

CITY OF BELLEVUE
HUMAN SERVICES COMMISSION
MINUTES

April 4, 2017
6:00 p.m.

Bellevue City Hall
City Council Conference Room 1E-113

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

COMMISSIONERS ABSENT: None

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

GUEST SPEAKERS: Debra Duitch, Early Learning and After School Programs, Bellevue School District; Kathleen Hickey, Jackie Bui, Youth Eastside Services; Mimi Siegel, Kinderling; Phoebe Anderson, Child Care Resources

RECORDING SECRETARY: Gerry Lindsay

1. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 6:00 p.m. by Chair Villar who presided.

2. ROLL CALL

Upon the call of the roll, all Commissioners were present with the exception of Commissioner Perelman, who arrived at 6:06 p.m.

3. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

A. March 7, 2017

Commissioner Oxrieder called attention to page 4 and the question she asked about other groups on the Eastside that are offering similar services. She clarified that what she had asked was whether or not Youth Eastside Services was offering services elsewhere.

A motion to approve the minutes as amended was made by Commissioner Mercer. The motion was seconded by Commissioner McEachran and the motion carried unanimously.

4. PETITIONS AND COMMUNICATIONS

Mr. Darrel Roberts, President of the Board for LifeWire, introduced Rachel Krinsky, the new executive director.

Ms. Krinsky said she is new both to LifeWire and to the community having been in Bellevue for only a month. She said she chose LifeWire on purpose because she was impressed with the health of the organization and how well-run and effective it is.

5. STAFF AND COMMISSION REPORTS

Commissioner Oxrieder reported that she attended the Community Resources Fair at the library. She said it was very well done. She said she also attended the ERIC event featuring a representative from Immigrants and Customs Enforcement who made an attempt to calm people's fears.

Commissioner McEachran said the work of the Affordable Housing Technical Advisory Group is drawing to a close. The draft report has been shared with the Council. The group will meet for the last time on April 7. He said he kept before the TAG members the need to be sure that those in need of affordable housing find sustainable affordable housing options. The final report will be presented to the Council on April 10.

Commissioner McEachran said he is also continuing to serve as a member of the Wilburton CAC. He reported that the 30th anniversary auction for Imagine Housing was scheduled for April 8, and said he would be participating in the LifeWire gala on May 6.

6. DISCUSSION

A. Early Learning – Local Providers Trends and Issues

Human Services Planner Alex O'Reilly welcomed the early learning representatives and noted that Hueling Chan from the Chinese Information and Service Center was ill and unable to participate; she said she will be invited to attend at another time to share information about their play and learn programs.

Phoebe Anderson, Chief Operations Officer for Child Care Resources, said she oversees all of the program work, looks for new opportunities, and bolsters the work of the staff in meeting outcomes and interacting with clients. The agency has been operating for 27 years in the traditional arena of information and referral for families and licensed child care providers in King and Pierce counties. The organization runs a statewide call center through which families can seek information about child care and early learning programs. The center fields some 16,000 calls annually. More importantly, the agency works to provide education about what to look for in early learning and what to expect. The agency also works with families to help them

identify resources around state and federally funded preschools. Seventy percent of the families Child Care Resources works with are low- or very low-income. The agency is also a point of entry for homeless families. The homeless child care program serves families who are looking for resources and stability for their youngest children while the parents do what they need to do relative to making connections with service, housing and employment providers to work themselves out of homelessness. Homelessness is traumatic, especially for children, and without a consistent and safe place for them to be every day, the issues are amplified. A significant amount of work is done to the learn and play model through partnerships with community agencies.

Ms. Anderson said the agency's work with licensed child care providers represents a significant focus. Child Care Resources is the implementer of Early Achievers, the state's quality rating improving system. There are about a thousand providers in King County engaged in the program, and 80 percent of the Child Care Resources staff are attached to the project.

Ms. Anderson said the biggest federal investment in early learning comes through the child care development block grant. The dollars flow through the states specifically to fund child care and drive the quality care side of things. Things are shifting, however, for the families who are eligible. As proposed, Working Connections, the state subsidy, will go to a 12-month authorization. That is good news for those who are eligible because it means they will not lose their subsidy should their circumstances change within a 12-month period. Homeless child care subsidy has always been separate from Working Connections, and Child Care Resources is an agency that has implemented some of that funding. As of July, however, the homeless child care subsidy dollars will become part of the bigger Working Connections, so homeless families will be lumped in with all families. For homeless families that meet the eligibility requirements, it will be a good thing in that it will provide them with some continuity for 12 months, but there are many homeless families who are not able to meet the Working Connections requirements for various reasons, and that issue will need to be addressed. The state intends to implement a 120-day grace period; any family that declares itself homeless will have 120 days of subsidy grace, but at the end of that period if they cannot prove they are eligible, they will not be eligible for the rest of the year. Bellevue has over the years supported Child Care Resources with safety net funds to support homeless families, and that will not go away.

