

The Human Services Commission approved these minutes on September 4, 2019

CITY OF BELLEVUE
HUMAN SERVICES COMMISSION
MINUTES

July 16, 2019
6:00 p.m.

Bellevue City Hall
City Council Conference Room 1E-113

COMMISSIONERS PRESENT: Chairperson Mercer, Commissioners Amirfaiz, Jain, Kline, Ma, Mansfield, Piper

COMMISSIONERS ABSENT: None

STAFF PRESENT: Alex O'Reilly, Dee Dee Catalano, Christy Stangland, Betsy Anderson, Department of Parks and Community Services

GUEST SPEAKERS: None

RECORDING SECRETARY: Gerry Lindsay

1. CALL TO ORDER

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

2. ROLL CALL

Upon the call of the roll, all Commissioners were present with the exception of Commissioner Kline who arrived at 6:04 p.m.

3. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

A. June 18, 2019

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

4. ORAL AND WRITTEN COMMUNICATIONS – None

5. COMMUNICATIONS FROM CITY COUNCIL, COMMUNITY COUNCIL, BOARDS AND COMMISSIONS – None

6. STAFF AND COMMISSIONER REPORTS

Commissioner Jain reported that following the Commission's July 2 meeting she went online and read the stories of businesses helped by Ventures Business Development. She said the research confirmed her support for the organization.

Human Services Manager Alex O'Reilly highlighted the human services brochure and noted that it is a helpful document for explaining the work of the Commission and includes a list of all funded agencies for 2019. She made the brochures available to the Commissioners for handing out.

Human Services Planner Christy Stangland said City Manager's Office Assistant Director Nancy LaCombe, who serves as the city's homelessness program, has charge of the index cards with homelessness information. She noted that the city is currently seeking someone to serve as homelessness coordinator and said once that person is onboard the index cards will be updated and ready for distribution.

Grant Coordinator Dee Dee Catalano reported that the city received its 2019 funding agreement from HUD on July 15. Once signed by the City Manager's Office, it will be sent back to HUD, after which the 2019 allocation to the city will be released.

7. PUBLIC HEARING

A. 2020 Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Funding Recommendations

Chair Mercer briefly reviewed the public hearing process and invited staff to provide an overview of the funding process.

Ms. Catalano explained that five applications for funding had been received. One was found to be ineligible by virtue of the agency not being able to document the low- and moderate-income requirements. The applications were reviewed by the Commission on June 2, and the Commission made its preliminary funding recommendations on July 2. She said the Commission would vote on its final recommendations following the public hearing and the recommendation will be forwarded to the City Council for review and action on November 4. An estimated \$764,000 in entitlement funds will be available for allocation along with an estimated \$250,000 in program income.

A motion to open the public hearing was made by Commissioner Ma. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Piper and the motion carried unanimously.

There was no one present to address the Commission during the public hearing.

A motion to close the public hearing was made by Commissioner Kline. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Piper and the motion carried unanimously.

8. DISCUSSION

A. Final Review of the 2020 CDBG Applications

Ms. Catalano noted that the Commission's preliminary funding recommendations were included in the packet materials along with a draft of the contingency plan. She explained that the city's Annual Action Plan, also required by HUD, cannot be submitted until the exact entitlement amount is known. The contingency plan outline what steps will be taken in the event the city receives less than anticipated or more than anticipated. Both the planning and administration and public services categories come with caps, which for the former is 20 percent of the entitlement and for the latter is 15 percent. Accordingly, the contingency plan adjusts those categories up or down as necessary. As proposed, if the allocation is significantly higher or lower than projected, the individual capital projects allocations will be increased or decreased by the percentage of the increase or decrease in the entitlement allocation.

Chair Mercer observed that the projections made by the staff foresee less program income and asked if the Commission should look to accommodate that reduction with entitlement funds. Ms. Catalano clarified that program income was down in the previous year and said the projection is for it to remain lower by about the same for 2020. She said the city has received about \$150,000 in program income this year, which puts the program income on track to be about \$300,000 for the year.

