

The Human Services Commission approved these minutes on April 18, 2017

CITY OF BELLEVUE
HUMAN SERVICES COMMISSION
MINUTES

March 21, 2017
6:00 p.m.

Bellevue City Hall
City Council Conference Room 1E-113

COMMISSIONERS PRESENT: Chairperson Villar, Commissioners Bruels, Kline, Mercer, Oxrieder, Perelman

COMMISSIONERS ABSENT: Commissioner McEachran

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

GUEST SPEAKERS: Colleen Laing, United Way of King County

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 McEachran who was excused.

3. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

A. February 23, 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 unanimously.

4. PETITIONS AND COMMUNICATIONS – None

5. STAFF AND COMMISSION REPORTS

Chair Villar reported that on March 18 she attended the King County Library Foundation gala at which over \$320,000 was raised. The keynote speaker was the very entertaining Daniel Handler.

Human Services Manager Emily Leslie noted that fundraising season is well under way. She said that along with Human Services Planner Alex O'Reilly she attended the Washington Women in Need event. She said she would also be attending the Youth Eastside Services breakfast on March 22.

In order to accommodate the presenters for the legislative update agenda item, the agenda was revised to address the draft CAPER report first.

7. DISCUSSION

A. Review Draft CAPER Report

Grant Coordinator Dee Dee Catalano explained that the Consolidated Annual Performance and Evaluation Report (CAPER) fits into the continuum of reporting required by the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) that starts with the current Consolidated Plan, which for Bellevue runs from 2012 to 2019 and broadly outlines the city's goals for spending CDBG funds; the annual action plans that specifically outline how the CDBG funds will be spent for the year; and the CAPER report, which must be submitted annually by March 31 and which outlines exactly how the CDBG funds were spent.

Ms. Catalano explained that the table on the third page of the report outlined by goal area the different projects the city set out to accomplish in 2016.

Chair Villar asked if there were any risk of HUD finding the city is not on track to meet the goals given that the ARCH affordable housing project 30 Bellevue has been funded but not built. Ms. Catalano said that will be addressed by starting to include projected accomplishments into the system based on the anticipated year of completion for the project.

Commissioner Mercer asked if HUD could pull funding from the city that has already been allocated and earmarked. Ms. Leslie said the funds have already been awarded.

Ms. Catalano noted that the racial and ethnic composition table on page five of the report related to all of the projects for which the city tracked accomplishments in 2016.

Answering a question asked by Chair Villar, Ms. Catalano explained that under the way HUD tracks demographics, Hispanic is an ethnicity not a race. A person can be white and Hispanic, black and Hispanic Asian and Hispanic, etc..

Ms. Catalano explained that the dollar totals on the resources table on page six included prior year unspent funds, program income, and the annual entitlement. It also showed the amounts expended, including prior year funds and the annual entitlement.

6. DISCUSSION

A. State Legislative Update

Ms. O'Reilly introduced Colleen Laing, Associate Director of Public Policy and Planning for United Way of King County. Ms. O'Reilly also provided the Commissioners with the state legislative agenda for the Eastside Human Services Forum for reference purposes.

Ms. Laing said United Way engages in public policy because it defines the ecosystem in which the organization operates. That is true for local governments as well relative to state and federal policies. In order to thrive, it is necessary to be a part of the conversations that define the ecosystem.

Ms. Laing said the list of notable state successes in 2016 includes passing the homeless students stability act and the certificate of restoration of opportunity. There were also successes in the area of early intervention for those with developmental disabilities by capping the amount school districts could hold back from the contracts that flow through from the state. At the federal level, United Way Worldwide, which is the overall organization, worked with the Center for Budget and Policy Priorities to make permanent the earned income tax credit. The successes flowed through United Way's free tax program. The organization's advocacy work aligns closely with its funding. Where United Way used to fund senior services generally, it now funds senior services through the priority areas of ending homelessness, financially stable families, and student graduates.

Ms. Laing said other notable successes around the federal budget included the organization's advocacy work on behalf of the Corporation for National and Community Service to avoid budget cuts; advocacy in regard to the Elementary and Secondary Education Act; and advocacy in favor retaining the extra flexibility local housing authorities have.

Chair Villar asked about the Certificate of Restoration of Opportunity bill and was told by Ms. Laing that it is focused on removing barriers in state licensing for ex-offenders. Those released from prison following a felony conviction are barred from holding some professional licenses that are low-education high-wage positions, such as barbers/beauticians and commercial fishing. Making entry into such careers possible would be beneficial for ex-offenders. The intent is that those who have been compliant with all conditions of release for a full year should be able to apply for the necessary state licenses.

