

The Human Services Commission approved these minutes on July 2, 2019

CITY OF BELLEVUE
HUMAN SERVICES COMMISSION
MINUTES

June 4, 2019
6:00 p.m.

Bellevue City Hall
City Council Conference Room 1E-113

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

COMMISSIONERS ABSENT: None

STAFF PRESENT: Alex O'Reilly, Dee Dee Catalano, Natalie Minas, Toni Esparza, Department of Parks and Community Services

GUEST SPEAKERS: None

RECORDING SECRETARY: Gerry Lindsay

1. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 6:05 p.m. by Commissioner Ma who presided.

2. ROLL CALL

Upon the call of the roll, all Commissioners were present with the exception of Chair Mercer who participated via telephone.

3. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

A. May 7, 2019

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

4. ORAL AND WRITTEN COMMUNICATIONS – None

There was agreement to reverse the order of agenda items 5 and 6.

6. STAFF AND COMMISSIONER REPORTS

Commissioner Jain reported that she attended the mental health awareness

presentation made by the India Association of Western Washington at the Crossroads Community Center. She said it was enlightening to see the community come forward, especially the younger generation, to share stories of the mental health challenges they have faced and how they were aided by the system. She said it was noted that suicides do happen in the community.

Human Services Manager Alex O'Reilly said staff was reaching out to agencies via the needs assessment survey. Hopefully the effort will result in some information.

Ms. O'Reilly reported that earlier in the day she along with several staff attended the cultural conversation event at Crossroads Community Center. The event is put on through the Neighborhood Outreach Program and it was focused on disabilities that may not be evident to people, such as a medical or mental health issue. A young Asian woman who was present and who will soon graduate from a Bellevue high school spoke about her struggle with mental illness and the fact that she was suicidal but received help in time from an unnamed local agency.

Commissioner Jain shared that recently during a visit to a supermarket she encountered a homeless woman and nine-year-old child. The Armenian woman shared that she was undocumented and was living with an aunt but not in Bellevue. She was looking for a job or for cash. Commissioner Jain said the same day she met another young undocumented woman who had moved from California to Seattle who also was looking for money for diapers for her child. An offer of a ride to the food bank was turned down.

Ms. O'Reilly said it was the right move to share information about where services can be obtained. She said resource cards developed in collaboration with the City Manager's Office and the police department are available for handing out to folks on the street. The cards list current resources, including the shelters.

5. COMMUNICATIONS FROM CITY COUNCIL, COMMUNITY COUNCIL, BOARDS AND COMMISSIONS

Deputy Mayor Robinson reported that the recent homeless count found that the number of chronic homeless persons decreased significantly. She pointed out that the numbers fell the most in the categories for which the most funding has been earmarked. Additionally, the homeless numbers fell in Bellevue as well. The only category that showed a significant increase was the number of persons living in cars. The first step of stable housing is usually into a car, and it is easiest to get people back into stable housing from their cars and before they adopt the whole homeless lifestyle.

Deputy Mayor Robinson said she attended the opening of Bellevue 30, the affordable housing development on Bellevue Way near St. Luke's. She said it has a very welcoming feel to it and is very much a part of the community. The people living there with their children are very happy. The development is a wonderful example of how to

integrate people of all incomes into the community in a positive way. Somehow, however, only two Bellevue School District homeless families made it into that facility through the coordinated entry system. That is a conversation the city may want to have with the county.

Ms. O'Reilly said the city provided some capital dollars for the building, and added that the city also provides funding for the provision of services to Imagine Housing, which runs the building. Deputy Mayor Robinson said she would welcome investigating whether or not a criteria could be established under which Bellevue dollars could only be used where Bellevue families are served.

Grant Coordinator Dee Dee Catalano said CDBG funds were allocated to the project for predevelopment expenses. The facility must serve a certain number of Bellevue residents as a result of receiving those funds. After the first year of operation, a report must be provided to the city outlining how many Bellevue residents were served.

