

CITY OF BELLEVUE
HUMAN SERVICES COMMISSION
MINUTES

July 2, 2013
6:30 p.m.

Bellevue City Hall
City Council Conference Room 1E-113

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

COMMISSIONERS ABSENT: Commissioners Beighle, McEachran

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

GUEST SPEAKERS: None

RECORDING SECRETARY: Gerry Lindsay

1. CALL TO ORDER

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

2. ROLL CALL

Upon the call of the roll, all Commissioners were present with the exception of Commissioner Perelman, who arrived at 6:41, and Commissioners Beighle and McEachran, both of whom were excused.

3. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

A. June 4, 2013

A motion to approve the minutes as submitted was made by Commissioner Plaskon. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Stout and it carried unanimously.

4. PETITIONS AND COMMUNICATIONS - None

5. STAFF AND COMMISSION REPORTS

Commissioner Stout said the Downtown Livability CAC met on June 19 and received a great deal of information. The group will meet again on July 17 to continue reviewing potential code revisions. Nothing with regard to human services has been raised yet. Human Services Planner Alex O'Reilly commented that issues related to

mobility and access are yet to be discussed, as is the issue of wayfinding for those whose first language is not English.

Chair Yantis proposed moving directly on to discuss item 6-A and then returning to item 5.

6. DISCUSSION

A. 2014 CDBG Funding Recommendations

Grant Coordinator Joseph Adriano called attention to the spreadsheet containing the Commission's dollar amount recommendations and the revised contingency plan.

Chair Yantis asked if staff had concerns regarding any of the rationale language included on the spreadsheet. Mr. Adriano said the only thing that stood out to him was the language under the ARCH request and the fact that it does not call out the architectural, acquisition and similar costs, and the phrase that the Human Services Commission will provide some kind of approval for any use ARCH might have for CDBG funds.

Commissioner Plaskon called attention to the contingency plan language and said it matched with what the Commission hashed out at its last meeting. He noted, however, that it still read "XX percent" under Step 2. Mr. Adriano agreed it should be changed to read "100 percent" in accord with what the Commission previously concluded.

A motion to approve the 2014 preliminary recommendations for Community Development Block Grant allocations and the contingency plan as revised was made by Commissioner Stout. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Plaskon and it carried unanimously.

5. STAFF AND COMMISSION REPORTS (Continued)

Ms. O'Reilly called attention to the information in the packet regarding the civic leadership class called Bellevue Essentials. She said applications are being taken for the class that will begin in September. She noted that Commissioner Stout has agreed to speak to the class on the topic of how to address boards and commissions.

Ms. O'Reilly said the Bellevue Diversity Initiative is under way and several meetings have already been conducted. She said she attended one recent meeting and heard several talk about livability issues, including some issues related to human services. She said she will keep the Commission informed as the process moves ahead.

Human Services Manager Emily Leslie stated that the discussions regarding the Eastside Winter Shelter are continuing. A presentation will be made to the ARCH Board soon in order to bring them up to speed. A long-term solution for siting the

shelter is being sought and each city is conducting research on potential sites. Bellevue's interdepartmental team will have its first meeting on July 8 and will consider both private and city-owned properties along with faith community sites. Redmond's strategy will involve meeting with a number of faith groups.

Ms. Leslie said the joint meeting with the Redmond Human Services Commission has been rescheduled to July 22. It will be in Redmond and the Eastside Winter Shelter will be the primary topic of discussion into September.

Answering a question asked by Commissioner Perelman, Ms. Leslie said Renton recently opened a women's day center in an old jail facility in their City Hall; it is small and will only accommodate five women. A faith organization is staffing it. Seattle's City Hall and the King County Administration Buildings have elected to keep their winter shelters open through the summer months.

Commissioner Plaskon asked why ARCH is being involved in the discussions. Ms. Leslie said the shelter issue came up through the Eastside Homelessness Advisory Committee and then the Eastside Human Services Forum took it on. ARCH has been looking at things from the perspective of a long-term solution. If a building is purchased or leased and there will be capital costs, ARCH will get involved with funding. Arthur Sullivan also convenes the Eastside Homelessness Advisory Committee.

7. DISCUSSION

B. Overview of Findings from the Phone/Online Surveys and the Consumer Surveys

Ms. O'Reilly said the phone and online surveys have been completed, and there were 624 respondents. A total of 22 community conversations were conducted. To date 42 of the provider surveys have been completed, and five key informant interviews have been held with more scheduled. The results of the ten faith community interviews were shared with the Commission earlier. Almost 200 consumer surveys were filled out. City staff from ten of the divisions within the city's various departments were also surveyed.

