

CITY OF BELLEVUE
HUMAN SERVICES COMMISSION
MINUTES

June 6, 2017
6:00 p.m.

Bellevue City Hall
City Council Conference Room 1E-113

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

COMMISSIONERS ABSENT: Commissioner Oxrieder

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

GUEST SPEAKERS: None

RECORDING SECRETARY: Gerry Lindsay

1. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 6:03 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 6:15 p.m., and Commissioner Oxrieder, who was excused.

3. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

A. May 2, 2017

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

B. May 16, 2017

A motion to approve the minutes as submitted Commissioner McEachran. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Kline and the motion carried unanimously.

4. PETITIONS AND COMMUNICATIONS

Mr. Derek Delvalle with Imagine Housing said the agency does a lot with housing on the Eastside and looks forward to doing more.

5. STAFF AND COMMISSION REPORTS

Commissioner McEachran said he appreciated the value of the community conversation at Bellevue College. He said the college may be the most misunderstood neighborhood in the city. Some believe the college is a four-year school, others do not know what goes on behind the gas station. There is a hope that the new college president will bring the school out into the community more successfully. Many in the local community believe the college is becoming a residential school, which will be viewed as either positive or negative depending on the traffic mitigation in the neighborhood. A member of the student government pointed out, however, that 75 percent of the housing that is being built will be for international students, and the balance is for out-of-state students. That could be interpreted as meaning the housing is more about income for the college than serving local area students. The conversation pointed out the fact that the college is hungry to be engaged with the city but is largely unaware of the possible collaborative impact that could happen. There is also apparently little awareness of the services available in the community, especially around issues of medical care. It would be good for them to hold a health fair on campus focused on creating paths to health services rather than selling insurance. He said he was disappointed that no one from student services was at the table. He praised the staff for putting together the conversation.

Commissioner Mercer reported that she attended the Youth Link awards fair and thoroughly enjoyed herself. She said the event was an excellent venue for engaging with young people and focusing on their leadership.

Chair Villar said that along with Councilmember Robinson and Department of Parks and Community Services Assistant Director Terry Smith she participated in the process of interviewing prospective candidates for the vacant Commission seat. She said Timothy Ma was selected. Mr. Ma is a lifelong resident of Bellevue and when he was a child his family used human services in the community. He works as a physical therapist and has a passion for giving back.

Chair Villar congratulated Alex O'Reilly on being promoted to take the place of the retired Emily Leslie.

Grant Coordinator Dee Dee Catalano reported that the existing Veterans and Human Services Levy was originally passed in 2005 and renewed in 2011. The King County Executive has proposed placing the levy on the ballot in an expanded format. The current levy involves a property tax of five cents per thousand dollars of assessed value. The proceeds are split 50-50 between veterans services and general human services. The proposal is to increase the levy rate to 12 cents per thousand dollars of

assessed value. If approved, the new levy will generate \$60.7 million in 2018, compared to \$18.6 million in 2017. The areas to be funded would continue to include veterans and human services, but older adults/seniors would be added with revenues to be split equally between the three groups. Additionally, in the first year of the levy, no less than 50 percent all of proceeds will be dedicated to housing stability; after the first year, 25 percent will flow to that category. The full King County Council has not yet made a recommendation about the ballot measure. County staff believe there is a good chance the measure will pass.

Ms. O'Reilly reminded the Commissioners about the June 14 Human Services Forum. She said the event will be held in Redmond and the focus will be the opioid epidemic.

Ms. O'Reilly provided the Commissioners with copies of a press release regarding the June 5 City Council meeting that focused on the Eastgate shelter site. She also noted that the Council approved construction on the Lincoln Center men's shelter facility which will be desperately needed by the time the shelter opens in the fall of 2017. The Council also directed staff to continue conversations with Sound Transit about using a portion of the land on which they will locate their operations and maintenance facility. The issue is whether or not some portion of that site could be used for a shelter in addition to affordable housing. None of the actions taken by the Council can be construed as approval to construct the Eastgate shelter facility; the proposed revisions to the Eastgate Land Use Code still must be reviewed and separately acted on by the Council.