B. 2020 CDBG Contingency Plan

Chair Mercer asked if the contingency plan should be written to give the major home repair program more flexibility in terms of allocations given that it can fluctuate dramatically in terms of program income. Ms. Catalano pointed out that under HUD rules, program income must be spent first on all projects, not just the major home repair program. The request of \$494,914 submitted by that program represents what the agency believes can be spent during the year. She noted that the contingency plan as drafted does allow for amending the major home repair program contract to increase funding as needed and as allowed under the city's contract amendment approval policies.

Ms. O'Reilly added that the agency would need to demonstrate that it could use any extra funds.

Commissioner Kline said she was confused by the fact that the preliminary recommendation does not allocate all of the funds that are available. She asked why more funds are not being earmarked for projects if projects could use more money. Ms. Catalano said the answer lies in the fact that program income estimates are not exact. The prudent approach is not to allocate too much up front. The calculations are difficult to make given the large number of unknowns. Sound Generations has requested \$84,000, and the agency has indicated it does not believe it could do a lot

more than that. The new program Ventures Business Development has requested \$50,000, which is an amount it believes it can comfortably spent. The preliminary funding recommendation funds the applications at their full requests. Funds are not necessarily being held back.

Chair Mercer commented that the difference between the preliminary funding recommendations and the projected CDBG allocation is about \$100,000. She asked where things have landed in previous application processes. Ms. Catalano noted that several years ago fewer requests than expected were submitted. On paper, 2019 looks good but the Lifewire project to purchase housing for domestic violence survivors has not yet gone forward, and there is some question as to whether or not it will. It was hoped that the Kindering project would work because it would take up \$100,000. In the coming months it likely will be necessary to do another RFP for additional funds. She reiterated, however, that the preliminary funding recommendations cannot be called conservative in that all of the applications are proposed to be fully funded. She added that the city is on track to meet its timeliness tests, but it is likely that additional projects will be needed. If the Ventures Business Development program is successful and if there is a demand, the allocation to it could be increased by up to 50 percent under the citizen participation plan without amending the plan. The allocation for planning and administration could also be increased up to the cap.

Commissioner Kline said it felt to her as if there were more moving parts than in past years and a higher likelihood of another project coming in. She questioned whether the Commission should have a contingency plan that locks in doing specific things. She asked if funds could simply be held for another project that might come in, or direct it all to the micro loan program. Ms. Catalano said the 2019 contingency plan established a hierarchy for allocating additional funds or reducing allocations if necessary. There were Commissioners, however, who felt funds should simply be divided equally among all the applications. She stressed, however, that the Commission was free to word the contingency plan as it wished. The contingency plan is a required HUD component and it must be predicated on the amount expected to be received.

Commissioner Kline asked what process would be necessary should the Lifewire project not go forward. Ms. Catalano said the process would be to recapture the funds for allocation to another project. That likely would mean putting out another RFP and amending the plan to add a new project, which would require a new public hearing. Unallocated prior year funds can be comingled with current year allocations.

Commissioner Amirfaiz said she would not be concerned where the funding involved is minimal. Where it is significant, however, there should be a plan in place for dealing with it. Ms. Catalano said the contingency plan could be written with specific percentages, such as if there is an increase of up to five percent, the increase will flow into the unexpended funds category for reallocation to a different project.

Chair Mercer said she did not favor having the contingency plan written to take funds from or add funds to all projects equally in the event of receiving more or less than expected. She suggested the Commission should have a little more control over funding revisions where the dollars involved are quite large. She said she would favor having a threshold percentage beyond which another project would be sought.

Commissioner Kline asked how locked in the city will be once the contingency plan is approved. Ms. Catalano said the contingency plan is part of the Annual Action Plan, which must be followed. Commissioner Kline asked if revising the plan is allowed. Ms. Catalano said changes are allowed to be made to the plan. If minor, a public comment period or public hearing would not be required.

Commissioner Kline said she favored drafting the contingency plan to direct extra funds to the Ventures Business Development program up to a certain threshold, and to reassess things above that threshold. Chair Mercer pointed out that the Ventures application stated that each class costs \$25,000, so any allocation to the program would need to be in increments of that amount.

