

CITY OF BELLEVUE  
HUMAN SERVICES COMMISSION  
MINUTES

June 7, 2011  
6:30 p.m.

Bellevue City Hall  
City Council Conference Room 1E-113

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

COMMISSIONERS ABSENT: Commissioner Yantis

STAFF PRESENT: Emily Leslie, Alex O'Reilly, Joseph Adriano, Kimberly Walker, Department of Parks and Community Services; Councilmember John Chelminiak

GUEST SPEAKERS: None

RECORDING SECRETARY: Gerry Lindsay

1. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 6:32 p.m. by Chair Beighle who presided.

2. ROLL CALL

Upon the call of the roll, all Commissioners were present with the exception of Commissioner Plaskon who arrived at 6:33 p.m.

3. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

A. April 19, 2011

B. May 3, 2011

Motion to approve the April 19, 2011, and the May 3, 2011, minutes as submitted was made by Commissioner Stout. Second was by Commissioner Bruels and the motion carried unanimously.

4. PETITIONS AND COMMUNICATIONS

Mr. Doug Hoople, 10637 SE 22<sup>nd</sup> Street, reported that as one of his last duties as a member of the Human Services Commission he participated with Friends of Youth in the Count Us In project, which counts homeless youth and young adults. He said five locations in Seattle were included, one in south King County, and Crossroads in

Bellevue. A survey was conducted as part of the exercise, free bus passes were handed out, there was a raffle, there were free gift cards offered, and food was served.

## 5. STAFF AND COMMISSION REPORTS

Chair Beighle welcomed new Commissioner Olga Perelman. She said Commissioner Perelman has worked for Microsoft since 2007 and serves on the board for the Center for Human Services.

Commissioner Stout said she attended the Youth Link awards ceremony along with Chair Beighle, Commissioner Bruels and former Commissioner Hoople. She said the evening was absolutely delightful.

Commissioner Stout said she took the ARCH housing tour and learned a great deal. She said she never ceases to be amazed at the savvy of director Arthur Sullivan and his memory of the dozens of projects that exist on the Eastside. Doug Hoople, Michael Yantis, and Emily Leslie also went on the ARCH Tour.

Commissioner Stout reported that she participated in a recent United Way community meeting conducted in Council Chambers hosted by the Strengthening Communities Impact Council. A general overview was provided before breaking the attendees into subgroups to focus on specific topics. Commissioner Stout said she sat in on the aging and older adults group which also covered services for those with disabilities. The conclusion reached by the group was that between 50 to 55 years of age adults begin dealing with the issues that are common to the older population. The group expressed concern over the fact that United Way allocates only a small percentage of its funds to aging populations.

Human Services Planner Alex O'Reilly commented that the YWCA works collaboratively with WorkSource. She said the WorkSource staff reports that the age 50 and up group is the fastest growing group of folks coming through their offices. Those folks are also the most difficult to place because they often have fewer computer skills.

Commissioner Bruels highlighted the new Swedish Hospital facility in Issaquah. He said the emergency department would be open in about three weeks, and the full service hospital in November. Swedish Hospital is second only to the University of Washington and Harborview in terms of offering care for persons without insurance. An open house at the new campus is scheduled for July 9.

Chair Beighle said she and Human Services Manager Emily Leslie made a presentation to the Bellevue Network on Aging recently. She said the presentation included an overview of the city's human service program and the work of the Human Services Commission.

Chair Beighle reported that earlier in the day she attended the Eastside Human Services Forum meeting. She said what stood out for her was the clothing program called The Works that is sponsored by the Shoreline PTSA. The program is for children in the Shoreline School District and is open to the school children on Wednesdays. For the current school year, some 1200 students have been served.

Ms. Leslie noted that intern Kimberly Walker and Grant Coordinator Joseph Adriano were involved in planning the Eastside Human Services Forum event. Much of the focus was on ways to leverage resources to address human service needs. About 100 persons attended.

Councilmember Chelminiak said the information provided was excellent and useful even though things did not gel at the small group discussion in which he participated. The approach was helpful in getting people to think outside of their normal tracks.

Councilmember Chelminiak reported that the Council received a number of updates at its meeting on June 6, including one regarding updating the Downtown Transportation Plan for which the Transportation Commission will have the lead. He said he made the suggestion that liaisons from other boards and commissions should be appointed to follow the process because of the fact that transportation issues are important to everyone.