Deputy Mayor Robinson noted that a number of homeless Bellevue School District children are housed outside of the city and the school district must pay their transportation costs, which is more than \$300,000 annually. She said it would make sense to focus more on providing housing for the homeless families that are already in the community. Ms. O'Reilly said she would be happy to check with Imagine Housing staff who work with the coordinated entry staff from King County to place families.

Deputy Mayor Robinson reported that she attended the recent xTech event at Global Innovation Exchange. People from all over the world were present to share technology that is helping society be better. Two Councilmembers and eight Bellevue city staffers attended, including Ms. O'Reilly. One thing highlighted was how human services funding should focus more on helping agencies improve their technology in order to be more efficient and effective.

Deputy Mayor Robinson said she heard from an agency that the Commission is considering funding fewer agencies but with a more in-depth focus. Ms. O'Reilly clarified that the Commission had not even discussed taking that approach. Deputy Mayor Robinson said making such a change would require a Council directive.

Commissioner Ma allowed that during a panel discussion there was talk about whether or not the emergency financial funding should be consolidated into a single agency or spread out among several agencies. That discussion could have led to a misunderstanding by an agency representative.

Chair Mercer noted that during the discussion it was noted that currently some 15 different organizations are funded to distribute emergency funding and the talk was about whether or not it makes sense to fund so many organizations that are all doing the same thing. Commissioner Kline added that one of the agencies funded by the Commission for that purpose passes funds on to other agencies, including to

agencies that are directly funded by the Commission for that work. The panel demonstrated, however, that each organization serves different populations and different needs and the Commission came away not feeling strongly that focusing the funds on fewer agencies would be appropriate.

7. INFORMATION FOR THE COMMISSION

A. MSW Final Presentation

Ms. O'Reilly informed the Commissioners that intern Natalie Minas would be graduating soon with her Masters in Social Work. She said the interns who work with the human services department do a myriad of different projects, including monitoring the Eastside Human Services Forum's legislative agenda. City and county governments often have a legislative agenda, and many actually employ lobbyists. Bellevue employs intergovernmental affairs staff in the City Manager's Office with whom all of the individual departments coordinate. For every project that comes through the pipeline, there is potentially some impact in terms of what is happening at the state or federal levels. The city's website references the adopted state legislative statement of policy, a general policy document that governs a variety of elements within the city. It outlines what the city believes will be beneficial to helping the city move forward in various areas. On page 12 of that document, starting with paragraph J, there are a number of items relating to human services, including affordable housing and homelessness. On that same page, the Eastside Human Services Forum priorities are listed; that organization's policies are adopted annually into the city's legislative policies. The state legislative agenda for Bellevue does not always have something related to human services.

Ms. Minas said she worked with an MSW intern at United Way tracked all of the bills that went through the legislature. She said she also worked on refining the agenda and creating the supplemental materials that go along with the agenda. She explained that there is a difference between lobbying and advocacy which is important to the status of 501.(c)(3) organizations. Lobbying activities involve discreet and particular asks of a person regarding a thing, such as asking a legislator or community member to vote in favor of SB 5600 to provide eviction protections, where as advocacy involves any sort of general support or information about services provided issues. Talking to administrative or executive branch officials about proposed regulation is not considered lobbying. Under the law, no substantial part of a charity's activities may be carrying on propaganda or otherwise attempting to influence legislation. Organizations are allowed to spend up to 20 percent of the first \$500,000 of their budgets on lobbying, 15 percent of the next \$500,000, 10 percent of the next \$500,000, and five percent thereafter. Of the total amount spend on lobbying, only 25 percent can go towards grassroots lobbying.

During the time the legislature is not in session, the Eastside Human Services Forum engages in a lot of groundwork in the form of networking with agencies, stakeholders and representatives to get the pulse of what might occur in the next session. A lot of

information gathering and strategy building occurs in the off season. The organization is currently focused on what the legislative agenda will include when it comes out in the fall. The Eastside Human Services Forum does not have a lobbyist, though it does work with agencies like the United Way which does have a lobbyist. Items for the agenda are selected using a scoring rubric that helps in deciding between hot topics. The legislative season begins the second Monday of January. Typically the Forum tries to lobby in February.

