

BELLEVUE NETWORK ON AGING
REGULAR MEETING
MINUTES

February 6, 2014
8:30 a.m.

Bellevue City Hall
Room 1E-120

MEMBERS PRESENT: Dan Aznoff, Ethan Crawford, Jullie Gray, Jeanne Grote, Beverly Heyden, Peg Jones, Bob Megargel, Bill Merriman, Susan Posten, Eileen Rasnack, Berta Seltzer, Diana Thompson, Mary Watkins, Terri Wilson, Janet Zielasko

MEMBERS ABSENT: Howard Katz, Hannah Kimball, Chris Strand

STAFF PRESENT: Bophary Du, Cathy VonWald and Alex O'Reilly, Department of Parks & Community Services

OTHERS PRESENT: Hank Myers, Redmond City Council; Cindy Goodwin, Mercer Island Youth & Family Services

RECORDING SECRETARY: Teri Ekstrom

PUBLIC COMMENTS/QUESTIONS

This agenda item was moved to the beginning of the meeting in case someone wanted to speak to the group without having to stay for the entire meeting.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES – January 16

Ms. Thompson indicated four changes: 1) on p. 1 she wanted to cross out “World Elder Abuse Awareness Proclamation” and replace it with King County Prosecutor’s Elder Abuse Conference, 2) on p. 2 change Kevin Grady to Kevin Brady in two places, 3) on p. 2 in the same section, 3rd paragraph add (HR 1179) at the end of the paragraph, 4) p. 3, in the 3rd paragraph of the Committee Structure for 2014 section, replace 2nd sentence “The last legislature established information online by the Aging and Disability Services group” with “The last legislature established an Aging and Disability Services Committee and has placed the information online”. Ms. Posten also said that her name is misspelled on p. 4, so change from “Poston” to “Posten”.

There was a motion to approve the minutes with the indicated changes and the motion was seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

ELDER MEDIATION PRESENTATION & DISCUSSION

Cheryl Cohen, City of Bellevue Mediation Program Manager, brought long-time volunteer mediators Ms. Rhona Yonker and Mr. Henry Smilowicz. Ms. Cohen said that she last met with the BNOA in 2008. At that time they were just starting the Elder Mediation Program. The program mission is to provide a happy, healthy community by providing mediation services. There is also Parent-Teen Mediation and Foreclosure Mediation Programs. A new State law says that involved parties must come to the table to mediate to help a borrower stay in their homes. The Mediation program also goes out into the community and deals with group disagreements/issues, which can include neighbors and families.

The Elder Mediation Program started in 2008 to a very slow start due to little outreach, so Ms. Cohen asked for some outreach ideas. Ms. Yonker and Mr. Smilowicz gave the group an idea of what the program is about:

A typical mediation has a beginning, middle, and end; and can be done in same-room or via phone, with volunteer mediators often stating how mediation will happen, so involved parties will know what to expect. Ms. Yonker said that it is important for all parties to have a chance to tell their story, that there are lots of layers involved in any situation. Part of the mediator's job is to help people tell their stories and sifting through yet validating feelings involved, which is the difficult part. It is a confidential, voluntary process to help people see what they have to gain from a resolution, which may not happen in the first session. Some people must have time to think and process information, while others might need a specialist (i.e. an arborist regarding a tree dispute) involved. With family situations, just getting everyone together for the first time in a long time is a big part of the issue resolution, for example.

The Mediation Program has a good-sized staff of mediators, well-trained and from all walks of life, but very underutilized. Mr. Smilowicz said that many of the volunteers have recently had issues/experiences with elders and realize the amount of stress it is on the family. He said that the program can make a difference in the community because the mediation is useful and productive. They are well-trained, free of charge, neutral in situations and bring unique perspectives to the table. Some families cannot afford mediation otherwise, but many of them do not know that the program is available, so they need more outreach, and thought BNOA would be a good resource.

Ms. Cohen said that the mediators are neutral and do not do assessments, hearing both sides and trying to get clarity on an issue. Mediators have encountered issues regarding nursing homes and think there must be many in the community with the same issues, who could use their free services.

