

CITY OF BELLEVUE
HUMAN SERVICES COMMISSION
MINUTES

October 3, 2017
6:00 p.m.

Bellevue City Hall
City Council Conference Room 1E-113

COMMISSIONERS PRESENT: Chairperson Villar, Commissioners Kline, Ma, McEachran, Mercer, Oxrieder, Perelman

COMMISSIONERS ABSENT: None

STAFF PRESENT: Alex O'Reilly, Dee Dee Catalano, Christy Stangland, Cynthia Moreno, Nancy LaCombe, Terry Smith, Department of Parks and Community Services; Councilmember Lynne Robinson

GUEST SPEAKERS: None

RECORDING SECRETARY: Gerry Lindsay

1. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 6:00 p.m. by Chair Villar who presided.

2. ROLL CALL

Upon the call of the roll, all Commissioners were present with the exception of Commissioners Kline and Perelman, both of whom arrived at 6:03 p.m.

3. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

A. September 7, 2017

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

4. PETITIONS AND COMMUNICATIONS

Ms. Theresa Winther, Director of Child and Family Services for Sound Mental Health, thanked the Commission for its support of the program. She noted that Grant Coordinator Dee Dee Catalano and others recently conducted an audit. One thing the audit uncovered was that the organization is supposed to inform the Commission when something major occurs. She reported that a new Executive Director, Patrick

Evans, came on board in May 2016 which by oversight was not reported to any of the funding cities. Mr. Evans has focused on consolidated electronic health records, improving the billing system, and making sure all processes talk to each other. Public mental health had often been siloed and under Mr. Evans things have been flattened out after several staffing changes were made. The organization continues to be known mostly for its Medicaid population, which are the hardest to serve in King County. Sound Mental Health conducts outreach and does a lot of work in the schools, in homes and around the community. Caseloads have been balanced out so that folks are not just dealing with the hardest to serve to avoid burnout and turnover. All state-required programming and percentage of services milestones have been met to date in 2017. The evidenced-based programs provided include parent-child interactive therapy, cognitive behavioral therapy through Harborview, screening and brief intervention, and dialectical behavioral. In the children's and youth's world it is really all about creating resilience along with prevention and intervention. The Medicaid services offered are wide ranging and run from individual family groups to psychiatric services and mental health assessments. Partly because of the city's grant, the organization has begun reaching out to cover unfunded folks. Sound Mental Health became a provider of SBIRT, screening and brief intervention and referral to treatment, three or four years ago, a program that is helpful in prevention and intervention. The agency is an active member of Eastside Pathways.

Commissioner McEachran asked Ms. Winther how large her staff is and she indicated that on the Eastside she has 25 on her staff who serve 500 children, youth and families.

Commissioner Perelman asked if the agency is seeking to grow its private insurance element. Ms. Winther said it is through the department called Sound Solutions.

5. STAFF AND COMMISSION REPORTS

Commissioner McEachran reported that Congregations for the Homeless launched the men's winter shelter on October 1.

Commissioner McEachran said the tour of the Bellevue Boys & Girls Club was excellent. He said it was good to learn about the collaborative impact of the organization with the school district and the way barriers are kept low to increase participation. One of the things the program has going for it is long-term staff.

Human Services Manager Alex O'Reilly introduced new intern Cynthia Moreno, a second-year student at the University of Washington in the Masters of Social Work program. Ms. Moreno said she was excited to be working at the city of Bellevue and said she would be with the city until her graduation in June. She said her concentration is on administration and policy and noted that her background is in the non-profit world working primarily with immigrants, refugees and the foster care system. She said she also participates as part of the University of Washington Seattle Minimum Wage Study team.

Chair Villar reported that the October 17 Commission meeting would be her last. She explained that she and her husband would be moving to Canada in November.

Department of Parks and Community Services Assistant Director Terry Smith explained that the human services continuum was developed many years ago by former Human Services Manager Emily Leslie and Department of Parks and Community Services Director Patrick Foran. The outcome of the concept was the formula that is still in use that adjusts the allocation to the human services fund based on population growth and other factors. The continuum focuses on the concept of moving people through transitions in their lives. On the enhancement side is sports and recreation which is viewed as an upstream opportunity to create self-worth, self-care and a sense of hope. Such programs often help people staying up and out of homelessness, or getting back to independence. Mentoring is certainly an important element, as is supported employment and ESL instruction.

The human services continuum requires collaboration and coordination with a lot of different players, internally within the city organization and externally with the community and the region. If there were resources enough, homelessness would not be an issue. If there were adequate shelters and programs for addiction recovery along with a good opiate task force, the work of the police and code compliance officers would be greatly reduced.

Commissioner Mercer referred to access to services on the comprehensive/coordinated approach chart and pointed out the clear need for transportation infrastructure. Mr. Smith agreed that would be good to highlight. Commissioner Mercer noted that the Commission has been hearing stories of Bellevue being a transportation desert and how hard that makes it for those who need public transportation. The assumption is that Bellevue is well served, which it clearly is not.

Referring to the same chart, Commissioner McEachran suggested there is a danger in using language such as “key community partners” when going about the business of funding many different agencies. The danger lies in the perception that some are more equal than others.

Commissioner Mercer said the chart feels like it covers a lot of things. She said she found it difficult to figure out where to focus. Someone could look at it and conclude that more police are needed, while others could look at it and reach a different conclusion. She said her preference would be to have a conversation around a more structured approach regarding the big rocks and the smaller rocks. The continuum puts some things that are all the way to the right on an equal footing with other things. Mr. Smith agreed. He pointed out that there are many components. The police are not just about enforcement, they also serve as the eyes and ears and are in a position to provide immediate contact and resource support given that they have

access to the support services. Commissioner Mercer said her issue with the chart was how to control the narrative for the person who is seeing it for the first time.

Commissioner McEachran concurred and said if he were seeing the chart for the first time he would have more questions than answers. An update is needed to avoid having it interpreted as creating priorities.

Chair Villar suggested that missing under support services is medical care.

