

The Human Services Commission approved these minutes on January 7, 2020

CITY OF BELLEVUE
HUMAN SERVICES COMMISSION
MINUTES

November 19, 2019
6:00 p.m.

Bellevue City Hall
City Council Conference Room 1E-120

COMMISSIONERS PRESENT: Chairperson Mercer, Commissioners Amirfaiz, Jain, Ma, Mansfield, Piper

COMMISSIONERS ABSENT: Commissioner Kline

STAFF PRESENT: Alex O'Reilly, Dee Dee Catalano, Christy Stangland, Toni Esparza, Devin Konick-Seese, Department of Parks and Community Services; Nancy LaCombe, City Manager's Office; Natasha Grossman, Scott Tankersley, Fire Department

GUEST SPEAKERS: None

RECORDING SECRETARY: Gerry Lindsay

1. CALL TO ORDER

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

2. ROLL CALL

Upon the call of the roll, all Commissioners were present with the exception of Commissioner Kline who was excused.

3. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

A. October 15, 2019

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

4. ORAL AND WRITTEN COMMUNICATIONS – None

5. COMMUNICATIONS FROM CITY COUNCIL, COMMUNITY COUNCIL, BOARDS AND COMMISSIONS – None

6. STAFF AND COMMISSIONER REPORTS – None

7. DISCUSSION

A. Bellevue Homelessness Coordinator Update

City Manager's Office Assistant Director Nancy LaCombe stated that in the 2019-2020 budget the City Council created a new position for a Homeless Outreach Coordinator. The pilot program, established for a three-year period, was in response to some growing challenges relative to homelessness. The Council felt having a more focused position and a single point of contact within the city would be beneficial in terms of coordination internally with city staff and externally with service providers. The intention is to more quickly identify and connect with people who are experiencing homelessness or who are about to. The intention is for the Homelessness Outreach Coordinator to provide direct outreach; to be a single point of contact internally and externally; to coordinate and align across agencies, jurisdictions, faith communities and other community agencies; and to foster community awareness. The Outreach Coordinator is also tasked with developing some performance measures.

Homelessness Outreach Coordinator Stephanie Martinez stated that in the two months since coming on board she had spent time going out into the community to learn about the programs and services that are already provided, both internally through city programs and externally by agencies. She said she formerly worked for Lifewire working with domestic violence survivors and helping them either maintain housing stability or help folks get into housing. She said she had previously done the same sort of work for the City of Tacoma and in the state of California.

Ms. O'Reilly said it was her understanding some referrals had already been made. Ms. Martinez said part of her work plan involves going to homeless encampments and receiving internal referrals from the various city departments that handle homelessness-related issues. Recently a referral was made by a code enforcement officer regarding a woman who was having issues with the housing she was in and who needed to move into different housing. In order to make the transition, she needed \$4425. Ms. Martinez said she discovered the woman had been working with Hopelink, Lifewire and some other agencies. She said she started an email chain aimed at having everyone work together without duplicating services. It took about a week for various providers to pledge the funds needed for the woman to make the move, which prevented her from entering the homelessness system.

Chair Mercer said one of the things the Commission has wrestled with over the last year is the need for people to work with multiple agencies to cobble together what they need to stave off homelessness. She suggested to Ms. Martinez that it would be helpful to the Commission if prior to the next application cycle she could look at that issue and offer thoughts and suggestions for how to improve the system from the point of view of the Commission funding various agencies who all offer some part of

what the homeless need. Ms. LaCombe said part of what the Outreach Coordinator has been tasked with is doing a gap analysis to see what is working and what is not and to then make recommendations.

Chair Mercer asked how the coordinating and direct outreach done by the outreach coordinator differs from the outreach work being done by various providers. Ms. Martinez said many of the initial meetings she has been having with providers have been focused on learning about their programs and stressing that the city's outreach position is not in any way intended to take away from the outreach work they are doing. The meetings have also been a way to better understand what the providers need. There are many different departments internally that come into contact with homelessness-related issues and referrals come in from all of them. A clear understanding of what is available in the community is needed in order to fully represent the city and connect folks to services.

Ms. LaCombe noted that similar to the rental assistance program, people can get fatigued in trying to figure out what they are supposed to do. Calling ten different places to find the help they need is overwhelming for many. Having a single number in the city to call will be a real benefit.

Answering a question asked by Commissioner Piper regarding homeless encampment cleanup actions, Ms. Martinez said there have only been a couple in the last two months. She said from those actions there were two individuals who indicated they did not want to go to the day center and it took multiple contacts with the individuals to convince them to do so. It often takes multiple contacts to figure out next steps in helping individuals become safely housed. There will always be some folks who will be seen over and over again.

Natasha Grossman, Bellevue Fire Cares manager, added that only recently did the day center bump up against the night shelter program. In the past people would be at the day center from 9:00 a.m. to about 3:00 p.m. and then they would have to be in the community until the shelter opened at 7:00 p.m. or 8:00 p.m. They would then have to be in the community again until the day center opened. For many, even if all they have is a tent, it is their home and it is difficult to get them to move to a situation where every night they are with different people and are constantly in transition. She said it will be interesting to see if more people will want to come into the shelter once the year-round shelter opens as a 24-hour place.