Councilmember Chelminiak noted that the Eastside Human Services Forum board endorsed the Human Service and Veterans Levy and sent a letter to the county voicing a concern about the diversion of funds from programs that are working. He also reported that the Eastside Human Services Forum received the mid-point review of the Ten Year Plan to End Homelessness. Some adjustments are needed but not many, but everyone agrees the Ten-Year Plan should be pushed forward. He said he was working to get an update for the Council as well.

Human Services Planner Alex O'Reilly reported that in the near future the Eastside Easy Rider Collaborative will provide an update to the Commission. The Commission was last updated two years ago and several new programs have been added since then. One program currently on the back burner is the downtown circulator, though it is highly regarded and still on everyone's radar.

Councilmember Chelminiak said Eastside Pathways is a program that has been gaining traction. The collective impact model is essentially a ramped up version of wraparound services. It is focused on education, particularly the whole child and the concept of cradle to career. He suggested the Commission should seek an update regarding the initiative.

Chair Beighle reported that she and Ms. O'Reilly met recently with a group of teenagers from Interlake High School at the Asian Counseling and Referral Service office in a community conversation. She said the group receives 40 hours of training and then makes presentations to outside groups on topics such as gender roles, teen

dating violence, sexual assault and sexual identity. They have made presentations ranging from middle school students to attorneys.

Commissioner Stout recognized the fact that Councilmember Chelminiak was recently honored by the Chinese Information and Service Center. Ms. Leslie noted that on June 15 Councilmember Chelminiak would be honored by the Alliance of Eastside Agencies in the elected official category.

Ms. Leslie also recognized that the meeting was Ms. Walker's last and that she would be graduating on June 11 from the University of Washington with her MSW. Ms. Walker has been involved in a variety of activities during her tenure with the city and will be missed.

## 6. DISCUSSION

### A. Overview of the 2011-2012 Human Services Needs Update and Impact of State Budget Reductions

Ms. Walker noted that the Human Services Needs Update is revised and updated every two years. Several instruments are used to gather information, including community conversations, key informant interviews, surveys, and city staff interviews. The participants involved came from a variety of backgrounds in terms of ethnicity, age, economics and other categories.

The community conversations highlighted some specific areas of concern, including affordable housing, employment, healthcare, homelessness, support services needed, transportation, youth violence and drugs, and cultural competency concerns. She noted that undocumented residents are having little or no success in securing housing. Families are having to move in together, which is problematic given the limits imposed by the Section VIII rules. The wait list for housing currently is up to three years long. Low-income housing units are often not acceptable for raising families. Older adults, single adults, youth and families are all having a difficult time finding affordable housing.

With regard to employment, Ms. Walker said many who have lost their jobs are finding it difficult to find new employment right away; most remain unemployed for six months to more than a year. Once new employment is found, it is often not at the same level and means a pay cut. That makes it difficult for the person to regain stability. Youth who are unemployed are finding it very difficult to find jobs because they must compete with adults who have much more experience.

Residents are having a difficult time getting their prescriptions filled. Attendance at community clinics is up, but many residents find it necessary to use multiple clinics in order to get all they need. The possible closing of community clinics due to budget cuts is a concern for many. Many are afraid of getting sick, and many will not seek help from a doctor for fear of piling up additional debt. The participants said they

have found that doctors are refusing to take on new Medicaid patients both for general and specialty care due to the low reimbursement rates. Undocumented residents often face language barriers and often will avoid seeking medical help for fear of being reported.

Ms. Walker said the community conversation participants pointed out the need for more support services, particularly legal help for domestic violence and general legal issues. The wait time for callers to the 2-1-1 provider is too long for most people, though the agency is trying to address the issue by providing information to people while they are on hold.

Childcare subsidies are a prime need in the community. Families that have in the past used childcare subsidies to help balance their budgets and make it possible for them to work are finding they can no longer obtain subsidies due to cuts.

Interpretive services are needed for ESL residents, particularly for medical services. In most cases, interpretive services have been eliminated.

With regard to homelessness, Ms. Walker reported that residents who leave overnight shelters in the morning typically have nowhere else to go. One person reported that he spends long weekends at the library or wandering around the downtown until the shelter reopens. There is a need for low-barrier shelters, which is shelter programs without an extensive intake process. Participants did highlight the fact that shelters on the Eastside are cleaner and safer and they feel more comfortable in them.

