

The Human Services Commission approved these minutes on April 4, 2017

CITY OF BELLEVUE
HUMAN SERVICES COMMISSION
MINUTES

March 7, 2017
6:00 p.m.

Bellevue City Hall
City Council Conference Room 1E-113

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

COMMISSIONERS ABSENT: Commissioners Bruels & Kline

STAFF PRESENT: Emily Leslie, Alex O'Reilly, Dee Dee Catalano, Department of Parks and Community Services; Maj. Jerry Litzau, Police Liaison

GUEST SPEAKERS: Justin Daigneault, Youth Eastside Services; Jennifer Davies, PFLAG; Morty Scanlon, GLEAM; Jan Stout, Cheryl Kuhn, Jan Star, Bill Perry, Backpack Meals for Kids

RECORDING SECRETARY: Gerry Lindsay

1. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 6:01 p.m. by Chair Villar who presided.

2. ROLL CALL

Upon the call of the roll, all Commissioners were present except Commissioner Perelman, who arrived at 6:12 p.m., and Commissioners Bruels and Kline, both of whom were excused.

3. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

A. February 7, 2017

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

4. PETITIONS AND COMMUNICATIONS – None

5. STAFF AND COMMISSION REPORTS

Commissioner McEachran said his work as a member of the Affordable Housing Technical Advisory Group was continuing. He said he has been surprised to see how little of the focus has been on the Needs Update. The group will likely have two more meetings and forward its report to the Council by the end of March.

Commissioner McEachran reported that as a member of the Wilburton CAC he has had a lot of reading to do. He said information was recently shared with the group about the fact that Bellevue is a major employment center and that every day 177,000 people come into the city to work, and 46,000 Bellevue residents commute to jobs outside of the city. Only 34,840 of Bellevue's residents actually work in Bellevue.

Commissioner Oxrieder said she had been invited to participate in a stakeholder workshop on the affordable housing strategies on February 27. She said the other stakeholders included representatives of Congregations for the Homeless, city of Redmond and a church that is involved in providing affordable housing. The group focused specifically on three strategies: helping people stay in affordable housing, creating a variety of housing choices, and creating more affordable housing.

Commissioner Mercer said she recently attended an auction to benefit Syrian refugees, specifically the Syrian American Medical Association that operates several hospitals in Syria. She said it was sobering to hear the stories of immigrants who have made it to the United States. What they shared reinforced the steps taken by Bellevue to celebrate diversity and to welcome the world.

Intern Kayla Valy reported that March 10 was the end of the quarter and said by that date she would have completed her master's degree. Human Services Planner Alex O'Reilly added that things have been arranged for Ms. Valy to continue on with the city until June or until she accepts a job.

6. DISCUSSION

A. Panel on LGBTQ Trends, Gaps and Needs

Ms. O'Reilly noted that the Commission had previously identified the LGBTQ community as a group to contact in preparation for updating the needs assessment. She introduced the panelists Justin Daigneault with YES, Jennifer Davies with PFLAG, and Marty Scanlon with GLEAM.

Mr. Daigneault said he graduated from Bastyr University in 2015 with a degree in mental health counseling and has been working at Youth Eastside Services since. He said he first got involved with the BGLAD group at YES prior to his graduation. He said he has been the main coordinator and facilitator for the group for two years. YES provides a lifeline for children and families who are coping with challenges, such as

emotional distress, substance abuse and violence. Through intervention, outreach and prevention, YES builds confidence and personal responsibility, strengthens family relationships, and advocate for a safer community that cares for its youth. YES has access points across the Eastside and operates various groups and services, including BGLAD, drug and alcohol recovery groups, stand-alone psychiatric services, school-based services, and the SUCCESS mentoring program.

Mr. Daigneault said BGLAD, originally named for serving as a bi-sexual, gay and lesbian adolescent drop-in group, has broadened its focus over the years since its inception in the 1990s. The free drop-in support group is open to youth aged 13 to 19. The number of attendees varies and currently has about 15, but it has had as few as two and more than 20. Most are from Bellevue and present with a range of identities.

Commissioner Mercer asked if it has been challenging to serve youth with such a broad range of issues. Mr. Daigneault said it certainly can be. Even something like a movie night or fostering a certain discussion will pull on the boundaries of inclusivity and exclusivity. Gay or lesbian youth who attend a discussion about trans issues can gain a greater understanding, but they can also decide they do not want to participate in discussing the topic.