Commissioner Mercer asked if the proposed prohibition against safe injection sites was acted on. Commissioner McEachran said the Council directed staff to include the issue in the proposed Land Use Code amendment for Eastgate. The Council will make a final determination on the issue at a later date. Commissioner Mercer added that a reading of the comments on NextDoor would seem to indicate the actions taken by the Council have not changed any minds.

Commissioner Mercer commented that no matter where the shelter issue ends up, the Commission should make sure the program involves the city and the community. That may involve going to Congregations for the Homeless, Imagine Housing or some other group to engage in an outreach program aimed at bringing the community and a shelter along. Given the animosity of the process to date, it would be a good idea to look into putting some investment dollars into making the connection happen. Ms. O'Reilly said the Neighborhood Outreach folks have been working on it and said she would seek an update from them.

Intern Kayla Valy reported that she would be walking for her graduation on June 8 with a masters in social work degree.

6. DISCUSSION

A. Findings from the Human Services Needs Update Online/Phone Survey

Ms. O'Reilly shared with the Commissioners some of the initial findings from the online and phone surveys. She noted that there were five key data sources. The online and phone surveys provided quantitative data; it was completed by 484 persons. The provider survey was sent out to some 60 organizations, mostly those currently being funded by the city but some that are not, and there were 39 surveys completed. There is as yet no data concerning the consumer survey, which is translated into five languages in addition to English and which were distributed at Bellevue College, mini City Hall and other places.

Ms. Valy said another qualitative data source was the key informant interviews. The surveys are conducted in person with those who have insider knowledge, including a case manager at YES focused on homeless prevention. The community conversations also generated qualitative data. A survey is yet to be posted on NextDoor and it will be interesting to see what it turns up. Beyond the typical data sources, some specific populations have surfaced, including the faith communities that see the needs and often serve to fill them in various ways. Older adults has also been an area of emphasis, and there has been a focus on communities of color.

Ms. O'Reilly said there is much happening in the seniors age group given that the population is growing. That was the reason it was held out for special emphasis.

With regard to the concept of reframing human services, Ms. O'Reilly said one component of the National Human Services Assembly is the Frameworks Institute. She said the question at hand is why it is necessary to continue telling the story about the need for human services every year, and how the narrative could be reframed to grab the attention of people in a different way. The Frameworks Institute has looked at the issue in a number of ways. One of them is to talk about human potential and well being using the construction metaphor. A house needs a strong foundation, but often it is not recognized that there are different expectations of those who did not have a strong foundation. The idea is to reframe the discussion away from looking at persons as vulnerable adults and toward what is happening in society around them that is causing some vulnerability. The fact that many still do not understand what human services are continues to be a challenge, but another challenge lies in the view that those who are in need are somehow at fault for their situations.

Ms. O'Reilly noted that in discussing development of the survey in January, she had mentioned adding a question about well being. She said she worked with some staff from King County Public Health who do surveys all the time but fell short of finding a succinct well being question to add. In the end, a bullet was added to the online and phone survey defining what well being is, and a question was included asking people to rate their well being compared to last year on a scale of one to ten. Of the 484 people who took the survey, only four percent said their well being was worse than

last year. The interesting thing is that even though the vast majority reported feeling good about their well being are still identifying a number of concerns, both in the community and in their households.

Ms. Valy said several themes rose to the top in the survey data, namely the cost of living, health issues, and racial equity/discrimination. The survey questions were sorted by community problems and household problems, and the respondents' answers were separated into first, second and third tier problems. The top tier community level problems highlighted in the survey results have been listed as top tier problems since 2005. Seventy-five percent of all the survey respondents indicated housing as the most serious problem to no one's surprise.

Chair Villar said she was surprised to see inadequate transportation had not been higher on the list. Ms. Valy said the issue came up heavily in the community conversations.

Commissioner Mercer said she received a survey from Microsoft on a variety of similar questions. She said the survey was very well done and the data would be good to include in the Needs Update. Ms. O'Reilly said she would work on that. She added that the Puget Sound Regional Council is currently updating their needs assessment for their strategy plan Transportation 2040. They will through a consultant be conducting focus groups around the four-county area, and on July 6 they will visit with the Bellevue Network on Aging at its monthly meeting.