Commissioner Oxrieder said she did not understand showing fire under support services. Mr. Smith said fire provides emergency support by responding to 9-1-1 calls. Fire is a very active player relative to support services. Councilmember Robinson suggested the reference would be clearer if it specifically called out EMT services. Mr. Smith said he views the chart from a collaborative perspective. It is not just city services, but it certainly is city services, programs and departments.

Commissioner McEachran proposed changing the title “Comprehensive/Coordinated Approach” on the chart to “Collaborative/Coordinated Approach.” He said collaboration and coordination equals comprehensive care.

Chair Villar suggested revising the presentation to include at the end a slide showing all of the community partners. Mr. Smith said the point was well taken.

Commissioner Mercer said it would be helpful to include a map of the various community partners that do various things in part with funding from Bellevue. That would make it clear that the city funds the spectrum all around. Mr. Smith agreed that would be a good visual for the update.

City Manager’s Office Assistant Director Nancy LaCombe said staff had heard quite a bit recently about the two right-hand and the two left-hand columns on the chart. Staff have been looking at what other opportunities exist to increase services given that increased needs are being seen, including increasing the Human Services Fund, working with other human service providers, coordinating with businesses and additional faith communities, and increasing community support through education and outreach.

Commissioner Mercer suggested that in talking about what other opportunities exist, there should be some clarity around what the city should do to activate them.

Commissioner Oxrieder asked who the information is targeted to and Ms. LaCombe said ultimately it will be the Council. Commissioner Oxrieder suggested that as drafted it assumes the Council knows a lot about the current human services arena, such as which faith communities and which human service providers are involved.

Commissioner McEachran said the presentation includes the ultimate question for citizens of Bellevue and other jurisdictions. It outlines the issues. With the need

outlined, the focus needs to be on proactive supportive services. The diagnosis is there but the prognosis is not. The people need to see a way out of the issues. Sub-points are needed to illustrate what is really meant relative to implementation.

Commissioner Perelman suggested the presentation is not clear relative to diversity. While it may be an overarching issue, it is not clear. The recent presentation to the Commission by Eastside Pathways pointed out that there is no one “go-to” group for the Hispanic community and that could be deemed one of the areas that is currently missing.

Chair Villar commented that one thing the Commission does during the funding cycle is review out how culturally competent the services are that are being provided. That is a key focus for the Commission and is a narrative the Commission looks for in reviewing applications and making funding recommendations.

Ms. LaCombe said the list of increasing needs or gaps includes affordable housing, employment opportunities, shelter space during the non-winter months, mental health and additional counselors, outreach support, access to food on the weekends, inpatient mental health and addiction treatment, safe parking facilities for RVs and single men, and transportation.

Councilmember Robinson said she was troubled by the reference to safe parking facilities for RVs. She said the Council is in fact not sure it wants to encourage people parking anywhere in Bellevue, let alone making it a priority. Ms. LaCombe said the issue has been identified as a gap but has not been made a priority. There are some faith communities offering their facilities to accommodate RV parking. Councilmember Robinson suggested removing the word “parking” and leaving only “safe facilities for RVs.”

Mr. Smith added that the increasing needs and gaps identified have not been prioritized. They have come from several different sources and are intended only as a way of getting arms around the issues. The city is doing a great job of being proactive and responsive. Outreach support has gone from half time in 2016 to full time in 2017; that certainly is a best practice, but whether or not more could be done should be evaluated.

Commissioner Mercer suggested that the increasing needs equals gaps slide is really talking about opportunities and possible actions. With that in mind, the slide about what other opportunities exist actually lists the potential sources that might be activated to address the needs. Some of the areas in which there are gaps involve issues for which there is nothing set up yet to address them. In making the presentation to the Council, the narrative should demonstrate the problem first, then outline what is already being done, and then indicate what else needs to be done.

Commissioner Ma said the information on the slides could be made clearer by having category headings, such as shelter, followed by the specifics, such as affordable housing.

Commissioner McEachran stressed the need to highlight what is already being done to support the needs in the community.

Councilmember Robinson called attention to the possible resource gaps slide and noted that the first bullet point under the homelessness task force is mental health and additional counselors. She said too often it is pretended that the homeless have issues that no one else has. There is a real deficit generally in mental health and addiction counseling for everyone, not just the homeless population.

Commissioner Mercer said transportation is a clear resource gap and should be highlighted as such.

Ms. LaCombe said the city's webpage relative to homelessness references only the interim shelter and the permanent shelter. Staff are currently working to comprehensively update the page to better frame the issues and the resources that are out there, and how the city and the Eastside deals with homelessness. The Council has also tasked staff with coming up with something specific in regard to panhandling. Redmond's webpage on homelessness includes various ways to address panhandling, such as through handing out resource cards or care packages instead of dollars.

Commissioner Mercer suggested the documentation should highlight some of the things being done relative to legal resources that help people deal with landlords so they can remain in their houses, as well as resources to help deal with mental illness and domestic violence.

Commissioner Perelman said recently some signs were put in her neighborhood to get the attention of drivers and asking them to drive the speed limit. She suggested that a similar approach could be used to address the needs in the community.

Chair Villar said social isolation is an issue that is not covered in the presentation materials. She said it impacts seniors as well as the immigrant community.

Commissioner McEachran said supportive services is a key term for being proactive. At some point it should be clearly stated that Bellevue is supporting citizens. An effective brochure should be printed up and made available at schools, community centers and faith communities outlining how citizens are supported.

Chair Villar asked how many languages the city website is in. Mr. Smith said at least five. The updated website is far more user friendly relative to translations.

Chair Villar asked if the proposed homelessness task force will be specific to Bellevue or the Eastside generally. Mr. Smith said it will focus only on Bellevue.

Ms. O'Reilly pointed out that some of the information in the presentation is included in the Needs Update, and much of what is in the Needs Update will be integrated into that work over time. Every effort is being put into making sure there is no overlapping work.

Commissioner Perelman said there is a clear need to talk with agencies about the increasing needs creating gaps. Homelessness is only one piece of the human services spectrum. The talk of updating the city's homelessness website will still result in a focus on homelessness. The needs in the city reach far beyond just homelessness and that fact needs to be highlighted.