Ms. Catalano commented that five percent of the estimated \$764,000 is \$38,200, which would be sufficient to cover one additional Ventures business class. Chair Mercer suggested the balance beyond \$25,000 could be earmarked either for the minor home repair program or spread evenly among the minor home repair and major home repair programs. Ms. Catalano added that the major home repair program could easily absorb another \$15,000.

Commissioner Amirfaiz asked if any allocation to the Ventures Business Development program would be done prior to the Commission seeing any outcome data from the two funded classes. She suggested that it should first be demonstrated that the program is actually making an impact before being allocated additional funds.

Chair Mercer pointed out that as drafted, any additional funds would be spread evenly across all of the programs, beginning with administration and followed by services and capital projects.

Commissioner Piper said he was inclined to allocate the first \$25,000 of excess funds to the Venture Business Development program and then to distribute the balance evenly between the two home repair programs. He said it did not sound overly onerous to make changes to the contingency plan in the event that the outcomes from Ventures fall short of expectations. Ms. Catalano pointed out that even if the Commission were to earmark an additional \$25,000 for the Ventures program, the funds would not go to the organization up front. They will have to offer their classes and report on their outcomes, and if they fall short, no additional funds would flow to the program. Commissioner Piper said in that event his preference would be to see the \$25,000 allocated evenly between the two home repair programs.

Commissioner Mansfield concurred that the first \$25,000 should go to the Ventures program and the balance should be split between the home repair programs.

Commissioner Ma said that mirrored his inclination as well. If the Ventures outcomes are not good, the contingency plan could be amended.

Commissioner Kline asked if Ventures Business Development has the capacity to offer a third class within the CDBG timeframe. Ms. Catalano said they would if they had additional dollars and if the demand was there, adding that they intend to offer the two classes in the first half of the year, leaving plenty of time to offer a third class. Chair Mercer pointed out that the organization's representatives did indicate they want to go slow and not to overdo it out of the gate because they also offer wraparound services in addition to the classes.

Ms. Catalano noted that \$25,000 is roughly 3.25 percent of the estimated entitlement amount and said it would be reasonable to expect an increase of that amount. She said the question is what should happen in the event the increase is less than \$25,000.

Commissioner Kline said the math would get difficult if there were a desire to allocate a percentage of any increase first to planning and administration before anything else. That could mean there would not be enough for Ventures to offer a third class. Ms. Catalano said the option exists not to increase the planning and administration or public service allocations.

Commissioner Ma proposed earmarking any additional funding of \$25,000 to Ventures Business Development. If the extra funds are less than \$25,000, they should be spent equally between the home repair programs.

Chair Mercer suggested Ventures could be asked if they could use additional funds in any amount for their follow-up services. She said her preference would be to see a third class offered provided the first two classes prove to have good outcomes. She backed off of the notion of dividing funds equally among all of the programs.

Commissioner Kline pointed out that the only third party proposal in the mix is the Ventures application. While Jewish Family Service technically fits that category, it was funded through the general allocation process. Any additional amounts allocated to Jewish Family Service through the contingency plan would be a windfall and could impact the general allocations in that they would suddenly have a higher base allocation. Ms. Catalano pointed out that the Jewish Family Service allocation is close to the 15 percent public services cap. She added the general fund allocation has remained fairly steady aside from an annual COLA increase.

Chair Mercer commented that during the next regular allocation process the Commission could choose to not give a COLA increase to Jewish Family Service to offset any increase in their CDBG allocation.

Ms. Stangland indicated that the home repair programs have seen an uptick in the number of clients and as such has been able to spend their allocations in a more timely manner. Ms. Catalano added that their 2018 contracts were spent down as of the end of June. They could accommodate more funding.

Commissioner Kline said she was excited about the microloan program, pointing out that it has been a long time since the Commission has had the opportunity to fund something new and innovative.

Commissioner Jain said her mind remained open in regard to the Ventures program. She said there is a clear need in terms of the home repair programs.

Commissioner Kline said she would first fund Jewish Family Service to the maximum with funds above or less than \$25,000 and split the balance between the two home repair programs. Commissioner Ma concurred.

