CITY OF BELLEVUE

BELLEVUE DIVERSITY ADVISORY NETWORK

MEETING MINUTES

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| April 25, 2017 | Bellevue City Hall  |
| 6:00 p.m.  | Room 1E-112  |

MEMBERS PRESENT: Anthony Austin, Paulo Perez, Edilberto Flores, Eloisa Tran, Justin Daigneault, Andrew Kelly, Tom Brewer, Aleksandra Poseukova, Haruka Kojima, Alaric Bien, Jingdong Yu, Margie Ye, Chinar Bopshetty, Rita Badh, Mohamed Bakr

MEMBERS ABSENT: Beabe Akpojovwo, Linda Whitehead, Mareth Flores, Jennifer Karls, Aisha Kabani, Maria Batayola

STAFF PRESENT: Mark Manuel

OTHERS PRESENT: Alex O’Reilly, Kayla Valy, Department of Parks and Community Services; Ann Oxreider, Human Services Commission

RECORDING SECRETARY: Gerry Lindsay

1. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 6:09 p.m. by Chair Austin.

2. APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA

A motion to approve the agenda was made by Mr. Brewer. The motion was seconded by Ms. Ye and the motion carried unanimously.

3. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Mr. Bakr called attention to the second sentence of the second paragraph on page 4 and noted that “Islamists” should be changed to “Muslims.”

Mr. Kelly referred to the fifth paragraph on page 7 and noted in the second sentence “car accident” should be revised to read “car accident with injuries.”

A motion to approve the minutes as amended was made by Mr. Bien. The motion was seconded by Mr. Brewer and the motion carried unanimously.

4. SPECIAL PRESENTATION

Human Services Planner Alex O’Reilly informed the group that a report is produced every two years to assist the work of the Human Services Commission in making recommendations about how to invest the city’s human services dollars. Called the Needs Update, the report outlines the top human services needs in the community. While focused on Bellevue, the report also includes some information regarding needs on the Eastside generally. Non-profit agencies, those in the faith communities and others use the data in the report when planning and writing grant applications.

Ms. O'Reilly said the data is collected in a number of ways, including a phone and online survey. In order to be scientifically accurate, more than 400 people must agree to take the survey. A consumer survey is also conducted; it is available in English and five other languages. A number of community conversations or listening sessions are also held to gather information from people with a wide range of perspectives.

Mr. Yu asked what human services are. Mr. Bien said they are services that help people reach their full potential to succeed in life when they are faced with challenges such as homelessness, training for jobs, seeking employment, domestic violence, and cultural issues. Chair Austin added that human services include after-school programs, early learning programs, and senior services such as Meals on Wheels.

Ms. O'Reilly said those in need of services often include those who have full-time jobs but are not earning quite enough to pay for child care, housing, and food.

Mr. Bien said immigration services are also in the human services realm. The IAWW and Chinese Information and Service Center both provide services to immigrants to help them understand how to navigate the system.

Answering a question asked by Ms. Badh, Ms. O'Reilly said a big part of what the Needs Update addresses is why services that are available are not being accessed. Concerted effort is put into trying to remove barriers to the degree possible. For instance, the city does not determine bus routes, but it can provide input relative to changes that would facilitate getting people to the services they need.

Ms. Badh commented that there is a large population of parents coming for long stays. Often they will stay for up to six months and during that time they suffer from isolation given language and cultural barriers and the like. She suggested that is a population that is being underserved.

Mr. Manuel said different organizations are providing services in response to the ambiguity of federal transitions. There are a number of organizations in Bellevue that provide the services, but the need is clear. Ms. O'Reilly said Eastside Legal Assistance Program (ELAP) is one such service. The organization is funded by several Eastside jurisdictions and with their workload ramped up, additional funding is needed.

Mr. Brewer asked if any of the grantees are from outside the city and the Eastside. Ms. O'Reilly said the application rules allow organizations to be in Seattle and other places, but they must be able to document that they are serving Bellevue residents. Those in need of services, however, will go where they can obtain services. Mr. Bien added that agencies providing the same service cannot be funded in every city. Organizations like Lifewire are based in Bellevue but serve regional clients.

Mr. Brewer said Northwest Immigrants Rights also funds regional clients. Ms. O'Reilly said Bellevue does not currently fund that organization but could given that it serves Bellevue residents.