Child Care Resources is working with the state to come up with an agreement to provide some service coordination, which will be critical. Families who go to apply for Working Connections will not have a case manager to triage with other service providers and to work with them to find safe and comfortable child care options for their children. Child Care Resources will continue to use its call center as a point of entry and will continue to support families in making a connection with the Working Connections office and will help them in navigating the complicated system. Along the way the agency will collect and track data regarding who is eligible and makes it in, and who is not eligible based on the criteria. She said she would be happy to

make herself available to return to the Commission in early 2018 to share the findings.

Ms. Anderson said the Working Connections subsidy rates will not be increasing. The costs of child care are continuing to increase for Eastside families, and providers are facing the dilemma of how to maintain and run a viable business that includes accepting subsidy payments that do not match with private pay rates. Additionally, the \$15/hour minimum wage is directly impacting child care providers, particularly where they want to avoid increasing the cost per child. For families, the higher minimum wage can be very beneficial, but it can also push families above the eligibility thresholds and cause them to either lose their subsidies or see their co-pay rates increase. Since 2011, there has been a 22 percent drop in the number of licensed child care providers in the state, and where the services are more scarce, the prices are rising. Infant care in Washington for a single parent is often more than half the median income. Washington has the third highest infant child care cost in family child care, and the sixth highest cost in child care centers.

Commissioner Kline asked what has led to the big drop in the number of providers across the state. Ms. Anderson said some of the decrease has coincided with some of the change to the WAC involving the Department of Early Learning. There has been a slow but steady movement toward the March deadline for family child care owners to meet certain educational requirements. Additionally, the quality rating improvement system, while a great effort, has for many providers posed a crisis moment in which they had to decide whether or not to engage in serious training and coaching or choose to just shut their doors.

Commissioner McEachran asked what it costs to have a child in child care in Bellevue. Ms. Anderson said there is of course a range, but for a one-year-old the cost would be between \$1200 and \$1800 per month. Commissioner McEachran said that does not present a happy picture for the household making \$36,000 per year and having a difficult time finding affordable housing. Ms. Anderson agreed that child care costs force families to make significant decisions.

Commissioner Mercer asked what the eligibility requirements are to obtain a child care subsidy. Ms. Anderson explained that a family of four making just under \$49,000 and meeting certain work requirements qualify. Bellevue has traditionally funded child care financial assistance programs, a safety net program that addresses families who make just above the Working Connections threshold limits. In 2016, 33 families were served using the program.

Ms. Anderson said the quality rating improvement system that Child Care Resources spends a lot of its time on is really showing up beautifully in Bellevue. Bellevue has some very strong licensed care sites. There are 162 of the licensed care sites, almost 50 percent of which are enrolled in Early Achievers. Of those that have rated so far, 86 percent have rated very high, and that is far above the county average.

Commissioner McEachran asked how Best Starts for Kids will factor in. Ms. Anderson said Child Care Resources has its fingers crossed that there might be a place for the agency in Best Starts for Kids. It was hoped that Best Starts for Kids would be interested in supporting the homeless, but they have been clear they will not be doing any subsidies. They have, however, talked very highly about the family, friend and neighbors program.

Mimi Siegel with Kindering said the organization is best known as a development center serving infants and children with disabilities. The program treats a couple thousand children annually, including more than 300 Bellevue School District children who are enrolled in early intervention programs in a given year. About ten percent of the children have been diagnosed with autism, and over the last few years medication evaluations were added to the services offered to address the fact that children were waiting as much as 18 months to get into Children's Hospital for a diagnosis. The physician is provided through a contract with Children's Hospital. Kindering has the only teacher of the visually impaired for all of King County.

About ten percent of the Kindering families are Spanish speaking, so all programs offered are available in that language. While that is good, there are 85 other languages represented, necessitating the need to use a lot of interpreters. Kindering also provides physical and occupational therapy as well as speech and language therapy.

