

CITY OF BELLEVUE
HUMAN SERVICES COMMISSION
MINUTES

July 16, 2013
6:30 p.m.

Bellevue City Hall
City Council Conference Room 1E-113

COMMISSIONERS PRESENT: Chairperson Yantis, Commissioners Beighle, McEachran, Plaskon, Stout

COMMISSIONERS ABSENT: Commissioner Bruels, Perelman

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 6:30 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 Plaskon, who arrived at 6:34 p.m., and Commissioners Bruels and Perelman, both of whom were excused.

3. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

A. June 18, 2013

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

4. PETITIONS AND COMMUNICATIONS - None

5. STAFF AND COMMISSION REPORTS

Commissioner McEachran reported that he attended the recent Planning Commission meeting at which they received a briefing regarding the housing and environmental elements of the Comprehensive Plan. With regard to the housing issue, the Commission noted the change from targets to needs assessment, and

Commissioner Ferris spoke directly about the need to move toward implementation as opposed to more conversation about how to alleviate homelessness.

Commissioner Stout informed the Commission that she has been asked to participate in the development of the city's essential civic training process that is under way. The application process will run for another two weeks, but already the number of applicants exceeds the number of slots in the program. She said there has been a good response by minority applicants, particularly from the Hispanic community.

Human Services Planner Alex O'Reilly mentioned that on July 18 she would be participating in a community meeting sponsored by Neighborhood Outreach. They are working to engage the newly annexed residents in the South Bellevue area. Survey was distributed about a month ago to the households in the newly annexed area, and several questions related to human services were included in the survey. Some 74 have responded to date. Nineteen of the respondents mentioned an interest in home repair services; 18 talked about needing senior services in the area; and another 12 indicated an interest in the zero interest loan program. At the meeting on July 18 there will be an opportunity to answer questions directly. The top topic in the survey responses and in other community meetings has been transportation. The meeting will be held at the South Bellevue Community Center from 7:00 p.m. to 8:30 p.m.

Human Services Manager Emily Leslie reminded the Commissioners that the King County Council asked the County Executive to convene a health and human services transformation panel to provide input on implementation of the Affordable Care Act, healthcare reform, and the possible integration of health and human services. She said she served on the panel that was appointed and which met from February to June. The group released its draft plan in early June and was subjected to a public comment period. The Eastside Human Services Forum commented on it expressing the view that the plan does not really address the need for dedicated revenue for human services. The King County Council is slated to receive the plan on July 17. An internal team was appointed to look at the specific issue of merging Public Health and the Department of Community and Human Services, and their final recommendation was not to go in that direction at the current time while looking at ways for the two departments to align their efforts more closely together. The legislature has given counties the authority to impose a public safety sales tax as a revenue tool. The King County Council tried to get the legislature to give them councilmanic authority to avoid having to go to a vote of the people, but failed in that attempt, and no steps have been taken to put a tax increase on the ballot.

Ms. Leslie said a presentation was given to the ARCH Executive Board recently on the need for a winter shelter and the challenge in siting it. It appears that organization is going to take on the winter shelter issue in terms of the need to have a dedicated space for the long term. They will use ARCH capital funds as needed. For the interim, each Eastside jurisdiction is looking at siting options. She said she convened a meeting with staff from a number of city of Bellevue departments to

brainstorm options, particularly in light of buildings that might become available as light rail comes through and leaves some buildings vacant for a few years. The group believes it would be best to use city-owned or vacant buildings rather than facilities owned by the faith community, although there are challenges in some City-owned facilities, e.g., community centers.

Commissioner McEachran said the faith communities are an interesting resource. He said he has watched multiple iterations of the cold weather and winter shelter. Busy faith communities often cannot stage the activity because of their own programmatic needs, while smaller churches that might have space are often locked in communities that would not welcome having a shelter. It will be important for the municipalities to seize the opportunity to provide for shelter space. Churches large and small are often willing to contribute financially, but space is much harder to contribute.

