

The Human Services Commission approved these minutes on April 5, 2016

CITY OF BELLEVUE
HUMAN SERVICES COMMISSION
MINUTES

February 18, 2016
6:30 p.m.

Bellevue City Hall
City Council Conference Room 1E-120

COMMISSIONERS PRESENT: Chairperson McEachran, Commissioners Bruels, Oxrieder, Perelman, Villar

COMMISSIONERS ABSENT: Commissioners Kline, Mercer

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

GUEST SPEAKERS: None

RECORDING SECRETARY: Gerry Lindsay

1. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 6:33 p.m. by Chair McEachran who presided.

2. ROLL CALL

Upon the call of the roll, all Commissioners were present with the exception of Commissioner Perelman, who arrived at 6:50 p.m., and Commissioners Kline and Mercer, both of whom were excused.

3. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

A. January 21, 2016

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

4. PETITIONS AND COMMUNICATIONS

Ms. Cristina Wheatley, an Early Care and Education Consultant at Kindering Center, noted that the agency provides a variety of services to Bellevue preschools, childcare programs, and to family, friends and neighbors caregivers. The list of services includes developmental screening, teacher and provider training, and referrals for further evaluation. She thanked the Commission for its generous funding over the

years. During 2015, the agency served 115 Bellevue children and their families, which exceeded the contract goal of 89. In all, almost technical assistance hours were provided, exceeding the goal of 667 hours. Early intervention fits very nicely into the city's stated goals regarding school readiness. She shared with the Commissioners a couple of success stories and pointed out that Kinderling Center is unique in the services it offers.

Ms. Kim McCaulou, Deputy Director of LifeWire, said the mission of the organization is to take care of victims of domestic violence. To that end, the agency has emergency shelter and transitional housing. The affordable housing issue facing the Eastside is making it difficult for many domestic violence survivors to find permanent housing they can afford.

Commissioner Villar asked what kind of challenges the agency is facing relative to cultural diversity and serving individuals whose first language may not be English. Ms. McCaulou said all of the advocates are pushed to become culturally aware. Multiple languages are represented by the diverse staff, but interpretive services are often required. Cultural differences can make the delivery of services take longer, particularly in the case of those who do not wish to indicate whether or not they are documented.

Ms. McCaulou said the agency recently received a housing stability grant and uses the funds to prevent homelessness through eviction prevention, services, back utilities payments, and debt cleanup.

5. STAFF AND COMMISSION REPORTS

Commissioner Oxrieder said she recently attended an event in Redmond titled Rejecting the Rags of Racism and Living into the Riches of Diversity. She said there were several excellent speakers. The exhibits will be moving to various locations through March.

Commissioner Bruels said he recently participated in a training on perinatal mood and anxiety disorders. He said it was interesting to hear how the treatment of post-partum depression has evolved over time. It is now recognized that symptoms can emerge at any time during pregnancy and up to a year post-partum and can encompass far more than just depression. In many if not most cases, the women do not qualify for mental health services and so are being treated at primary care clinics. The training pointed out the importance of funding community health centers.

Commissioner Villar said she attended the recent Leadership Eastside meeting focused on basic needs in neighborhoods and communities. There were several human service agency representatives present who identified neighborhoods and communities as a basic need, and the need for neighborhoods and communities to be part of the solution. There was a call to stop referring to the homeless and start referring to them as people experiencing homelessness.

Chair McEachran said he recently was invited to attend a Level 6 ELL class at Bellevue College. The class edits a newspaper and the topic has been homelessness. He said he was invited to address the class on what his faith community has done in regard to the need, and while there it was noted that he is also a member of the Human Services Commission. The 16 class members were quite diverse and their highest question was in regard to accessing human services in a culturally competent way. He said he called the attention of the class members to mini City Hall at Crossroads as one place to get connected with human services, but none of them were even aware of it. It came out, however, that none of the members actually live in Bellevue.

Chair McEachran reported that Congregations for the Homeless has moved its client services operation out of the facility operated by his faith community. They are increasing their finance and advancement offices and are moving toward a large capital campaign.

Chair McEachran also informed the Commissioners that he attended the most recent meeting of the Parks and Community Services Board at which Human Services Planner Alex O'Reilly presented the Needs Update. Some good and interesting questions were posed, particularly around what is happening in some of the city's parks.

Commissioner Perelman asked if a new location has been found for the men's Day Center in the downtown. Human Services Manager Emily Leslie said the search continues. The agency has approached Sound Transit about using the winter shelter facility on at least a temporary basis.