In response to an increase in the number of clients in transitional housing or secure shelter, the agency started a program a few years ago with funding from the Gates Foundation to develop a model of intervention that would work for those families. The model was created in tandem with the moms themselves.

Cherish is a project geared toward infants and toddlers in foster care. Kindering staff went to DSHS to point out the special needs of the kids, including a way to evaluate and treat them. The program developed involves having social workers go to their homes and work on issues of attachment, self-regulation, and all of the developmental milestones. The program has been so successful that King County has asked Kindering to replicate it through them, and inroads are being made statewide as well.

Ms. Siegel said she is passionate about the programs offered by Kindering because they work. She said there is ample data and good research about the positive impact the early intervention programs have. Forty-six percent of the kids who graduate at age three from Kindering no longer require or are not eligible for special education, saving the school district a bit more than \$51,000 annually per child made ineligible. When aggregated over the Eastside school districts, the annual savings is close to \$14 million.

Commissioner Perelman asked if the agency conducts any outreach to communities that are underserved. Ms. Siegel said Kindering partners with Bellevue schools and

the King County Housing Authority and goes door-to-door in all the complexes once or twice a year in search of the kids who are in need of services. Additionally, by retaining the same staff, in some cases for decades, they become known and trusted and often receive referrals from parents of children served by the agency.

Ms. Siegel said the Parent/Child/Home program is an early learning project that was started about ten years ago by a group of business leaders in Seattle. The effort was based on national research of evidence-based programs for early learning. The program that was developed was passed on to United Way of King County which was able to bring it to scale. Kindering received one of the grants and an ongoing contract with United Way which serves 63 kids per year in Bellevue. The structure of the program is such that home visitors need not be professionals, but they do need to be native language speakers who can gain instant trust in their own communities. Each makes a visit twice a week and brings a toy or a book for use in engaging with the child and the parent; the toy or book is left after the first visit, then on the second visit the parent does the activity. The family thus builds up a library of toys and books and learns the skills they need to forge ahead. At the end of the first year, the parents are presented with a bookshelf; at the end of the second year, they are presented with a toy chest. The program is for children two and three years old, and the results are proven. Best Starts for Kids is very supportive of the program and will continue it.

The child care consultation program, which the city contributes funding to, deals in many cases with kids who have significant behavior issues. The program offers hands-on practical information that resolves some behaviors, and also makes referrals.

Ms. Siegel said Kindering is seeing more kids with autism and more kids who are medically fragile and in need of serving ranging from feeding to speech services. More infant mental health issues are being seen as well. In addition, both foreign-born staff and families are experiencing free flowing anxiety due to immigration issues.

Ms. O'Reilly reminded the Commissioners that a funding application from Youth Eastside Services was received for the infant mental health program. The agency had previously been implementing the Healthy Start home visiting program in partnership with Friends of Youth.

Kathleen Hickey with YES said the agency was organized in 1968 by a group of local professionals and volunteers who were aware of increasing drug and alcohol use by teens and felt that youth needed a place to go to get good information. Since then YES has become an East King County behavioral youth agency and has served over 40,000 youth and families in 70 different locations in Bellevue, Kirkland and Redmond. YES feels strongly that no one should be turned away due to an inability to pay for services, so a sliding scale fee and full care program has been initiated. YES offers mental health counseling using evidence-based therapies, substance abuse

treatment, and psychiatric services. YES also has a program for youth who have gender and sexual identity concerns.

The agency's education and prevention program empowers young people and families to pursue decisions, habits and activities that promote their well being and success. Healthy Start has been a part of education and prevention since it came into existence some 23 years ago. The home visiting service has been using the parents as teachers curriculum covering pregnancy to age three. Over the past several years, there have been discussions about making changes to loosen the collaborations with other agencies. YES now acts independently but still enjoys a loose collaboration and has decided to look at a different curriculum and to include families of all ages rather than just young, first-time parents. YES is funded by the King County Veterans and Human Services levy to provide parent as teacher (PAT) home visits and currently serves between 35 and 40 families. That funding will run out at the end of the year and YES will phase out PAT services in favor of shorter-term services.

Commissioner Perelman asked if there is a certain population that will continue to need the services YES will be phasing out. Ms. Hickey said the number of young, first-time parents, which was the initial target, has been falling and continues to do so. Over the last five years the upper age limit of the parents has been increased from 22 to 24, but YES intends to simply expand it to all parents who want the services, and to any child in the age range, not just the first child.