Commissioner Ma said emergency financial assistance is a point of interest for the Commission, particularly in light of how allocating funds can be done most efficiently. Mental health issues are often encountered by social workers and the more severe cases can certainly prove difficult to address. He said the Commission would benefit from knowing the degree to which severe cases of mental illness are linked to homelessness.

8. DISCUSSION

A. Bellevue Fire Cares Update

Scott Tankersley, a Masters in Social Work student at the University of Washington, explained that Bellevue Fire Cares (Citizen Advocates for Referral and Education Services) connects residents with services in the community, provides them with information about services, and advocates for them. Residents are met where they are, either in their homes or on the street. There are on average between 12 and 20 students from three different universities working with the program.

Mr. Tankersley said there are two different teams in the Cares program. The Cares 1 team goes out with first responders. The MSW students are part of the Cares team and are placed with the program to accrue hours. The students conduct follow-up for the referrals that come in and seek to make one-on-one connections at least once every few weeks. If other connections to services are needed, they are facilitated. Anyone calling in can receive information about resources from anyone at any time.

Ms. Grossman said the Cares program began as a way to address high utilizers of the 911 system, those who called repeatedly for non-emergency reasons. She said early on in the launching of the program she facilitated a focus group with all firefighters and what came out loud and clear was that they did not want the city seen as a high utilizer program, and that they felt helpless in getting people connected with the services they need. They also did not want to have to wait until someone called 911 ten times before making a referral. Cares is a considered a high needs program rather than a high utilizer program. Referrals are taken from both Fire and Police and follow-ups by the Cares students are done in person and unannounced. Visits are always done in pairs for safety reasons and the teams always have a radio with them. Sometimes the services needed are for the short term, such as where someone has fallen and needs only to be connected with the King County Fall Prevention Program. Others will require services and case management until they die or move out of Bellevue due to chronic mental illness.

The Cares 1 program utilizes professional social workers. The response unit is staffed Monday through Friday from 8:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. They can be dispatched to the scene with Fire or Police or be directed to meet someone who has been transported to a hospital. Where the Cares 1 team has been called to a scene, residents are less likely to decline services when the Cares students team come back three days later. Among Cares 1 referrals, there were 14 percent who declined services in 2018; to date in 2019 only seven percent have declined services. The teams makes a lot of referrals to Adult Protective Services, particularly in cases of self neglect. A lot of referrals are also made to the designated crisis responders, who are in the only ones in King County who can involuntarily detain someone. Multiple reasons can be checked when making referrals.

Ms. Grossman said during the snow event in 2019 the Cares team assisted with the delivery of prescription medications; made home visits to vulnerable clients; conducted welfare checks on homeless clients; and were prepared to assist the Office of Emergency Management with transports to critical medical appointments.

All emergency medical services in King County are funded by a public levy. The voters recently approved a levy that includes \$4 million for mobile integrated health (MIH) funding for 2020. The approach is a new and burgeoning body of work among fire services across the country. In some cases an EMT and a social worker go on calls together, in other cases EMTs respond to low-acuity non-emergency calls. Every fire department in the county will have money either to stand up their own MIH services or to contract for them with another department. The Cares budget in Bellevue will increase significantly and the plan is to increase the Cares 1 service hours to seven days a week and to grow the student program.

Ms. O'Reilly asked if the Hugs (High Utilizers Group) program is still ongoing. Ms. Grossman said the Hugs group was mirrored on a program that began in Seattle ten years ago. The Bellevue group meets monthly and consists of a group of Eastside providers who work with high utilizers of systems such as Police, Fire and emergency departments. The release of information document has all of the agencies on it so that when working with a client they can be asked to sign the release, allowing all the agencies to staff the cases together by developing a coordinated care plan. Ms. O'Reilly commented that the coordination is invaluable, noting that some clients work with as many as ten providers and they are not always able to clearly communicate their need for services.

Ms. O'Reilly asked what gaps in terms of human services have been identified in the community. Mr. Tankersley said there is a general need for social support, particularly for those who are lonely in their homes and who possibly have no family or anyone close to them. Care coordination, which involves someone keeping track of clients and maintaining relationships, is a huge need. Ms. Grossman added that there is a real need for transportation, particularly for the large number of older adults who do not qualify for Medicaid. Organizations like Melina and Community Health Plan of Washington often have care coordinators. It is to their benefit to be able to try to coordinate care for people rather than having clients going to the emergency room all the time.

Ms. O'Reilly asked if the Cares program has seen an increase in referrals regarding people who represent diverse communities, including those who speak a language other than English as their first language. Ms. Grossman said she has not experienced that. The trend nationwide is that immigrants and people of color do not call 911 nearly as often as the general population does for all kinds of reasons. Work is being done in King County to educate those populations regarding how to call 911, what to say when a call is made, and stressing that the police will not respond to a medical emergency.