Ms. O'Reilly said presentations to various groups on the Needs Update are continuing. The next one will be to the Kirkland Senior Advisory Council in early March. Groups slated to receive updates include the Eastside Pathways School Readiness Collaborative and the Eastside Interfaith Social Concerns Council. An abbreviated executive summary has been completed and will be made broadly available.

With regard to the joint human services commissions and advisory groups on February 2, Ms. Leslie stated that each of the small groups has turned in their notes to staff from Issaquah who are going to create a summary for distribution.

Commissioner Oxrieder commented that a representative from Redmond spoke of developing a communication plan to better address homelessness and human service needs. She said she hoped the Commission would see a copy of that to take advantage of their efforts.

Ms. O'Reilly said one of the questions raised at the Parks and Community Services Board meeting was from a member who lives in the downtown who said he sees

homeless people often and would like to be able to share resources with them. The Redmond document is still in draft form and they are still trying to determine how it should be promoted to the community once it is completed. Bellevue has an interdepartmental team working on all aspects of homelessness and it would be great to have a common handout at the ready.

Commissioner Bruels said those at his table talked about homelessness as well and wondered aloud the need to address the problem at the federal level. Often it is folks from out of state who end up being on the streets in the local communities, which highlights the fact that homelessness is an interstate, and thus federal, problem. The country as a society needs to come together and decide if shelter should be made a basic human right.

Commissioner Perelman said the conversation at her table included a potential provider who offered a new and different perspective.

Commissioner Villar said the conversation at her table centered on the degree to which affordable housing and good transportation go hand in hand.

Chair McEachran said his table talked quite a bit about process. The members of the Issaquah group had a number of questions about how to approach the council and how to get their message across. There was a lot of evidence of how important the Needs Update is to the entire area. He said the thought crossed his mind that those groups that have found their voice should mentor those that have not yet found their voice.

6. DISCUSSION

A. Finalize Focus Areas for 2017-2018 Human Services Funding

Ms. Leslie reported that the staff are taking the steps necessary to be ready for the funding process, which will kick off with the application workshop on March 2. That means that by February 23 it will be necessary for Bellevue to have its funding process summary completed. A key element will be a description of the funding focus areas.

The Human Services Element of the City's Comprehensive Plan serves as the basis for everything the Commission does. Policy HS-4 is key in that it talks about supporting the full spectrum of community needs, an approach that has been Bellevue's philosophy for many years. An issue, which has been bubbling up in the Northeast funders group, is the notion of developing a regional emphasis, and one possible topic is homelessness.

Commissioner Perelman allowed that homelessness is a growing issue and something that needs to be discussed. However, homelessness is only one element of the full spectrum of needs. It is also only a relatively small percentage of the overall

need. There are many whose needs will not be addressed if the funding focus is on homelessness alone.

Commissioner Bruels observed that over the years homelessness has become less of an issue in terms of population and more of a lens highlighting how human services are delivered. Bellevue's four goal areas all speak to one degree or another to the homelessness issue. Clearly food to eat and a roof over head is a homelessness issue, but so is supportive relationships within families, neighborhoods and communities. A safe haven from all forms of violence and abuse is another clear tie given that domestic violence is a huge cause of homelessness among women. Many end up losing their housing due to healthcare issues, and a lack of the education and job skills needed to lead an independent life leads to not being able to afford housing.

Chair McEachran commented that the need to look at the whole picture and the continuum of services is well taken.

Referring to the first bulleted paragraph of the draft funding strategy document, Commissioner Perelman proposed moving away from the notion of homelessness as an increasing issue and focusing instead just on the need for affordable housing.

Commissioner Villar proposed revising the first and last sentences to read "The need for affordable housing for low and moderate income residents is an urgent and timely issue for the county, Eastside and City" and "Employment training and education opportunities that lead to living wages are integral to this stability."

Commissioner Perelman said she would support listing homelessness and affordable housing as separate issues. Ms. Leslie allowed that affordable housing is integral to the issue of homelessness. If there is no affordable housing, it will not be possible to move people out of shelter and subsidized housing programs. The homeless issue is acute regionally, and particularly on the Eastside, because of a lack of affordable housing.

Commissioner Villar concurred. She said the data backs up the fact that for every hundred dollar increase in rents there is a corresponding increase in homelessness.

Chair McEachran proposed revising the second sentence of the first bullet to read "Helping people maintain housing stability is critical to making homelessness rare, brief and one-time and requires affordable housing."