Ms. O'Reilly said the phone and online surveys, along with the consumer survey, are examples of how information is gathered to build up a picture of what is happening in the community. The quantitative data collection, which is counted and expressed numerically from the scientific data, does not adequately describe the full picture. The qualitative data is not necessarily numerical by nature and are not scientifically accurate. Taken together, however, the bigger picture emerges.

Commissioner Bruels noted that 17 percent or so of the online and phone survey respondents indicated discrimination is at least a moderate problem. Physical abuse was indicated to be at least a moderate to severe problem for five percent of the

respondents. He said he found it somewhat telling that the funding for combating physical abuse is much higher than the funding for combating discrimination. Ms. O'Reilly said certain sensitive items, like sexual abuse or child abuse, are typically underreported in most surveys. Commissioner Bruels suggested the same could be true of discrimination. He said he was not recommending any specific action.

Ms. O'Reilly said the methodology used for the surveys was the same used two years ago, though a different survey company was used. The company, Gilmore Research Group, indicated just after the survey was completed that it was going out of business. That caused some consternation but they have been very professional about continuing to provide assistance as needed. The web-based sampling approach was launched two years ago to capture those who no longer have land lines and it has been very successful. In all, 138 surveys were completed via the phone and 486 were completed online. Gilmore Research Group sent out 5000 letters to Bellevue addresses calling attention to the survey and inviting the recipient to fill out the survey online. The letters were mailed out in mid-February, and the electronic survey went live February 15 and continued through March 13.

Those who completed the survey online or who only have cell phones as opposed to land lines were typically younger. Respondents to the phone survey were more likely to be female, to have lived in Bellevue for a longer period of time, and to be older. The letter sent out offered respondents the opportunity to take the survey via the language line. In 2009 before the online survey was available, 32 respondents availed themselves of the opportunity to take the survey in a language other than English. In 2011 the online option was added and only two respondents chose to use the language line. No one used the language line for the latest survey. Even though the survey was only offered in English, the online and phone respondents were asked if other languages are spoken in their homes, and about a third referenced indicated there are and highlighted some 20 different languages.

There was no significant difference in the answers given in the 2013 and 2011 surveys to the question asking about satisfaction with the city. In both years nearly all the respondents indicated an excellent or good response.

The list of problems people are asked to rate are divided in the survey between community problems and household problems. The responses to community problems can be sensitive to what is happening in the news or in the respondent's neighborhood, but the information generated is interesting nonetheless. In the latest survey 53 percent identified more than five different problems. The problems mentioned were similar to those highlighted in 2011 by 56 percent of the respondents, though in that year 40 percent identified more than ten problems, while only 29 percent in 2013 called attention to ten or more problems. Interestingly, the percentage of respondents identifying ten or more problems in 2009 exactly matched the 2013 results. The upward spike between 2009 and 2011 mirrors what was happening in the economy.

Commissioner Stout asked if there were any way to relate the survey results to particular areas of the city where there may be affordable housing issues or various demographic clusters. Ms. O'Reilly said some of the data is available by zip code so breakdowns of that sort can be made.

Ms. O'Reilly pointed out that between 2011 and 2013 there was a significant decrease in what people thought the magnitude of problems was, yet the order of the problems cited is the same with only a few variations. It could be concluded that with the improving economy people are generally feeling better about how things are going in the community.

With regard to the results regarding household problems, Ms. O'Reilly said the survey looked at some 35 specific problem areas and the respondents were asked if the items on the list had been problems for anyone in their household over the last two years. She noted that the shift in responses was much smaller between the 2009, 2011 and 2013 surveys. The providers are still highlighted the fact that they are seeing middle class people who have never before sought social services, though not to the same degree identified in 2011, and the online and phone survey responses and community conversations bear that out.

The top four household problems, not surprisingly, were called out as being inadequate public transportation, budgeting money, not able to find work that supports self or family, and inability to pay for medical insurance. Over the last five surveys the top problems have all related to the affordability of living in Bellevue and east King County.

Ms. O'Reilly said the survey included three questions aimed at getting a sense of the impact of the economy on the respondents; the same three questions were included in the 2011 survey. In the 2011 results, 43 percent indicated there were somewhat negatively impacted by the economy; only 35 percent had the same response in 2013. In 2013, 67 percent of the respondents indicated they were employed full or part time, and five percent said they were unemployed. In 2011, 63 percent indicated they were employed full or part time, and nine percent were unemployed.

Two new questions were added to the 2013 survey aimed at determining the general outlook for 2013. Surprisingly, nearly half said in 2013 things would be significantly or slightly better. Just over a fifth said it would get a lot or a little worse in 2013. Those indicating they thought things would get a bit or a lot worse were more likely to have lived in Bellevue for 11 years or more, to live in Lake Hills, and to be someone who moved to the United States within the last ten years. More than half of the respondents indicated a belief that the economy will improve at least two years in the future.

