

BELLEVUE NETWORK ON AGING

MINUTES

July 9, 2026, 8:30am - noon

MEMBERS' PRESENT: Suresh Velagapudi, Guang-an Wu, Roxi Wilson, Elaine White, Hannah Kimball, Bhavana Pahwa, Beth Hanley, Chelcy Flores, Kan Liang, Eleanor Lee, Julie Hart.

MEMBERS ABSENT: Shilpa Mehta, Madhu Kachru, Andrea Kline, John DePalma, Anne Rittenhouse, Kari Marino,

STAFF PRESENT: Dan Lassiter -Community Services Supervisor

GUESTS: none

PRESENTER(S): Bhavana Pahwa – The Art of Advocacy

RECORDING SECRETARY: Daniel Lassiter, Bellevue Parks & Community Services

WELCOME AND ROLL CALL: The meeting was called to order by chair Elaine White at 8:30a

Approval of MINUTES: Minutes for June 2026 were reviewed and approved.

PUBLIC COMMENTS: None

Presentation: The Art of Advocacy by Bhavana Pahwa

Advocacy -Building influence, relationships and results.

Advocacy equals educating and influencing decision-makers. It includes meetings, testimony, letters, calls and coalition letters. It focuses on issues and policy outcomes. And finally, is nonpartisan when conducted by nonprofits.

What is the difference between advocacy and lobbying? Advocacy is broad education issue. Lobbying is asking for/or against specific legislation. 501c3

organizations may lobby in limited amounts. When advocating there is no endorsing or opposing candidates.

Why advocacy matters.

Elected officials control budgets and policy decisions. Silence equals lost influence opportunity. Consistent engagement builds credibility.

Understanding the elected officials

Motivated by constituents and e-elections, the officials have a limited time and competing priorities to focus on; they care about fiscal impact and public perception, and they value credible community partners.

The advocacy mindset is relationships over transactions. Respect even during a disagreement; provide solutions, not just problems; think long-term influence.

Preparing for a meeting

Research the official's priorities and committees by clarifying your goal; develop a clear and specific ask; prepare a one-page leave-behind; practice key talking points.

Structuring your message

Introduce yourself and your organization. Define the problem clearly. Show impact with data and stories. Make a specific ask.

The power of story plus data

Data establishes credibility. Stories create emotional connection. Keep your stories brief and relevant. Use local examples when possible.

Making a clear ask

Be specific and measurable. Lay out the specific item you would like the person to do.

Handling Difficult Questions

If unsure, respond with "I'll follow up with that information" and then do it.

Acknowledge differing views respectfully. Stay calm and focus on shared goals. Never damage the relationship.

After the meeting

Send a thank-you within 24-48 hours. In it, restate your request clearly, provide requested materials and track commitments and the next steps.

Grassroots Advocacy

Letter-writing campaigns, call-in days; public testimony' media engagement; coalition sign-on letters.

Working through coalitions

This type of advocating can demonstrate broad community support; shares resources and expertise; strengthens credibility; and aligns messaging for greater impact.

Common Advocacy Mistakes

Being vague; giving too much information; not providing a clear ask; taking an adversarial tone; and not following up are all advocacy mistakes.

Ethics & Legal Guardrails

Remain nonpartisan; do not endorse candidates; track lobbying activity if applicable; consult with legal counsel when you are uncertain.

ffffffffffffffffffffffffffffffffffff

Invite officials to events; share periodic updates; highlight collaborative successes; be a reliable policy resource.

Have a persona advocacy action Plan

Identify one priority issue; identify one key decision-maker; define your specific ask; and set a timeline for outreach.

Conclusion: Advocacy is relationship-building and your voice shapes policy outcomes.

Human Services Needs Update – Christy Stangland

No Human Services Updates are available for today's meeting.

COMMITTEE REPORTS: Members were asked to read the committee reports before the meeting for discussion and due to time restraints were skipped this month.

Advocacy: No new information beyond the committee minutes.

Housing & Transportation: No new information beyond the committee minutes.

Outreach: No new information beyond the committee minutes.

Public Meetings: No meetings attended.

Ad hoc committees:

Celebration Committee: Chelcy is working to secure a BNOA fund raiser to help remove barriers for the public to enjoy the Botanical Gardens by providing up to two specialized wheelchairs to the Garden or possibly Chihuly glass plates by Jesse Kelly. The celebration will be moved to the Botanical Garden October 14th, 4-7p. Emphasis will be to invite past members, valued partners, and City of Bellevue staff and officials involved in its development.

Older Adult Recreation Plan for Bellevue: Throughout the city a written survey will be provided at the community center and cultural groups in partnership with the city of Bellevue. The plan is to finish that project by end of August. Progress has been good with four focus groups completed and three to go.

Recycled Computer Program:

Guan-an has taken responsibility to get the BNOA information repository in place and members were in-service on how to use the system. Several members continue to have issues being able to log in. Guan-an will continue to work with

them, and Dan will continue to send out the committee minutes and agendas and place them in the repository for members to view as needed.

NEW BUSINESS:

Guang-an is working on a personal computer project to get free or low-cost recycled computers into older adults' possession and then training on how to connect with internet for information sharing and receiving. Progress made on availability and he will meet with Dan and Marcus at NBCC to see how a program could be developed.

The meeting was adjourned at 10:30a

Next meeting is August 6th, 2026. Presenters: Office of Emergency Management –Being Prepared for emergency.