Commissioner Kline suggested that if the shelter presentation had come before the Commission for discussion early on, it all could have gotten off on a better foot. Commissioner Mercer agreed and said she remembered the presentation that was given to the Commission and some of the comments made at the time. She said it was clear at the time that the shelter was being built on work that had already been done in the planning department; there was a vision for what the neighborhood would be and the shelter plan fit perfectly into it. There was no focus on bringing people along to that vision. She said she remembered giving that feedback. Commissioner Kline noted that staff had at that time already given the presentation to the Council. Commissioner Mercer suggested that had staff come and talked to the Commission first, the Commission might have been helpful in recommending how to deliver the message.

7. DISCUSSION

A. 2018 Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Contingency Plan

Ms. Catalano proposed making a change to the contingency plan relative to receiving more funds than estimated. The idea is to make the document as flexible as possible to accommodate the greatest number of options without having to get approval from the Council. As proposed, the first step in the event of additional funds that would increase the cap for planning and administration was to spend the additional money up to the full cap amount if needed. The second step in the event of additional funds that would increase the cap for public services was to allocate additional funds to existing projects in that category if they could demonstrate they could spend the additional funding in a timely manner; any new programs would need Council approval.

Chair Villar informed the Commissioners that staff met with the City Attorney's Office to confirm that the proposed language is well within all requirements.

A motion to approve the CDBG contingency plan as amended was made by Commissioner McEachran. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Perelman and the motion carried unanimously.

6. DISCUSSION

A. 2017-2018 Human Services Needs Update Draft Report Presentation

Ms. O'Reilly noted that the Needs Update will be back before the Commission the second meeting in November. That will permit time to make revisions to the draft to reflect all new information and data. Homelessness is a focus area in the draft, but as a result of the opioid task force and the recommendations that have flowed from it, it may be a good idea to add the opioid crisis as a focus area. Having two focus areas in the Needs Update has been done in past years.

Commissioner McEachran suggested there should be an executive summary that can go to the Council and the people who are questioning what is happening in the city. Some consideration should be given to putting something in front of each section to say how the human infrastructure continuum is being confronted in each of the goal areas. At the end of the document, there should be a statement noting that wellbeing and quality of life in Bellevue comes because of the goals being met by implementation.

Commissioner Perelman said she would like to see each chapter begin with a page similar to but more detailed than an executive summary. Commissioner Mercer agreed. She said it should be possible to simply read the first page of each chapter and come away with a good understanding of what the overall document is about. Ms. O'Reilly said the executive summary booklet put together each time as part of the development of the Needs Update serves that purpose. Commissioner Perelman allowed that some people are more visual and would benefit from having graphics that lead through the storyline.

Ms. O'Reilly pointed out that many of the pictures in the report were received from partner agencies. She said the report is dedicated to those the report is about. There are lots of different needs on the continuum and the Commission is charged with addressing them. She allowed that there are some good things happening and highlighted specifically funds from the Best Start for Kids levy, the city's adopted Affordable Housing Strategy, the Bellevue Network on Aging's continued advocacy on behalf of older adults in the city, and AtWork's focus on helping more people with disabilities find employment. Each chapter seeks to recognize what has been accomplished while also outlining the gaps and needs that have been identified.

Chair Villar said it would be helpful just before the grant season begins to provide the Commission with a refresher on how the Affordable Housing Strategy might play into the process. Ms. O'Reilly said the Goal 1 chapter includes information about the strategy. She agreed that it will be an important issue to keep in mind.

Ms. O'Reilly said the presentation to the Commission in May drew from the data from the phone and online surveys as well as from the focus groups and provider surveys. She noted that the overarching themes are reflected in every chapter, including the specific populations chapters and the goal areas. The fact that the themes overlap is acknowledged, though compartmentalizing them allows for looking at the data more closely.

With regard to Goal 1, Food to Eat and a Roof Overhead, Ms. O'Reilly said the obvious gaps are affordable housing and emergency financial assistance. That is not to say there is no longer a need to fund food banks and that sort of thing. Emergency financial assistance serves as a safety net to keep people from going into homelessness, and the feedback from the community has been that more funding is needed.

Commissioner Mercer said she sees transportation as an issue that crosses all of the goal area boundaries without rising to the top. Ms. O'Reilly said transportation has been made a special focus area in years past. She agreed that transportation is a gap associated with several chapters and as such it might be a good idea to develop a white paper or something more specific around the issue. Transportation has been a focus for the Network on Aging for quite some time and is something that should be looked at in 2018 when developing a work plan.

The gaps identified in association with Goal 2, Supportive Relationships Within Families, Neighborhoods and Communities, include free or low-cost legal assistance, especially for immigration issues, support for early learning, and information on how to find resources.

A Safe Haven from All Forms of Violence and Abuse is Goal 3. Ms. O'Reilly said the gaps identified were affordable housing, legal advocacy for domestic violence survivors, and community education on trafficking signs and resources. She said the latter is an issue that reaches throughout the whole county but is also a problem in Bellevue.

Goal 4, Healthcare to be as Physically and Mentally Fit as Possible, highlights the fact that healthcare continues to be a major issue. Ms. O'Reilly said much was heard from those talked with and from the surveys about people in fear of losing their healthcare. There has been a very large increase in the number of people who have some healthcare coverage, though admittedly not everyone is being served well. The specifically identified gaps include the need for culturally responsive physical and behavioral healthcare, access to services, and treatment on demand for both.

Chair Villar commented that the survey did not include a separate question about vision health. She said if there is a gap in physical and behavioral healthcare, there very likely is a gap in vision care, something which can certainly impact people's

ability to work. Ms. O'Reilly agreed the question should be considered during the next update.

Ms. O'Reilly said in regard to Goal 5, Education and Job Skills to Lead an Independent Life, that according to the Self-Sufficiency Calculator, a living wage for families in Bellevue ranges from \$26.30 to \$39.30 per hour, which is well above the minimum wage in the state. There are actually few jobs that pay that much and that is why so many people are struggling to make ends meet. The identified gaps for the goal area were training to obtain higher wage jobs, child care subsidies, and transportation to get to jobs.

