

The Human Services Commission approved these minutes on June 16, 2015

CITY OF BELLEVUE
HUMAN SERVICES COMMISSION
MINUTES

May 19, 2015
6:30 p.m.

Bellevue City Hall
City Council Conference Room 1E-113

COMMISSIONERS PRESENT: Chairperson McEachran, Commissioners Bruels, Beighle, Kline, Perelman, Plaskon, Villar

COMMISSIONERS ABSENT: Commissioner Perelman

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

GUEST SPEAKERS: Steve Roberts, David Johns Bowling, Congregations for the Homeless; Bill Hallerman, Eileen McComb, Catholic Community Services; Angela Murray, Sophia Way; Arthur Sullivan, ARCH

RECORDING SECRETARY: Gerry Lindsay

1. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 6:33 p.m. by Chair McEachran who presided.

2. ROLL CALL

Upon the call of the roll, all Commissioners were present with the exception of Commissioner Perelman who was excused.

3. PETITIONS AND COMMUNICATIONS - None

4. STAFF AND COMMISSION REPORTS

Commissioner Bruels reported that he and Human Services Planner Alex O'Reilly visited Congregations for the Homeless shelter to participate in a community conversation for the Needs Update. The conversation with seven men in the shelter was both wonderful and enlightening. Housing was highlighted as the top issue but there was also discussion regarding legal problems, particularly around infractions and civil issues. Other needs mentioned were hygiene stations, socks and under garments, outdoor meal programs, and day center services on weekends.

Transportation was called out as an issue, particularly the fact that the ORCA cards do not cover Sound Transit. The healthcare coverage gap that exists for many who are unemployed or disabled was also raised, as was help with money management. The need to increase shelter capacity was mentioned as well.

Commissioner Villar she participated along with Chair McEachran and Commissioner Kline in a site visit at Salvation Army. The conversation included a review of their existing plans and plans for building a new two-story facility. While the building is under construction, services will be moved to a building around the corner, except the feeding services program which will be moved to a church.

Commissioner Kline said she found it enlightening to get a better feel for the agency and the services they provide. The staff are clearly very dedicated.

Chair McEachran said the visit lasted about an hour and he came away with the impression that the agency is quite insular with their own programmatic needs, including shelters in Seattle. They are also remarkably affiliative. Further conversation would be in order.

Human Services Manager Emily Leslie said she participated in a second visit to Salvation Army with Commissioner Perelman and intern Mary Jayne Walker. She said an hour was spent learning about their programs and looking over their building plans.

Councilmember Chelminiak reported that the update given to the Council on May 18 on the Needs Update was very enlightening. He said the Council has also been continuing its focus on the East Link project and since the last Commission meeting finalized the Memorandum of Understanding with Sound Transit. The Council held out to the very end to get three parcels of property near the 130th station; there is the possibility of adding a fourth parcel. The opportunity exists to both kick start development around the station and include an affordable housing element.

Councilmember Chelminiak added that the Council acted on May 18 to approve the Shoreline Management Program, noting that the principles to guide the work were sent to the Planning Commission in 2007. He said it is good both to have a good product and to be done with it. The Council also acted to rename Bovee Park for Georgia Zumdieck, a former Councilmember who was also very active in the Northtowne area.

Chair McEachran took a few moments to commemorate the work of Commissioners Beighle and Plaskon. He noted that when he was appointed to the Commission he was assigned to work with both of them during a funding cycle and found their knowledge and passion very inspiring. He said their service is an example of what makes Bellevue a community of compassion and care. He thanked them for their leadership on the Commission over the past several years.

On behalf of the Council, Councilmember Chelminiak thanked Commissioners Beighle and Plaskon for their work on behalf of the city. He said the time put in by Commissioners is worthy of note and evidence of their care for the community and the people in it. The gave to each a certificate recognizing their service.

Representing the staff, Ms. Leslie said it had been an honor serving with Commissioners Beighle and Plaskon. She noted that both had been very supportive of the staff and very engaged and said both will be missed.

5. DISCUSSION

A. Update on Eastside Winter Shelters & Planning for Permanent Winter Shelters

Mr. David Johns Bowling with Congregations for the Homeless said the winter shelter opened its doors on November 15 at the Sound Transit building on 120th Avenue NE. The shelter remained open for 167 continuous days providing services to homeless men. In all the shelter provided 11,708 bednights with an average of just over 70 residents per night. There were 449 unduplicated men who stayed at the shelter, which exceeded the 387 counted in 2014. Forty-two percent of the residents were persons of color; ten percent were veterans; 17 percent were between the ages of 18 and 25; ten percent were aged 55 and older up to 70 plus; 30 percent identified as disabled; 58 percent identified as long-term homeless; and 28 percent were chronic homeless, defined as being long-term homeless plus disabled. Sixty-three of the men were moved into program shelter or housing.