Mr. Daigneault commented that while no referral is needed to join the BGLAD group, often parents or school representatives will call to get a sense of the group on behalf of a young person, some of whom may have social anxieties related to groups for various reasons. One of the biggest factors that can keep kids in the queer community safe, however, is being connected within a safe and confidential environment. The first hour of the group meeting includes activities such as ice breakers aimed at encouraging the attendees to get to know each other. The second hour includes the opportunity for each group member to indicate their highs and lows of the week and to say whether or not they are in need of extra support. Everyone is encouraged to engage, to be open and to provide feedback. The group meets every Thursday from 5:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m.

Chair Villar asked if there has been any increase in reports of bullying or worse since the election. Mr. Daigneault said he has heard some very horrible stories of kids receiving anonymous notes on their lockers and other bullying and discrimination activities. He said he was not able to say the number of incidents is on the rise but the issue is certainly on everyone's mind.

Commissioner Perelman asked if the work done in the schools has any particular focus or just mental health in general. Mr. Daigneault said the school-based counseling provided by YES is all one-on-one. He said some of the youth he works with want to discuss trans issues, may need access to hormones, and may need parental support. Others are dealing with issues of anxiety, depression and behavioral issues. The counselors have very little contact with the teachers but do have contact with the school counselors. Teachers generally could benefit from being more informed.

Commissioner Perelman asked if YES advises the schools and students relative to bathroom issues. Mr. Daigneault said the organization does not have a lot of input in general as to how the schools regulate bathrooms, but can help student clients in advocating bathroom usage. Most schools in the area, however, are pretty good about letting the students choose.

Commissioner Mercer asked what the Commission could or should be doing for the queer community in general. Mr. Daigneault highlighted the need for acceptance and visibility for leaders who will serve as role models. Transportation is a key issue that in many cases serves as a barrier to the students accessing services. There is also a need to educate parents.

Commissioner Oxrieder asked if there are other groups on the Eastside that are offering similar services. Mr. Daigneault said he was not aware of any. People have been trying to get groups started at schools but they have not generally met with success.

Commissioner McEachran suggested YES should take the opportunity to go before the school board to call them to consciousness about what is happening. He also suggested YES could choose to bring to the Commission a grant request aimed at raising visibility of the issues. With regard to space needs, he proposed reaching out to progressive faith communities. Bellevue College could also be a resource. Mr. Daigneault said YES would love to have the opportunity to advise school boards and other organizations and to have the ability to come up with more consistent resource lists. He added that he serves as a member of the Bellevue Diversity Advisory Network (BDAN).

Commissioner Mercer noted that Bellevue has a very diverse population and asked if YES has run into challenges related to diversity, especially in dealing with youth whose parents may not be as accepting. Mr. Daigneault said many of the group members are from white semi-affluent homes. Many who might otherwise attend have parents of different backgrounds and cultures that are not as accepting and open. Bellevue has a culture of being open and affirming of diversity, but reaching some of the smaller populations and audiences can be challenging. That is one thing BDAN is focusing on currently.

Ms. Davies said she learned her son, now 23, was gay when he was 14. She said that started her journey with PFLAG, a grassroots organization founded by a mother who was upset her son being constantly harassed for being gay. The organization now has more than 400 chapters and 200,000 supporters. PFLAG, which stands for Parents, Families and Friends of Lesbians and Gays, has over time expanded its focus to properly reflect all sexual orientations and gender identities. The mission of the organization is to advance the equality of the LGBTQ community through support, education and advocacy. The local chapter is about to celebrate its 21st anniversary. Everyone associated with the chapter is a volunteer, and that is also the case

nationally. The group meets the third Thursday of each month from 7:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m. at the Bellevue First United Methodist Church which has been a reconciling congregation for over 20 years. The first part of each meeting involves the support circle. The attendees break up into small groups in which they can share their joys and their concerns and hear from others on their journey. Everyone is met where they are and over time they experience progress. Guest speakers and educational programs take up the second half of the meetings. People can come just for the support, just to hear the special presentations, or for the full meeting.