Transportation issues affect everyone. Young people going from school to the downtown, a mall or a park find the King County Metro system works very well. However, adults with more varied destinations report far more difficulties in getting around, particularly getting to other Eastside cities or to Seattle. Time and monetary costs are issues for many, particularly given the need to change buses often in order to get around. Medicaid transport services are no longer available but are certainly needed. The participants also identified the need to have a downtown Bellevue shuttle service.

Commissioner Plaskon commented that transportation is a gateway issue into all of the different types of social services. People cannot access social services or food banks if they cannot get to them. Ms. Walker said people did report having difficulties getting to appointments, and providers raised the same issue. Ms. O'Reilly said a good example is Hero House which has a new van to transport clients but no budget for fuel to operate it; some of the members have not been coming because the bus routes have been changing. King County Metro is currently working to develop a collaboration with Hero House because some of the members do go to job training. Commissioner Plaskon said the solution to the transportation problem cannot simply be handing out bus passes; a variety of approaches are necessary.

Ms. Walker said the youth in the community conversations reported that gangs are an issue in the schools. Additionally, they reported that drugs are used and sold on the school campuses. Police are visible on the campuses, but the students know the police schedules and those engaging in illegal activities are doing so around the police schedules.

Ms. Walker said it was reported by some of the participants that a growing number of grandparents are responsible for and raising their grandchildren. For a variety of reasons, among them transportation concerns, they feel isolated within their communities.

Language continues to be a barrier to services and employment for those who do not speak English as their first language. Through the community conversations it was learned that many Latinos have difficulty in accessing and navigating online job tools; the Latino population largely uses cell phones to communicate verbally and online. Residents and agency staff both reported cases of discrimination against non-fluent English speakers. Homeless residents reported incidents of discrimination as well.

Ms. Walker said the participants reported generally feeling safe in Bellevue. They said they enjoy the parks, the clean water, the schools and the diversity. Those who reported needing social services indicated they gravitate to Hopelink, SeaMar, and the Crossroads Community Center.

Data from the key informant interviews is still being compiled. The early data shows, however, that the primary issues are dental services, employment, transportation, health services and health insurance.

The consumer survey was distributed to ten different groups, each of which identified many of the same issues, namely employment, dental care, affordable healthcare, legal services, and affordable childcare.

Overall, 88 percent of the survey respondents indicated Bellevue is a good or excellent place to live.

Not being able to find work to support yourself or your family was reported by 34.5 percent of the survey respondents as a major problem. Not being able to pay a dentist bill was reported by 40 percent of the respondents as a major issue. Not being able to find affordable home healthcare was highlighted by 17.3 percent as a moderate problem, while 26.9 said it is a major problem by those who use home healthcare. Not being able to pay for legal help was reported by 9.4 percent of the respondents as a moderate problem, while 26.4 percent heralded it as a major problem.

Sixty-three percent of the respondents reported not having any problems finding help for their health and human service needs.

With regard to employment status, 21.8 percent of the respondents indicated they are employed full time; 18.2 percent indicated they are students, and 27.3 percent reported their status as unemployed. Forty-four percent reported their previous year income was less than \$10,000; 17.8 percent reported less than \$20,000 but more than \$10,000.

The online and telephone survey was conducted by ORC International and the full results will not be in hand until July. Preliminarily, the data indicates that 98 percent of the respondents described Bellevue as being an excellent to good place to live. The top concerns highlighted by the survey were lack of affordable housing, lack of affordable medical insurance, unemployment, and lack of affordable medical care. The respondents generally indicated that there is relative support for resident segments that may have special needs, particularly for children aged 5 to 9, for seniors, for individuals with diverse racial or ethnic backgrounds, low-income individuals, children aged 0 to 5, and low-income families.

Of the respondents who indicated they needed health and human services help, 59 percent said they asked for the help; 41 percent said they did not ask.

Ms. Walker said the provider survey was given out to 58 providers; to date, 43 have responded and more are expected. The providers were asked how they are providing services during the economic downturn and what changes are being made to the services they offer as a result of economics. Some 66 percent of the respondents indicated they have seen changes in the type of clients using their services; only 30 percent responded no. The respondents highlighted increases in anxiety or depression, increased need for emergency services, clients staying in programs longer, clients needing help more often, increased call for substance abuse and mental health services, an increase in the number of clients in need of rent and utility assistance, and an increased number of homeless youth and young adults.