Commissioner Villar proposed adding a reference to market-rate housing to the first sentence of the first paragraph under the heading "Overarching Factors." She suggested the sentence should read "Even though economic indicators have improved, such as employment and market rate housing growth, the Bellevue Human Services Commission recognizes...."

Commissioner Bruels called for calling attention to the issue of transportation by making it a separate bulleted overarching issue to which the Commission gave consideration. He said that could be done by moving up the transportation bullet on the third page in the Further Considerations section of the memo.

Chair McEachran proposed changing "...services must expand..." in the third bullet to read "...services must continue to expand...."

There was agreement to indicate that the bulleted items were not in priority order.

Commissioner Perelman pointed out that the Commission funds a lot of organizations that provide services to children, but nothing is said about that in any of the focus area bullets for 2017-2018. There was agreement to add a paragraph reading "A continuum of services for children, youth and their families aimed at helping them succeed in school and in life."

Commissioner Villar proposed revising the first focus areas bullet to read "Housing with services, particularly for people experiencing homelessness, including intervention and prevention programs that intervene early to stabilize people at risk of experiencing homelessness."

Commissioner Villar commented in regard to the second bullet that people can be very productive and still unable to pay their bills. The recommended rewording of the paragraph to read "Support for employment and those skills and services that result in a productive, living wage workforce that has opportunities to move up the wage ladder, and includes affordable quality child care options."

With regard to the contract performance paragraph in the Further Considerations section, Chair McEachran proposed incorporating the notion of being good stewards of the city's investments. He proposed revising the first sentence to read "The Human Services Commission continues to be diligent about ensuring good stewardship and accountability of the City's investments in human services."

There was consensus to add "...but not limited to..." to the end of the first paragraph and ahead of the bulleted paragraphs in the alignment with regional and local initiatives section.

There was agreement to rename "Other (non-human services) City dollars" to "Other City dollars."

Commissioner Villar called attention to the note at the end of the diversity and cultural competence section and proposed removing it in favor of adding to the last bullet a second sentence reading "The practice of cultural competence is more than a non-discrimination policy."

Calling attention to the section on access to healthcare, Commissioner Villar highlighted the need to call out the groups that still do not have access under the Affordable Care Act. After a general discussion, there was agreement to revise the paragraph to read “The Commission recognizes that although many more Bellevue residents now have individual health care coverage, there are still many residents who are not eligible for health care provided through the Affordable Care Act. Gaps and barriers include: inability to pay for premiums, co-pays and out of pocket expenses, limited services or prescriptions depending on the individual health plan, and lack of specialists who are willing to accept lower fees. In addition, there is an increase of residents, including children, youth and adults, who have behavioral health needs for which services may not be readily available. Similar to transportation, funding requests are encouraged to include how access to all forms of health care could be improved.”

Ms. O'Reilly said staff would revise the document as directed and send it out to the Commissioners for approval before February 23.

Commissioner Perelman pointed out that following each funding cycle, the Commission takes the time to debrief the process and make suggestions for changes. Ms. Leslie said staff would pull out the last one and review it to make sure all bases have been covered.

7. OLD BUSINESS

Grant Coordinator Dee Dee Catalano reported that on February 16 the city received notification of its CDBG entitlement amount for 2016. The allocation of \$635,872 represents an increase of \$22,500 over the previous year. Under the terms of the contingency plan, funds will flow first to the Major Home Repair Program. The program administrator believes the program can expend the funds.

Ms. O'Reilly said the funds will probably be used in conjunction with the Neighborhood Outreach Program, which has a partnership with Jubilee REACH. Jubilee REACH has a program similar to United Way's day of caring. The intent is to highlight projects that are eligible for the funds.

Ms. O'Reilly informed the Commissioners that efforts are under way to help promote the virtual village concept. A meeting was held earlier in the day with a member of the planning committee and a representative from the Bellevue Network on Aging.

7. NEW BUSINESS

Ms. Leslie reminded the Commissioners of the requirement to conduct a public hearing prior to starting the funding process. She said questions are typically provided to the various agencies ahead of the public hearing to spur comments and suggestions. She briefly reviewed the questions that were sent out ahead of the

previous public hearing and there was agreement to use the same questions, and to add one about emerging issues.

9. PETITIONS AND COMMUNICATIONS – None

10. ADJOURNMENT

A motion to adjourn was made by Commissioner Bruels. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Villar and the motion carried unanimously.

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

Secretary to the Human Services Commission

Date

Chairperson of the Human Services Commission

Date