The Forum seeks to focus on three or four specific hot topics to go in-depth with in talking with legislators and stakeholders. Flyers addressing the hot topics are technical and are data- and fact-based. They are left with legislators to peruse and to use for data points. For the current year, hot topics were long-term care benefits, eviction reform with a focus on extending the timeline of the process, funding multiple programs and options to give people the right access to substance abuse disorders, and funding child care options. On lobby day a group of about ten from the Forum splits into two teams each of which meets with five to seven legislators. The legislators are not asked for a specific yes or no but they are asked what additional information they need.

Ms. Minas said the current state agenda items are supporting access to basic needs and health services; making homelessness rater, brief and one-time by making housing more accessible; supporting older adults and people with disabilities; and strengthening early learning, youth and education programs. The Forum's federal agenda includes the same items.

The bills that passed included SB 5380, which provides more protections around treatment, and prevention-related services. It requires Medicaid and state-regulated plans to cover certain medication-assisted treatments without preauthorization; requires the healthcare administration to develop recommendations to lower the cost of those medications; permits schools and other facilities to have opioid overdose medications and to have specific staff trained in their use; and advances progressive opiate policies in different areas. There were significant updates made to the budget. Community diversion and discharge programs got \$50.8 million that will be used to fund eight new crisis teams, five mental health peer service centers, and create wraparound discharge service programs. About \$40 million will go to competitive grants for behavioral health treatment facilities. There was also an increase in the long-term inpatient beds in community hospitals, and about \$45 million was earmarked for community based inpatient behavioral health facilities. The 2-1-1 network received an increase of \$1 million.

In regard to the focus on homelessness, there was a partial increase in the HEN funding, which pays for limited rent and utility assistance and move-in costs. The Housing Trust Fund received a record \$175 million investment, \$35 million of which will specifically fund capital costs for permanent supportive housing for people with chronic mental illness. There was also some funding for permanent supportive housing operations, which is important for the services people need to stay housed. It

was the first time permanent supportive housing has received state general fund support.

With respect to eviction reform, there were multiple bills that did not pass. However, HB 5600 did pass, moving the three-day pay or vacate notice to a 14-day notice. Emergency financial service providers say the change is huge given the difficulties associated with getting all the paperwork in order in only three days. A 30-day notice was sought, but that failed. The bill gives tenants more protections in the event their cases go to court, and it gives judges more leeway in being able to consider individual circumstances. It also provides clear definition of what rent is and what money must go to rent before paying late fees.

The bill SB 5160, which was also approved, will provide property tax relief for seniors, veterans and folks with disabilities. It bases eligibility on county median household income rather than statewide median income, which will particularly benefit high-income areas like King County. The legislature became the first in the nation to create a long-term care benefit through HB 1087. Contributions will start in 2020 and it will create a benefit for everyone who contributes for six years.

Ms. Minas said the effort to get passed legislation that would support home visiting, allowing schools to work with families in their homes on such things as parenting coaching and creating more community focused schools, did not succeed. There was, however, an increase in the budget for the early childhood education assistance program, which allows for funding families that are at 200 percent of the federal poverty level. About \$34.7 million was added to the operating budget to allow the program to add some 1100 new slots. HB 1344 passed and it will create a task force to bring about a better funding model for working connections child care. SB 5290 was approved and it will end the practice of detaining youth for non-criminal offenses such as truancy and curfew violations. An increase in institutional education funding, which was sought, was not realized. Passage of HB 1303 provides wraparound support for college students experiencing homelessness so that they will not need to work in order to receive the benefits.

Ms. Minas shared with the Commissioners a graphic from a 2015 Tacoma News article showing the potential impact of SB 5290 by stopping the practice of jailing youth who commit non-criminal offenses. The graphic showed that in 2015 Washington state jailed more juvenile status offenders than any other state, and twice the second-place state of Kentucky. The top categories of youth detentions shown in the graphic were contempt of a child in need of services; contempt of a dependency order; contempt of a truancy order; and contempt of an at-risk youth, which includes jailing youth for violating an order to obtain mental health treatment.

