

CITY OF BELLEVUE
HUMAN SERVICES COMMISSION
MINUTES

March 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, Camron Parker, 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 6:30 p.m. by Chair Yantis who presided.

2. ROLL CALL

Upon the call of the roll, all Commissioners were present

3. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

A. January 15, 2013

Chair Beighle referred to the fifth paragraph from the bottom on page 9 and asked to have it reworded to read "Chair Beighle said she could see how joint funding decisions could be challenging."

Commissioner Stout pointed out a typographical spelling error in the fourth paragraph from the bottom on page 9.

A motion to approve the minutes as amended was made by Chair Beighle. The motion was seconded by Commissioner McEachran and it carried unanimously.

B. February 5, 2013

Commissioner Bruels noted that the minutes indicated he was present for the meeting when in fact he was not.

A motion to approve the minutes as amended was made by Commissioner McEachran. The motion was seconded by Chair Beighle and it carried unanimously.

4. PETITIONS AND COMMUNICATIONS -- None

5. STAFF AND COMMISSION REPORTS

Chair Beighle asked if she should write up her notes from the Eastside Legal Assistance Program visit. Human Services Planner Alex O'Reilly said she would welcome the information. She noted that many of the agencies will be submitting information via the providers survey which hopefully will be ready to go live in early May, but all data from all sources will be valuable. Chair Beighle said she was very impressed by the work being done by the agency, particularly their training programs.

Commissioner Perelman said the agency staff pointed out that if they had more funding they could take on 15 to 20 more critical cases. The staff are passionate about what they do, as are the volunteers.

Answering a question asked by Commissioner Bruels, Chair Beighle said the agency does handle immigration issues but they are not given top priority.

Commissioner Stout pointed out that the Commission has conservatively increased funding for the agency by a few percentage points each funding cycle, but the amount of work provided in the community far exceeds what the additional funding pays for.

Ms. O'Reilly provided the Commissioners with flyers announcing a workshop slated for April 25 on human trafficking, as well as copies of an article from the *Bellevue Reporter* about the prostitution ring that was found operating in Bellevue and Kirkland.

Ms. O'Reilly also noted that King County Metro has established an advisory council to explore instituting a low-income fare. That has come about at the request of some King County Council members. After the free ride zone in Seattle ended, there were many homeless advocates who raised awareness about the number of persons negatively impacted, most of whom were using the free ride to get access to services. King County Metro staff were directed to put together an advisory panel to come up with some options, and the Eastside Human Services Forum was asked to provide a representative. Two meetings have been held to date, and updates will be provided as more happens.

6. DISCUSSION

A. Bellevue Comprehensive Plan Update Discussion

Human Services Manager Emily Leslie said the timeline for the Comprehensive Plan update is continuing to be worked out. The role the Commission is expected to play is focused on the goals and policies of the Human Services Element. A joint meeting between the Human Services Commission and the Planning Commission is scheduled for March 13, the focus of which will be the Housing Element.

Senior Planner Camron Parker reminded the Commissioners that the Comprehensive Plan is the city's main policy planning document for all of its functions and services. The various chapters in the document address just about everything the city does. The document sets the vision for the next 20 to 30 years, and it is updated every seven to ten years. With regard to the update that is underway, not much is expected by way of wholesale changes. The policies will be reviewed to make sure they are staying contemporary.

Mr. Parker said during the last few months city staff have been working through the scoping process. Information has been put together from the city's boards and commissions as well as from the public. The next step will be to take the information to the City Council and seek formal direction.

Answering a question asked by Commissioner Perelman, Mr. Parker said the materials that will be provided to the Council will also be provided to the Commission.

Commissioner Stout pointed out that the picture on the first page of the Housing Element is of two homes that no longer exist and a third that is an eyesore for its neighborhood. She suggested the picture should be updated.