With regard to the question of whether or not demand for services has changed in the last two years, 47.8 percent of the providers indicated they have seen an increased call for their services. Some said they are seeing more refugee and immigrant clients seeking assistance, and others said they are seeing an increase in families in need of help, including middle class families who are new to the system. Early learning programs have increased by 45 percent. The wait list for some agencies has doubled. The providers said that more than 30 calls per day are being received from women in need of housing, and there is an increased need for classroom support due to an increase in the number of ESL students. Food assistance has increased by 52 percent since 2007. There are 160 youths on the waiting list for housing, and there has been an increase in the number of men asking for services.

The providers indicated that their responses to decreased public funding have included the formation of strategic partnerships, seeking grants, leveraging resources, social enterprising, and engaging in strategies to increase private funding.

Ms. Walker informed the Commissioners that 39.5 percent of the provider respondents indicated that they have waiting lists for their services. However, 60.5 percent said they do not have a waiting list and are not tracking who they turn away.

Responding to the question of services clients report needing but cannot get, the providers highlighted healthcare, dental care, mental health services, transportation, and emergency financial assistance. The providers said the barriers to services mentioned most often by their clients are cost, transportation, language, non-eligibility, and not knowing where to find help.

The providers were asked to answer questions about funding cuts from federal, state, local and private sources. The responses were evenly split between receiving more funding than a year ago and receiving less funding than a year ago. Asked how the economic downturn had affected overall fundraising efforts, 27.7 percent indicated an increase in fundraising, 34 percent noted a decrease, and 38.3 said they remained unchanged. The majority of the responders said they had not experienced reductions as a result of federal funding cuts, though it could be that those giving that answer do not actually receive federal funding. More than half of the agencies said their state allocations had been reduced, though one-third said they had not experienced any cuts in state funding. The cuts have resulted in an increased need for childcare assistance to keep parents from losing their jobs and requiring even more assistance, as well as an increased need for ESL services, mental health services, and employment services for immigrants and refugees. The cuts are limiting the ability of agencies to grow the needed services; many are having to reduce the services they offer and are having to lay off staff.

County funding reductions have impacted many providers, though there are some who do not receive funding from the county. Those who do rely on funding from the county have seen substantial reductions, which in turn have triggered program reductions; some programs may be closed. As a result, needs in the community are increasing. More than half of the providers said they have seen reductions from local government sources, the result of which has been fewer services for immigrant and refugee clients, less technical assistance for agencies, and a reduced capacity to provide services.

Agencies that have seen cuts from multiple sources reported finding it very difficult to continue their levels of service. Many of the providers expressed anxiety with regard to their 2012 budgets.

Ms. Walker shared with the Commission a document titled *The Color of Cuts* which highlighted a disproportionate impact of budget cuts on communities of color in Washington state. She said the data in the document was based on the state's 2011 supplemental budget. The budget limits individuals who are eligible under Medicaid to the aged, blind, disabled, a caretaker or relative, and the pregnant. Immigrants and refugees must be in the state for five years before being eligible for the program. An estimated 17,000 low-income individuals and 50,000 immigrants and refugees

have lost coverage statewide. Disability Lifeline received a cut in 2010 and an additional cut of 27.7 percent in 2011, the impact of which has been 21,000 disabled individuals seeing reductions in cash grants for food, medicine and housing; those cuts are being felt disproportionately by African Americans and Native Americans. The 50 percent reduction in the Senior Citizens and Service Act has impaired the ability of seniors to receive transportation services, bathing assistance, home repair and other services. The state food assistance program was reduced by 50 percent, which means that 31,000 individuals and approximately 14,000 low-income immigrant households receive less food assistance than they need.

Commissioner Plaskon asked the staff to keep the Commission informed as things progress. He said it will be particularly important for the Commission to be kept abreast of programs that are to be closed. Commissioner Stout concurred and pointed out that in addition to programs there are entire agencies that are in precarious positions, and the Commission should keep an eye on them as well.

Answering a question asked by Commissioner Perelman, Ms. O'Reilly said the data collection process undertaken every two years makes it easy to spot and track trends over time.

## 7. DISCUSSION

### A. Update on State Legislative Issues

Ms. O'Reilly provided the Commissioners with a document recapping the latest state budget cuts that have been announced. She noted that agencies will be impacted by the funding reductions. She commented that the Housing Trust Fund is a key mechanism for funding affordable housing throughout the state. Four years ago the fund stood at \$200 million and was being used to provide affordable housing; for 2011, it was a struggle to include \$50 million in the final budget. How that will impact specific providers is still being determined.

