

CITY OF BELLEVUE  
HUMAN SERVICES COMMISSION  
MINUTES

May 5, 2009  
6:30 p.m.

Bellevue City Hall  
City Council Conference Room 1E-113

COMMISSIONERS PRESENT: Chairperson Stout, Commissioners Beighle, Huenefeld-Gese, Plaskon, Seltzer

COMMISSIONERS ABSENT: Commissioners Hoople and Yantis

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

GUEST SPEAKERS: Councilmember Noble

RECORDING SECRETARY: Gerry Lindsay

1. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting began without a quorum at 6:34 p.m.. Chair Stout presided. A quorum was reached when Commissioner Plaskon arrived at 6:46 p.m.

2. ROLL CALL

Upon the call of the roll, all Commissioners were present with the exception of Commissioner Plaskon, who arrived at 6:46 p.m.; Commissioner Beighle, who arrived at 6:52 p.m., and Commissioners Hoople and Yantis, both of whom were excused.

4. PETITIONS AND COMMUNICATIONS – None

5. STAFF AND COMMISSION REPORTS

Commissioner Seltzer said she attended the Bellevue Diversity Task Force meeting on April 15. She explained that the task force was formed after a shooting incident involving the police and an immigrant. The suggestion was made that the Commission could participate in the community night events, which are put on by the task force for the various immigrant groups, to provide information about where and how the immigrant populations can get the information they need.

Chair Stout said she attended the dedication of the new Hallock building, the refurbished AtWork! facility on Bel-Red Road. The city was represented by Councilmember Balducci. The facility is wholly owned by the agency and is used to

serve adults who are mentally or physically disabled. The ceremony was very well attended by employers and families.

Chair Stout said she also participated in a community conversation involving Hispanic mothers of young children.

Patrick Foran took a moment to thank the Commissioners for the volunteer work they do on behalf of the city. He said the work of the Commission makes the work of staff far easier and far more productive. The Commission does the hard work which in the end result in opportunities for many in the community.

Councilmember Noble added his appreciation on behalf of the City Council for the work done by the Commissioners. He said if someone were to draw up a list of the 100 most influential people on the Eastside, the Human Services Commission members would be at or near the top. The work done by the Commission is critical as far as the Council is concerned in that it focuses with people rather than roadways or signs or systems. There is no way the Council could do the work it does and still have time left to devote adequate attention to the issues the Commission deals with.

The Commissioners were presented with a token of appreciation from the staff and the City Council.

## 6. DISCUSSION

### A. Briefing on Severe Weather Shelter (January to March 2009 & Planning for Shelter for Winter of 2009-2010)

Grant Coordinator Joseph Adriano reminded the Commissioners that during the winter months some two years ago a homeless person died not too far from City Hall. That event triggered discussions about what the city can do to address the safety concerns of people who are on the streets during particularly severe weather. Past One Night Counts have encountered over 100 homeless persons on the Eastside, though most homeless providers suggest the actual number is closer to triple that figure.

City leaders asked staff to explore the potential for establishing a severe weather shelter. Staff took the issue to the Eastside Homelessness Advisory Committee. In the latter part of 2008 the focus was on where those in need of shelter would come from, the Eastside or beyond; how many could be expected if a severe weather shelter were to be opened in Bellevue; what existing facilities could serve as the shelter. In early discussions there was talk of using the Lake Hills Clubhouse. In some circumstances the hard-floored facility would make an ideal shelter, but it is located in an area that lacks consistent public transportation, has no sprinkler system, and is situated in a residential area zoned R-1.

In working with other parks staff it was made clear that the Department of Parks and

Community Services has the authority to provide safe shelter for the community during severe conditions, including earthquakes and other natural disasters. The King County typing table includes the category for warming shelter; that helps to address how to navigate planning and zoning issues.

In late December 2008 the City Manager signed a declaration allowing the use of city facilities as shelters. The declaration is consistent with the city's emergency operations plan.

Mr. Adriano said the city of Seattle has a co-ed severe weather shelter that operates annually between October and March. During the 2008-2009 season, the shelter had a budget of \$81,000. It was activated for 75 nights and the staffing costs came to \$71,000, or \$950 per night. There were on average 46 people in the shelter each night, though the range was between eight and 70.