Ms. Laing said 2017 is supposedly the do or die year for McCleary education funding decisions. While some interpret the supreme court decision as allowing another year, most believe that would be playing with fire because the court might take extreme action to close loopholes, shut down schools, eliminate the one-percent property tax

limits, or otherwise free up revenues to be invested in the schools. It appears the legislature is trying to comply with the ruling. McCleary is coloring all discussions in Olympia because the \$3.5 billion required to comply is massive. Of that, about \$1 billion can be achieved through a levy swap. The Senate wants to identify the rest in cuts, while the House wants to identify the rest through additional revenues.

With the elections that occurred in the fall, changes at the federal level could be dramatic. For the first time in a long time there is a unified government given the Republican House, Senate and President. It is likely a proposal will be made to cap Medicaid, but United Way wants to see preserved the Medicaid expansion associated with the Affordable Care Act. Severe impacts are also expected in the areas of food assistance programs, and legal immigrants may not be eligible for some programs. It is also likely that during 2018 comprehensive tax reform will be proposed and acted on that could have implications for many areas, including the low-income housing tax credits through the Washington Housing Finance Commission that are critical in putting together bricks and mortar housing unit deals for homeless families. The tax credits are floated on the bond market and sold to businesses which can then use them to offset their tax liabilities. Should their tax liabilities be significantly reduced through tax reform, the value of the tax credits will be lowered.

At the state level, the election of Senator Wellman in the 41st District and the death of Senator Andy Hill will likely usher in a more conservative Senate. The hope of many in the human services world was that the Senate would turn Democratic, but that goal was not achieved.

Ms. Laing said United Way has a number of different advocacy tools to use. One of the most important is coalitions such as the Eastside Human Services Forum, the Early Learning Advocates Group, E-Law, the Washington Coalition of Homeless Youth Advocates, the home visiting advocates and the welfare advocates. Most of the groups meet monthly, except during legislative sessions when they meet weekly, to share information. Coalitions are critical for mobilizing grassroots actions and also for strategic engagement. United Way has a lobbying day and a federal Hill Day in Washington, D.C. United Way has a full-time contact lobbyist and also enjoys key influencers such as individual and corporate donors, board members and key volunteers. The Public Policy Impact Council advises on priorities and over the past couple of years has engaged in a series of racial equity trainings, the result has been the development of a racial equity screening tool that has been applied to the existing legislative agenda. Over the summer while looking ahead at the November legislative agenda, items most likely to be added to the agenda will be screened using the tool.

Ms. Laing said development of the legislative agenda begins with preliminary work done by herself and her staff. That is followed up by recommendations from the Public Policy Impact Council members. The recommendations are subjected to a global screening tool and then the racial equity screening tool. Between eight and twelve items are selected for recommendation to the board which in November votes

to approve the agenda. Once the priorities are adopted, the work of sharing them with the legislators and coalition members begins.

In the area of family stability, United Way has three policy priorities. United Way has taken the lead on the Breakfast After the Bell program which focuses on a new service delivery model for a program that already exists using existing federal funds. The message is that HB-1508, which is a comprehensive school nutrition bill that was introduced in the House by Representative Stonier, accommodates a lot of concerns, interests and priorities from Republicans in the House and the Senate because of its agriculture focus. Many states are meeting with success relative to requiring very low-income student population schools to implement the model.

With regard to reforming legal financial obligations, Ms. Laing said when people are sentenced to jail or prison there are mandatory fees and fines like restitution, but there are also several discretionary fees and fines. Persons can be charged for their own defense, for jury trials, and for some court processing fees which often are required to be paid even before restitution. While the persons are incarcerated, interest at the rate of 12 percent accrues. Many low-income persons have found themselves remanded back to jail for nonpayment of the fees and fines, interrupting their ability to maintain work and stay housed. There are hopes that the bill will progress.

United Way is also focused on seeing restored the Temporary Assistance to Needy Families grant to pre-recession levels. There are several components to the approach, one of which is already dead. It remains to be seen how it will shake out, but Ms. Laing said she is optimistic that even if the grant is not increased, some of the other components, such as raising the asset limits, will keep moving. United Way also wants to see expanded to 24 months the time period during which people can be pursuing vocational education under Work First.