Ms. Davies said the organization provides scholarships to graduating high school seniors. In the Bellevue School District, scholarships have been awarded to students from Newport High School, Sammamish High School, and Forest Ridge. PFLAG participates in all Eastside city events, which most recently was in Kirkland at a diversity and inclusion event that was focused on Middle East immigrants. The organization has participated in the Issaquah event Salmon Days, and in Redmond's Derby Days event, but has not to date been involved in any major Bellevue events. At each event pamphlets and brochures on a wide range of topics are made available to anyone who will take them. The materials are also available as downloads from the organization's website.

One resource the organization offers is individualized one-on-one support. Recently a parent from the Asian Pacific Islander culture was too uncomfortable sharing her emotions in a group setting, so it was arranged for her to meet privately with a volunteer.

Ms. Davies said PFLAG has seen an increase in requests for support on gender identity. Trans information is largely new and parents are not always well versed in the issues. Locally and nationally, the chapters are seeing more families and gender nonconforming folks coming to the meetings. The Eastside chapter has an average attendance of about 40, about two-thirds of which are there for gender identity issues. LGBTQ people exist in all cultures and walks of life, and as the Eastside has become more diverse, the number of multicultural attendees has increased.

Initiative 1552, a ballot measure for which signatures are being collected for the November ballot, will be very damaging in that it would repeal nondiscrimination protections for trans people that have been in place for 12 years. Trans kids in public schools would be denied access to restrooms consistent with their gender identities. Students could sue schools for finding a trans student in the "wrong" bathroom. The initiative would also prevent local cities from passing ordinances aimed at reinserting the lost nondiscrimination protections. Sex and gender are defined by the initiative as what was determined at birth. When denied access to living their authentic selves, teens have a 60 percent suicide attempt rate. Washington is the only state in the country that has the initiative; all other bathroom bills exist in the various legislatures.

Ms. Davies noted that for those interested in learning more about gender identity, Redmond United Methodist Church would be sponsoring an event on March 18 from

4:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m. Aiden Key from Gender Diversity will be speaking and he will have a panel of parents of transgender kids.

Chair Villar asked what the minimum age is that someone can have a gender confirmation surgery. Ms. Davies said it is generally 18 in the United States.

Ms. Davies said the gaps and barriers include visibility and integration into programming. Bellevue College has an LGBTQ center. King County has the Queer Youth Advisory Board. Bellevue School District has GSAs, but they are not consistent and there are issues with having a lot of allies; there needs to be something that stabilizes them more because a good GSA has been shown to benefit queer youth and have better outcomes. There are some excellent Running Start options for kids who are feeling trapped, but the schools have a financial incentive to keep the kids in their schools. There is limited information regarding LGBTQ people from other cultures in their native languages. There are also issues around medical care and elder care for aging LGBTQ people.

Commissioner McEachran stressed the results that can be obtained through collaboration. He urged the organizations to get their heads together and collectively seek funding from organizations such as Microsoft.

Mr. Scanlon with GLEAM, the employee research group (ERG) within Microsoft, explained that the acronym stands for gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender employees at Microsoft. The group is focused on supporting the LGBTQ community at Microsoft and provide career guidance and growth development advice while celebrating diversity and championing Microsoft's involvement within the wider LGBTQ community. GLEAM was started in 1993 and has just over 1000 members currently.

Mr. Scanlon said he moved to the Northwest from Ireland two years ago and noted that if the Redmond Microsoft campus were a city in Ireland, it would be the sixth largest. Though a corporation, Microsoft is no less immune to the needs of a city. All of Microsoft's ERGs work together and seek to support each other. GLEAM works toward the mantra of acting local and thinking global. There are ten chapters in the United States, one in Canada, ten in Europe, the Middle East and African, and chapters in Asia and the greater Pacific. GLEAM recognizes that the work it does locally cannot generally be reflected throughout all of the various chapters worldwide. There is cognizance of the fact that colleagues in Russia and Singapore cannot declare themselves to be LGBTQ, and that in certain countries marriage equality does not exist.

GLEAM is focused on being a global ERG for Microsoft employees. The fact that the Microsoft organization has been for marriage equality worldwide has been very empowering. Microsoft challenges its employees to bring their authentic selves to work along with their A game, and that visibility in the workplace has been very important. The Pride event is the largest of the year and is a global event for the

company. At least 36 LGBTQ non-profits have benefited from the work of the giving campaign that is held every year. GLEAM members actively support local non-profits and provide volunteers for events, and Microsoft matches time donations at a rate of \$25 per hour.