Commissioner McEachran allowed that to some degree, the living wage issue impacts every goal area. Every day, 114,000 people travel into Bellevue to work, while 34,000 residents work in the city, and 36,000 leave Bellevue to work in other cities.

Ms. O'Reilly said it was clear from the surveys and stakeholder interviews that while the unemployment rate is currently low, many must work more than one job in order to earn enough to keep up with expenses. Many also feel they cannot take time off work to go back to school to train for a higher wage job.

Commissioner Mercer said in volunteering at homeless shelters she has often heard from men who talk about having worked physically demanding jobs up until encountering something physical that keeps them from doing what they are trained to do. They then must deal with the medical issue while not having any training to seek other employment. Ms. O'Reilly said comments were made during the data gathering process that medical issues are one of the main reasons people fall into bankruptcy and become homeless.

With regard to specific populations, Ms. O'Reilly said transportation continues to be an issue for older adults. Other recurring themes are affordable housing, help in staying in their own homes, caregiver support, including for those taking care of those with memory loss, and culturally appropriate services. Even though the percentage of non-white older adults is smaller than the percentage of younger non-white people, there are still a lot of social and cultural issues faced by families who bring their older adult family members with them when they come from other cultures.

The biggest gap relative to people with disabilities is the fact that state funding has not kept up with the needs. Many imagine that those with disabilities have a large safety net around them, but the fact is what they receive is not enough to meet their needs. Other identified gaps include employment support, housing, and services to help keep people with disabilities in their own homes.

With regard to refugees and immigrants, the gaps include legal assistance for immigration issues, ESL instruction to facilitate finding living wage jobs, help for families to feel welcome in the community, and culturally responsive health and

human services. The phone and online surveys included a statistically significant increase in the number of people who said they feel there is racial and ethnic discrimination in the community.

Commissioner Mercer said she would like to see an expansion beyond just refugees and immigrants to include other minorities. She said there have been incidents involving African-Americans but also the Mosque burning incident and Nazi symbols, all of which may be impacting people coming forward and asking for services.

Commissioner Oxrieder said she would like to drill down on the information to learn more about the people who have experienced racial and ethnic discrimination. Ms. O'Reilly said the capacity does not exist to get that information from the survey, but there may be other ways.

Ms. O'Reilly agreed that the section could be titled something other than refugees and immigrants in order to cast a broader net. Commissioner Mercer agreed, noting that the issues are not only affecting refugees and immigrants, or even only people of color. There has been a significant rise in cultural issues, including anti-Semitism and anti-Muslims.

Commissioner Ma said he agreed there is a need to discuss the broader issues. Refugees and immigrants have issues specific to them just as people of color have specific issues they deal with. There are overlapping commonalities but going out of the way to highlight the overlaps would not necessarily be an effective approach.

Commissioner McEachran said the overview which is yet to be written could include the foundations on which the report is based, specifically the mandate from the ordinance, the Comprehensive Plan policies, and Council initiatives such as the Diversity Advantage. Linking to those specifics will provide a framework for which the Commission is responsible.

Ms. Moreno commented that refugees and immigrants face specific circumstances, including legal issues that in some cases limit the services they are allowed access to.

Commissioner Perelman asked about including a separate section on inclusivity that is not focused on a specific population. Ms. O'Reilly said there could be an inclusivity chapter, but it could also be addressed in a basic statement.

Commissioner Oxrieder referred to page 37 of the draft and noted that white residents living alone indicated an average of 8.1 problems, whereas non-white residents living alone indicated an average of 6.5 problems. The same kind of difference came up relative to the primary language spoken at home. Ms. O'Reilly said the hard part about surveys is they can give answers that are difficult to interpret accurately.

Commissioner Ma said there is a sentiment among minorities coming to the United States that it is necessary to tolerate a little bit of racism and discrimination as a matter of fact. Accordingly, they are less prone to complain about things because they do not feel they have the right to. That does not mean they have fewer problems, but it could be they have found solutions within their own communities.

Commissioner Perelman said she is a white immigrant who came from a culture in which it is normal to complain as much as possible and to be vocal about it. She agreed that sometimes surveys simply provide data that does not really tell a story. Ms. O'Reilly said that is the reason for having a human services plan where the data is used to create goals.

Commissioner McEachran suggested the section could be lifted to a higher level by making it narrative driven instead of data driven. That approach might make a statement in a way that is new to the people who read the document. Commissioner Ma concurred and said if recent national pictures have indicated anything it is the people are driven by narrative stories and emotions, not just pure data. Data does not always reflect people's views.

Ms. O'Reilly said she would continue the discussion of specific populations at the second Commission meeting in November. Turning to the timeline, she said it called for seeking consensus at that meeting on the report. The executive summary will be worked on in November and December, and the report will be presented to the Council in January. A link to the report will be sent out to the community in late January or early February.

Commissioner Mercer suggested the refugee and immigrant section could be left as is provided the issues of racism and culturally sensitive topics were raised under Goal 2. Ms. O'Reilly agreed.

8. OLD BUSINESS

Human Services Planner Christy Stangland announced that she had been able to set up some possible times to tour the Hopelink transportation facilities and the service center. The dates and times given were October 18 between noon to 2:00 p.m., November 1 in the afternoon, and November 22 in the afternoon. Commissioners Mercer, Ma and Oxrieder said they could go on October 18.

Commissioner McEachran suggested that as the funding cycle ramps up it might be good to set up tours of different agencies that are new to the Commission. Ms. O'Reilly agreed but pointed out that visits would not be scheduled in December.

Commissioner Perelman said her take away from the comments made by the representative of Sound Mental Health is that they are having a hard time using the money allocated to them by the city. Commissioner Mercer said she had the same impression.

Commissioner Kline said she did not recall putting any restrictions on their funding. Ms. Catalano said staff has attempted to convey to them that no restrictions had been placed on the funding, thus the agency does not have to focus only on unfunded people. Commissioner Kline said that is disappointing in that the agency should know what they asked for. Ms. Catalano added that the contract has not yet been paid because the agency has not submitted their service units. Staff are keeping a close eye on the agency.