Answering a question asked by Commissioner Stout, Ms. Leslie said following a disagreement with Tent City in November 2012, a group split off and became known as Camp Unity. The new entity set up an encampment in Kirkland, but they have been directed to leave the site by July 24 because they are already a month past their permit. They have submitted a permit application with Bellevue but are not slated to come to the city until September.

6. PUBLIC HEARING

A. 2014 CDBG Funding Recommendations

Mr. Adriano said the purpose for the public hearing is to receive feedback from the community on the recommendation of the Commission for allocating the 2014 CDBG allocation, and on the associated contingency plan.

Chair Yantis related that the recommendation of the Commission affect the allocation of the city's anticipated 2014 federal Community Development Block Grant award. He welcomed comments on the city's practice of dedicating CDBG funds for human services purposes. He noted that copies of the city's strategies for affordable housing and human services were available to all present and said they would be incorporated into the city's application for the CDBG award.

A motion to open the public hearing was made by Commissioner Plaskon. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Stout and it carried unanimously.

No members of the public were present to provide testimony.

Mr. Adriano noted for the record that an email comment had been received and would be entered as part of the public record. The email was sent in by Klaas Nijhuis, senior planner for ARCH.

A motion to close the public hearing was made by Commissioner Stout. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Plaskon and it carried unanimously.

A motion to adopt the recommendations and the contingency plan for the 2014 CDBG award was made by Commissioner Stout. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Plaskon and it carried unanimously.

7. DISCUSSION

A. Reserve Fund Request - Homeless Outreach

Mr. Adriano called attention to the request received from Congregations for the Homeless for additional funds to help defray the costs incurred preparing for the winter shelter. He noted that the application had in fact been written by him and represented the Human Services Division asking for permission to use \$10,000 from the reserve fund to contribute to what has been an effort by the cities of Kirkland, Redmond and Bellevue toward a homeless outreach project. The project is modeled after a pilot program in Redmond in which an individual with street smarts engaged some of the more difficult to reach among the homeless population. The three cities have identified funds to launch a pilot project that will run from September 2013 through the end of 2014 in all three jurisdictions.

The City of Redmond took the lead in releasing an RFQ to solicit community providers qualified to and interested in operating the pilot program. Two responses were received, one from the Sound Mental Health Path program that operates in South King County and supposedly in East King County, and one from Congregations for the Homeless. Staff from the three cities met on July 15 and concluded that the best proposal was the one from Congregations for the Homeless.

Commissioner Beighle asked if the program will in any way try to address youth who age out of foster care and end up on the street. Ms. Leslie said the pilot will not be focused on young adults, primarily the chronically homeless. Friends of Youth has a program that reaches out to homeless youth on the Eastside. Commissioner Beighle said what is needed is a program that will reach out to the youth while they are still in foster care to keep them from ever ending up on the street in the first place. Ms. Leslie said Friends of Youth does reach out to that group. She added that the county-wide youth and Young Adult Initiative also focuses on youth in that category. Additionally, the legislature changed the rules to allow youth to remain in foster care through the age of 24 if they choose to.

Commissioner Stout asked what the long-term vision is after the pilot wraps up. Ms. Leslie said the intent is to run the program as a pilot first. If successful, an agency could apply for funding during the regular funding cycle to continue the program.

Ms. Leslie commented that a few months ago Redmond police convened a meeting of police and human services staff from Kirkland, Issaquah, Bellevue and Redmond

to talk about the issue of panhandling and how the various jurisdictions deal with it. There was general agreement at that meeting that homeless outreach would be a good strategy. There also was agreement to, following the pilot program, embark on a public education campaign aimed at encouraging people not to contribute to panhandlers, but to local providers serving homeless.

Commissioner Beighle pointed out that there are always waiting lists for shelters and a lack of options for transporting the homeless to shelters that do have beds. Given that, she said she questioned how effective the outreach program will be.

Ms. O'Reilly said recently the city's park rangers were offered some training about encountering homeless persons in the parks. Typically the rangers are seasonal staffers but they operate on the policy that when someone is noted to be sleeping in a car or an encampment they are to call the police. The training included the notion of providing information to homeless persons about the day center that is operating in the city where they can clean up, get some food and receive additional information. The day center can provide them with bus passes.