Mr. Scanlon said transgender employee concerns have been at the forefront over the past few years. There is a specific group within Microsoft that meets on a monthly basis to talk to specific issues, and to advocate for changes to healthcare. The benefits for transgender employees have improved from 60 percent to 95 percent coverage of costs for transition surgery.

GLEAM has eight different chairs across the organization. Mr. Scanlon said that as co-chair for outreach he works with non-profits in the area, and works with the various chapters on how to coordinate with non-governmental organizations and non-profits. Other chairs work with local communities, with specific attention paid recently to the transgender community. There are also chairs who address membership. Two directors serve as overseers of the GLEAM board; one is based in Redmond and the other is based in Dublin. Two of the chairs focus on policy issues. The pride directors are spread throughout the world.

Chair Villar said it would be helpful for the Commission to know exactly which non-profit organizations locally have a support stream from GLEAM.

Commissioner Oxrieder asked if GLEAM can get involved in political campaigns and initiatives. Mr. Scanlon said the organization was actively involved in working on the Initiative 1550 campaign and will intentionally be involved in challenging the new initiative. The organization also brings the voice of the community to Microsoft's corporate external and legal affairs division. Microsoft is one of 53 companies that has filed an amicus brief regarding the current transgender bill.

Mr. Scanlon said it matters that Microsoft cares because that is who Microsoft is as a company, an organization that strives to reflect the customers it serves. Having the visible support of the CEO is very important to all employees. There are still challenges faced on a day-to-day basis by employees in the LGBTQ communities, and they are being addressed through training and frank discussions. The company will undoubtedly make mistakes going forward, but it will learn from them and make the appropriate course corrections.

Commissioner Mercer noted that the Commission talks often of diversity in all its forms and has talked about how to engage more with employers given that many immigrants coming to Bellevue are coming as a result of employment. She asked how GLEAM dials in with new employee resources. Mr. Scanlon said GLEAM actively works with HR and is involved in new employee orientations that include representation from each of the seven ERGs. The organization also gets emails from individuals wanting to know how they can get involved in various issues and that is where the membership chairs are very active. GLEAM also has a very strong alliance

with the Greater Seattle Business Association, which is a great touchpoint relative to learning about businesses that are LGBTQ certified in Bellevue and on the Eastside.

BREAK

7. DISCUSSION

A. Backpack Meals for Kids

Ms. Jan Stout said she has been on the board of Backpack Meals for Kids about a year and has found the challenge delightful. She said the organization provides weekend food for K-12 children in nearly every school in Bellevue. The food is intended to supplement whatever the family has in the home. The children are either homeless or from significantly low-income households. The organization enjoys a broad set of supporters ranging from foundations, corporations and law firms to numerous churches, including the Muslim Community Resource Center. The level of diversity on the board is something everyone is very proud of.

Ms. Jan Star said she has been interested in the topic of helping the community with food for a long time through her church. She said her church started a community garden and has over the years given a lot of food to Hopelink. Through that connection contact was made with Nourishing Networks and the need for food for children in the community was made known. A small program was started toward the end of the 2011-2012 school year at Holy Cross to address the need, and a number of other churches helped out in packing bags for two schools. The next school year, the program continued to focus on the same two schools serving junior high through high school students. The all volunteer program has grown each year. Beginning with 180 packs of food per weekend, the program quickly grew to 2063 the next year, then to 3000 before reaching the current level of 5000. The program now includes providing food to children as young as kindergarteners and packs 365 bags each weekend.

Ms. Cheryl Kuhn said people are often stunned when they learn about the degree of need in Bellevue, an apparently affluent community. The fact is that 20 percent of the students in the Bellevue School District qualify for free or reduced lunches. During the last school year, 252 students in the district were homeless. When kids are hungry, they suffer from more than just stomach pains, they have trouble paying attention in class and with learning. A range of problems are improved by having enough to eat on the weekends. The formula is a simple one involving committed volunteers and a generous community. It all began with the sheer audacity of Jan Star who got the ball rolling and continues to serve as the organization's guiding light.

Ms. Stout pointed out that the organization has no paid staff. All who participate are volunteers. Ms. Kuhn said last year there were 58 volunteers. Due to a new method for packing the bags, there are currently fewer volunteers.

