

The Human Services Commission approved these minutes on October 7, 2014

CITY OF BELLEVUE
HUMAN SERVICES COMMISSION
MINUTES

September 4, 2014
6:15 p.m.

Bellevue City Hall
City Council Conference Room 1E-113

COMMISSIONERS PRESENT: Chairperson Perelman, Commissioners Bruels, Beighle, McEachran, Plaskon, Villar

COMMISSIONERS ABSENT: Commissioner Kline

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

GUEST SPEAKERS: Rae Levine, Karina O'Malley, The Sophia Way

RECORDING SECRETARY: Gerry Lindsay

1. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 6:21 p.m. by Commissioner McEachran who presided until the arrival of Chair Perelman.

2. ROLL CALL

Upon the call of the roll, all Commissioners were present with the exception of Chair Perelman, who arrived at 6:31 p.m., and Commissioner Kline, who was excused.

3. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

A. July 1, 2014

A motion to approve the minutes was made by Commissioner Beighle. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Bruels and it carried unanimously.

B. July 24, 2014

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

4. PETITIONS AND COMMUNICATIONS - None

5. STAFF AND COMMISSION REPORTS

Commissioner Villar informed the Commission about Solarize Bellevue. She explained that if 30 homes in Bellevue take on solar panels, the company will donate a solar panel unit to a non-profit in Bellevue. The finalist non-profits are all human services organizations.

Human Services Planner Alex O'Reilly reported that she attended the NAMI Eastside breakfast on September 3. The keynote speaker was Dan Satterberg, former co-chair and current member of the MIDD Oversight Committee. The Committee puts out a quarterly report and the most recent edition highlighted HERO House.

Ms. O'Reilly reported that the Eastside Pathways community scorecard was recently released. It updates some of the data from the baseline report that was released in December 2013.

Ms. O'Reilly informed the Commission that Puget Sound Sage, a policy and advocacy organization in Seattle, released a report recently called *Between a Rock and a Hard Place* that is focused on the King County childcare crisis. The report includes recent data about the high cost of childcare and how it is affecting the working poor and low-income single-parent households.

Ms. O'Reilly distributed to the Commissioners copies of a fact sheet regarding the King County budget that is being developed by the King County Executive ahead of being transmitted to the King County Council on September 22. The Eastside Human Services Forum is tracking the impacts that could result from cuts that are included in the Executive's budget around public health, particularly family planning and health education services. Two public health clinics are slated in the budget to be closed, one in North King County and one in Federal Way.

6. DISCUSSION

A. The Sophia Way Update

Human Services Manager Emily Leslie introduced Rae Levine, The Sophia Way interim director, to provide an update to the Commission.

Ms. Levine said she came of age in the 1960s as part of a generation that is about making the world a better place. She allowed that that focus undoubtedly is in the heart of each Commissioner as well. She said she has very strong personal values around honesty, reliability and integrity. She said she has been working with non-profits since the late 1970s and received her Masters Degree in Organization Development in the 1980s and has since had a great deal of experience of working with non-profit organizations of all sizes with a focus on organizational change and what makes organizations tick. She explained that after moving to Seattle she put her talents to use working with organizations facing leadership change and said The

Sophia Way organization is the third she has served as interim executive director.

Ms. Levine said she began her tenure with The Sophia Way the third week of July. She said she has been working very closely with clients, case managers and shelter staff to get a good handle on what is working and what is not, and has also been focusing in the organization's finances. Kim Loveall Price, who is currently serving as the interim executive director for DASH, has also been contracted with to assist in developing an in-depth assessment for The Sophia Way. The assessment will be completed later in September and will include a short-term plan and recommendations for future direction.

Ms. Levine said the good news is the board and staff of The Sophia Way are dedicated to their work, the cause and the people they serve. She said she continues to be impressed by the fact that everyone involved with the organization goes the extra mile. Currently the finances are on an even keel, making it possible to pay the bills on time. There are some excellent outcomes happening with clients relative to obtaining permanent housing. There is clearly strong grassroots support for the organization in the community, especially among the various church congregations; all of the meals provided at the programmatic shelter are cooked and delivered by people in the community, and the organization enjoys the support of a number of volunteers.

The organization has, however, been struggling for some time. While the cash flow is currently stable, the organization has been operating at a deficit and the reserves are on the thin side. There is also some debt from the renovations done at St. Luke's. Focus is being given to what immediate actions can be taken to bring the financial picture into more of a neutral state. The business plan that was done for the organization represents the aspirations and vision of the board and the staff and is focused on growth. The board has now agreed that the plan was premature and that the organization is not in a position to grow.

The organization is not simply facing the fact that a leader has left. What is needed is a course correction. The organization has been functioning in what can be termed a long-term startup mode. It has addressed and filled genuine needs in the community, but in doing so has spread itself too thin; it has failed to create for itself a solid foundation on which to grow. The course direction that is needed must involve pulling back a bit, focusing on the core programs, and strengthening the infrastructure. The core programs for The Sophia Way are focused on helping women move from homelessness to independence. Taking on the emergency winter shelter, and changing the focus from women to women and children, are examples of the agency spreading itself too thinly.