Ms. Catalano reiterated that the projected CDBG allocation was \$764,000, and that the projected program income would total \$250,000. Given that, the public services cap would be \$152,100. Jewish Family Service is currently funded at \$143,877.

Chair Mercer said she would prefer to split any amount over or less than \$25,000 between Jewish Family Service and the two home repair programs.

Chair Mercer asked if, in the event of a windfall increase in the CDBG allocation from HUD, the Commission would prefer to put out an RFP for additional programs to fund. Ms. Catalano allowed that the proposal on the table from Congress represents a slight increase over the current funding level. The odds of the city receiving more than a three percent increase are very slim. In the unlikely event of a 25 percent increase, the planning and administration and public services cap amounts would increase accordingly. It is not likely the Commission would want to fund Jewish Family Service all the way up to the new cap.

Chair Mercer she was hearing consensus in favor of drafting the contingency plan to allow for giving up to \$25,000 to the Ventures program to fund one additional class, to allocate any amounts beyond \$25,000 to planning and administration and public services, and to distribute any additional funds evenly between the two home repair programs.

Commissioner Ma said in the event of a decrease in the CDBG allocation he would want to keep the Ventures program fully funded to facilitate two classes, decreasing instead the Jewish Family Service application and the two home repair programs.

There was consensus to direct staff to wordsmith the contingency plan accordingly before voting to approve it.

A motion to approve the funding recommendations as proposed was made by Commissioner Piper. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Ma and the motion carried unanimously.

9. DISCUSSION

A. Minor Amendment to 2019 CDBG Annual Action Plan

Ms. Catalano stated that an amendment was needed to the 2019 Annual Action Plan to show the exact amount of prior year resources along with the estimated program income.

A motion to approve the minor amendment to the 2019 CDBG Annual Action Plan changing the amounts of estimated program income and prior year funds in the Expected Resources table was made by Commissioner Jain. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Piper and the motion carried unanimously.

10. DISCUSSION

A. Parks Strategic Plan Update

Parks and Community Services Senior Planner Betsy Anderson said the Parks and Community Services strategic plan establishes a shared understanding of the vision, mission and guiding principles of the department, and prioritizes the key areas of focus for the next five years. The document translates policy level guidance from city and department level plans into actionable goals and strategies, and it meets the departmental accreditation requirements. Given that human services is part of the parks department, the document is the Commission's strategic plan.

The strategic plan is informed by the human services needs update, the parks and open space system plan, and the recreation program plan.

The components of both the current plan and the updated plan includes the vision, which is a future-oriented declaration of the organization's purpose and aspirations. The vision is the north star guiding point and in a perfect world is what the department would like to see happen. The next component is the mission which is much more tangible and is the organization's reason for being. The values component, also called the guiding principles, are the fundamental beliefs and guiding standards of the organization. The vision, mission and values are enduring elements and do not change much over time. The goals and strategies elements of the plan are much more dynamic and are changed according to community and department contexts. The goals are the what and the strategies are the how. The tactics and the action plans are where the staff take the content from the plan and move it into their specific program and division work plans.

Ms. Anderson said the first strategic plan was created in the early 2000s and the

current plan was adopted in 2015. She said the mission for the department is to build a healthy community through an integrated system of exceptional parks, open space, recreation, cultural arts and human services. Supporting that mission are a set of six guiding principles.

The goals are: 1) advance the mission of building a healthy community; 2) assess the relevancy and effectiveness of programs and partnerships; 3) leverage the value of assets, resources, technology, external funding and partnerships; 4) integrate Parks and Community Services into local and regional economic development strategies; 5) support policy outcomes that advance the mission; and 6) align organizational development activities with department guiding principles. The work of the Commission is addressed particularly under the first three goals.

The update process kicked off in earnest in late 2018 with a management team retreat workshop. The focus was on content of the current plan and areas that should be built on over the next five years. A plan update scope has since been identified by a multidisciplinary core planning team. It includes a draft series of core components. A draft plan will be available in the fall of 2019. Traditionally the strategic plan has been endorsed by the Parks and Community Services Board but it will also be reviewed with all boards and commissions that have a connection with the department.

