gained a foundation.

Ms. Erica Horn with Hero House has hit some rocky places financially but has managed to keep its doors open. She reported that because the city works to bring agencies together to address issues, Hero House is working collaboratively with Therapeutic Health Services. The larger and stable organization is helping a struggling young organization find its way. Talks are under way with Youth In Action about possibly starting a youth program that could happen at the clubhouse in the evenings. The clubhouse supports adults with mental illnesses living in the community. Currently, about 85 percent of the clients are from Bellevue. Outreach efforts to the smaller and rural communities that have no such services of their own are under way. Transportation is offered twice a day by a volunteer driver. The employment program continues to be strong, and King County has stepped up with an offer to partner with the program. One issue facing the agency is the need for a better facility. The current month-to-month arrangement could be ended at any time.

Motion to close the public hearing was made by Commissioner Stout. Second was by Commissioner Hoople and the motion carried unanimously.

Commissioner Stout said she was relieved to hear that Hero House is keeping its head above water. She said it would be interesting to know if one of the large Rotary clubs could be interested in working with the organization towards finding a new

facility. She said she has visited the site several times and continues to be amazed at what they are accomplishing.

Ms. Leslie reminded the Commissioners that no applications for new CDBG capital projects will be accepted as there will not be any new money coming in. There could be, however, other ways the city could help.

Ms. Leslie informed the Commissioners that she attended the United Way Community Building committee meeting earlier in the day. At the meeting it was stated that the organization is starting to call agencies that are going to experience major reductions in the upcoming funding cycle. The Commission likely will begin to hear soon from agencies and programs that will be receiving less money from United Way.

7. DISCUSSION

A. Update on State of Washington Early Learning Plan

Ms. O'Reilly informed the Commission that following the close of the 2009 State legislative session, Governor Gregoire commissioned three organizations to work together to develop an early learning plan. The organizations were the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction, the Department of Early Learning, and Thrive By Five, a public/private partnership concerned with increasing school readiness. The plan was developed and placed on the Governor's desk in December 2009.

Ms. O'Reilly said much of the attention given to early learning over the last four years has produced a number of programs, including home visiting and the creation of the Department of Early Learning. There has been consensus that in order to prevent downstream issues and problems, working with kids and families needs to be done sooner rather than later. Parents are the first teachers of children, so it is vitally important to have family and caregiver support even before birth.

Governor Gregoire has an ongoing agenda in terms of funding and early learning services, including increasing the number of slots for the state equivalent of Head Start, and a statewide assessment for kindergarten students. The stimulus package created a year and a half ago included funds for early learning for states that had plans in place, and the Governor's planning was in part based on positioning the state to receive the dollars.

Ms. O'Reilly provided the Commissioners with copies of a summary of the recommendations for the plan that the Governor wanted to have in place by December 2009. The recommendations include more funding for ECAP slots, and making sure that there is more money for full-day kindergarten.

The team from the three organizations that developed the plan conducted a number of public information sessions across the state to gain public input on components of

the plan. There were three meetings in the King County area that were fairly well attended, though everyone concurs that the short timeframe cannot be considered to be a true representation of community buy-in. Following the delivery of the plan to the Governor, the Department of Early Learning took the lead in taking another stab at getting information out to the public for additional comment. People can comment on the plan by filling out an online survey found at the website for the Department of Early Learning. Local early learning coalitions throughout the state have been asked to help conduct public comment forums or focus groups.

The plan acknowledges that physical, mental, oral health and nutrition all should be part of the Early Learning Plan. The plan also includes recognition of the importance of training early learning professionals. Making sure that schools are ready and more welcoming to families with children aged birth to five is also a tenet of the plan.

Ms. O'Reilly also provided the Commissioners with copies of a letter to Dr. Betty Hyde from the Department of Early Learning, Nina Auerbach, the director of Thrive By Five, and Randy Doren, State Superintendent of Public Instruction from the Eastside Human Services Forum. She noted that the Eastside Human Services Forum has for the past four years included early learning as a priority area in its legislative agenda, and the letter is in support of the plan.

A collaboration of United Way, SOAR, and the FACES groups around King County has written and sent around a letter to a number of contacts who work with parents or caregivers. The letter includes a series of questions to be asked of parents or caregivers aimed at determining ways the state could help them. The deadline is April 7. The comments will be compiled and forwarded to the State by April 14.

Commissioner Stout pointed out that the work that has led up to the development of the plan has been under way for six or seven years. Hopefully the effort will mean that down the road the state will be more carefully aligned with a set of goals and priorities.

Commissioner Stout said one concern she has had with the plan is the fact that some of the kindergarten to three elements are more completely flushed out than the birth to three element, which it is understood, based on brain research, to be far more important.

Commissioner Stout reported that on April 20 one of the nation's premier brain researchers will make a presentation at the Healthy Start luncheon.

8. OLD BUSINESS

Ms. Leslie said she would glean comments made at the public hearing and help draft talking points for Chair Huenefeld Gese to share with the City Council.

9. NEW BUSINESS

Ms. Leslie informed the Commissioners that at the next meeting a presentation on disability services will be given.

Ms. O'Reilly provided the Commissioners with a flyer regarding the Easy Rider Connector service. Residents can call the number on the flyer to arrange for a van to pick them up at home and taken them to anywhere shown on the route map.

Ms. O'Reilly noted that Hopelink was able to hire a mobility coordinator using federal transit money. They have developed a project in which people can come in and on a one-to-one basis talk about where they want to go and get information about how they might get to those destinations. She shared with the Commission copies of a flyer advertising the program.

Ms. O'Reilly provided the Commissioners with a summary of a complicated report put out by the Puget Sound Regional Council called Transportation 2040. She allowed that there are some human services elements included in the report, which is out for public comment.

Commissioner Stout informed the Commissioners that a Sustainable Communities Workshop will be held at Mercer View on June 3. Ms. Leslie said the Eastside Human Services Forum conducts an educational event each year. This year the target will be newly elected officials with information about how human services strengthens communities and social sustainability.

10. PETITIONS AND COMMUNICATIONS – None

11. ADJOURNMENT

Chair Huenefeld Gese adjourned the meeting at 8:09 p.m.

Secretary to the Human Services Commission

Date

Chairperson of the Human Services Commission

Date