Commissioner Perelman said she was surprised to see the responses regarding lack of affordable medical insurance has remained steady. Ms. O'Reilly agreed. She said one nice thing about having a survey that has been done so many times is that trends can become clear.

Ms. Valy reiterated that a high number of respondents indicated that housing costs continue to be a serious problem and noted that the issue rose nine percentage points over the previous survey. Additionally, 93 percent of the respondents in the provider survey called out as a major issue difficulty in finding affordable housing. The provider survey responses included the comment that more people are calling for services as they are unable to keep up with frequent rental increases, and that affordable housing is limited in the community, which often forces families to move away from their support systems and employment. A homeless person who indicated she works full time in Factoria commented that she makes \$63 per month too much to qualify for low-income housing; she also noted that some people she knows pay \$1000 per month for a room in a house.

Ms. Valy said there has been a working definition of basic services in place for the past surveys that has been focused on food, shelter, clothing and child care. There is, however, a need to more clearly define the category to keep up with what the community considers to be basic services. For instance, internet access would have

been seen as a luxury just a few years ago, but now it is essential because seeking and applying for a job occurs online.

The phone and online survey asked the respondents to rank the severity of certain issues, both in the community and in their own households. Having a job that does not pay enough was highlighted as a major community concern, and in fact was number four with respect to their own households. In fact, eight of the eleven top tier issues had some connection to jobs. The top household concern was not being able to afford child care, which has been the same two update cycles in a row.

Commissioner Mercer said she found it interesting that rental costs continue to be highlighted as an issue. She said in talking about affordable housing, the focus is usually on the increase in the cost of buying a house. For those who are renters, the demand is making rents rise, and the changes are more immediate. The increase in the cost of homes is less of an impact on those who already have a mortgage.

Commissioner McEachran suggested the Commission would benefit from having a panel discussion with members of the Affordable Housing TAG, specifically the representatives of the rental association, the Master Builders Association, and the King County Housing Authority.

Ms. Valy noted that transportation was also ranked as a top tier community concern. One comment from the provider survey was that public transportation does not meet the needs of participants working outside of peak hours due to limited routes during the evenings and on weekends. Transportation was not rated as high when respondents ranked the issue within their own homes.

At the community level, child care ranked higher than it did at the household level. Child care is needed on weekends. High school students often have to take care of younger siblings and therefore cannot work or do anything else. Legal services did not rise to the rank of top tier as a household concern, but it did as a community concern. In the community conversations, it was stated that renters need help in knowing their rights as tenants; many are afraid to ask for repairs because they are concerned the landlord will tell them to move out.

Ms. O'Reilly said the top tier community issues that are health related are closely tied to cost of living and affordability. In 2011, half of those who took the survey said lack of affordable medical insurance was a problem. That was in the timeframe during which the Affordable Care Act was beginning to be implemented. In subsequent surveys, the issue was ranked lower and lower to where by 2015 it was down to only one third of the people surveyed. Now it has increased again to 45 percent. It is a trend that will need to be watched. Additionally, lack of affordable medical care rose in ranking. Lack of services for elderly people, lack of services for people with disabilities, and alcoholism all were rated higher than they were in 2015. Two-thirds of the household problems were related to healthcare issues, livability and affordability.

Another top tier problem was mental illness and emotional problems. Ms. O'Reilly said the questions that relate to mental health were related to anxiety, stress and depression, teens with emotional behavior problems, not being able to pay for mental health counseling, and not having access to mental health counseling. Many of the same respondents who indicated their well being is quite good also talked about having stress, anxiety and emotional problems. In the providers survey, 32 percent indicated their clients could not find mental health services in the community.

With regard to dental health, Ms. O'Reilly said there has been good feedback from people in the community about the fact that the community health clinics are very helpful. There is, however, still a need for more dental care services.