The first of the draft core components is a vision statement for the department as a whole developed by the core team. The new statement reads “In Bellevue everyone can connect to nature and to each other through experiences and programs that help them to live, grow, and thrive.” The updated mission statement is close to the existing statement. It reads “We build a healthy community through an integrated system of exceptional parks, recreation, natural areas, arts and culture, and community services.”

The staff workshop in 2018 uncovered an interest in aligning the work of the department with the citywide Diversity Advantage Initiative and the department’s diversity plan through the creation of an equity statement. As drafted, it reads “Equity acknowledges and removes disparities in opportunities, power, and resources so that everyone can reach their full potential to thrive. Bellevue Parks & Community Services practices equity, which is the responsibility of every individual in the department. Equitable access is a right, not a privilege, and is fundamental to our mission of serving all people. Through the practice of equity, we cultivate ties that connect people to the fabric of our community.”

The draft update retains the guiding principles, the foundation for a healthy community, and the philosophy of a continuum of services. The full suite of elements will round out the core elements section of the document. Attention will be given next to the goals and the five-year priorities.

Commissioner Jain referred to the guiding principle around actively managing

organization health and asked what process would be used to accomplish that. Ms. Anderson said the principle could be applied in different ways. As drafted, the focus is on ensuring an environment for the staff in which they can succeed and thrive. The principles are inspired from the citywide One City principles.

Commissioner Ma said the ability of the department to maintain parks, green spaces and natural areas is a big draw for many. It is a visible outcome community members can see. It speaks to environmental sustainability.

Commissioner Piper said the continuum of services is a key strength and is what brought him to the Commission. It is both an interesting and helpful framework. He stressed the need for the Commission to be cognizant of all parts of the continuum spectrum.

Chair Mercer said she did not see the human services strategies popping out in the strategic plan. The things the Commission believes in strongly, such as food to eat and a roof overhead, clearly fall under the umbrella of the plan, but that is not evident in the draft.

Commissioner Kline said she is always finding new pockets of human services that are going on within the city. It does not seem that it is all pulled together in one place. There are programs under the fire and police departments, and different pots of city dollars go to fund the various programs. It is difficult for the Commission to internally capture all of those components and far more so for the public. Ms. Anderson allowed that the staff team talked about that and agreed it would be a benefit to have a single place where people could go to find all of the resources.

Chair Mercer asked if accessibility and affordability could be raised into the guiding principles. Ms. Anderson said the suggestion is an interesting idea, noting that there has been much talk about those two concepts in regard to individual programs.

Chair Mercer also noted the reference to the fourth goal and said she would like to see that expanded to call out Bellevue as a regional leader in all of the areas.

Ms. O'Reilly pointed out that the document uses both "human services" and "community services." She asked if there could be a clearer definition included in the plan. Ms. Anderson said there was some interest on the part of the staff in thinking about human services as being part of community services and viewing the two more holistically as a way of serving up a more comprehensive understanding.

Commissioner Ma suggested that people in the know understand what is meant by the term human services. He allowed that the term community services is broader and more encompassing and could make human services more visible to the community. Ms. Anderson agreed a definition should be embedded to ensure

transparency. She also agreed that everyone should be able to pick up the strategic plan, read it, and understand the role of the department and what it does.

Ms. O'Reilly said that approach would go a long way toward addressing the fact that other departments offer services that can widely be called human services. She said she did not know how the strategic plans of the various city departments are inter-coordinated, though she allowed that the diversity strategic plans are being coordinated by the diversity initiative staff. Taking the holistic view would not change how the programs of city departments are operationalized, but it would help to make things clearer.

Commissioner Kline pointed out that many of the programs offered by other departments actually provide human services, while the primary function of the human services division is to contract with agencies to provide human services. Ms. O'Reilly noted that the 1985 ordinance that created the human services division and the Commission specifically outlines that role.

Commissioner Jain asked if the department has data about which parks in the system get used the most and who the users are. Ms. Anderson said park and trail usage is somewhat difficult to determine. Parks are very porous in the way they can be accessed. The marketing lead and the facilities manager have, however, been working on developing ways to track park usage. Tracking usage at community centers and the programs they offer is much less complicated.