One thing currently being explored is the option of having another agency take on the winter shelter for the upcoming season. That would free The Sophia Way to focus on its core programs and building its base for the short term. Discussions are under way with five area agencies to see if one of them could take on the winter shelter

responsibility. The agency is committed to making sure the winter shelter services are provided and if no other organization can be found will proceed on its current course.

Ms. Levine said her sense so far is that the agency has a lot of good to build on. The problems being faced are fixable and taking the right kinds of short-term actions will get the agency where it needs to be. She said she hoped the Commission would continue to support The Sophia Way.

Answering a question asked by Commissioner Plaskon, Karina O'Malley, a board member for The Sophia Way, said the agency's relationship with St. Luke's is strong. They own the building the shelter is in and they have given a 30-year lease for \$100 per year. Both the congregation and the staff of St. Luke's are incredibly supportive.

Commissioner Plaskon asked Ms. Levine about her relationship with The Sophia Way board. She responded by saying the board members are involved and engaged. She said the board is comprised of a group of dedicated people who have stuck at it through hard times. The agency has a classic strong-founder history; it began under the direction of a charismatic person who brought together a group of people to address a specific issue. The board may have gone through many years of not fully understanding its role, but recently they have learned what their role really is. Their board is not filled with large egos and does not present any obstacles. While there is some sadness associated with letting go of the original ideals, the board understands that the reality is not what was hoped for and that a different course of action is needed.

Commissioner Villar asked how often the board is meeting currently and. Ms. O'Malley said it meets monthly face to face and via conference call when necessary. She allowed that The Sophia Way board members were naïve and are exhausted. None of the members agreed to serve in order to pad their resumes. Any of the board members would be willing to step aside in favor of someone who could do the job better. The board sees the need as huge and feels desperate about it.

With regard to the business plan, Ms. O'Malley explained that during the winter months the agency was facing a desperate financial situation and made a plea to its funders for help. One of the recommendations that came with the extra funding was the hiring of a consultant to help move the agency out of its startup mode. A consultant was hired and one of the things the consultant helped produce was the business plan. The idea that the agency could meet more of the identified need was exciting to the board. While the consultant was saying of course it could be done, there were questions raised internally among the board members. When Ms. Levine came on board and suggested the growth cannot happen in the short term, the board members in fact breathed a sigh of relief even in light of the fact that the lofty plans were not going to be carried out.

Answering a question asked by Commissioner Plaskon, Ms. Levine said the agency currently employs close to ten regular staff and a number of on-call staff. The shelter staff who work the evening and night shifts are all on-call staff. The shelter manager and assistant manager, the day center manager, the three case managers, the reporting specialist, the pathways program manager and the accounting manager are all regular staff. As people have left employment at the agency, their positions have not been refilled.

Commissioner McEachran said the issue facing the Commission relative to the work of the agency is stewardship of the public money and the provision of shelter. He highlighted the need to get out to the constituents the message of where things stand and the steps that will be taken to get there. There certainly is no sense of scarcity of support for The Sophia Way and it would be good to identify and sit down with six to eight community leaders to ask for advice relative to the central mission of the agency. Ms. Levine said she has taken every opportunity to talk with funders and providers and will continue to seek out every constituency to share what is going on and what is being done about it.

Commissioner Plaskon said the Commission would appreciate seeing the assessment and next-steps plan once it is completed. Ms. Levine said she would be happy to share it.

After Ms. Levine and Ms. O'Malley left the meeting, Ms. Leslie said she was concerned when she heard recently that The Sophia Way was considering giving up the winter shelter. Everything is in place to run the winter shelter, including the location and the funding. While the manager has resigned, she is available to help train in her replacement. The Sophia Way is right to turn its focus to what it needs to do to remain viable. Hopefully one of the other providers with whom Ms. Levine is talking - Catholic Community Services, Hopelink, YWCA, Congregations for the Homeless, and Lifewire - will step forward. The best option would be to find another agency willing to take on the responsibility, but if they cannot they will need to grit their teeth and move forward even though that means stretching out their course correction. She added that the funders group is very happy with the selection of Ms. Levine to serve as the interim executive director.

7. DISCUSSION

A. Debrief of Human Services Funding Process

Grant Coordinator Joseph Adriano noted that the recently completed funding cycle represented the second time the ShareOneApp was used. He said suggestions for revisions would be considered.

Chair Perelman observed that the process went very smoothly. She said the fact that numbers were not considered during the first round helped the Commission focus on the applications rather than the budget.

Commissioner Bruels agreed and said it helped that the number of dollars requested was not much different from the number of dollars available. If the disparity between dollars requested and dollars available is large in a future funding cycle, it may be necessary to consider dollar amounts during the first round. Mr. Adriano said the \$1.4 million gap was in fact larger than it was in the last two cycles; the difference was that the difference was made up of two extraordinarily large requests.