Ms. Laing said ending homelessness is another one of United Way's investment areas. One focus is on a bill that allows homeless youth to consent to participate in sharing their identifying information in the homeless management information system. Under a legal interpretation by the attorney general's office, the approach was deemed to be akin to entering into a contract, which those under 18 years old are not legally allowed to do in Washington state. A technical adjustment is needed to collect the data, which is needed in order to plan effectively for the types of services needed, where services should be delivered, and specific cultural needs of different populations. The organization is also wanting to see the document recording fee reauthorized and expanded. About 60 to 70 percent of the operating dollars that are spent in King County for ending homelessness are generated through the document recording fee, a \$45 fee on certain real estate transactions which was initially authorized with a sunset date. There are two bills, one to make the document recording fee permanent, and the other to extend the fee for eight more years; both bills are still alive. The bill to make the fee permanent includes an option allowing local jurisdictions to increase the fee to generate more funds. On the capital side, a

request has been made to add \$250 million to the Housing Trust Fund for bricks and mortar projects. Housing Trust Fund dollars are an essential element for new buildings and for purchasing or renovating existing buildings to house the homeless.

The list of United Way's support priorities include preserving Housing and Essential Needs (HEN), a state voucher that can be used for housing which the Senate budget proposes to zero out. The topic was not initially indicated as a main priority because assurances were made that it would not be a target, but given that it has been made a target, the organization will work to preserve the critical funds. Additionally, United Way has been watching the issue of income discrimination. Recently in Kent and Renton, some have received notices that they would be losing their housing because their landlord would no longer be accepting Section 8 housing vouchers. Renton subsequently put in place legislation that makes it illegal to discriminate based on the source of rent income. Such local laws often address only Section 8 and do not include veterans vouchers or Social Security income.

Commissioner Kline asked if there is a cost to landlords associated with accepting Section 8 vouchers. Ms. Laing said the Washington Rental Housing Association has asked for a set-aside of the document recording fee vouchers for use in private housing, but those same private landlords, represented by the same advocacy association, want the right to refuse to accept the vouchers, which is puzzling. They face little risk because the funding is ongoing once the vouchers have been issued. There is an inspection required where Section 8 vouchers are involved and where compliance issues are identified, the landlord is on the hook for the costs associated with making the corrections. The source of income law that was recently proposed included an exemption wherein landlords having to make capital investments would not have to accept the vouchers. The source of income bill died, but the Low-Income Housing Association is in vigorous discussions with the Washington Rental Housing Association and there is the possibility of coming to an agreement, making it possible to introduce a bill at the last minute that could be approved.

Ms. Laing said United Way has also set as a priority the Early Childhood Education and Assistance Program (ECEAP), home visiting slots, and dual language learning. The ECEAP ask is quite high in that it seeks to increase the number of eligible slots to accommodate every eligible child. In order to get providers to be willing to make slots available, the reimbursement rate will need to be increased. The providers must meet a number of quality indicators, but the current reimbursement rate from the state is about \$2000 per slot less than the cost of providing each slot, and providers must fundraise to fill the gap. At the same time, there is competition for early learning space owing to various actions by the legislature to reduce class sizes. Many of the early learning classrooms are in public school buildings and are being pushed out into a very tight rental market, so there is an associated capital ask to build more early learning classrooms. The bills are all still alive, but the recently released Senate budget creates an entitlement for four year olds by prioritizing them over three year olds. It remains to be seen how the advocacy community will respond but a strong pushback against the approach can be expected.

Advocates initially asked for a big increase in funds for home visiting slots, but as the budget situation became more clear given McCleary, the initial ask of \$10 million was reduced to \$2.7 million. The Senate budget included a \$1.4 million increase for the program that is very well liked on both sides of the aisle. The funds in the Senate budget is intended to account for federal dollars and Gates Foundation grants that will be going away.

Dual language learning is a small pilot program with only a half million dollar budget. It seems to be popular and the bill is still alive.

Ms. Laing said the 2-1-1 program initially grew out of a United Way program in greater Atlanta. Over time, United Way has served as the provider for numerous 2-1-1 programs nationally. In King County and across Washington state the program has been spun off to regional service providers; in King County, the provider is the Crisis Clinic. The 2-1-1 program serves as the coordinated entry gatekeeper for homeless housing. The infrastructure dollars come from the state and have fallen short of the real need for some time and the current ask is for \$2 million for the biennium.

Ms. O'Reilly said the Eastside Human Services Forum agenda includes restoring the Medicaid adult hearing hardware benefit. The United Way agenda does not include the item. The benefit was discontinued in 2011, making it necessary for low-income persons to forgo having hearing aids. Advocacy groups have been working hard to see the benefit restored. The Senate on March 20 passed SB-5179, and the focus now is on getting it through the House.