Mr. Parker said the Housing Element has four sections: the Neighborhood Quality and Vitality section covers housing diversity and quality; the Housing Opportunity section talks about opportunities for increasing the housing supply; the Affordable Housing section is focused on housing affordability; and the Special Needs section is focused on the housing needed by special needs groups. During the scoping process, comments were made relative to housing diversity and size, about housing affordability, and special needs housing.

Chair Beighle called attention to policy HO-36 on page 63 of the Housing Element and asked if the city actually participates in relocation assistance to low-income households whose housing may be displaced by condemnation or city-initiated code enforcement. Mr. Parker said the city does indeed follow the policy language in cases where condemnation or code enforcement displaces low-income residents, but allowed that neither happens very often.

Commissioner Bruels noted that a number of players, including private sector players, were involved in the Andrew's Glen project. It is clear that the model for funding and orchestrating affordable housing projects has become more complex over time. It should be highlighted that it is not just government organizations that are behind affordable housing anymore. He said he could see policy HO-32 being used to empower the city to act as a facilitator in addition to being a funder of affordable housing projects.

Answering a question asked by Ms. Leslie, Mr. Parker said at one time the city required housing projects in the downtown to include a percentage of affordable units. The requirement has since been repealed but there remain certain incentives for providing affordable units. Such requirements and incentives are not, however, part of the Comprehensive Plan.

Mr. Parker called attention to the language of policy HO-29 and commented that while the downtown was at one time the primary focus for affordable housing units, there is now a need to also encourage affordable units in part parts of the city, particularly the Bel-Red corridor.

Commissioner Stout suggested it might be appropriate to revise the policy language to encourage the development of affordable units citywide. Chair Yantis pointed out that policy HO-25 essentially does that. Mr. Parker clarified that HO-25 was intended to put the focus on the downtown area.

Answering a question asked by Chair Beighle regarding policy HO-28, Mr. Parker said while the city does in fact offer incentives, developers have not been quick to take advantage of them. The policy language for the Bel-Red corridor also includes incentives for affordable housing. He proposed that the topic would be a good one to bring up at the joint meeting with the Planning Commission when there will be housing experts participating.

Commissioner Stout asked if Bellevue has anything on its books that encourages or allows accessory dwelling units. Mr. Parker said the city allows attached but not detached accessory dwelling units. Ms. O'Reilly said the topic is one that has been of great interest to the Network on Aging; that group is currently advocating in favor of allowing detached accessory dwelling units as well as a way to increase the stock of affordable housing units for older adults. Commissioner Stout said she would support having the Commission officially agree with the Network on Aging on that point.

Chair Beighle asked if the Housing Element would be an appropriate place to include language calling for the provision of shelter facilities. Ms. Leslie said policy HO-39 addresses that, though it could be more clearly defined.

Mr. Parker agreed that the Special Needs section does not clearly define what is meant by special needs housing.

Commissioner Stout said the term “special needs” often is equated to persons with disabilities and the like. The same as used in the current Housing Element may in fact be a holdover of that definition. It would be better to use a broader term. There should also be some language included somewhere that indicates the need to provide shelter, special needs housing and associated services is a regional issue in which Bellevue has a role to play but is not the only player.

Ms. Leslie pointed out that within Bellevue there are quite a few adult family homes and group homes, both of which fall into the special needs category but are not specifically called out in the current policy language.

Grant Coordinator Joseph Adriano commented that the last time the Department of Housing and Urban Development reviewed Bellevue’s fair housing strategy, they specifically called out the fact that there is no policy language regarding preventing discrimination. Discrimination is called out in the Human Services Element but not in the Housing Element.

Commissioner Beighle asked if the term "all members of the community" as used in the Housing Element goal include people who work in Bellevue but who do not live in Bellevue. The overview section goes on to reference people who call Bellevue "home" without defining exactly what is meant by that. She noted that there are many who work in Bellevue who cannot afford to live in Bellevue. Chair Yantis pointed out that the section pertains to housing in the city and by inference to residents of the city. Mr. Parker said it takes a combination of housing type and housing affordability to make it possible for folks who work in Bellevue to also live in Bellevue.