Seattle's women only shelter was budgeted for almost \$47,000. The shelter was open for 76 nights and the final tally came to \$40,000 and served on average about 20 people per night.

Mr. Adriano said in discussing what criteria to apply to a Bellevue severe weather shelter, a cue was taken from Seattle relative to when to activate the shelter. The discussion focused on temperatures of 32 degrees or below for 24 consecutive hours, or three inches of snow on the ground, or other severe conditions. It was recognized that the daytime temperature could rise above freezing and fall well below freezing during the night, conditions that could jeopardize personal safety. It was agreed that the shelter should be open by 9:00 p.m., cleared out by 6:30 a.m., and cleaned up by 7:00 a.m.

An RFP was issued for a contractor to operate the Bellevue shelter. While in the final stages of closing the deal, the weather turned very cold. Parks staff acted quickly and activated a severe weather shelter at the Crossroads Community Center. It was operated from December 14 to December 28 and staffed with city staff, staff from other jurisdictions, and staff from the Eastside Interfaith Social Concerns Council. In all 43 city staff participated in serving over 50 unduplicated individuals. Most of the residents were single men, but there were some single women and families with children.

The Commission met in emergency session on December 29 to discuss the only application that came in from the RFP process. The proposal was to operate the severe weather shelter through a partnership between the Eastside Interfaith Social Concerns Council and Catholic Community Services. The pilot project ran between January 1 to March 31 at a contract cost of about \$4000. During that time the shelter was activated for six nights and registered 22 bednights. The highest number of persons served in a single night was eight.

The Bellevue shelter is not a homeless shelter. As such it is open to anyone who

needs shelter.

Mr. Adriano said a meeting (in April) with staff and folks from Hopelink, Eastside Interfaith Social Concerns Council (Congregations for the Homeless) and Catholic Community Services was called to talk about the core issues. The low turnout of shelter residents was attributed to a general lack of awareness. There were no press releases, and some of the providers suggested that would have been helpful. Local providers were sent an email on a daily basis whenever the shelter was open. Other suggestions made included printing cards to hand out with information about the shelter; creating laminated signs for posting in different venues; posting a notification at the Family Resource Center in Redmond and the Bellevue transit center; a larger sandwich board near the facility; and printing flyers to be distributed by food banks in food bags.

Councilmember Noble asked if notice was provided to the 9-1-1 center. He said a person in an emergency situation might dial 9-1-1 seeking help of some sort. Mr. Adriano said the police department was aware when the shelter was in operation, but no specific notice was made to the 9-1-1 system.

Chair Stout suggested that with more and more middle class families finding themselves in trouble, during the next winter season there may be many in need of help who will not know how to access it because they are not tuned into the system. Some different strategies may need to be implemented.

Commissioner Huenefeld-Gese suggested flyers at Crossroads Shopping Center, Factoria Mall and Bellevue Square would be helpful in getting the news out, not only to shoppers but to employees who might find themselves stranded because of the weather.

Commissioner Plaskon observed that communications need to be tailored to fit the situation. Those without electricity will not be getting information from online sources or through television, and those out of their homes because of a flood could benefit from a general broadcast of information in the affected neighborhoods. The old fashioned phone tree can also be a powerful tool for getting word out.

Mr. Adriano said the agency representatives suggested attaching a flyer in the email to agencies that could simply be printed and posted. Notifying the network of faith communities was also highlighted as a good idea.

Commissioner Seltzer asked if Bellevue has a reverse 9-1-1 system in place that can contact people in case of a major emergency. Ms. Leslie said that system is functioning but is only used in the case of major disasters and specific emergency situations.

Mr. Adriano said the feedback received also include the criteria used and the lead time. The feeling was that if lifesaving is the primary purpose of the severe weather

shelter, the criteria should be altered to activate the shelter whenever the National Weather Service forecast is for 32 degrees or below for Bellevue. The sense was the approach would promote consistency and reliability, allowing the public to know what to expect. With regard to the lead time, the suggestion was made to make a determination the morning preceding the night forecast to fall to 32 degrees or below, allowing more time for word to circulate on the streets.