Ms. Laing said the legislative session will end at its normal time at the end of April, and the anticipation is that they will not be done with McCleary. Most of the budget will have been negotiated by then, but not the education portion, so there will not be an agreement on whether or not to raise revenues or make cuts. There is the possibility that the Senate will not want to take a vote and will engage in political gamesmanship to get the House to vote on how to fund education.

Chair Villar asked when the Parent/Child Home Program came to King County. Ms. Laing said it was in 2005. The Business Partnership for Early Learning piloted the program is 120 slots. They came to United Way in 2010 and via a multi-year campaign about \$28 million was raised. People are being encouraged to fund the program through their workplace campaigns and individual giving. The program has been proven and the intent of United Way has been to reduce its allocation to the program as government funding for the program increases.

8. OLD BUSINESS

Ms. O'Reilly reported that she has been working with a lot of different groups to create opportunities for community conversations. One conversation is slated with the King County Veterans Consortium. Their meetings are called musters in keeping with

military lingo, and they will hold their May 11 muster on the Bellevue College campus and the main agenda item will be the community conversation.

Ms. O'Reilly reminded the Commissioners that two years ago a community conversation was held with staff from some of the general departments at Bellevue College. Commissioners McEachran and Kline both participated. The staff person who convened the gathering is willing to do so again, though a date has not yet been set. The Commissioners were provided with a list of departments and were asked to consider which of them should be invited to participate.

Chair Villar suggested having someone from the financial aid office, as well as representatives from various student groups to comment on how they might be impacted by the proposed homeless shelter. Commissioner Mercer agreed and suggested having someone from the scholarships office as well.

Commissioner Oxrieder said it would be good to have staff present to comment on the proposed homeless shelter given that students form a transitory population and may not be there once the shelter opens.

Commissioner Bruels proposed inviting someone from diversity and multicultural services.

Commissioner Kline said it would be good to have someone who works with students in locating housing in the community who could also talk about the college's plan for its own housing.

Ms. O'Reilly said a community conversation with the Bellevue library staff is scheduled for a date in mid-April to gain insight into the needs they are seeing in the community. The Bellevue Diversity Advisory Network will hold a conversation on April 25. She noted that she would be meeting with one staff and one parent from Clyde Hill Elementary on March 22 to see if there might be opportunities to talk with some of the different affinity groups for multicultural representation; that conversation could lead to scheduling a community conversation. She said she also had been invited to attend the May 6 monthly meeting of the Asian Senior Concerns Foundation.

Ms. O'Reilly reported that the phone and online survey has exceeded its quota of 400 respondents. The survey will be kept open for a few more days and then it will be shut down. She also reported that an adaptation of the phone survey is being developed for posting to NextDoor, possibly in late May.

Ms. Leslie reported that the winter shelters would remain open through the end of April. The women and family shelters may stay open through May. The permanent men's shelter issue will be going back to Council within the next few weeks.

Ms. Catalano said work is underway to put the 2016 CDBG program year to bed. She added that the 2017 federal budget is on the continuing resolution, which means

action to approve it has been put off until April 28. HUD cannot release the 2017 entitlements until the budget is passed, so Bellevue will not see the funds until June at the earliest. The 2016 contract with the King County Housing Authority for the Housing Repair Program will be amended to use program income, and other reserves will be used to the extent possible.

9. NEW BUSINESS

Ms. Leslie announced that she would be retiring on May 31.

Ms. Leslie provided the Commissioners with a copy of the strategies the Affordable Housing Technical Advisory Group was focusing in on. She shared a link to offering comments online. One of the strategies under consideration is to increase funding and to expand eligibility for the city's Home Repair Program, an approach that could be needed should the federal government decide to reduce or eliminate the CDBG program.

Ms. Leslie called attention to a report from the National Low-Income Housing Coalition that included some interesting data about Washington state.

Renewal of the Veterans and Human Services Levy is an item that is ramping up. A November ballot measure is under contemplation. Interest has been expressed in expanding the levy and changing it from how it has been for the last five years to potentially include funding for affordable housing and older adults.

10. PETITIONS AND COMMUNICATIONS – None

11. ADJOURNMENT

Chair Villar adjourned the meeting at 7:42 p.m.

Secretary to the Human Services Commission

Date

Chairperson of the Human Services Commission

Date