

CITY OF BELLEVUE
HUMAN SERVICES COMMISSION
MINUTES

June 4, 2013
6:30 p.m.

Bellevue City Hall
City Council Conference Room 1E-113

COMMISSIONERS PRESENT: Chairperson Yantis, Commissioners McEachran, Perelman, Stout

COMMISSIONERS ABSENT: Commissioner Bruels, Commissioner Beighle, Commissioner Plaskon

STAFF PRESENT: Emily Leslie, Alex O'Reilly, Joseph Adriano, Stephen Miller, Department of Parks and Community Services

GUEST SPEAKERS: None

RECORDING SECRETARY: Gerry Lindsay

1. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 6:40 p.m. by Chair Yantis who presided.

2. ROLL CALL

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

3. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

A. May 7, 2013

A motion to approve the minutes as submitted was made by Commissioner McEachran. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Perelman and it carried without dissent; Commissioner Stout abstained from voting.

4. PETITIONS AND COMMUNICATIONS - None

5. STAFF AND COMMISSION REPORTS

Commissioner McEachran reported that in his capacity as a community leader he recently stumbled onto the Preparing for Work program at Bellevue College. He said

a young woman from Iran told him her story that led her to the program that is making a big difference in her life.

Commissioner McEachran also noted that on Memorial Day he attended the festivities at Andrews Glen and heard many talk about the transformations that occur there.

Human Services Manager Emily Leslie reminded the Commissioners about the Eastside Human Services Forum event slated for June 6. She said more than a hundred people have registered for the event that will be focused on changes in homelessness.

Ms. Leslie informed the Commissioners that the annual luncheon of the Alliance of Eastside Agencies is scheduled for June 12.

6. DISCUSSION

A. Presentation on Human Services Agency Successes and Challenges

Graduate Student Intern Stephen Paul Miller said he is involved with the University of Washington School of Social Work in the administration and policy concentration, which focuses on program evaluation, assessment and implementation. The core values of the program are social change for social justice, empowerment as a healing process, collaboration, and breaking cycles by addressing the root causes.

Mr. Miller allowed that resources are limited. Accordingly, it is necessary for communities to invest wisely. Often that means organizations cannot be given all the funding they need to run their programs. He also noted that the reports submitted by funded organizations do not always capture everything. Units of measurement can indicate how many people walked through the door or slept in a bed, but they do not always paint the full picture. That is why Grant Coordinator Joseph Adriano has included in the grant reporting requirements a section focused on successes and challenges of clients or programs.

To date, 56 of the funded programs contributed narratives covering the period from the fourth quarter of 2011 to the fourth quarter of 2012. He said the task given him as an intern was to analyze the stories, compose a productive, informative and tangible report, and to, if possible, connect it to the work of the Commission. He stressed that his report was evidence of a truth but not necessary the entire truth, which is the point of qualitative data.

In the first phase of the study the focus was on identifying successes and challenges. The successes included getting clients into stable housing and clients not testing positive for substances. The challenges identified included domestic violence, poverty and lack of housing units with which to serve clients with housing needs.

The second phase zeroed in on identifying themes, which were identified as fostering self-confidence and mental health; the strong relationships between client and staff; culturally appropriate services; and the resiliency of clients. Strong relationships staff to staff were also identified. One major theme focused on the experiences of trauma such as homelessness, domestic violence, physical abuse, substance abuse, mental illness, and neglect.

In the third phase attention was given to goal areas. Mr. Miller said one way to do a content analysis is to take a preexisting category and apply narratives or some other qualitative body to it. The Commission has continuum goal areas to guide funding allocations and the narratives were coded to indicate which goal area they fit. The intent was to determine what areas are being met by the funded programs, and the conclusion reached was that the programs are in fact meeting the needs of clients based on how often the goal areas were mentioned in the various narratives. Additionally, it was concluded that each program addresses at least two goal areas, and that the majority address three or more.