Ms. Thompson said that Ms. Gray could probably indicate what kind of cases are the most suitable for this program. Ms. Gray said that she is not in a position to say, but that some of the barriers to going to mediation could possibly be that people do not have the energy during a stressful time to get together and dealing with issues quickly; they possibly have elder law attorneys making referrals to them; and they don't know that the Mediation Program exists. Ms. Gray said it might be good to get the Mediation Program information out to Assisted Living, Skilled Nursing facilities, and Attorneys about the mediation services, especially since it is free. Mr. Merriman stated that the Mediation Program should promote the "facilitation" part of the

program and it might be better received. Ms. Wilson asked what happens if people are advocating for the patient and the family disagrees; and the family comes up with a different solution, does the Mediation Program staff go along with the advocate? Ms. Yonker said that mediation staff does not advocate for any particular one, but would listen to everyone involved to help clarify the issue.

Mr. Crawford said that getting the Mediation Program information out in the Neighborhood News would be great. Ms. Thompson said that writing a letter to the editor of the Bellevue Reporter, which will often be published, so it is a good way of getting information and news out to the public. Other outreach ideas suggested were to put the information on the utility bill or on our BNOA website.

Ms. Cohen said that to be eligible for the program one person involved must live, work or attend school in Bellevue.

Ms. Rasnack asked about the process of the program. Ms. Cohen said that when a call comes in, the person receiving the call does intake to see what the issue is and proceed from there. Most mediations are held in City Hall, some over the phone and sometimes out to a person's home or another facility. With each call, only one person's story is heard, so the mediator will call the other person involved to get their story and the underlying issue. Issues are sometimes resolved on the phone. Only 15% of calls go to mediation.

Mr. Smilowicz said that sometimes the problem stated is not what ends up being the problem, so volunteers are trained to create a safe environment that allows people to say what the issue is and how they feel.

Mr. Crawford asked if mediators ever come up against boundaries, legal or otherwise. Mr. Smilowicz said that other resources outside the boundaries of mediator duties can often be recommended. Ms. Yonker added that legal issues rarely come up.

Ms. Heyden suggested that program brochures can be put at the community centers. Ms. Cohen said that there are some at North Bellevue Community Center but would have to check at the other centers. Other outreach suggestions included open houses, elder events, COPS, etc. Ms. Wilson said that they should connect with Senior Care Connection to be listed with their information.

The Mediation Program has been funded since 1995. The City Council has always wanted to keep it going. Other cities do not have programs like this.

A question was asked about mediator training. Ms. Cohen said that all volunteers complete 40 hours of mandatory training (the next one is March 12) and there is a nominal fee; and then there are 16 hours of phone and ongoing in-service trainings.

Ms. Thompson suggested that the program be listed in the Senior Services of King County and Evergreen Healthcare directories.

If anyone thinks about any additional resources, please pass on the information.

BREAK

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Outreach Committee (reported by Dan Azhoff)

The main focus is on getting new members, so that stated committee goals can be reached. The next meeting is February 25th. Ms. Thompson asked about the BNOA Bylaws, pointing out that people might be fearful of committing with the 80% participation requirement; that bylaws may have to be revised or have unofficial members. Ms. VonWald suggested that the Bylaws could be discussed later in the meeting.

Transportation/Housing Committee (reported by Terri Wilson)

The committee statement is “making educated decisions.” Janet Lewine attended the last meeting to educate the group about how government and planning work. The committee wants to accomplish more, possibly looking to Councilmember Lynn Robinson for help on some issues. There is a difference between affordable housing and market available units, and the committee will focus on making affordable housing available in Bellevue. Members will bring in speakers to educate committee.

The committee would like to have a Facebook page, where they would have more public and social exposure. Ms. VonWald said that there is a committee in the City that is currently looking into the protocol and constraints of using Facebook and other social media. Ms. Du will be following this issue and reporting back to the group.

Ms. Rasnack said that she went to the Planning Commission with the Human Services Commission and they definitely need to hear input from us. Their next meeting is March 12th.

The Transportation/Housing Committee meetings are the last Monday of every month from 9-10am at the North Bellevue Community Center.