Ms. O'Reilly said Ms. Catalano is continuing to work with other cities to set up a joint commission meeting, possibly on November 7.

9. NEW BUSINESS - None

10. PETITIONS AND COMMUNICATIONS – None

11. ADJOURNMENT

A motion to adjourn was made by Commissioner Mercer. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Ma and the motion carried unanimously.

Chair Villar adjourned the meeting at 8:20 p.m.

Secretary to the Human Services Commission

Date

Chairperson of the Human Services Commission

Date

CITY OF BELLEVUE
HUMAN SERVICES COMMISSION
MINUTES

October 17, 2017
6:00 p.m.

Bellevue City Hall
City Council Conference Room 1E-113

COMMISSIONERS PRESENT: Chairperson Villar, Commissioners Kline, Ma, McEachran, Mercer, Oxrieder, Perelman

COMMISSIONERS ABSENT: None

STAFF PRESENT: Alex O'Reilly, Dee Dee Catalano, Christy Stangland, Cynthia Moreno, Department of Parks and Community Services; Councilmember Lynne Robinson

GUEST SPEAKERS: Sara Levin, United Way; Meghan Altimore, Malory Gustave, Stephanie Paget, Hopelink

RECORDING SECRETARY: Gerry Lindsay

1. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 6:01 p.m. by Chair Villar who presided.

2. ROLL CALL

Upon the call of the roll, all Commissioners were present with the exception of Commissioner Perelman who arrived at 6:19 p.m.

3. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

A. September 19, 2017

A motion to approve the minutes as submitted was made by Commissioner Oxrieder. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Mercer and the motion carried unanimously.

4. PETITIONS AND COMMUNICATIONS – None

5. STAFF AND COMMISSION REPORTS

Commissioner Oxrieder said she attended the recent Congregations for the Homeless luncheon.

Commissioner McEachran noted that he had also attended the Congregations for the Homeless function. He said Sophia Way was fun and Hopelink \$1.2 million later is probably feeling pretty good. The presentations were excellent. He added that earlier in the day he had lunch with three executive directors during which the faith community's commitment to increase participation with Congregations for the Homeless and Sophia Way and by 50 percent in dollar value in the new year was reaffirmed.

Commissioner Ma reported that several weeks ago he attended a fundraiser for Kin On, a social center for culturally relevant Asian seniors located in Crossroads.

Chair Villar said her husband recently donated a piece of durable medical equipment to Bridge Ministries. She said she recently visited the agency and witnessed them assisting a disabled person in completing their paperwork. They were very patient and caring and were able to get the person what was needed.

Human Services Manager Alex O'Reilly took a moment to honor Chair Villar, noting that it was her last Commission meeting before moving to Canada. She thanked Chair Villar for her service and leadership, for her contributions, and for her wonderful insights.

Councilmember Robinson said Bellevue's boards and commissions attract a certain kind of person, namely those who really care about the community. That is particularly true of those serving on the Human Services Commission. She said Chair Villar has shown a commitment to the community through leadership and contributions. She said the city and the City Council appreciates the work that has been done.

Chair Villar said she has over the years volunteered in many different places and in many different capacities. She said her work as part of the Commission has been the most fulfilling. She said she will miss attending the meetings, the Commissioners and staff, and being part of the great work done by the Commission on behalf of the city.

Commissioner McEachran said the amazing thing about the Human Services Commission is that its members join as strangers and in a very short time become friends and stewards of the city. He said he has been an honor to serve with Chair Villar and beside her.

Commissioner Ma thanked Chair Villar for welcoming him and for being so helpful to him as a newcomer to the Commission. He wished her all the best in her new adventures.

Commissioner Mercer said she would miss going through the various applications in the coming year without Chair Villar and hearing her insights. She said she would

miss having Chair Villar being part of the journey, but wished her all the best in taking on her new challenges.

Chair Villar explained that she would be working in the field of business immigration ensuring that folks get the permissions they need to legally immigrate. She said the work has been more challenging as the administration seeks to make it as difficult as possible for folks to legally immigrate. She said recently she has had a lot of conversations with DACA kids who are trying to figure out their options.

There was a short break to take a group photo and serve cake.

Grant Coordinator Dee Dee Catalano reported that staff have been working to put together a joint commissions meeting for November 7 with a focus on cultural diversity and racial equity and looking at applications through that lens. However, the person asked to make the presentation cannot attend on November 7. January 9 has been reserved instead.

Councilmember Robinson commented that there has been much said lately about the homeless shelter. She said it was her belief that there is a majority of people in Bellevue who support creating support for the homeless population, even though there is a very loud group that claims to not be against a shelter while being clear about not liking the proposed location. Regardless of where a shelter is ultimately sited, consideration needs to be given to what kind of programming will be offered in conjunction with it, a conversation that will need to involve the public. She said she has visited Imagine Housing, Congregations for the Homeless, Sophia Way and Hopelink. The very mission Bellevue is trying to engage with is consistent with the work being done by those organizations. It would be very helpful if everyone who supports the work of those organizations could come out in support of the shelter.

Councilmember Robinson said while attending a Mental Health and Drug Dependency meeting with Human Services Planner Christy Stangland a couple of weeks ago it became clear to her that the funding that will be needed to support the homeless population is going to be limited unless names and birthdates are collected so they can be signed up for Medicaid. She asked the Commission to look into that for her because the Council needs to be educated in regard to that reality.

The Commission should be thinking about the possibility of having a homeless shelter sited in Bellevue in the next few years. Consideration should be given to what kind of funding it will need and what other resources will need to be dedicated to it, along with the kinds of relationships and partnerships that will need to be developed.

Commissioner McEachran said he took the opportunity while meeting with three executive directors to discuss with them the need to speak together around supportive services as a way to help the process. He said he told them they have been far too quiet about what each can offer in terms of supportive services. The talk should be less on homelessness and more on shelter security and home security,

using the language of affirmation in moving forward. He said he challenged them to put their heads together and put out something about collaborative impact for supportive services, and moving forward in partnership with the city and other municipalities.