Mr. Yu pointed out that Chinese immigrants facing various issues tend to see those issues as their own problems to address and thus they do not reach out to agencies or the government for help. Ms. O'Reilly asked if there is a better way the agencies or the city could get word out about the programs that are available. Mr. Yu said one way to do that might be to create a video to put on the city’s website about the available services.

Commissioner Oxrieder pointed out that agencies applying for funding are directed to talk about their staff training programs relative to cultural sensitivity. They are also asked to explain how they recruit employees from different cultures. She asked if there agencies in the area that do work the Human Services Commission should know more about. Mr. Bien said the IAWW does a great job. Ms. Badh commented that the King County Library System is a great community place; in many ways it has taken over tasks previously done by community centers.

Mr. Bien said agencies that serve specific populations do a very good job of hiring and retaining staff. Mainstream organizations have a more difficult time in that their recruiting efforts are not necessarily focus on specific populations.

Ms. Poesukova said she is works with the community advocacy program for International Community Health Services. She said there are four community advocates on the Eastside that work with the Hispanic, Punjabi, Hindi and Russian communities. There is a focus on health and in partnership with Jubilee Reach free cooking classes are taught. Assistance is provided in regard to enrolling in the Affordable Care Act and in regard to Medicaid. There are several support and educational groups. The agency hopes to expand its dental facilities. Housing and immigration are certainly issues being faced by clients.

Ms. Tran noted that many people have access to the main social media outlets, like Facebook, Twitter and NextDoor. Ms. O'Reilly said the city has a presence on social media, including NextDoor, but she allowed that it could be improved. Many of the funded agencies have some degree of presence on social media, but it is admittedly spotty. She said currently work is under way to prepare a survey on NextDoor. It has been done before in regard to other plans and the response was good.

Mr. Bien said infrastructure is one issue that all agencies face. He said no one wants to pay for administration, they only want to pay for services. Agencies need to realize the need to pay not only the rent, the bookkeeper and the electric bill but also someone to make their websites look good. He proposed setting aside some funds to conduct ongoing training around how non-profits can use social media. Ms. Bopshetty agreed and suggested there should be an accessibility standard established for all agencies to meet. The degree to which clients are able to even read what is on the screen because of language or other barriers is very important.

Mr. Manuel reported that the city is about ready for a soft launch of its updated website. One thing being looked at is pages that are language specific.

Ms. Badh pointed out that the city website does not include any links to agencies funded by the city. She said people do not generally understand what human services are and it would be empowering for people to know the city funds a number of different agencies that provide needed services.

Mr. Flores said he is currently working with a pilot program focused on homelessness prevention. He said there is a clear need for affordable housing in Bellevue. One thing that is lacking in Bellevue is information regarding tenant rights. Ms. O'Reilly said the city hosts fair housing and tenants rights workshops once or twice a year. The next workshop will be held in the fall of the year. Mr. Flores said other needs in the community that he has observed include immigration services and services for seniors.

Mr. Bakr said Muslim Housing Services is finding it difficult to find housing for families with six to eight members. Immigrants allowed in by the government often are only given a week or so to find a job.

Mr. Manuel asked about the Power of One LGBTQ conference held at Bellevue College. Ms. O'Reilly said the city funds programs at Youth Eastside Services that serve the LGBTQ community. She said Mr. Daigneault and others served as part of a panel discussion recently to educate the Human Services Commission about the different needs in the community. She said no agency to date has submitted an application to fund services to that community. The Human Services Commission every two years accepts applications for funding, reviews them and formulates a recommendation for the City Council. The next funding cycle will begin in January 2018, and the application period will open in early March. New organizations that have not previously received funding for their programs should talk to city staff well in advance to help work through the process.

Commissioner Oxrieder pointed out that during the last funding cycle, the requests submitted totaled one million dollars more than the available funding. It is always a challenge to determine exactly how the limited funds should be allocated.

Mr. Manuel said Ms. O'Reilly was scheduled to return for the Network’s October meeting to provide a high-level overview regarding the Needs Update ahead of its publication date in January 2018.

5. ICE BREAKER

Ms. Badh asked the members to answer the question, “If you could be one age for the rest of your life, what would it be and why?” She then said she would choose 27 because that is the age that for many years she told her kids she was. She said 27 is grown up enough but still young.

Ms. Kojima said the older the better because older persons have learned a lot and have gained confidence.