Commissioner McEachran said he works near Robinswood Park where several unsheltered individuals camp out, many of whom come to the church for water and food and to use the facilities. One such individual encountered explained that he was quite happy living in the park so close to Bellevue College where he is enrolled as a student. He said the outreach program could be viewed as a police abatement program or a program aimed at getting the homeless out of the neighborhoods and suggested one could question whether the funding for the pilot project represents good stewardship of the public money. Ms. Leslie said Redmond is the only city to date that has operated a homeless outreach program. Their experience was that the program proved to be the missing link for those encountering the homeless. The program was very successful in reaching people who normally would not connect with mainstream shelters and available services. The police in particular found the resource to be very helpful in connecting people with services.

Answering a question asked by Commissioner Stout, Ms. Leslie said the proposal from Congregations for the Homeless would fund a 0.7 FTE, which means a person would be spending 28 hours per week conducting the outreach. Chair Yantis allowed that while there will be three cities to cover, the fact is homeless persons tend to congregate in certain areas, and with week after week of outreach to those areas, a rapport could easily be established.

Commissioner Stout suggested the job will require someone with solid mental health training. Ms. Leslie agreed and said the individual on staff at Congregations for the Homeless identified as the person to conduct the outreach is not necessarily trained in mental health. Training and supervision will need to be part of the program, which Congregations for the Homeless is qualified to offer.

Chair Yantis asked if there is capacity in the system to accept and provide help to the additional homeless persons the pilot project may bring in. He suggested that if there is not, launching the program will serve no useful purpose.

Commissioner Stout said her concern was not with allocating dollars to the pilot program but rather was with identifying the bigger vision and whether or not the investment will take the cities in a positive direction.

Commissioner Plaskon asked what the measure of success will be for the pilot project. Mr. Adriano allowed that the glaring piece missing in both submitted proposals was targets to aim for. Assuming the project goes forward, however, the contract will be drafted with a requirement to track specific service units. Under the pooled contract, each of the three cities will determine what the targets should be.

Commissioner Plaskon pointed out that the project will, if nothing else, identify the need for additional capacity in the system. Commissioner McEachran noted that as such allocating funds for the pilot project could result in impacting future funding decisions. He said he fully supports the collaborative approach.

Chair Yantis voiced concern over the fact that simply knowing the number of contacts made will not be very informative. Ms. Leslie agreed that measures of effectiveness will need to be identified. Regular progress updates certainly would be beneficial.

Chair Yantis called for a vote and the motion carried unanimously. Commissioner Beighle asked if a motion had even been made, but everyone else seemed to remember one had been made. After the meeting, the notes were checked and the recording was listened to and no motion was ever made, so a formal vote will have to be taken at the September 5th meeting.

8. OLD BUSINESS

Ms. O'Reilly provided the Commissioners with a handout regarding the Reach Center of Hope. The day center program utilizes some unused space in the Renton jail and is expressly for families with children enrolled in the Renton School District. She said she provided the information because Commissioner Perelman had previously asked for it.

Ms. O'Reilly informed the Commission that staff are working to develop a team to help facilitate the process of enrolling uninsured persons under the Affordable Care Act beginning in October. She said the Neighborhood Outreach and Service First staff are actively involved, as are the community centers. Rooms at City Hall and the community centers will be made available at certain times on certain dates, and the times and dates will be widely advertised. The efforts will be coordinated with Kirkland and Redmond as well.

Commissioner Stout praised the cities for choosing to coordinate their efforts. The walls that have been in place and maintained over the years are finally coming down.

Ms. Leslie reminded the Commissioners of the joint commission meeting slated for July 22. She also reminded them that there would be no Commission meetings in August.

9. NEW BUSINESS - None

10. PETITIONS AND COMMUNICATIONS - None

11. ADJOURNMENT

Chair Yantis adjourned the meeting at 7:41 p.m.

Secretary to the Human Services Commission

Date

Chairperson of the Human Services Commission

Date