There is no Bellevue office of the National Weather Service, but for planning purposes the temperature data recorded for the Sand Point station should be used. Between October 2005 and March 2009 there were 120 days on which the temperature at the Sand Point station hit 32 degrees or below. The average for the years 2006 through 2008 was some 28 days per year, though in the first three months of 2009 there were 28 days at or below 32 degrees.

If the shelter were operated based on the forecasted weather as proposed, it would be open 28 days annually on average. With three staff per night, the necessary budget at the contracted rate would be around \$20,000 for a given year. Mr. Adriano said Bellevue utilities staff recorded 56 days at or below 32 degrees in 2008. Using that figure, the necessary budget would be doubled. He suggested that a text revision of the criteria is probably not necessary; the criteria appears to be flexible enough to allow for activations when it is recognized it will be very cold. The focus should be on outreach.

The pilot project was for up to \$11,000. Even average winter weather activity during any given year would require twice that much and potentially as much as \$40,000.

Commissioner Plaskon suggested that the city could not find a better investment. The cost for a single hypothermic patient being treated in the emergency room, possibly requiring a couple nights of hospitalization, alone would be more than \$40,000. Outreach efforts should be targeted at where homeless persons are during the daytime hours. Targeting the major transportation areas would be a good first step.

Commissioner Huenefeld-Gese observed that variable message signs are often posted in the downtown during the holidays to direct drivers to parking. It would seem that messages could be included on those signs.

Councilmember Noble questioned closing the shelter at 6:30 a.m. when it may still be cold and those in need of shelter may have either no power at home or nowhere to go. Assistant Director Terry Smith allowed that the Crossroads Community Center is often kept open as a warming shelter, though regular programming is carried on during the day. The city has that flexibility. Mr. Foran added that an overnight shelter is an entity unto itself given the logistics involved. The people are moved out during the day so the space can be reconfigured for the daily activities. During the

day there are far more opportunities for people to get out of the cold, including the malls and the community centers.

Commissioner Huenefeld-Gese suggested that as people leave the overnight shelter they should be given a list of options. Mr. Adriano said that is done as a matter of routine, but it could be done better. Printing a small hand out card with information might be a good approach.

Mr. Smith said getting the word out generally to the community about the severe weather shelter should be seen as a process, with more people learning about it every year. In time it could be akin to an Amber alert and the people will know that when there is an issue the city has shelters and where they are.

Commissioner Plaskon noted that the public transportation system has severe weather routes that are implemented as the need arises. Dovetailing the opening of the severe weather shelter to the buses switching over to the alternate routes would be a good idea. Of course, it would be necessary to make sure the roads leading to the shelters are plowed.

Noting that during the most recent severe weather event the shelters were manned by city staff who did not receive compensation for their time, Commissioner Huenefeld-Gese suggested running an article in *It's Your City* thanking the staff, and taking the opportunity to let the public know about the shelter.

Ms. Leslie said the notion of having the shelter serve as a regional facility has come up. There is support from Kirkland and Redmond for taking that approach, which would mean they would contribute financially. Crossroads is accessible by residents of both those jurisdictions.

Commissioner Huenefeld-Gese proposed that a downtown shelter would be a good idea as well, especially if severe weather traps people in the downtown and prevents them from going home.

### 3. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

#### A. April 7, 2009

Commissioner Beighle called attention to page 6 and noted that twice on the page the acronym "CDBG" was printed as "CBDG." It was agreed to correct the typographical errors.

Motion to approve the minutes as amended was made by Commissioner Seltzer. Second was by Commissioner Beighle and the motion carried unanimously.

## 7. DISCUSSION

### A. Recap of State Legislative Actions

Human Services Planner Alex O'Reilly said the recent legislative session could be described as brutal given the \$9 billion deficit. At least \$3 billion was cut from various programs; the balance was made up by using one-time stimulus dollars. Just how Bellevue and Eastside agencies will be impacted by the cuts is unclear given that not all of the cuts have gone into effect. Continued monitoring will be needed.

Ms. O'Reilly said the state Basic Health Plan took a very large hit, the result of which will be 40,000 people cut from the plan. Many of those people will likely end up being treated in hospital emergency rooms. Public health throughout the state also received a number of funding cuts, so the number of people using public health centers is expected to rise.