Mr. Johns Bowling said it was good to have had Dwight Jackson come onboard with the program. He infused his relational style that added a calmness. In the previous shelter season, heroine was a real issue, but during the current year that was not the case to the same degree. The outreach worker helped to connect people with the shelter and services.

Winter shelter staff met often with the local community which resulted in a far more welcoming environment. During the last season someone was paid to direct the men not to go onto neighboring properties. For the recent season volunteers who stayed at the shelter were utilized to do the work as a way of showing their respect to the community.

Ms. Leslie asked if there were any demographic trends noted during the recent season. Mr. Bowling said nothing stood out, aside from a noted reduction in heroin users. The shelter has always seen a fairly high percentage of younger residents. The percentage of veterans has remained steady for years.

Mr. Johns Bowling said the shelter works hard to leverage funds. United Way continues to support the program along with the cities. A grant the city of Seattle was tied to was coupled with CDBG funds that enabled keeping the shelter open longer

than originally anticipated; with those funds, however, came direction not to restrict the shelter to just Eastside people.

Commissioner Kline asked if the dynamic within the shelter changed when more men came over from Seattle. Mr. Jackson allowed that it did to some degree. Many of the Eastside regulars recognized other people being there and their attitude was changed somewhat.

Mr. Johns Bowling said the Eastside shelter is the best of its kind in the region, largely because the community rallies behind it. It is amazing how many people who band together and bring food for 80 to 90 men every night and then stay and serve the food. Seattle simply does not enjoy the same support.

Steve Roberts with Congregations for the Homeless noted how proud he is of those who operate the winter shelter. He said one of the things pledged to the cities was that they would run a safe place for the community. Over the last few years a lot has been learned and going forward the community can be assured that whatever plans are made for the future will be handled in the same way. The recent winter season saw much broader community support faith communities and others opting to help in various ways. The partnerships that have developed with the city and others are truly heartening.

Chair McEachran suggested the word needs to get out to other faith communities and the *Bellevue Reporter* that the winter shelter is a working operation and not just a place to dump homeless people.

Commissioner Villar asked what the process is like as the winter shelter season winds down to get the men prepared to leave the shelter. Mr. Roberts said it is very painful for the staff after having spent six months to build a community only to see the men have nowhere else to go. Mr. Johns Bowling said the process becomes very intentional. It is certainly a loss for the men who have come to rely on the shelter, and a number of behaviors play out. Some men choose to leave a week early as a way of doing things on their own terms. Others withdraw as a defense mechanism, others get angry, and still others get very emotional. Every attempt is made to create a space where the issues can be talked about and not just acted out. There are discussions with each of the men about what their plans are once they leave; many are put on the waiting list for the program shelter.

Mr. Jackson added that many of the men realize the shelter is a place where they can belong, not just a place to get out of the weather for a while. The level of anxiety certainly rises as it comes close to the time to close the doors. A community barbeque was held before the shelter closed and the men really appreciated it.

Angela Murray, Executive Director for Sophia Way, noted her appreciation for Catholic Community Services having the organizational capacity and experience to take on the winter shelter. During the recent season the shelter housed 194 adults

and 106 children; 97 single-person households; 97 households with minors; 18 Eastside families; 205 women and 95 males. Fourteen persons indicated they had full-time jobs, 20 said they were employed part time, and others said they had seasonal jobs. With regard to housing status, 296 said they were homeless, and one reported not being homeless.

Bill Hallerman with Catholic Community Services said the shelter opened on November 15 at St. Peter's in Crossroads and it operated there until the end of January. From February 1 the shelter was housed at United Methodist in Redmond. The shelter closed for the season on May 16 and operated its last month at Overlake Park Presbyterian Church. Each of the churches has indicated a willingness to host the shelter again next year. There was excellent cooperation between Sophia Way, Catholic Community Services and Congregations for the Homeless.

Eileen McComb with Catholic Community Services shared with the Commissioners a calendar indicating the nightly count for the shelter in each of the churches. She noted that overall the nightly average was 41. The focus in the past has been on serving single adult women unaccompanied by children; the practice of welcoming women with children began last year and word spread to where on most nights the shelter had between six and ten families. A number of the families were actively looking for work.

Mr. Roberts said everyone should be proud of the fact that with only a couple of exceptions during the winter of 2014-2015 there was no reason to be homeless outside on the Eastside.

Chair McEachran asked if moving the shelter between three different churches during the winter season cause any problems for those who were served. Ms. McComb said the move triggered the need to use taxis to get the children to their regular schools. Notice was given in advance of each move.