Commissioner Ma said he would like to see the fourth goal and strategies drafted to be specific about encompassing more diversity by serving people at all economic levels. He allowed that affordability is a major issue for the Commission. Ms. Anderson said the staff have given attention to the language relative to a vibrant economy and have made attempts to conflate a vibrant economy with a high quality of life. The opportunity exists to do a better job of emphasizes affordability and accessibility.

With regard to accessibility, Chair Mercer stressed that transportation is a key component. She suggested there should be some reference made to the ability for people to get to where they need to be. Ms. Anderson said transportation has been a crosscutting issue, particularly in regard to the recreation plan. She said she did not have a good handle yet on a path forward but agreed more needs to be done in terms of removing barriers. Chair Mercer pointed out that the Commission had done a lot of research in concert with King County Metro that has not been moved forward yet.

Commissioner Amirfaiz asked if there are plans for acquiring any more green space. Ms. Anderson said there are plans in place. The parks and open space system plan looks forward many years and analyzes geographic levels of service based on neighborhoods being within a third of a mile of parks and trails. There is more work to be done by way of study which will be addressed in the next update of that plan in

2022. There has also been a lot of talk about the term “walkable access” in terms of sidewalk conditions, the curb cuts, and the slope of the topography. The data, while relatively easy to collect, can be expensive to address on the ground. The parks and open space plan is used to guide acquisition decisions. Habitat conditions and watershed health are also consideration factors. Data regarding population density is still used for siting community centers. The data is also a contributing factor to determining where additional park facilities are needed. Open space creation can be incentivized in new development.

Ms. O'Reilly informed the Commission that the intern who will be starting with the department in September, Devin Konick-Seese, is currently working with Ms. Anderson on the Recreation Plan. That will provide for a good carryover.

11. OLD BUSINESS

Ms. O'Reilly noted that she had forwarded to the Commission an email received from a person who serves on the board of an agency that the Commission chose not to fund in the current biennium. The email simply asks the Commission to consider funding them during the next allocation cycle.

Commissioner Jain asked why the Commission had elected not to fund the application. Commissioner Piper said the primary issues were with the number of Bellevue residents served and the breadth of the program.

Chair Mercer added that the Commission had generally struggled during the funding cycle with the number of different organizations that were seeking funds for financial assistance. The Commission's evaluation of the various programs in terms of impact led to the conclusion to fund the programs that were ultimately funded.

Commissioner Kline said the Commission dove into the area of emergency financial assistance at the top of the funding cycle. It was realized that the system could use some improvements along the lines of the coordinated entry system for housing. A number of different methods are used to fund the various aspects of emergency financial assistance and clients in need of assistance end up having to go from program to program to get what they need. The Commission convened a panel of agencies that provide emergency financial assistance and the turnout was very good, including representation from Attain Housing. It was discovered that there are large variations between agencies in terms of restrictions from their funding sources or from their boards around what each can and will fund, as well as their funding levels. The Commission reached the conclusion that there are valid reasons for having so many different agencies involved in emergency financial assistance. The population served by Attain Housing was deemed to be very similar to the population served by Hopelink, so from the standpoint of economy of scale the decision was made to fund Hopelink rather than Attain Housing. The Commission did not rule out funding Attain Housing in the future.

Continuing, Commissioner Kline stated that after the funding process was finished, Deputy Mayor Robinson came to the Commission with a question about what areas would be funded if more money was available. That kicked off another process during which Attain Housing came up. The feedback given to Deputy Mayor Robinson was that if more money were made available, the Commission would allocate it to emergency financial assistance, including Attain Housing.

Assistant Director of the Department of Parks and Community Services Toni Esparza pointed out that the applications received totaled some \$5.5 million, yet the Commission was only had \$3.6 million to allocate. The discussion around emergency financial assistance is just one example of the conversations the Commission engaged in deciding how to split up the available dollars.

12. NEW BUSINESS – None

13. CONTINUED ORAL COMMUNICATIONS – None

14. ADJOURNMENT

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

Chair Mercer adjourned the meeting at 8:03 p.m.

Secretary to the Human Services Commission

Date

Chairperson of the Human Services Commission

Date