Ms. Hickey said the University of Washington has done a lot of research on the caregiver/child relationship. Dr. Kuhl from the ILABS program at the University of Washington spoke at the recent YES breakfast and spoke about how the social and emotional health of the child begins with and is largely dependent on their first relationships. Promoting First Relationships (PFR) will focus on the relationship between the parent and the child, and the parent's understanding of the social and emotional needs of their child. The program looks at the full spectrum of a child's development and the well-being of the family, and that will be a part of the check-ins and the initial meetings with families. PFR involves some ten meetings with the parents, and if the parents have another child they can choose to be in the program again.

Answering a question asked by Commissioner Mercer, Ms. Hickey said the PAT program and the parent/child/home program both are based on home visiting and both run longer term. Ms. Siegel said PFR is an excellent model.

Ms. Hickey said PAT will continue through the year after which the clients could be rolled over into different programs. Referrals will continue to be made to Kindering Center and Child Care Resources. PFR will carry through from birth to age three, though it could be applied up to age five. It involves ten home visits to build the parents' knowledge and understanding of their child and their own social and emotional needs.

Ms. Hickey said YES has over the last year seen a lot of homelessness. Clients have come to the agency from shelters as well as from the streets. Loss of jobs and housing costs have been contributing factors. Many clients are experiencing fear and are against allowing strangers into their homes and lives, so some who could benefit from the information and resources are not willing to get connected. Many immigrant families have talked about returning to their homelands, even those with citizen children and where one parent is a citizen. Fear is driving many into isolation. YES has also heard anecdotally that it is getting harder to find providers that accept child care vouchers. One positive trend is that teen pregnancy rates are continuing to drop both locally and nationally.

With regard to the fear being faced by many families, Ms. Bui said YES is working with Eastside Legal Assistance Program (ELAP) and other legal programs to provide staff with solid information so that in working with families they can educate them about their immigration rights.

Ms. Bui said Parent Child Interaction Therapy (PCIT) is an evidence-based mental health intervention therapy for parents with children aged two to seven. Whereas PFR is focused on emotional attachments, PCIT deals with kids who are misbehaving. PCIT operates on a life coaching model with the parents and child in one room and the therapist unseen in another room. The therapist communicates with the parents during the sessions via a microphone and headphones. The sessions are recorded. The goal is to improve the relationship between parent and child. The program is based on the principles of attachment and social learning, and authoritative parenting that is nurturing while also firm and consistent. The treatment involves some 16 sessions over a three- to four-month period, and the parents must agree to do their homework assignments.

Ms. Bui said one trend she has seen is grandparents taking care of their grandchildren. She noted that most are low-income families. The homeless prevention program involves Best Start for Kids and the flex funds are used as needed.

Debra Duitch, Director of Early and Extended Learning for the Bellevue School District, said the current school year has been a watershed year for early learning in Bellevue. There is a clear community-wide commitment to early learning. The district operates early and extended learning programs, the latter of which occurs before and after school. When a child goes into kindergarten, they still have relationship needs. City of Bellevue scholarships support not only families toward early learning, but also families that have their children in extended learning programs.

The early learning program has 869 children enrolled. As elementary schools in the district are rebuilt, each is being provided with an early learning wing. The new Enatai school offers the opportunity to try out a new model in that the classrooms have been intentionally designed to be inclusive. Children from a wide variety of socioeconomic backgrounds as well as children with special needs are all in the same classroom.

The facility can truly be called an early learning center that is inclusive of the broad community. Within the district are a large number of students who are Spanish speakers and native Mandarin speakers. Accordingly, there is a Mandarin/English preschool and a Spanish/English preschool.

Because of the loss of Head Start funding, the district realized in September it did not have the funding needed to provide services to all the children and families that wanted it. The decision made was to offer a parent/child program once a week at Phantom Lake elementary. More people want to attend than can fit in the classroom, so conversations are under way with Child Care Resources about how to incorporate the play and learn program.

Ms. Duitch said the extended learning programs serve almost 1100 students. The programs are offered during the school breaks and the summer months. One trend seen to date has been growth in the demand for the services. The problem is that while the demand is increasing, capacity is not.

Ms. Duitch informed the Commissioners that about 21 percent of the early learning and extended learning program participants receive some kind of assistance. The assistance comes from a variety of resources, including Child Care Resources, Working Connections, the Bellevue Schools Foundation, as well as the Bellevue School District. The 21 percent is more than the 19 percent of students who qualify for free and reduced lunch.