Mr. Miller said the stories reflect lived experiences. With the data coded and the themes pulled out, it is an easy thing to connect them to academic research and to identify promising solutions and/or changes. One pertinent academic study is the Adverse Childhood Experiences Longitudinal Study (ACE) done by the Kaiser Permanente Department of Preventive Medicine in San Diego. The study began in 1995 and is ongoing. Between 1995 and 1997 there were 17,373 respondents to a health survey that was geared at locating current health outcomes as well as past childhood experiences. Some 286 life interviews were conducted as well which led to the conclusion that in cases of obesity and sexual abuse, the sexual abuse always antedated the onset of obesity. One woman who had been sexually assaulted at the age of 23 put on 105 pounds in a single year; she made the statement that overweight is overlooked and added that that is the way she needed to be. For her, obesity served as a protective measure.

The participant demographics of the ACE study are similar to Bellevue demographics in many ways. The ACE participants were asked to indicate whether or not they had experienced adverse childhood experiences such as emotional abuse, physical abuse, contact sexual abuse, violent treatment of their mother, alcoholism in the home, household mental illness, the incarceration of a family member, not having been raised by both parents, physical neglect, and emotional neglect. The respondents were scored based on the total number of adverse childhood experiences they had had.

The study produced some profound results. Those with an ACE score of four or higher were 4600 percent more likely to engage in intravenous drug use. Those with higher scores were also far more likely to experience chronic depression; to attempt suicide; to seek and receive prescriptions for antidepressant medications; to later being raped; to begin smoking as an adult; to become an alcoholic; to develop liver disease; to perpetrate domestic violence; and to engage in sexual activities as a teen.

Mr. Miller said the study was clear that the higher the ACE score, the higher the likelihood of a negative health outcome. There is a clear relationship between childhood emotional experiences and adult physical and mental health. Emotional experiences have been shown to produce toxic stress, which in turn impacts neural pathways and the makeup of the brain.

The study showed that traumatic experiences are actually quite common. Of the 17,373 respondents, over a quarter had an ACE score of at least two. Such experiences are destructive and the effects can last a long time. Social workers need to move away from dealing with the effects to dealing with the cause as a preventive measure.

Mr. Miller said with the ACE information in hand he recoded the narratives for trauma by applying ACE scores. He said he found that of the 56 programs, he coded 39 for trauma. Bellevue residents are not immune from trauma. Funded Bellevue programs are largely working with survivors of trauma.

There has been a ground level response to the ACE study research. Folks are starting to acknowledge trauma and its impacts. The responses are different client by client based on the knowledge of the trauma experienced, and client services are being adapted to the client by being flexible, non-judgmental, and patient. Understanding trauma is a vital approach to tailoring trauma-informed services and care. Trauma-informed care is not a blanket approach with a single methodology that can be applied to every instance. It takes deep organizational and leadership reflection. Just as trauma happens in the context of relationships, so does healing. Sometimes service providers must fulfill the relationship role. Trauma involves powerlessness, and one way out is empowerment aimed at helping folks live more independent lives.

Mr. Miller allowed that service providers are already doing a great deal. Organizational change is challenging in terms of time, resources and informed change. Funders can help by funding the initiative, supporting program shifts, and taking advantage of free training. Washington State is playing a leadership role but it is not alone; as of 2011 there were 18 states that were actively collecting ACE data to enhance the body of research. The principle investigators believe ACE is the biggest public health breakthrough ever.

Commissioner McEachran said it is one thing to place a roof overhead, but quite another to add qualitative client services. Where agencies get involved in direct relational activities and services, the outcomes create wonderful narratives. He said he hoped the report would surface in some other areas of city government to illustrate the work of the Commission in support of human services.

Commissioner Stout stressed the need to remember that the key elements are relationships, relationships and relationships. Mr. Miller commented that while the

research makes that clear, case management, which is where the relationships occur, is very expensive. The data is important, but without funding there will be no gains.