There was a small but not significant change between 2011 and 2013 in how people rated access to services. What did change was the number of respondents who

indicated not sure. Commissioner Plaskon said that could be interpreted to mean the message is not being communicated properly.

The survey also included a series of questions to determine if the respondents sought help for their problems. Between 2009 and 2011 there was a significant increase in the number of people who did look for help, which likely can be tied to the effects of the bad economy. Between 2011 and 2013 there was a slight decrease, but the difference was not significant. In answering the questions related to finding help when people look for it, the respondents identified as barriers cost, not knowing where to find help, and lack of eligibility. Family, friends and human service was listed as the top responses for where people go for help first; healthcare workers was second on the list, and social service agencies was third. Of those who said they sought and found help, 79 percent indicated they were satisfied with the help they received.

Ms. O'Reilly observed that overall the community and household problems in the top tier were similar and related to the cost of living in Bellevue.

The consumer surveys were not available online but were available in five languages other than English. Working with community partners, the surveys were handed to consumers along with a request to complete and return them. Once mailed in, the results are input into a format that allows for compiling the data. In the past the surveys were handed out at food banks and Eastgate Public Health, but the number of completions was fairly low compared to the time it took to hand out the surveys. For the 2013 iteration, the surveys were handed out at Mini City Hall, at ESL classes, and at Jewish Family Services. The ESL teachers use the surveys as an exercise. To keep the consumer survey from being too long, it includes questions about household problems, demographics and access, but not about community problems.

The consumer survey was completed by almost 200 persons. Those speaking a language other than English in the home were well represented, and those in the older adult and minority groups were somewhat over-represented. Because of the locations where the surveys were distributed, the respondents are more likely to be low-income.

Commissioner Bruels noted that the data indicates how people of color continue to be disproportionately impoverished.

Ms. O'Reilly pointed out that the top household problems were not surprisingly identified as dental needs; doctor bills; not being able to speak, read or write in English; not being able to find work to support themselves or their families; and not having money to pay for housing. More than 20 primary languages other than English were identified by the respondents as being spoken at home. A quarter of the respondents stated that they were unemployed. The barriers highlighted were similar to the 2011 survey results, but inability to pay was more frequently cited than eligibility, and more people talked about lack of transportation as an issue. There

was an uptick in the number of respondents who receive public assistance, and there was a slight downtick in the rating of Bellevue as an excellent or good place to live.

The analysis of the key informant interviews will focus on the qualitative data to determine what themes pop out.

Ms. O'Reilly said the task of writing the report is under way. The first draft should be available in September.

8. OLD BUSINESS

Commissioner Stout noted that she had previously asked for a copy of the city's adopted Code of Ethics. She said having received and read it, she found it very confusing and left without any idea of what applies to the work of the Commission. There are references to commissioners and boards and the way the code applies to them, but some of the references are buried in the text. She said she is exceedingly disappointed in the product. Ms. Leslie said staff has asked the City Clerk to provide an analysis of what the Commission needs to be paying attention to, but that has not been received yet. Commissioner Stout suggested it would be helpful to schedule a study session to go over the document.

Chair Yantis said he could see quite a lot in the document that simply does not apply to the Commission. He said it would be helpful to have someone go through it and mark exactly what does apply. Knowing that ahead of time could limit the amount of time needed to review the document.

9. NEW BUSINESS

Ms. Leslie informed the Commissioners that the Planning Commission at its July 10 meeting is slated to talk about the Housing and Human Services elements of the Comprehensive Plan. She said it will not be a joint meeting, but the Human Services Commissioners are invited to attend. In September the Commission will conduct its own review of the Human Services Element and will forward recommendations to the Planning Commission.

Ms. Leslie said the Commission's meeting on July 16 will include the public hearing on the CDBG allocations.

Mr. Adriano said the larger Eastside cities have put together an RFP that seeks to find an agency in the community to conduct outreach to homeless persons. A few years ago Redmond had a special contract with an organization to engage in reaching out to the homeless and getting them connected with services. He said the collective cities intend to find a funding source to at least fund part of the program until the next application cycle. Some of the police departments, including Bellevue, have chipped in funds, and some of the cities have also contributed some General Fund dollars. The Commission will be provided with an update at its July 16 meeting,

and may be asked to consider an allocation from the reserve fund. Altogether the three cities have successfully identified about \$57,000 for the project.

The joint meeting with the other commissions is scheduled for July 22 at Redmond City Hall. The focus will be on the Eastside Winter Shelter.

9. PETITIONS AND COMMUNICATIONS - None

10. ADJOURNMENT

Chair Yantis adjourned the meeting at 8:09 p.m.

Secretary to the Human Services Commission

Date

Chairperson of the Human Services Commission

Date