Ms. O'Reilly said not all of the legislative actions were dismal. She said early in the session federal stimulus money was allocated to help fund the Apple Health Program for kids; by 2011 that will allow kids aged birth to 18 living in families earning up to 320 percent of the federal poverty level to have healthcare coverage.

There are no ECAP sites in Bellevue but there are some on the Eastside. ECAP is the state equivalent of the federal Head Start program. The program received about a two percent funding cut, which was not as bad as expected.

At the May 19 Commission meeting, representatives from other human services commissions will be present. They will be focusing on homelessness issues. Ms. O'Reilly noted that housing advocates were very disappointed to see the Housing Trust Fund cut in half. The fund is used for affordable housing projects throughout the state, and over 160 projects will be negatively affected.

Ms. Leslie said she has heard that the full budget amount for the Housing Trust Fund for the biennium, \$200 million, is to be allocated in the first year.

Ms. O'Reilly said the Transitional Housing Operating and Rent (THOR) program received a \$10 million increase. The dollars will come from increased County document recording fees.

Housing assistance advocates were very interested in seeing the General Assistance Unemployable (GAU) program retained. In December when the Governor's budget was released, the program was completely removed from the budget. Homelessness advocates said that move would devastate the Ten Year Plan to End Homelessness and put many more people out on the streets. Luckily, the program was preserved; recipients can receive \$339 per month. There will be some changes to the medical assistance aspect of the GAU program, however. There will be a

push to get the disabled persons who are on the program streamlined to getting qualified for the federal SSI program.

Ms. O'Reilly said SSB-5433, often called the local funding option, turned out to have several different components. The bill will allow for supplanting the funds being collected by the one-tenth of one percent MIDD sales tax; as approved, the bill will allow the funds to be used for existing programs. The bill includes funding for public transit through a service fee.

Ms. O'Reilly said the King County funding picture is still not known yet. There will be a meeting on May 8 between King County Council staff and service providers. The lifeboat funds being used to keep some agencies going will be ending on June 30. The hope is that there will be some relief from the state.

The statewide 2-1-1 system did receive some additional funding instead of a cut, which was welcome news.

## 8. OLD BUSINESS

Ms. Leslie announced that the Eastside Human Services Forum event will be held on June 18, 7:30 a.m. at City Hall. The focus will be on strategies and tools for tough times. Some of the things Bellevue is doing will be highlighted as things that be included in government toolkits.

Ms. Leslie said word has finally been received from HUD about the 2009 funding and guidelines for use of the recovery funds. Mr. Adriano said the CDBG allocation to Bellevue will total \$718,802, or \$13,081 more than was projected. That means under the contingency plan approved by the Commission and the Council, \$13,000 will go to Jewish Family Service, and \$81 will go to the Home Repair Program.

Ms. Leslie said Bellevue will receive roughly \$191,000 in CDBG-Recovery funds from the federal government. On May 5 HUD posted on its website the guidelines for use of those funds. They include requirements for any and all materials used for capital projects to be manufactured in the United States; and giving preference to projects that can be started and completed expeditiously.

Ms. Leslie said the City's Consolidated Plan will need to be amended to indicate how the funds will be used in Bellevue. The amendment must be submitted to HUD by June 5. An extra Commission meeting may be necessary in May in order to have the amendment to the Council by their first meeting in June.

It was agreed to start the May 19 Commission meeting at 5:30 p.m. to address the allocation of CDBG-Recovery funds.

Ms. O'Reilly said staff was able to work with VIBES staff to arrange a coffee time on May 7 from 8:00 a.m. to 10:00 a.m. at Starbucks in the Crossroads Shopping Center.

The event, which brings together the mentors, is conducted twice a year. The May 7 meeting will focus on what the mentors are seeing with their mentees and families in the schools.

Ms. O'Reilly reported that effort to distribute the consumer surveys has begun. The surveys are a qualitative component of the Needs Update data collection process. The surveys will be available in five languages other than English, including Farsi.

- 9. NEW BUSINESS – None
- 10. PETITIONS AND COMMUNICATIONS – None
- 11. ADJOURNMENT

Chair Stout adjourned the meeting at 8:13 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