Human Services Planner Alex O'Reilly pointed out that case management hours are routinely being reduced due to funding shortfalls. As a result, case managers are being given ridiculously large caseloads to carry, making it far less likely that they will be able to form strong relationships with their clients.

Commissioner Stout said the information provides the Commission with the opportunity to think hard about some of the programs funded and to consider whether or not they are poised to make significant differences in the lives of clients.

Commissioner McEachran said it was clear to him that early childhood education programs should be given priority.

Chair Yantis asked to what degree agency personnel are aware of the ACE study. Mr. Miller said the majority of the groups he has worked with are not necessarily moving forward based on the ACE data. Folks are, however, becoming aware of the information but are still wondering what to do with it. Those who on board are able to look beyond the top level to the other themes that are present.

7. DISCUSSION

A. Overview of Needs Update Data Collected to Date

Ms. O'Reilly said interns are traditionally engaged in the process of collecting data for the Needs Update. Most, however, do not have the benefit of staying through the summer months and writing the chapters for which they gathered the data. She said most interns have only three days a week in which to do their work, but noted that Mr. Miller had only two. He did an incredible amount of work in the time available to him.

Mr. Miller said one of his first assignments was to work on the faith community interviews. There were ten interviews conducted in all, each in an open-interview format with a few preset questions to serve as guides. The faith communities are seen as key informants to the Needs Update in that they are experts in understanding the needs of their congregations and the community at large. The interviews were intended to discover the degree to which faith communities partner with human service agencies in helping to assure a safety net for Bellevue residents. Recognizing that the faith communities cannot do it all alone, the interviews were also intended to gather information about how the Human Services Commission can help.

The faith communities participants included St. Andrew's Lutheran Church, Newport Presbyterian, St. Luke's Lutheran Church, Grace Lutheran, Islamic Center of the Eastside, Bellevue First Congregational UCC, Eastside Christian Community Church Fellowship Center, Highland Covenant Church, First Presbyterian Church of

Bellevue, and Mars Hill. Some of the churches gave evidence of a very established role in the safety net ranging from offering shelter services and operating food banks to more informal approaches to meeting community needs. The list of organizations highlighted as partners included The Sophia Way, Hopelink, Congregations for the Homeless, Eastside Winter Shelter, Food Lifeline, Emergency Feeding Program, Habitat for Humanity, LifeWire, Renewal Food Bank, Jubilee Reach Center, YWCA, Bellevue College Toddler Program, Auto Angels, Union Gospel Mission, World Impact Network, Lake Hills Elementary, Highland Middle School, Baby Basics, and Muslim Community Resource Center.

During each interview the faith community representatives were asked what kind of requests they see on a regular basis. Most indicated they receive requests almost daily, by telephone and by walk-in. Food is always the top item requested, and several of the churches meet that request by handing out gift cards to Fred Meyer, QFC, and Safeway. Requests for emergency assistance for rent, utilities and heating are very common, as are requests for bus tickets and gasoline. Requests for elder services and support are quite common as well. The overarching community needs highlighted in the interviews were transportation, housing, elder adults, and resources such as education, financial assistance and job training.

Seven of the 10 faith community interviews indicated little to no negative impact resulting from the recession. Some of the congregations described themselves as wealthy, affluent, upper middle class, healthy and prosperous. Those who did mention negative impacts from the recession said they saw an increase in requests to meet basic needs.

Mr. Miller said in every single conversation it was clear that the faith communities have a deep commitment to serving. They are an integral part of the safety net serving on the front lines where human service needs are evident. They are supportive of human services organizations through in-kind and cash donations, and they offer community support in the form of food drives, school supplies and shelter. Faith communities have a desire for a greater involvement in the wellbeing of the community.