Ms. Minas stressed the importance of advocacy actions. She said non-profits hold a unique spot by both knowing the reality of day-to-day government programs and by having insight into what the community needs. They also serve as a powerful equalizer by bringing issues to the table and helping to create policy tables on issues

that may not come up in the normal scope of things. If non-profits fail to step forward with information, no one will. The impact of non-profits was studied in the 2012 elections and it was found that they were able to close some of the usual voter turnout gaps relative to race, ethnicity and age just by reaching out to folks. Non-profits are held in somewhat higher esteem by not being associated with the government.

Answering a question asked by Commissioner Ma, Ms. Minas explained that the Eastside Human Services Forum is composed of agencies from more than just Bellevue. It is not necessarily under the direction of Bellevue but the city does provide technical assistance. Ms. O'Reilly added that Bellevue is one of the five Eastside cities that are members of the Forum. Each city has its own legislative agenda. The Forum does not work as the political arm for each of the cities, rather it helps to pull together information from the cities and the non-profit community. The organization allows each jurisdiction to have more of an impact under the rules of advocacy. The Forum focuses on more than just legislative issues and also provides training on various topics.

Ms. Esparza called attention to the fact that Washington state does not allow mandating treatment for kids. At the age of 13, kids get to decide for themselves whether or not they want to participate in mental health treatment, drug or alcohol treatment, or hospitalization for psychiatric care beyond 24 or 48 hours. Because mandated treatment is not allowed in the state, it is often the case that kids are detained instead as a way of providing services. She also explained that an At Risk Youth (ARY) order is issued when a parent voluntarily goes into family court, tells the judge they cannot figure out how to keep their child safe, and explains all the ways in which their child is acting unsafely. The order flows from a parent asking for help and results in the child being provided an attorney by the state, and results in guidelines for the youth to follow. If the child does not follow through, the burden is on the parent to go back to family court and file a contempt order. The power always rests in the hands of the parent, not the court. Detention can be an outcome, but other outcomes include community service and the use of ankle bracelets.

Continuing, Ms. Esparza said there is large-scale research on what happens when a child has exposure to detention at a young age, and the outcomes are typically not good. She said her experience with parents seeking an ARY has been that they are desperate to do anything to keep their child physically safe from harm, and detention may be the only short-term alternative. Advocacy in one area typically means advocacy is also needed in another area. Decreasing detentions for youth is supportable generally, but there needs to be a broader understanding of what else is needed. Funding cannot be the only solution because current law prevent it from occurring.

8. INFORMATION FOR THE COMMISSION

A. Review 2020 CDBG Applications

Ms. Catalano explained that the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) program is administered by the Department of Housing and Urban Development. The primary objective of the program is to benefit low- and moderate-income persons through decent housing, suitable living environment, and expanded economic opportunity. All CDBG activities must meet a national objective and be eligible under the regulations. The three national objectives are to benefit low- and moderate-income persons, prevent or eliminate slums and blight, and meet an urgent need. Bellevue and the vast majority of cities focus on the first objective.

There are a couple of ways to address the low- and moderate-income benefit. One is called limited clientele, which are activities that benefit low- and moderate-income persons, including services for seniors, homeless shelters, and microenterprise assistance. To qualify, it must be documented that at least 51 percent of the program participants are low- and moderate-income; or participation is limited to low- and moderate-income only; or the program serves a presumed benefit clientele with activities that exclusively serve the elderly, severely disabled adults, homeless persons, illiterate adults, migrant farm workers, abused children, persons with AIDS, or victims of domestic violence. The other low- and moderate-income benefit is low- and moderate-income housing involving structures that must be occupied by low- and moderate-income households, and activities must include homeowner rehabilitation. The major and minor home repair programs fit into that category.