Commissioner Perelman noted that the overview section references downtown midrise condominiums, which is out of date given that all of the condominiums in the downtown are in highrise structures. Commissioner Stout pointed out that a lot of factual updating is needed relative to the first four or five pages of the Housing Element.

Commissioner McEachran commented on the fact that senior affordable housing fits into the special needs category. He said most senior housing in Bellevue costs as much as \$5000 per month, and many seniors find they must move far to the south in order to find something they can afford and the services they need.

Commissioner Beighle suggested that in addition to the downtown there should be some focus in the element on housing in the Bel-Red corridor, particularly affordable housing.

Mr. Parker said the special needs section has language that says housing for people with special needs should be sited to protect residential neighborhoods from adverse

impacts and avoid concentrations of such housing. He asked the Commissioners to comment on that wording.

Commissioner Stout said a great deal of conversation went into the development of that language. At the time there was a very real concern, particularly about avoiding concentrations of special needs housing. She said, however, that she is not hearing similar concerns anymore.

Commissioner Beighle suggested the term "special needs housing" is itself outdated and far too restrictive. Commissioner Bruels agreed and suggested it should be replaced with some more positive. The city has an interest in mediating the interests of all parties in the siting of affordable housing.

Commissioner Stout said Bellevue has come a long way in being more accepting and less discriminatory. She said most of those who live in the center of the city would not have been accepted just 40 years ago. The result is far more diversity in the neighborhoods, even the upscale neighborhoods.

Commissioner Bruels suggested that a conscious effort should be made to include non-discrimination language in the Housing Element. Ms. Leslie said non-discrimination and diversity are currently only mentioned in the Human Services Element, not the Housing Element.

Turning to a review of the Human Services Element, Mr. Parker noted that the document has only one main section and a number of related policies. He allowed that some of the current policies may be obsolete or irrelevant and may not make use of more contemporary language. The Commissioners were asked to focus more on the themes and pieces that may be missing.

Commissioner Beighle called attention to policy HS-6 and she has seen non-profit organizations seeking opportunities to achieve efficiencies through co-location and coordination but has not seen the city take on that role.

Commissioner Perelman pointed out that during the funding process the Commission is constantly asking agencies about their efforts to coordinate with other agencies. She agreed there is less of a focus on co-locating agencies. Commissioner Beighle concurred but suggested seeking information about interagency cooperation is not the same things as proactively suggesting co-location and cooperation.

Chair Yantis commented that to take that route would seem to imply the city knows the business of agencies better than the agencies do.

Commissioner Stout suggested that the statement is intended to be more general and it came out of the work done to put the Family Resource Center (currently called Together Center) together. Agency co-location greatly benefits clients.

Chair Yantis proposed including the concept of supporting opportunities to achieve efficiencies rather than the notion of seeking those opportunities.

Commissioner Stout commented that throughout the Human Services Element language should be used to indicate that the city is part of a regional infrastructure. The needs simply do not stop at jurisdictional borders.

Commissioner Bruels agreed that much of the language is outdated. There has been a general shift away from discrimination and prejudice to social justice, anti-racism and empowering communities. Knocking down barriers is important, but equally important is the notion of empowering people to make a difference.

Commissioner Beighle noted that policy HS-2 mentions prevention but with the economy the way it has been for a past few years the focus has been less on prevention and more on crisis management. Mr. Parker explained that the language of the policy accurately reflects what the thinking was at the time the document was last updated.

Commissioner Stout suggested it would be helpful to have a policy indicating that prevention is the direction the city desires to take. Mr. Parker observed that the first paragraph of the narrative talks about the continuum of services, intervention, prevention and enhancement. He agreed, however, that it would be a good idea to take a look at the degree to which those concepts carry over into the policies.