Ms. Valy said racial discrimination is called out in the survey results because both at the community and household levels there were significant increases. The concern doubled at the household level. Immigration concerns are also on the rise, and legal advice is not affordable to students, according to the survey results and some community conversation comments. The good news is that along with people feeling unsafe and unwelcome, there is a balancing flow of people wanting to help. It was stated during a community conversation that many clients are fearful of political changes and there has been a marked increase in the number of individuals seeking documentation to secure a visa. Anecdotal concerns have violence and harassment have been heard as well, and some parents are pulling their kids out of school out of fear.

Ms. O'Reilly said the staff at mini City Hall are seeking ways to be more responsive and to utilize all those who are stepping forward with offers of help. One idea that has been tossed around is having people of different cultures get together on a regular basis for coffee to talk about how alike they are rather than different.

Commissioner Kline asked if the city has and utilizes volunteer coordinators. Ms. Valy said the suggestion that the city should do that was made during a community conversation. Ms. O'Reilly said the city had a volunteer coordinator position until about five years ago. Currently, each department has a mechanism for incorporating volunteers.

Ms. O'Reilly said the next steps will include more community outreach, including a couple of key informant interviews with the faith community. The editing work to update the chapters has begun and will continue. The hope is that a way will be found to tell some of the stories in the narrative, with the issues in the forefront and a focus on how they affect people. The initial draft of the report will be completed in mid September, and the final draft will need to be done before November 21, which is the Commission's last meeting of the year.

Commissioner Kline suggested someone should clue Uber into the fact that one way to restore their image would be to lend their technology services to people who need

to get to and from appointments. Commissioner Mercer said her teens are fully versed in how to use Uber and have even figured out how to get discounts and free rides. Commissioner Kline said Uber should be encouraged to work with organizations that coordinate volunteer trips. Commissioner McEachran added that some persons or organizations may be willing to give to a fund in order to help those who are without capacity to get where they need to go. Ms. O'Reilly commented that in one or two of the community conversations, it was stated that older people do not use Uber because they need assistance in getting into and out of the vehicles, and they have the perception that Uber drivers will not help them. It was also noted that older adults are not as technology averse as some might think them to be and likely would use Uber if they could.

Commissioner Kline asked if there was any information generated as part of the survey and conversations relative to the impacts of the United Way funding cuts on older residents. Ms. O'Reilly said she was not aware of any. There are some areas that previously were funded by United Way that were highlighted as top tier issues, including transportation and home care.

Chair Villar thanked staff for their diligent work.

7. OLD BUSINESS

Ms. O'Reilly informed the Commissioners that at the Commission meeting on June 20 there will be a panel talking about services and issue trends relative to adults with disabilities. Two of the panelists will be city of Bellevue staff, and the others will be from AtWork!, King County, the Alliance of People with Disabilities, and Community Homes. They will be asked to address trends and issues from their perspectives as well as collaboration with other service providers.

Ms. O'Reilly said a job announcement has been prepared for human services planner to fill her previous position. It hopefully will be posted by the end of the week. Interviews could begin after the Fourth of July.

Commissioner McEachran called attention to the 2017 Count Us In report and suggested it has sections that will help the Commission in the next funding cycle.

8. NEW BUSINESS - None

9. PETITIONS AND COMMUNICATIONS

Ms. Lalita Uppala with the India Association of Western Washington introduced herself. She said the organization has working creatively and collaboratively to address issues of racial discrimination and the unrest communities are experiencing. She said the focus is on integration and not just on immigration. A mobile hate crime infession has been brought to Bellevue, Redmond and Sammamish. On March 19

at the North Bellevue Community Center, the session included a panel of United States Attorneys from the hate crime division, members of the Bellevue Police Department, a representative of the Bellevue School District, and a meditation expert. More than 300 persons attended and the meeting ran for two hours. The session will be followed up additional meetings led by the Bellevue Police Department. Eastside Legal Assistance Program also conducts clinics in association with the organization.

10. ADJOURNMENT

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

Chair Villar adjourned the meeting at 7:48 p.m.

Secretary to the Human Services Commission

Date

Chairperson of the Human Services Commission

Date