There are a range of eligible activities. The activities that Bellevue has funded in the past include the acquisition of real property, public facilities and improvements, public services, rehabilitation, planning and capacity building, and program administration.

Ms. Catalano said the applications for CDBG funding are first screened by staff to ensure that the project meets a national objective and is an eligible activity. The Commission then reviews the applications and makes preliminary funding recommendations. That is followed by a public hearing on the preliminary recommendations and a final funding recommendation to the City Council. The Council approves final funding.

The estimated entitlement for 2020, which will not be known definitely until the federal budget is approved, is \$764,000 based on the 2019 amount. Program income in the form of loan repayments is estimated to be \$225,000 in 2020. Additionally, there will be \$150,000 to allocate from recaptured funds from 2017, and some prior years unallocated funds in an amount yet to be determined.

Planning and administration allocations are capped at 20 percent of the program year entitlement amount, and 20 percent of the current year program income. Also capped are public services at 15 percent of the program year entitlement amount and 15

percent of prior year program income. The public services funds allocated for 2019 and 2020 were addressed as part of the general fund application process and earmarked for Jewish Family Services. The remaining 65 percent of the entitlement funds can be spent on capital projects without a spending cap. In the past, Bellevue has used CDBG dollars for acquisition and pre-acquisition costs, public facilities and improvements, and rehabilitation projects.

Currently funded with CDBG dollars, in addition to planning and administration, is the Sound Generations minor home repair program, and the Bellevue/King County Housing Authority Major Home Repair Program. Both home repair programs have been funded for many years. The minor home repair program slowed on its rate of spending in 2017 due to the loss of some staff and the finance director. Accordingly, less money was asked for in 2019, but the program is back on track and fully staffed and is seeking \$84,000 for 2020. The major home repair program is requesting \$494,914 for 2020, which is only slightly over their 2019 allocation of \$490,000.

Ms. Catalano said the first new program application was from Kindering Center to replace their hydronic boiler system. She explained that CDBG funds would be used for the purchase of the hydronic boiler, water pumps and a water booster system, but not for labor or for installation of the equipment. The project is deemed to be exempt from the Davis-Bacon prevailing wage requirements, which are onerous administrative requirements for construction projects, because CDBG funds would only be used to purchase materials, equipment, machinery or other fixtures, not for the construction work itself. Ms. Catalano said the recommendation of staff, if the Commission elects to recommend the project for funding, would be to allocate either the recaptured 2017 funds or other unspent prior year funds during 2019 to facilitate replacement of the boiler ahead of the winter months. That would require amending the 2019 Annual Action Plan to include the Kindering Center project, and the Council would have to approve funding the project in September as a consent agenda item.

The Ventures Business Development and Microlending Program for Low-Income Entrepreneurs is the second new program application. The program provides technical assistance to a new or existing microenterprise or to a person developing a microenterprise, which is an eligible CDBG activity. A microenterprise is defined as a business having five or fewer employees, one or more of whom own the business. The Ventures Business Basics course qualifies as providing technical assistance and support to a microenterprise. The organization will offer its course in English and Spanish at the Hopelink location in Bellevue, and graduates of Business Basics can participate in the Peer Loan Program, which gives normally unbankable individuals access to collateral-free loans to help start their businesses. CDBG funds would not be used for the loans, but rather would support Ventures staff who work with the Peer Loan Groups.

Ms. Catalano said representatives from both Kindering and Ventures had been asked to attend the Commission's meeting on June 18 to talk about their programs and applications. At the meeting the Commission will also be asked to vote on its

preliminary funding recommendations. Then on July 16 the Commission will conduct a public hearing on the recommendations, followed by a vote of the Commission on the final 2020 recommendations to the Council. If recommended, the Council will see the Kindering Center project for 2019 in early September, and then in October or November the Commission's recommendations will be presented to the City Council in study session. Final approval of the funding recommendations will occur in a Council regular session in November.