SHB-2048 made it all the way to the last day of the session before dying on the floor of the Senate. The bill would have increased the document filing fee, the proceeds of which are used for homelessness programs. The current recording fees will continue.

With regard to supporting early learning and school readiness, Ms. O'Reilly noted that the supplemental budget included a funding reduction that made many people ineligible for the childcare subsidy called Working Connections. The good news is that the eligibility line was retained at 175 percent of the federal poverty level; the proposal to lower the eligibility line would have excluded far more persons. However, the program was ultimately capped at 35,500 statewide which has created a wait list of over 3000 families.

The Crisis Clinic runs the King County portion of the Washington Information Network, also known as 2-1-1. The final budget includes \$1 million for the program, \$500,000 per year, which is only half of the previous budget allocation. The Crisis Clinic remains unclear with regard to how the reduction will affect their service levels.

There was an effort to completely eliminate the state food assistance program, which serves immigrant families and individuals. The final budget retained the program but reduced its funding by half.

The Disability Lifeline program was drastically changed. It has three new programs and the name will change to the Essential Needs and Housing Support Program. Many are concerned with regard to what the changes will do relative to increasing the homeless population. Those in the program will still have medical benefits but they will not have cash grants. There will be housing vouchers but of course there is an insufficient supply of housing.

With regard to healthcare, the Apple Health for Kids program was saved, though there will be larger co-pays for undocumented children. Some foundations are looking the possibilities for putting together a funding source to provide subsidies for immigrant and refugee families to help cover the co-pays.

Funding reductions will mean the community mental health services will be at risk. Medical interpretive services have been hit hard; some of the larger hospitals are maintaining their in-house interpretive services in line with federal regulations, but they are having to eat the costs.

Ms. O'Reilly said the dearth of dental services for low-income residents is not likely to improve. Medicaid recipients will be provided with only minimal dental health services.

The Senior Citizens Services Act is a key source of funding for programs such as Meals on Wheels, chore services, and information and assistance services. Funding through the Act, however, has been reduced. Staff at King County Aging and Disability Services believe they will see a cut of close to \$150,000 but do not yet know how they will spread out those cuts. Funding for adult day health programs has been reduced, particularly for folks with developmental disabilities. The executive director for Elder and Adult Day Services does not yet know how the cuts will directly impact the program.

Ms. O'Reilly said the cuts to programs for refugees and immigrants will greatly affect their ability to move into sustainable lifestyles. Naturalization services, ESL and employment programs all will be impacted, as will the food assistance programs.

Ms. O'Reilly provided the Commissioners with a summary compiled by AARP regarding the budget reductions and how they will affect seniors in Washington state.

Commissioner Plaskon commented that with so many impacts still unknown, it would be good for the Commission to receive another update in about six months, by which time the specific impacts will be better understood. Ms. O'Reilly agreed.

Ms. O'Reilly said she would soon be finishing up interviews with Bellevue staff from different departments that have interaction with the public. Their insights will be valuable.

Commissioner Perelman said it will be interesting to know in six months to a year how the budget cuts will impact the local demographics. Ms. O'Reilly said the school district is one place where that sort of data is obtained and tracked. Many families who come to Bellevue cite many factors for choosing the city. Over the past couple of years the school district has expected to see some low-income families move away owing to the high cost of housing, but that trend has not been in that direction.

#### 8. OLD BUSINESS

Ms. Leslie reported that the federal Community Development Block Grant allocation to Bellevue for 2011 is to be reduced by 16 percent, which equates to more than \$120,000. While that sounds bad, it actually could have been a lot worse. The city's federal lobbyist recently met with staff and reported that the best case scenario for 2012 reflects another 16 percent reduction, and the worst case scenario anticipates a 50 percent reduction. The contingency plan in place for 2011 will kick into play, but the Commission will face some difficult decisions for 2012.

Commissioner Stout thanked Grant Coordinator Joseph Adriano for his work in getting information to the Commission regarding Evergreen Court. She said the information was very helpful in gaining some understanding of what their proposal is.

#### 9. NEW BUSINESS

There was agreement to cancel the first meeting in July to avoid a conflict with the holiday.

#### 10. PETITIONS AND COMMUNICATIONS – None

#### 11. ADJOURNMENT

Chair Beighle adjourned the meeting at 8:31 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