Councilmember Robinson said it was clear at the presentation about homeless women at the Sophia Way luncheon raised no eyebrows, and everyone agreed with the need to establish no barriers to serving homeless women. However, as soon as the conversation turns to homeless men, the ball game changes dramatically. She urged the staff to get copies of the presentation made at the luncheon by Representative Nicole Macri and share it with the Commissioners. She also pointed out that there had been unanimous support for siting a permanent homeless shelter for men in Bellevue until the elections became an issue.

6. DISCUSSION

A. United Way of King County Updates

Sara Levin, Vice President of Community Services for United Way of King County, took a moment to thank Ms. O'Reilly, a long-time volunteer with United Way who chairs the Early Learning Impact Council and serves on the Public Policy Council. She observed that the role of United Way is similar to that of the Commission. She said her role is to oversee all of the community impact work, which requires thinking a lot about community needs; the Commission does the same with a focus on the city of Bellevue. United Way must make difficult funding decisions, just as the Commission must. United Way looks at issues through a racial equity lens, which is training the Commission will also have.

Ms. Levin said United Way adopted a new strategic plan in 2015. In putting together the four focus areas, the community indicators taken into consideration included how to describe the value of United Way of King County. The organization has an old-school vision in which communities are built in which people have homes, students graduate and families are financially stable. Every dollar invested, all public funds leveraged and all efforts to influence public policy are focused on that vision.

The strategic plan's four community indicators were chosen in part to align with other community partners who are doing the same kind of work and who are measuring indicators in the same way. With regard to kindergarten readiness, a target was set that by 2020, 80 percent of all kids in King County would be ready for kindergarten. Currently that figure stands at 58 percent, which is up from 37 percent when the target was set. A new initiative has been determined that seeks to connect the 14,000 young people who are not in school and do not have a high school diploma with opportunities to gain a high school equivalency and getting them on a career path. Another goal is to help 50,000 people exit poverty. Regionally, things are going well in that arena, but there is still troubling data around who is still in poverty. United Way put a stake in the ground about wanting to see a 50 percent reduction in the number

of unsheltered people in the One Night Count, but nearly every year since that goal was set the number has actually increased.

United Way achieves community impact in several ways. Ms. Levin said her team is investing about \$29 million from donors and public funds in fiscal 2018 through competitive grants that have an emphasis on racial and geographic equity. Given the size of the portfolio and the reach across the county, the organization has the ability to take things to scale. When entering into a new program or initiative, consideration is given to those who will be served as well as the overall need and how United Way can scale efforts to address the issues completely.

Influence is important, which is why the organization has a public policy agenda that addresses both the state and local levels. United Way works with a contract lobbyist and mobilizes volunteers to get their voices heard. The organization is also increasingly looking at local advocacy and has taken a position recently on several levies.

United Way understands that it cannot go it alone. Donor dollars are leveraged with public and other dollars, and the work of thousands of volunteers each year is also leveraged. About 200 AmeriCorps members come through the doors annually and are put to work either providing direct services or working with non-profits on capacity building.

Commissioner Perelman noted that United Way defunded a large group of citizens with the new plan a couple of years ago. She asked if the agency has tracked who picked up services to those populations. Ms. Levin said United Way makes difficult decisions all the time because the dollars it has are limited. The decision to not invest in some of the older adult services was made in light of the understanding that many of the remaining investments in homelessness, food and hunger and ending poverty would be serving older adults, and that data is being tracked. United Way was also excited about and advocated for the Veterans and Human Services Levy to include significant services for seniors.

With regard to giving every child a chance to succeed, Ms. Levin said the Parent Child Home program is a signature effort of United Way. The home visiting program is based on a national model. It has been expanded in King County from serving 160 families to serving 1200 families in 2016. The goal was to raise donor dollars and garner awareness of the success of the program and then identify public resources for ongoing support. It is very fortunate that Best Starts for Kids has kicked in as a big investor. The two main Eastside partners are Kinderling Center and Encompass. Child care is also provided for homeless families, and a racial equity innovation fund was started in 2016 to look at emerging strategies for positively impacting child care services for Native American and African American communities.

Ms. Levin said the work of United Way with regard to financial stability has an emphasis on ending childhood hunger and building economic stability. Free tax

preparation for low-income folks is a great way to leverage volunteer time and also a way to bring some \$30 million back into the community through earned income tax credits and other benefits. There is an initiative around childhood hunger called Fuel Your Future, and some anti-poverty work is being tested on community college campuses that focuses on connecting college students living in poverty with benefits and providing financial coaching.

Ending homelessness is a concern for United Way as it is for many organizations. Ms. Levin said she co-chairs the All Home coordinating board, a regional collective impact work aimed at making homelessness brief and one time. A great deal of thought is being put into systems changes and how to effectively leverage and bring together various funding sources. Streets to Home is a United Way program in which Congregations for the Homeless is a successful partner. Under the program, outreach workers have access to flexible funds so that when they meet someone on the street they can quickly identify what the person needs and very quickly get them what they need to get off the street and housed.

Ms. Levin said the youth initiatives look at how to connect young people who do not have a high school diploma with programs that can help them get the credentials they need to move forward in fulfilling their dreams. State funding has been tapped to fund a good portion of the program, and a fundraising campaign is well under way. To date, about 5600 of the 14,000 young people in King County with a high school diploma have been reached.

One of the big challenges for entities like United Way that rely on donor dollars is the changing donor landscape. Many who for many years have been supporting United Way are getting older. The organization is thinking about how to bring in Millennials and younger persons, first as volunteers and then as donors. Other challenges include the federal landscape, housing affordability and homelessness. The data shows that even as progress is being made in some of the indicators, there remains a racial disproportionality in terms of who is making progress. The organization's brand and vision, while always evolving, remains strong.

Commissioner Perelman asked what percentage of United Way's donors are individuals versus companies. Ms. Levin said individuals still outnumber companies in terms of dollars. Donations by companies represent about a quarter of the funding brought in. The donor landscape continues to change, however, and the organization has far less access to work places.

With regard to the comment about United Way helping 50,000 people exit poverty, Chair Villar asked how the organization measures poverty. Ms. Levin said it is measured using the federal poverty level. That indicator was selected several years ago and if looked at with fresh eyes it might be viewed somewhat differently. Chair Villar pointed out that no one who rises just above the federal poverty level will be able to afford to live in Bellevue.