Commissioner Stout pointed out the need to carefully review and update all of the demographic data in the overview section and the rest of the element.

Commissioner Beighle referred to the five goal areas and questioned if availability of healthcare should be included in the fourth goal area, especially since the Commission funds agencies that make healthcare available. Healthcare should at the very least be included in the discussion section.

Mr. Parker noted that policies HS-15 and HS-16 were added to give the city incentive to be active in the areas of childcare and employment support services. He suggested the Commission should discuss the direction and relevancy of those two policies.

Chair Yantis suggested that if specific areas, such as childcare and employment support, are to be particularly highlighted in policy language, other focus areas should also be called out, such as healthcare. On the other hand, it could be concluded that all such issues are in fact addressed under the broader banner of human services and that none should be specifically highlighted in policy language.

Commissioner Bruels said there could be merit to the argument that by being specific the city could be tied down. If in the future funding restrictions make it necessary to

make cuts, having specific policy language supportive of some issues over others could make it very difficult to make cuts in those areas.

Chair Yantis asked if having policies HS-15 and HS-16 in the Human Services Element resulted in any action by the city over and above the recommendations the Human Services Commission would have provided. He said he suspected the answer to that question was no. Mr. Parker said it could be argued that policy HS-15 has resulted in more of an emphasis on quality childcare. Policy HS-16 is more general and likely has not resulted in any additional emphasis. Policy language is, however, used by city managers as the basis on which to implement strategies that do not necessarily have anything to do with funding human service programs.

Ms. O'Reilly said policy HS-15 has been cited in locating childcare facilities both in homes and not in homes. Some research would be needed to determine if the policy language is still needed.

Commissioner Stout said the approach to take might be to use language calling for action to address current and emerging needs in the community rather than being overly specific. Chair Yantis agreed that including general language will keep the Commission from being boxed into a corner, but it may not be enough to get the attention of decision makers and encourage them to think about specific needs.

Commissioner Perelman said the document will need to be visionary. The needs of veterans and the aging population are only going to increase, as are employment issues. None of those are addressed in the current language. She said using general language is a good idea but some specific issues should be included.

Chair Yantis said the section should be written to indicate that as needs in the community change they will be reflected in the Commission's funding recommendations to the Council. The Council has always respected the Commission's recommendations, and as such the document language should not need to reflect funding priorities. However, if there are issues that need to be specifically called out as a foundation for other city actions, they should be identified and included.

Commissioner Beighle drew attention to the second paragraph on page 245 and said she would like to see the idea highlighted there about governmental cooperation and partnership with the private sector spelled out in policy language.

Mr. Parker said the current Comprehensive Plan is very siloed in the way it houses themes, but the talk has been about weaving themes horizontally throughout the plan. The theme of health could in the Human Services Element be referenced as healthcare, whereas in the Utilities Element it could be about safe drinking water, and in the Transportation Element it could be about safe routes to schools.

Ms. O'Reilly added that the topic of transportation more often than not causes people to think about roads and buses, but it also is important when it comes to increasing access to services. There are a lot of mandates and federal funding that is focused on coordinated mobility and access to human services.

Answering a question asked by Commissioner Stout, Mr. Parker said the city has a couple of years to get through the process of fully updating the Comprehensive Plan. It is still early in the process and all of the city's boards and commissions are currently reviewing their respective documents and drawing up suggestions. The public comment will be sifted by the Planning Commission which has overall charge of the Comprehensive Plan.

7. DISCUSSION

A. Reserve Fund Request from Congregations for the Homeless

Mr. Adriano said the details regarding the request from Congregations for the Homeless were spelled out in the memo to the Commission and in the application from the agency. He noted that the guidelines for allocating from the reserve fund are fairly self-explanatory and include not having received reserve fund dollars in the last 24 months.