By the end of December, the Bellevue community was able to replace all funding for the current school year for the 151 ECAP slots that were eliminated. As part of that effort, a group was formed that is actively working to counter the perception that there is no family need in Bellevue. Meetings were held with the Department of Early Learning and a new way of determining need was identified. The new saturation study, which determines level of need, placed Bellevue in Group 4 out of eight groups, which is higher than many areas that received the additional Head Start slots. Bellevue now has 90 ECAP slots that will remain for as long as the legislature chooses to fund them.

Commissioner Bruels asked if the McCleary decision will impact the district's early learning and extended learning programs. Ms. Duitch said there are both advantages and disadvantages to not being included in K-12 funding. The good news is there is bipartisan support for early learning. Though there are details still to be worked out, the belief is that ECAP slots will be expanded in the upcoming year; Bellevue will make application for some of those slots.

Ms. Duitch said fear is one of the themes the district has been seeing. The tuition assistance program received a phone call three weeks ago from a family who wanted to withdraw their application for tuition assistance because they had heard that President Trump would deport anyone who took public dollars. The family was assured that would not be the case, but more of those kinds of calls can be expected.

Another theme is significant increases in homelessness. The highest percentage of homeless kids are those under the age of five. The district has made the decision to support any child throughout the school year and the summer who would be covered under McKinney-Vento. Some families have admitted that if they had to be homeless, it would be better to be homeless in Bellevue so their children will be able to go to school to learn.

Ms. Dutch said one thing that has helped in serving the different communities is the fact that her department has been very intentional in recruiting, hiring and retaining staff who reflect the diversity of the community. Fifty-two percent of the early learning and extended learning staff are of Asian descent. The composition of the staff relative to race and ethnicity is comparable to that of the students. Forty-two percent of the staff were born outside the United States, and almost half speak more than one language. Additionally, in thinking about child care and early learning, the perception for many is that the workforce is not very professional. The fact is that nine percent of the staff have masters degrees, 45 percent have bachelor's degrees, 15 percent have associate degrees, and many were medical professionals in their home countries. The staff strive to continue their relationships with the families as the families move from early learning to after-school programs. In attempting to understand how the programs impact kids in elementary school, it was found that of the kids enrolled in the extended learning programs, 46 percent have had no absences in the current year.

Ms. Dutch said last summer she worked with a lot of community members and in doing so it became crystal clear that there is a strong connection between early learning and affordable housing. The same families that were found to be losing their housing were also losing their early learning services. There is a critical need for the city to address the affordable housing crisis to preserve a city that is socioeconomically and racially and ethnically diverse.

With regard to Best Start for Kids, Ms. Dutch said the district has a very active Eastside Pathways school readiness collaborative. Three key areas have been identified for funding through Best Starts for Kids, and one of them is a database. There is currently no one place that houses information about services and contacts. The King County Library System is looking at how it might be able to create a community database focused on early learning for Bellevue. The second key area involves developmental screening, and Kinderling Center has taken the lead there in conjunction with a number of community organizations. The third key area is a connectors project that is focused on working with families and connecting them directly to the resources that they may need.

The Promotoros Project recently conducted a survey that discovered the two primary places families go for information about early learning are the district and health providers. The new information will be reviewed with an eye on how it can be leveraged and broadened.

7. OLD BUSINESS

Ms. Leslie reported that on April 10 she, Ms. O'Reilly, Chair Villar and Parks Director Patrick Foran will make a brief presentation to the City Council about the Needs Update. She urged the Commissioners to attend and be in the audience.

Ms. O'Reilly announced that the phone and online surveys have been completed. The community conversations are continuing, with some sessions already scheduled and others in the works.

8. NEW BUSINESS

Chair Villar reported that she attended a meeting of various arts organizations representatives, all of whom indicated they cannot afford to live in Bellevue. Mayor Stokes attended the meeting and made an interesting comment about the need for an examination of the city's art and human services strategies that currently focus on grants.

Commissioner McEachran said the Wilburton CAC has raised a number of questions about how to create a district that includes space for things like art. He noted that at one meeting it was noted that in the Spring District there is a focus on having units for those who will work in the area, and that there should also be space available for those involved in the arts.

9. PETITIONS AND COMMUNICATIONS - None

10. ADJOURNMENT

Chair Villar adjourned the meeting at 7:59 p.m.

Secretary to the Human Services Commission

Date

Chairperson of the Human Services Commission

Date