9. OLD BUSINESS

Ms. O'Reilly reminded the Commissioners about the need to RSVP for the joint end-of-year dinner with the Parks and Community Services Board. She said the event is slated for December 3 at the Mercer Slough Environmental Center.

Ms. O'Reilly noted that she had heard from all the Commissioners regarding signing up for the training session with the Deputy City Clerk. She said the Commissioners will at the training session will be provided with city issued iPads and be trained in the Legistar platform.

Human Services Planner Christy Stangland said she was working to schedule agency tours starting in January.

Asked about agencies and programs to visit, the Commissioners highlighted the Sophia Way shelter, Friends of Youth, the Homeless operation, Hero House, Jewish Family Services, Muslim Community Resource Center, and NAMI Eastside.

Chair Mercer asked if there had been any follow-up to the joint commissions meeting. Ms. O'Reilly said one significant thing that came from that meeting was the call to rethink and redevelop the application the agencies use. She said Ms. Stangland has been tapped to represent Bellevue in that effort.

Ms. Stangland said the focus of the work has been on what the commissions actually need to know and useful information. The questions will be simplified to the extent possible, and check boxes will be added where they can be. She allowed that in one way or another all of the information sought by the questions is important and said deciding what to cut is difficult. She said the issue of reported outcomes and outputs will also be reviewed.

Chair Mercer commented that the information that flows from the data supplied by the agencies in terms of their outcomes actually is a part of their story, particularly in terms of what they are measuring. She said she would prefer to ask each applicant how they measure their success. Ms. Stangland said that is almost exactly the question the review group is currently proposing. The current application seeks up to three outcomes and many feel they must include three. A food bank, which provides food, may not in fact need to list three outcomes.

Ms. O'Reilly said the north and east city funders are meeting monthly to coordinate planning. Meetings are held quarterly with the south King County cities human services staff. One topic of conversation has been the application questions. It also came out at the joint meeting that there is a high interest in having more training on implicit bias and diversity. A subcommittee of the north and east funders is looking at putting together a training session, possibly by early February, at which the focus will be on reviewing applications with an equity lens.

With regard to CDBG funding, Grant Coordinator Dee Dee Catalano reported that the City Council approved the 2020 recommendations via its consent agenda on November 18.

10. NEW BUSINESS

Ms. O'Reilly took a few minutes to review with the Commissioners the tentative timeline for the first quarter of 2020. She noted that at the first meeting in January, the Commission will act to elect a Chair and Vice-Chair and then receive an presentation on the Needs Update. The discussion of focus areas for 2021-2022 is slated for the second meeting of the month. In February the Commission will work to finalize the focus areas and the supplemental document for inclusion in the electronic application. The application for funding will go live the first week of March and the Commission will use its two meetings that month to conduct an application review discussion and to review the allocation process. Then in early April the applications are due and between April and July the Commission will review the applications and made funding recommendations to be forwarded to the Council.

Ms. O'Reilly asked for areas for which the Commission would like to have more information beginning in the new year. Chair Mercer said she would welcome a presentation by a Council representative regarding their priorities. The other Commissioners agreed that would be helpful. She suggested including it as part of the Needs Update discussion. Ms. O'Reilly said that would certainly be the appropriate time.

Ms. O'Reilly said someone from King County could possibly be available during the first quarter of 2020 to provide the Commission with an update regarding the coordinated entry system.

Chair Mercer suggested the Commission would benefit from having an update from ARCH.

Commissioner Jain said she would like to have a presentation regarding emergency management for people who are English language learners.

Chair Mercer said an update on the transportation issues previously addressed by the Commission would be good. Ms. O'Reilly said the staff are still in conversations with members of a couple of coalitions, including the King County Mobility Coalition. Chair Mercer asked if a transportation project could be funded through the application process. Ms. O'Reilly said the guidelines would allow for allocating funds to an agency to fund a staff person to drive a van.

Ms. Stangland added that Bellevue has had a strong voice at the table and has urged organizations to apply for funding for appropriate transportation programs. Sound Generations and Hopelink have both been at the table along with others, including a work group that is focused on advocacy for transportation. She said the issue of

transportation came up in nearly every community conversation. The work done previously by the Commission has not been lost and is the focus of ongoing work, though the process is slow.

Intern Devin Konick-Seese said he has been involved in updating the city's Recreation Plan. He said transportation for recreation purposes has been a dominant concern. Transportation has also been an issue around the Aging Plan for the North Bellevue Community Center.

Ms. O'Reilly agreed an update regarding transportation issues would be helpful for the Commission. She pointed that the Congregations for the Homeless shelter recently received two vans from King County and are using them to transport guests from the day center to the shelter and back.

Chair Mercer suggested having a joint update by the economic development staff and a Ventures program representative.

Ms. O'Reilly noted that it had been some time since the Commission hosted a panel focused on mental health.

11. CONTINUED ORAL COMMUNICATIONS – None

12. ADJOURNMENT

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

Chair Mercer adjourned the meeting at 7:39 p.m.

Secretary to the Human Services Commission

Date

Chairperson of the Human Services Commission

Date