Advocacy Committee (reported by Diana Thompson)

The issue of Medical Observation was assigned to Chris Strand and Carolyn Kelso.

Members of the committee met with a very knowledgeable liaison in McDermott’s office regarding the Medical Observation Bill. After this hour-long meeting, the liaison received additional information from Washington D.C., which made McDermott’s office feel that there is poor prognosis for this bill. A budget score is being written in the Senate, but the real problem is that covering more cases in nursing homes will cost CMS more money. Members agreed that the doc fix needs to pass; and that the only way to get the Medical Observation bill passed is if it is attached to the doc fix. However, Congress has not agreed to do this. What are the next steps?

Mr. Katz indicated that he and Councilmember Robinson said in previous meetings that they should go to Washington D.C. to speak to people regarding the issue.

Senior Lobby Day is on February 20th and needs pre-registration. E-mail Ms. Thompson for the website info, if there is an interest. The committee has appointments set up with the 41st and 48th Districts. Kirkland is setting up appointments for the 45th and the 1st District.

COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIP REPORTS

Eastside Easy Rider Collaborative (Ms. Heyden reporting)

Eastside Easy Rider Collaborative no longer has a staff liaison, so the group went over ideas for the coming year and is waiting to see who the new staff liaison will be.

Eastside Human Services Forum (Ms. O'Reilly reporting)

EHSF's annual meeting was on December 5th regarding Comprehensive Plans and how important they are in establishing future strategic plans. EHSF was trying to get an overview of what cities were doing. BNOA had a presentation on Bellevue's Comprehensive Plan and had sent in a letter with changes that it would like to see. The Human Services Commission met with the Planning Commission to let them know the needs of the community. The Comprehensive Plan is a key foundation tool. EHSF is bringing issues to the Planning Commission of items that might need to be updated. The Human Services Commission had Kevin McDonald present the Transportation Element information and stressed the importance of providing input to on how the Comprehensive Plan is being updated, which can be read online. Kevin McDonald should be scheduled to meet with the BNOA.

Mr. Megargel asked Ms. O'Reilly whether it was true that there will be 4-5 times more people living in downtown Bellevue in the next ten years. Ms. O'Reilly said that sounds about right but she will check.

Ms. O'Reilly also said that the Human Services Needs Update went to the City Council at the beginning of January and it should be posted online soon, which she will send out to the group.

Time Bank (Ms. Grote reporting)

Time Bank Board had a regular meeting and a budget meeting, and is continuing to look to increasing membership.

Aging & Disability Services Advisory Council (Ms. Seltzer reporting)

The group will meet again on Friday, Feb 14. The Planning Group met to finalize the work plan for the year and are looking for other sources of funding.

STAFF REPORT/UPCOMING AGENDA ITEMS

Cindy Goodwin, Mercer Island Senior Advisory Board, said that the Mercer Island Advisory Board has disbanded and has now become a part of the Youth & Family Services Group.

Ms. Du thanked Ms. Raznack for attending and presenting at the Planning Commission meeting on behalf of the BNOA.

The Overlake Active Senior Fair will be March 8th and Ms. Du will be sending out an e-mail for people to sign up to work the BNOA table.

Ms. Du brought up the attendance issue in the BNOA Bylaws, which state that all voting members must attend 80% of meetings. Each member must choose to serve on at least one committee during the year. Ms. Heyden pointed out that the bylaws read “expected to attend” and does not say “required.” If there is an absence, contact the chair or staff liaison prior to the meeting. Mr. Azhoff made another call for membership into the Outreach Committee.

The next BNOA meeting is March 6th, Conference Room 1E-120, 8:30-10:30 and the topic will be the FD Cares Program, which aims to reduce no emergency 911 calls.

NEW BUSINESS

Ms. Gray welcomed Ms. Du.

Ms. Zielasko asked if there had been any updates on the transportation issue in the Bellevue Botanical Garden. Ms. VonWald stated the staff at the garden are planning to do a transportation pilot project when the garden renovations are complete.

ADJOURN

The meeting was adjourned at 10:15 am.