Commissioner Plaskon said having agency representatives present while the Commission reviewed their applications was helpful, but observed that the timing was not always right; on occasion representatives were present when it was not possible to have a full dialog between them and the Commission. Mr. Adriano said emails were sent out regarding the second round of reviews with an indication of when each application would be discussed. He allowed that some agencies interpreted that to mean if they were present they would be able to dialog with the Commission.

Chair Perelman suggested it would be helpful to be more selective regarding which agencies the Commission specifically wants to see. Ms. Leslie allowed that certain agencies the Commission wanted to see were in fact specifically invited. The fact that representatives from a number of other agencies showed up was not anticipated. She suggested that an invitation only approach could be tried, though that would not stop anyone who wants to from attending.

There was general consensus in favor of narrowing the field of agencies invited to address the Commission during the second round. Commissioner Plaskon voiced the opposite view saying even if not called on it was good to have a wide array of agencies present; those not called on were able to observe the approaches taken by other agencies and to gain a better of understanding of what other agencies do.

Commissioner Bruels said the expectation of the representatives who showed up appeared to be that they would be allowed to address the Commission and answer questions. He suggested they should be made aware that the Commission's expectation is different. Ms. Leslie noted that in years past the Commission did not call any agency representative to the table unless it had questions for them to address. She agreed that having a sign-up sheet contributed to giving the representatives the expectation that they would be asked to comment.

Chair Perelman allowed that some representatives provided excellent and interesting insights to the Commission even though the Commission had no questions for them. She added that anyone wanting to speak should be given the opportunity to do so.

Commissioner McEachran said he appreciated the compressed timing, even though that required meeting more frequently. The approach kept everything fresh in the minds of the Commissioners and the degree to which that made reaching consensus easier. Commissioners Plaskon and Bruels concurred.

Commissioner Villar said as someone who came in in the middle of the review process she did not understand the review by team approach. She said she simply reviewed all of the applications.

Chair Perelman suggested some agencies end up being penalized for not having their collaborative efforts clearly outlined.

Ms. Leslie invited the Commissioners to comment on the application itself, including questions that should be added, questions that should be eliminated, and any existing question that is unclear.

Commissioner Plaskon noted that the application included a question about disaster preparation. He suggested an agency's disaster plans likely do not change from year to year and as such including the question could be considered superfluous.

Commissioner Beighle pointed out that for agencies with multiple applications, the portion of the application that describes the agency is exactly the same in each. She said there might be some way of eliminating the redundancy.

Commissioner Villar said it would be helpful for the staff report to include a flag sheet indicating possible concerns.

Commissioner Beighle said she paid close attention to the clarifying statements offered by the agencies.

Ms. Leslie said some cities still use scoring sheets similar to those the Commission used to use. When the Commission did use them, staff found them helpful in that the scores would be turned in ahead of time and the result would be a list of agencies and scores by Commissioner. One could easily get a sense of where each Commissioner stood. Funding decisions were not made based on the scoring, but the scoring did serve as a tool for discussion purposes.

Commissioner McEachran commended the staff for the amazing job they did.

Ms. Leslie said the Commission's presentation of its recommendations to the City Council has been scheduled for October 20. The study session will begin at 6:00 p.m.

With regard to the budget, Ms. Leslie reminded the Commissioners that the internal results teams had chosen not to include the budget proposal for additional funding for the winter shelter. The leadership team also did not include the proposal in making their recommendation to the City Manager. The City Manager is currently working to develop the budget he will advance to the City Council. She said it would still be appropriate for the Commission to appear before the Council and make a pitch for the ask for both the winter shelter and the provision of dental services. One way or another the city will have to step up with funding for the winter shelter given that a

lease for the site with Sound Transit is in the process of being negotiated. Addressing the Council in study session will also serve to keep the winter shelter in the open before the public and the Council. One of the recommendations in the diversity initiative is to support the winter shelter because homeless people are part of the city's diverse community.

8. OLD BUSINESS

Mr. Adriano called attention to the emailed correspondence from HealthPoint that was included in the packet.

9. NEW BUSINESS

Mr. Adriano shared with the Commissioners the information that HUD would be conducting its site monitoring visit in two weeks.

Ms. Leslie briefly reviewed with the Commission the agenda items to be covered at upcoming meetings.

Ms. O'Reilly said a panel has been put together and invited to attend the first meeting in October to discuss healthcare reform and various funding changes in regard to mental health and substance abuse services. The new director of the County's Mental Health and Substance Abuse division will attend. Two other agencies have committed to participating, including ACRS and Therapeutic Mental Health. HERO House, NAMI Eastside and YES have also been asked to attend. She noted that in the last session the legislature cut millions of dollars from the budget on the presumption that the State would see some reimbursement from Medicaid. While there will in fact be some funding received, it will not be sufficient to cover the need.

10. PETITIONS AND COMMUNICATIONS - None

11. ADJOURNMENT

Chair Perelman adjourned the meeting at 8:09 p.m.

Secretary to the Human Services Commission

Date

Chairperson of the Human Services Commission

Date