Mr. Daigneault said he was torn between choosing an age in the mid 20s because at that age there are fewer responsibilities and life is more carefree, and being older because life is in many ways easier the older one gets.

Chair Austin said he would choose to be 100 but with a keen mental capacity and in excellent physical health.

Ms. Poesukova said she was thinking she would be five because life is easy and they let you sleep in school. However, at that age booze is not allowed. She said in the future when technology is in place that allows people to live longer she would choose to be 150.

Mr. Manuel said he would choose to be 16 so he could eat all the pizza he wants and have all kinds of fun without any of the responsibility.

Mr. Bakr indicated he would be three years old so that people would give him love.

Mr. Bien chose 30. He said when he was in his 20s and trying to work as a therapist, no one took him seriously because he looked very young. At 30 he had no children and was able to go out and have fun, and was young enough not to be jaded by the world.

Mr. Yu said he would like to remain 39 years old. He noted that when he was 29 a woman told him he would go oversees for his career, which turned out to be true. She also told him that at age 39 he would be very wealthy. At 39, a person is experienced and mature enough to be able to be involved in many things.

Mr. Kelly said he would be 19 years old. He said at that age he was fresh out of boot camp and was traveling all over with the military interacting with different people in different cultures. He said his experiences then helped to form the man he is now.

Mr. Flores said he would be forever 21. He said once he turned that age he was unstoppable and had lots of energy.

Mr. Brewer said if possible he would stop time at his current age and stay there. When one has lived into one’s seventh decade, one has more of a sense of stages than of years. Becoming a grandparent involved crossing a threshold into a place of fulfillment and joy that is of a different caliber than parenting. Parenting is wonderful because it helps one escape oneself, but grandparenting is an amazing experience.

Ms. Tran said she also would choose to remain the age she is presently. She said she likes to live in the present and to not look to the past. She said she is excited to wake up every day and to keep moving forward.

Ms. Ye said she too would choose to be no age other than what she is currently. She said her daughter is three and she does not want her to grow up either.

Ms. Bopshetty said she was in the same camp of wanting to remain her current age. She said at her current age she enjoys a good balance of having been there and done that and being grounded, and being able to look at the world around her more realistically.

6. UPDATES

Mr. Manuel thanked the comments made with regarding to process. He said he followed up with the City Clerk’s office who has expressed a preference for using OneDrive, partly before the city has a company account that allows for unlimited storage. There are challenges, however, particularly around the fact that documents that are not updated within 90 days get jettisoned. IT has agreed to make a presentation to the group on how to use OneDrive.

Ms. Bopshetty commented that Microsoft Teams on Office 365 would provide the opportunity for the group to have conversations and store documents.

Mr. Bien said it was his understanding that the Open Public Meetings Act applies and it does not matter if conversations occur online between members. Mr. Manuel said he followed up with the City Manager’s office and learned that because the Network is only an advisory body, it is not held to the same standard as a board or commission. The meeting minutes will be part of the official record.

Mr. Manuel invited members of the Network to attend a meeting exploring cross-cultural communications at City Hall on April 26. He also encouraged the members to attend the 425 learning series for anyone interested in starting a business; the series will specifically look at how to support minority owned businesses in the community. The members were also informed about and encouraged to attend Under Our Skin, a series to be held in conjunction with King County Library System and the city’s neighborhoods department.

Mr. Kelly noted that his schedule is often unaccommodating and he asked if there were a way to virtually attend the Network meetings. Mr. Manuel said he did not think it was out of the realm of possibility. He said he would check into how other boards and commissions operate in that regard.

Ms. Tran called attention to the first paragraph on page 8 of the March 28 minutes and noted that she was not involved in the accident but was the person who called 9-1-1 to report the incident.

Mr. Manuel reported that there are currently openings on some of the city’s boards and commissions. He said he would send out an email listing the openings and how to apply.

Mr. Manuel informed the group that the Eastside Refugee and Immigrant Coalition (ERIC) will be doing a fun dance event as a fundraiser. He said information could be found on the ERIC Facebook page.

Mr. Manuel said the Pacific Educational Group puts on a great program. He noted that several members of the Network have participated in it. People come from all over to attend the program, which is generally held in Portland and which for the first time will be held in Bellevue. He said the seats will fill quickly and he urged anyone wanting to attend to sign up soon.