Ms. Kuhn commented that for four years the focus has been on growing slowly but keeping it simple while looking forward to a time to do something a bit more bold, which turned out to be the current year. The organization's output has now been doubled. The community continues to be generous and donations are received ranging from \$10 to \$10,000. Bellevue city staff, Bellevue firefighters and various congregations have all chosen to be involved. Several organizations have been involved in conducting fundraising events for the program. Last year St. Margaret's congregation stepped forward wanting to do something big, so they took on feeding summer school students. Also during the summer, a pilot program was operated to determine if high school students would be better served by a food pantry where they can select their own food; the results were mixed and no determination has yet been made about continuing the approach.

Mr. Perry explained that the counselors at the school know which kids need food. On leaving the school on Fridays, they are given regular backpacks that have the food already in it. That way any embarrassments are avoided. The packs are returned on Mondays and the cycle begins again.

Ms. Star said a survey is conducted annually in which the children are asked what they think of the food and what they would like different. In the most recent survey, one child made the statement that it must be someone with a big heart to give food. In the initial years of the program, emails were sent out to families to inform them of the program, and the response from people wanting to help was overwhelming.

Ms. Kuhn said the school counselors are also surveyed each year to identify the improvements they have seen, and their responses have been very positive.

Commissioner McEachran asked how many serve on the organization's board. Ms. Kuhn said there currently are eight members but plans are under way to expand it to gain new and different perspectives.

Commissioner McEachran asked if an estimate has been put to the annual in-kind donations. Ms. Kuhn allowed that there has been no tally of in-kind donations but agreed one should be conducted.

Commissioner McEachran asked what relationship the organization has with Renewal Food Bank and the Hopelink Emergency Feeding program. Ms. Star answered that Hopelink was asked to partner with the organization and they really wanted to but said they simply could not given all their current commitments. That was back when the program started, and Hopelink did help the organization find resources for food, which really helped get the program off the ground. The program does not partner with Renewal Food Bank. She further explained that the non-profit status for Backpack Meals for Kids is through the Interfaith Social Concerns Council and through that entity gains connections with a number of non-profits. The program hopes to do a project during the upcoming summer with Lifespring which offers boxes of food for families during school breaks.

Commissioner Perelman asked if similar programs exist in other Eastside cities. Ms. Star said most cities have some sort of program in place, many of which are managed by food banks.

Ms. Stout said she would not be surprised if three years out the program were a third to half again larger, and the organization is beginning to be concerned about having the resources needed to meet the need on an ongoing basis. Ms. Kuhn agreed but stressed that the organization is straightforward and simple in that it buys food and gives it to kids who need food on weekends. The needs are obvious and all outreach efforts are specifically tailored to achieve the mission.

8. OLD BUSINESS

Grant Coordinator Dee Dee Catalano reported that the Council on February 6 approved the amendment to the 2016 CDBG funding allocations.

Ms. O'Reilly reported that she is continuing to identify opportunities for the community conversations. She said the list of upcoming community conversations includes The Sophia Way, Hero House, and the India Association of Western Washington.

Ms. O'Reilly said she regularly attends the meetings of the Bellevue Network on Aging. Their outreach committee has been asked to participate by letting her know about groups in the older adults community that would be interested in community conversations. They have suggested putting together a flyer to invite the Alzheimer's family caregivers that meet weekly at the Tutta Bella restaurant to participate.

9. NEW BUSINESS

Ms. Leslie reported that the city would begin advertising in April to fill the seat to be vacated by Commissioner Bruels as his term expires.

Commissioner McEachran noted that the Eastside Interfaith Social Concerns Council has for some time been a spawner of human services groups. He said it has been his experience that often those who are deeply passionate and sincere are not cognizant of the need for collaborative impact. The organizations that survive usually gravitate toward becoming their own 501(c)(3) entities. Backpack Meals for Kids was at one point nearly absorbed by Lifespring, but that organization decided not to take them on given that they have a similar feeding program. He said he was concerned that the organization lacks a connection with Renewal Food Bank and Hopelink.

Ms. Leslie highlighted for the Commissioners a series that will be conducted in the spring through a partnership between the city and the King County Library System called Better Together. She said the program will be focused on civil disagreement, cross-cultural communications, diversity and race. The series will be held at City Hall.

10. PETITIONS AND COMMUNICATIONS - None

11. ADJOURNMENT

Chair Villar adjourned the meeting at 8:20 p.m.

Secretary to the Human Services Commission

Date

Chairperson of the Human Services Commission

Date