By way of background, Mr. Adriano explained that Congregations for the Homeless was seeking additional funds for the men's emergency winter shelter due to the significant amount of time needed to find a suitable site, prepare the site for shelter readiness, consult with planning staff and the fire marshal, and work with the new landlord regarding space usage and agreements. The additional work is more than was contracted for in the original contract. He said if the Commission decides not to recommend approval of the reserve fund request, the issue will fall back into contract negotiations or funding will need to be found from other sources in order to meet the contract requirement.

Ms. Leslie said the reserve fund has a balance of \$25,000. Requests to access the funds do not come along frequently and generally are requested to meet an emerging need not identified during the regular funding cycle. She informed the Commissioners that Bellevue and Kirkland are currently working to put together some funding to do homeless outreach, and that may require an allocation from the reserve fund as well of about \$10,000.

Commissioner Perelman asked why the agency was seeking the funds from Bellevue and not from other jurisdictions. Mr. Adriano said the request is predicated on the fact that the city is requiring more of the agency in siting and operating the shelter than was anticipated when the contract was drawn up, and that is why they are asking for what it will take to cover the additional costs. During the next funding cycle the agency will need to build in the extra costs.

Chair Yantis pointed out that absent having a permanent site for the men's winter shelter, it can be expected to move from year to year, which is partly what is responsible for the additional costs. The only way to keep the program operating is to approve the request.

Commissioner McEachran reminded the Commission that he is engaged on a daily basis with Congregations for the Homeless. The agency is expanding its programs across the board and enjoys support from many in the faith community. He asked if the agency has sought from those in the faith community the dollars needed to close the funding gap. Ms. Leslie said the funding shortfall is tied directly to requirements imposed on the agency after the application process was completed. It was not at that time possible to foresee that there would be additional costs involved, but that is why they are seeking relief from the city and not from some other sources.

Mr. Adriano said Sophia Way, which is also involved in the winter shelter program, has been made aware of the new requirements. In late December when Sophia Way was made aware the agency concluded it would not be adversely affected given that the women's shelter will be in the same location next year. At the time, however, the agency was in transition relative to its executive director and may not yet have had time to fully consider the issue; if they later determine they will also need additional funds, they may request reserve funds.

Mr. Adriano confirmed for Commissioner Stout that Congregations for the Homeless is seeking a permanent solution to siting the men's shelter. Commissioner Stout said that is exciting and alone makes it worthwhile to support the reserve fund request as a step in the right direction.

Chair Yantis asked if in the opinion of staff the request as has been made is reasonable to cover the additional costs. Mr. Adriano said it would be difficult to tell from past experience, adding that he would have thought the number of hours in meeting with everyone involved likely is more than what the agency has reported.

Commissioner Stout said mention of finding a permanent facility changes the discussion and makes it somewhat broader. She said her vote for the emergency funding would be contingent on the Commission receiving more information about where the program is heading in the form of regular updates. Anything the Commission can do to facilitate a longer-term or permanent solution should be done.

Ms. Leslie reported that the Eastside Human Services Forum has taken on the shelter issue as one of its work plan items for the year. Several workgroups are currently meeting to address specific issues. Everyone realizes that a short-term solution will need to be found and implemented ahead of having a long-range solution implemented.

A motion to fund the reserve fund request from Congregations for the Homeless in the amount requested was made by Commissioner Stout. The motion was seconded by Commissioner McEachran and it carried unanimously.

8. DISCUSSION

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

Ms. Leslie said time could be taken at the next Commission meeting to plan for the joint meeting. The Commissioners agreed to make planning for the joint meeting the main topic at the Commission's meeting on March 19.

9. OLD BUSINESS

Ms. O'Reilly said she has begun scheduling the community conversations. She passed around a sign-up sheet and encouraged the Commissioners to indicate which sessions they could attend.

10. NEW BUSINESS -- None

11. PETITIONS AND COMMUNICATIONS -- None

12. ADJOURNMENT

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

Secretary to the Human Services Commission

Date

Chairperson of the Human Services Commission

Date