Arthur Sullivan, Director of A Regional Coalition for Housing (ARCH), said his organization was asked to think about a long-term location for the winter shelter. The conversation was started a year and a half ago and the first report was given to the mayors and the city councils a year ago about having a more dedicated location. Having been directed to move forward, the next step was to come up with a game plan for identifying a permanent location. That conversation included looking at capital resources. Ten cities set aside resources to be available as seed money for the capital needed. The pieces are in place to proactively begin looking for a site. The process will include reaching out to the community.

Ms. Leslie said there is a tentative commitment in hand from Sound Transit to allow use of the same facility for the 2015-2016 winter season. However, a different site will be needed for the 2016-2017 season and it is unlikely that a permanent location will be operational by then, making it necessary to find yet another temporary facility.

****BREAK****

6. DISCUSSION

A. Agency Successes and Challenges

Intern Mary Jayne Walker said the purpose behind the report was to get a better understanding of what agencies are doing in terms of their services, to identify themes drawn from the narratives provided by the agencies, and to discuss possible funding implications.

Ms. Walker said 55 agencies participated. There were 220 narrative reports submitted over a four-quarter period. The narratives ranged in length from a few sentences to quite detailed. The narratives that either called out or alluded to one of the five service areas were categorized. Not surprisingly, 92 percent fell into the supportive relationship category. Several agencies reported that their services touch more than one service area.

Most programs use a collaborative and holistic approach as evidenced by references to referring clients out or providing multiple services. It was obvious from the reports that people come to agencies with a variety of needs at different entry points. In one report a person came in to NAMI Eastside who originally had been a client of HealthPoint. Symptoms of mental illness were identified, and upon further assessment it was determined the client needed housing resources and a referral to Sound Mental Health.

Ms. Walker said cultural competency was mentioned often in the reports. The agencies were not, however, very adept at describing what they did that was culturally competent, so they just used the phrase. In one example, a Mandarin-speaking client came in and was able to connect with a case manager and support group of people, and was then offered culturally relevant acupuncture on site to deal with pain.

Employment was a theme reported by 47 percent of the programs, and when it was reported it was often in relation to helping a client either secure or maintain housing. Nearly every agency reported providing employment services.

Ten programs mentioned that clients were volunteering, either at the agency where they received services or in the community. It would be interesting to capture that data in more detail and to think about how it might be used to show the strength of the community.

Ms. Walker suggested it would be interesting to take a closer look at the employment services that the agencies are providing to determine if they are formal or informal, whether there are duplications, and if any best practices can be identified. Ms.

O'Reilly agreed it would be helpful to know which agencies offer employment services and to what degree they offer them.

Ms. Walker also suggested agencies should be encouraged to explain how they are providing culturally competent services. Some agencies reported being the first point of contact for clients speaking in a given language, but then referring them out to some of the larger systems. It is a good thing to know that some whose first language is not English may not access services in the same way, and many agencies in Bellevue are doing a good job of reaching those folks and connecting them to services.

The way agencies report their successes and challenges is very much focused on client successes. Ms. Walker suggested it would be good to capture some of the nuanced ways in which the agencies are meeting with successes or facing challenges.

Grant Coordinator Joseph Adriano commented that before the Share One application process, the phrasing of the questions in the narrative sections gave far more guidance, leaving the agencies free to be forthcoming about barriers. That has been lost with the Share One application.

Commissioner Bruels said he liked the idea of being clear about what cultural competency is. He said he has seen a consistent confusion about it is as a concept. It is far more than simply not discriminating.

Commissioner Plaskon agreed that there should be some focus given to volunteerism; it should be part of the questioning in the future. It validates those who are giving back and gives them a sense of accomplishment. It may also give them some skills they can take forward.

7. OLD BUSINESS - None

8. NEW BUSINESS

Ms. Leslie reminded the Commissioners about the June 8 joint meeting of Human Services Commissions that will be hosted by Redmond. The focus will be the Best Start for Kids levy. The Commission's first meeting in June has been canceled.

Ms. O'Reilly encouraged the Commissioners to sign up for the Eastside Human Services Forum annual education event. The event is scheduled for June 10 from 7:30 p.m. to 9:30 p.m. at Mercer Island Community Center.

Ms. O'Reilly said the anticipation is that by the time of the Commission's next meeting a new intern will be on board.

Commissioner Plaskon said it had been a pleasure to work as part of the

Commission. The members clearly care for those in the community and the work done reflects that. The work of the Commission is not political and it can do its work without having to worry about the political side of things.

Commissioner Beighle said her nine years on the Commission had been wonderful. The staff are amazing and well respected in the community. She said the friends made on the Commission will be with her for the rest of her life.

9. PETITIONS AND COMMUNICATIONS - None

10. ADJOURNMENT

A motion to adjourn was made by Commissioner Beighle. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Plaskon and it carried unanimously.

Chair McEachran adjourned the meeting at 8:10 p.m.

Secretary to the Human Services Commission

Date

Chairperson of the Human Services Commission

Date