7. DISCUSSION

A. Hopelink Housing and Prevention Updates

Meghan Altimore, Vice President of Community Services for Hopelink, said Hopelink Place is a 20-unit facility in the Meydenbauer Bay neighborhood, the doors of which were opened in 2000 exclusively to serve homeless families. Over the years, the homeless system has gone through a number of transitions. Hopelink did a lot of research around what it wanted to do with its homeless units. It was discovered that nationally transitional housing is creating artificial moves for families. People who live in rental housing tend to move, often to accommodate jobs, schools or family needs rather than because of an arbitrary timeline. That evidence-based best practice resonated with Hopelink. The agency saw through the community case management program there was a very different set of outcomes when compared to the transitional housing outcomes. Beginning in 2009 with the Duvall Place housing, stays were not time limited. The units are not considered permanent for a lot of reasons, primarily that Hopelink wants the residents to become self sufficient and independent, and because the agency wants to be able to serve the next families that come along in need of housing. The non time-limited units have escalating rents, beginning at 30 percent of the residents' income. At six months they are recertified, and then at 18 months and again at 30 months the rent increases to a maximum of just under \$1000 per month at the 30-month mark. Within that time there is comprehensive case management and employment services, along with education services and financial coaching. There is a focus on making sure the children have the services they need relative to child care and social, emotional and educational assistance, all with an eye on making it possible for the parents to increase their incomes. The program was implemented at Hopelink Place, so that program is in the transition phase.

Ms. Altimore said that as the whole system has shifted to serving literally homeless families, the result has been serving families with higher barriers and families who have less natural support. In going through the work with the Coordinated Entry for All system, it was found that very few families with ties to north and east King County were being served. It was also found that the families were not connected to the community. Hopelink undertook a set of changes the primary result of which what is best for the families served and best for the community Hopelink Place is in. The timeframe was removed and escalating rents were implemented. The option of remaining in the transitional housing program or moving into the permanent housing program was offered, but only to the families in good standing. Currently, 15 of the 20 units are considered non time-limited, and the last transitional family will complete its two-years in June 2018. In the last year, nine families have exited the program into permanent housing, and there have been three negative exits or evictions from the program. Seven families have reached the first rent increase stage, and two families are about to reach their second rent increase. Two of those households have had to seek external support in order to meet the rents, while the others have been able to pay their own way and on time.

Over the last year, the average income at entry was \$580 per month, and the average income at exit was \$1579 per month, an increase of 173 percent. While the increase is impressive, \$1579 a month is not enough for a family to survive and that is why Hopelink seeks to bring to bear all possible assistance so the families will have the skills they need to gain access to living wage jobs.

Commissioner Perelman asked where most of the money is coming from for the individuals in the housing units. Stephanie Page, Hopelink Place manager, said at entry many of the families present with zero incomes beyond something like TANF. There are currently eight families with gainful employment.

Commissioner Perelman asked how the term “family” is interpreted now that Hopelink is no longer part of the Coordinated Entry system. Ms. Altimore said it is complicated and involves having at least one person over the age of 18 and one person under the age of 18 who is in guardianship to the older individual. Every attempt is made to be as flexible as possible to serve the families in need. Beyond that, Hopelink prioritizes referrals from community partners. Hopelink is definitively serving people who are living outside or who are in very unstable housing and have little background support, so there still are incidents of criminal activity at Hopelink Place along with negative tendency issues. The families engaged in criminal activities draw the most attention and are the most challenging for the neighbors around and in Hopelink Place. Currently there are three households at Hopelink Place that are creating a lot of chaos. Hopelink is working with community partners to bring in as many services as possible, and it is using all of the legal tools at its disposal. The agency never wants a family to leave the program in worse shape than they came.

Commissioner Mercer asked if any clients have left the program for financial reasons due to the graduated system. Ms. Page said she was not aware of anyone leaving for that reason. Those who need help paying their rent often seek help from various community partners. Every family at a Hopelink property has the ability to work out a payment plan with their case manager. Ms. Altimore said Hopelink is aware of the challenges faced by the families, many of whom work with unstable hours and wages. The case workers help them through the process by connecting them with available services to help them increase their incomes.

Commissioner Mercer asked if there are other groups with a similar system. Ms. Altimore said she was not aware of any. She said the households being served are in the coordinated entry system. Hopelink’s decision to leave that system means it does not pull clients from that list, rather from local community partners. Hopelink’s families want to live in Bellevue, though they do not have to be from Bellevue. The families are not automatically evicted if they cannot pay the escalated rents; there is a negotiation process in place aimed at making it work for all parties. If there were a household that had done nothing to raise its income or improve its situation, Hopelink would likely move toward eviction. Ms. Page said a recent rent increase for a family at Hopelink Place served as the motivator to get the household out looking for work and participating with the employment program.

Commissioner McEachran noted that both Lifewire and Sophia Way have sustainable housing funds that can be tapped for things like first month's rent, and asked if Hopelink has something similar. He also asked how well the coordinated entry system has worked on the ground. Ms. Altimore said Hopelink has started talking about creating a sustainable housing fund, but she added the organization already offers flexible financial assistance with short-term case management. All Home and the coordinated entry for all system is overwhelmed. King County has done a great job of bringing in the right staff and the right technology to bear, but callers to 2-1-1 can experience being on hold for more than an hour. That is why places like the new Bethlehem Day Center, Sophia Way's day center with Congregations for the Homeless, are so critical. People can go to those places in person to get connected to the services they need. It is the same old-fashioned system that has been in place for years and it is still critical.