Mr. Brewer said he has participated in the event for the last three years. Everyone going for the first time must take Beyond Diversity I. He said it is an amazing learning experience and helps those who attend to reset their mindframes and filters and develop more sensitivity to other people.

Mr. Bien added that the main focus of the sessions from the beginning has been on the school districts. Eastside Pathways and the city of Bellevue have adopted the approach as the focus has widened beyond school districts to include municipalities.

Mr. Brewer said those who attend the series learn to be able to sustain racialized conversations in the American culture, something that requires help from a protocol and established boundaries.

Ms. Kojima said as a person of color she found the series to be very educational.

7. SUBCOMMITTEES

Chair Austin said he and Ms. Badh recently sat down with Mr. Manuel to talk about the direction the Network is headed. He said the mission of the Network is to provide support and advice on ways to improve the city’s ability to communicate, collaborate and better serve Bellevue’s diverse community. The city in 1993 began the process of studying diversity when it was evident the makeup of the community was changing. The statements that Bellevue welcomes the world and diversity is our strength arrived in 2014.

Mr. Manuel said each city department has an appointed diversity liaison. He said in the near future he would seek to connect them with the work of the Network. Chair Austin noted that the Network is an outgrowth of the city’s diversity initiative. By going to meetings and continuing to talk to individual special interest groups, the Network members will become experts and prepared to advise the city on strategies. That work could take the Network up to a year to accomplish.

Chair Austin reminded the members that they previously had talked about establishing a crisis hotline but stressed the need for folks to continue to call 9-1-1 so cases can be documented. It was allowed that setting up a separate crisis hotline would be a very difficult task. At mini city hall a hotline is already established that provides lots of information, but it is not focused on crisis situations. The community will be the Network’s customers and as things move forward it will be important to identify who is missing from the table and reaching out to them.

Ms. Bopshetty said one role the Network should seek to play is understanding the diverse community. She said there is clearly more to be done in that regard. Mr. Manuel said the members of the Network were chosen for a variety of different reasons. Many have specific skills and all are highlight connected in the community. He stressed the need for the individual members to forget what they know and to start fresh. Each member has their own ideas, but until those ideas are confirmed or verified by the community, they are only personal ideas. The Network will not be able to do its work academically. What is needed is experiential learning. Some of the work will require engaging in projects in various areas. The Network will need to identify what it is the city wants to know and what roadblocks exist that prevent connecting to a wider group. The list of real projects into which Network members can become involved include a visionary project focused on arts space for artists and the Bellevue Diversity Institute. By participating, the members will develop new ideas and will need to find ways of connecting with and gaining feedback from community members. The initial months may be both messy and clumsy.

Ms. Bopshetty pointed out the need for the Network members to constantly be in learning mode given the fact that the issues in the community are complex. The members will need to be willing to step away from assuming they know the answers, because in fact they do not know. In fact, the Network members will never reach the point of knowing all there is to know.

Mr. Bien stressed the need to establish a mechanism for constantly receiving input. Ms. Ye agreed but stressed the need to avoid both information overload and a lack of information. Information needs to be captured, prioritized and verified. The list of issues facing the community will need to be constantly updated as well because things change quickly. Each item on the list may require multiple actions.

Chair Austin said that is something Mr. Manuel has been saying. People have been coming to him to gain input from the Network, but the members need time to become the experts. He has identified two or three key projects to serve as springboards.

Mr. Kelly asked if the diversity liaisons for the various city departments meet together regularly. He suggested that if they do, it would be helpful for the Network to see their meeting minutes. Mr. Manuel allowed that they do meet as a group, and in fact they are scheduled to come to a future Network meeting. They each have projects that they are working on individually.

Chair Austin asked about the Network survey, noting that the document had been set up by Ms. Tran. Ms. Tran said everyone will have access to the document once the bugs are worked out. The Network members were asked to verify their email addresses.

Mr. Manuel said ahead of the next meeting he would spend time figuring out Phase I in conjunction with Chair Austin and Ms. Badh. He said the document will serve as a good place to start the conversation.

The Network members took a few minutes to discuss meeting format and the presentation of information from the diversity liaisons.

8. ADJOURN

A motion to adjourn was made by Mr. Bien. The motion was second by Mr. Daigneault and the motion carried unanimously.

Chair Austin adjourned the meeting at 8:07 p.m.