Commissioner Kline noted that Kindering Center provides services to a wide range of clientele and asked how the city can be assured that at least 51 percent of their clients are low-income. Ms. Catalano said the agency must present documentation proof that they have met the requirement. They have indicated that currently 60 percent of their clients fall into the low- and moderate-income category. They have an intake process that includes checking client incomes. She also stressed that Ventures only serves low- and moderate-income people. They currently are receiving CDBG funds from Seattle.

Commissioner Ma asked if approving the submitted applications would use up all of the available CDBG funding. Ms. Catalano said it would use up the estimated entitlement, the estimated program income, and some prior year funds. She said there is a much bigger backlog that is the result of many years of having program income displacing the entitlement. There are not enough projects in hand to allocate the backlog of funds to. It would be good in the future to address how to get more projects in the pipeline in order to spend funds down faster to more easily pass the timeliness test every November.

Ms. O'Reilly said the hope is to be able to use some of the backlog when the men's permanent shelter comes online. Such an allocation would need to be for things like preconstruction costs.

Commissioner Ma asked if ARCH receives and allocates CDBG funds for things such as the pre-acquisition costs for affordable housing units. Ms. Catalano allowed that it does and said 30 Bellevue used funds allocated by ARCH, though the property was actually developed by Imagine Housing. There have been timeliness issues in the past owing to the length of time it takes for the organization to get projects online.

Ms. O'Reilly said Lindsay Masters, the new head of ARCH, has been scheduled to talk to the Commission on July 2.

Commissioner Ma asked if CDBG funds could be used for the purchase of properties on which to develop affordable housing at some later time. Ms. Catalano the purchase of property can be done with CDBG dollars, but the project cannot be too far in the future because of the requirement to show that low- and moderate-income people have benefited from the allocation. Projects would need to be no more than two or three years out. The funds could be used to purchase a preexisting building

that is not currently occupied. Purchase of a preexisting occupied building would trigger the Uniform Relocation Act.

Commissioner Kline asked if there are pieces of equipment that could be purchased for the temporary men's shelter. Ms. Catalano said CDBG funds cannot be put into a building that is going to be demolished without having to pay all of the money back.

Commissioner Ma asked if a religious organization could apply for CDBG funds to support a room in which services to low- and moderate-income individuals are provided. Ms. Catalano said such a room could not be used for any religious purpose, but it still would be tricky given HUD's regulations.

Ms. Esparza asked if CDBG funds could be used to pay for the materials needed to build the permanent men's shelter, provided the funds were not used to cover construction costs. Ms. Catalano said she believed that could be done, but stressed she would need to do more research to be certain.

9. OLD BUSINESS – None

10. NEW BUSINESS

Ms. O'Reilly shared with the Commissioners a flyer regarding senior property tax relief. She said seniors, veterans and people with disabilities can apply for either a deferment or an exemption of their property taxes. The changes to the program just signed by the Governor are intended to make the program more accessible to the target groups by basing the income eligibility threshold on county median income rather than by state median income.

Ms. O'Reilly also noted that the Point In Time count of homeless persons in the county is detailed in a hundred-page report. She offered to share the link to the report to the Commissioners. She allowed that the report highlights some significant decreases in homelessness in King County, and includes charts showing how the homelessness rates are changing or not changing by region. The report does not include specific data by jurisdiction. The count, which was made on the last Thursday of January, is required by HUD for all cities nationwide that receive federal money.

Commissioner Kline called attention to the upcoming community forums on cross cultural programming and public outreach and asked what the objective of the forums is. Ms. Esparza said one of the recommendations of Diversity Advantage was to do a study on cross-cultural offerings across the city. The study was recently completed and presented to the Council. The forums are intended to present the information to and engage with the public. Ms. O'Reilly said she would schedule a presentation to the Commission in the early fall.

11. CONTINUED ORAL COMMUNICATIONS – None

12. ADJOURNMENT

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

Commissioner Ma adjourned the meeting at 7:47 p.m.

Secretary to the Human Services Commission

Date

Chairperson of the Human Services Commission

Date