Mr. Miller shared with the Commissioners a story told him by the pastor one of the faith communities interviewed. The story focused on an undocumented single mother of two who lost her job and could not find another due to her undocumented status. Absent a job she was unable to pay the rent and utilities, and being undocumented was unable to qualify for assistance. She was ultimately evicted and began living in her car with her two children. One day while the children were in school and she was out looking for a job, her car was towed. The pastor told the story with an eye on thinking about how to be more involved in the upstream area in ways that would prevent the string of losses the woman suffered.

How to support the faith communities in their civic engagement is a question that flows from the interviews. A directory of resources indicating who provides what,

where the services are located, and how the faith communities can get involved would be helpful. Community networking work help to highlight the available resources. Cultural competency is vital to reaching out and providing services to a diverse community such as Bellevue.

Commissioner Perelman observed that for the most part the faith communities interviewed do not reflect Bellevue's diversity. No Korean or Japanese congregation was on the list, nor was any synagogue. Mr. Miller said the point was well taken. He said he did reach out to several faith communities from diverse populations but was ultimately unsuccessful gaining their participation.

Commissioner McEachran commented that many ethnic groups meet within larger congregations that are failing, and that makes it very difficult to make contact. Many of them rent facilities and have no presence during the week. As congregations reach out and choose to work with each other, it will be easier to gain the confidence of more diverse groups. That could be evident in the next update.

Mr. Miller said the SurveyMonkey providers survey had 43 questions. A total of 70 providers were asked to participate and 41 actually did. A range of types of services provided were represented, including housing, health, older adults, youth, and agencies serving refugees and immigrants. For the most part, the respondents represented agencies and programs funded by the city.

The respondents indicated that there are still lingering impacts of the recession. Many families are struggling to make ends meet due to lower wages or only part-time work. The high cost of gas and food is continuing to create stress for many. The barriers to accessing service highlighted by the survey included cost, transportation, language, lack of eligibility and not knowing where to find help. The services mentioned as the highest needs were transportation, housing and emergency financial assistance.

Some questions were asked about the tolling of SR-520. While more analysis is needed, the answers given indicated that the tolling has had some impact.

Mr. Miller said 182 persons have completed the consumer survey to date. The surveys have been widely distributed throughout the community at ELL classes, mini City Hall, the Factoria substation, and to community conversation participants. Of the participants, 87 percent have indicated Bellevue is a "Good" or "Excellent" place to live. Over half of the respondents indicate they earn less than \$10,000 annually. Seventy percent indicated they are not Caucasian, and 29 percent are between the ages of 35 and 54, and 85 percent noted that they speak a language other than English at home.

The Commissioners were told that 129 of the respondents reported having problems accessing human services. Lack of ability to pay was listed as the biggest barrier. The top major or moderate household problems were identified as not being able to

pay for dental bills, not being able to support family or self, and not being able to pay for doctor bills. Thirty-two percent indicated they have a lot of anxiety, stress or depression which interferes with their daily lives.

Answering a question asked by Commissioner Perelman, Ms. O'Reilly said the consumer survey questions had not been changed since the last update, but the provider survey did have a few questions revised or added.

Speaking on behalf of the Commission, Commissioner Stout thanked Mr. Miller for his presentation, which she said was informative, educational and thought-provoking.

8. OLD BUSINESS

Ms. Leslie reported that earlier in the day HUD informed the city what its 2013 award will be. Mr. Adriano said the news was welcome because the award will include an increase of \$2600. The increase triggers the approved contingency plan which will put the entire \$2600 into administration and planning.

Ms. Leslie also reported that on June 3 the City Council approved the recommendations for the additional capital projects to be allocated CDBG funds.

Commissioner Stout suggested the Commissioners should be provided with copies of the new ethics code approved by the City Council, and asked if the code will have policy implications for the Commission. Ms. Leslie said she would check on that.

9. NEW BUSINESS - None

10. PETITIONS AND COMMUNICATIONS - None

11. ADJOURNMENT

Chair Yantis adjourned the meeting at 8:19 p.m.

Secretary to the Human Services Commission

Date

Chairperson of the Human Services Commission

Date