Ms. Altimore said the financial resilience program was recently launched by Hopelink, who took two of the best AmeriCorps volunteers to run it. The organization has had the idea for several years of taking the eviction prevention program and adding to it a program with far more flexible dollars. Families face financial shock in more ways than just paying the rent; cars break down, medical issues arise, and family emergencies necessitate the need to purchase a plane ticket. The idea behind the program is to help families cushion financial shocks. Instead of an approach that involves checking boxes to prove eligibility, the program takes the shape of a conversation focused on what the family needs. Recently an individual faced a change in health that has made it necessary to reduce the number of hours worked. The person needed a different work situation and a different living situation as a result. The stability resource specialist is working with the person to identify other living options, move to something more affordable, and will hold financial assistance until the move is made, at which time the funds will address move-in costs, including first month's rent and security deposit. The program is currently being piloted in Bellevue with funding from Hopelink and United Way.

Ms. Altimore said Hopelink recently became an official partner of Washington Connections through the state. Through the program, persons who present with zero income or completely unconnected to benefits can be provided access to the benefits for which they are eligible to help stabilize them. Ultimately they will be brought into the employment and education programs so that they can begin weaning away from those resources as they move toward being self sustaining. Hopelink's food bank system serves 15,000 persons annually, only half of whom are enrolled for Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program benefits even though all of them qualify.

Ms. Altimore said Hopelink used to rely on Bellevue and United Way for its community needs assessment, but as a community action agency the state says that approach cannot continue. Accordingly, Hopelink recently compiled its own community needs assessment. It has some great information that backs up the work done by Ms. O'Reilly and her team in compiling the city's Needs Update.

The federal poverty level for an individual is currently \$12,000. The University of Washington study that was recently published highlighted that it takes far more than that just to make ends meet, so Hopelink is looking at the 200- to 300-percent brackets, which are not currently served by any of Hopelink's programs. Federal assistance is received by the food bank but it caps at 185 percent of the federal poverty level, and Hopelink must use the same cap. People are, however, food insecure almost all the way to 300 percent of the federal poverty level. The local communities are remarkably generous in terms of food support; Hopelink brings in \$5.8 million annually in in-kind food. The question is whether or not that level of support can continue to increase so that those who are food insecure can be served.

Commissioner McEachran remarked that Eastside Pathways produces a needs report, the city produces one, and Hopelink does as well, and suggested that there could be benefit to having all organizations working together to correlate efforts. Ms. O'Reilly said Bellevue has been pushing that notion for 20 years or more with the Eastside cities but without eliciting a positive response. Ms. Altimore agreed that if each organization were conducting their evaluations on the same metrics the result would be very powerful.

Ms. Altimore thanked the Commissioners for their work. She said the support provided Hopelink by the city, and the leadership provided by the Commission, the Council and the staff is tremendous, and Hopelink is grateful for it.

Answering a question asked by Commissioner Perelman, Ms. Altimore said should the city choose to increase its funding to Hopelink, she would earmark the emergency financial assistance program and the mobile food program, which is aimed at getting fresh healthy food out into the community, particularly to those who have trouble in coming to the food bank. The work being done by the city to address affordable housing, particularly at the lower levels of affordability, is huge.

8. OLD BUSINESS

Ms. O'Reilly noted that staff had received feedback from Commissioners about possible site visits, including Jewish Family Services, which focuses on immigrants and refugees; Easter Seals, which has taken over the running of Elder and Adult Day Services; Eastside Legal Assistance Program, which offers a range of legal services, including civic; Bridge Disability Ministries, which deals in durable medical goods; and the India Association of Western Washington, which is the only new agency funded in the last funding cycle.

Commissioner Mercer commented that last year the Commission chose to volunteer at the men's shelter and she said she would like to do something like that again, either at that facility or at Sophia Way. With sufficient notice, all of the Commissioners could attend and participate. Ms. O'Reilly said the men's shelter will not open until

mid-November, but the Sophia Way ongoing women's shelter has groups sign up to help serve lunch and dinner.

Chair Villar asked if there is an organization the Commission could visit to start getting answers to the questions raised by Councilmember Robinson relative to what happens when someone shows up and does not want to provide personal information. Ms. O'Reilly said the first step would be to have staff look into it before asking someone to come to a Commission meeting. Ms. Stangland said she actually had been confused in regard to the questions around Medicaid because anyone getting connected with Medicaid must provide far more information than just name and birth date. She agreed that staff should conduct some background research.

Ms. O'Reilly informed the Commissioners that Congregations for the Homeless fills out an intake form for everyone coming into their shelter. The information on the form is actually quite comprehensive, though folks can choose not to provide certain information.

Commissioner Mercer said she would like to visit the Chinese Information Service Center cultural navigator program. Commissioner McEachran added the possibility of either visiting SeaMar or inviting a representative to come to a Commission meeting and share information.

Commissioner Mercer said if there are in fact other organizations serving the Latino community it would be good to hear from them as well. Ms. O'Reilly said the Bellevue Diversity Advisory Network is engaged in a community mapping project to determine what cultural groups and services are available in the city. Their focus will be multicultural, not just on the Latino community. She said it would be better to allow that process to play out. Another option would be to pull together a panel of people from the Latino community to tell the Commission what they believe the needs and resources are.

Commissioner Perelman noted that it had been two years since the Commission heard from the Islamic community. She suggested it would be helpful to invite them to provide an update.

Ms. O'Reilly reported that HERO House has opened a new building in Bellevue and always loves to have visitors.

The Commissioners expressed interest in setting up a site visit to Jewish Family Services, the Eastside Legal Assistance Program, the Chinese Information Service Center cultural navigator program, HERO House, and Preparing for Work at Bellevue College.

Ms. O'Reilly briefly discussed with the Commissioners possible agenda topics for the November 7 Commission meeting as well as future Commission meetings. The topics mentioned were affordable housing, the coordinated entry system, and transportation

as it relates to human services. Ms. O'Reilly noted that at the next meeting the Commission would need to elect a new Vice Chair as Commissioner Mercer moves into the Chair position.

Ms. Stangland reported that she and Ms. O'Reilly met with the IT folks to talk about the suggestion made to include infographs in the Needs Update.

9. NEW BUSINESS – None

10. PETITIONS AND COMMUNICATIONS – None

11. ADJOURNMENT

A motion to adjourn was made by Commissioner Mercer. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Ma and the motion carried unanimously.

Chair Villar adjourned the meeting at 8:04 p.m.

Secretary to the Human Services Commission

Date

Chairperson of the Human Services Commission

Date