

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

CITY OF BELLEVUE
HUMAN SERVICES COMMISSION
MINUTES

November 20, 2018
6:00 p.m.

Bellevue City Hall
City Council Conference Room 1E-113

COMMISSIONERS PRESENT: Chairperson Mercer, Commissioners Kline, Ma, McEachran, Oxrieder, Piper

COMMISSIONERS ABSENT: Commissioner Perelman

STAFF PRESENT: Alex O'Reilly, Christy Stangland, Natalie Minas, Megan Farwell, Department of Parks and Community Services; Kathleen Kline, City Attorney's Office

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 Perelman who was excused.

3. PETITIONS AND COMMUNICATIONS – None

6. STAFF AND COMMISSION REPORTS

Commissioner Ma called attention to the incident in Kirkland involving the police being called to a restaurant by employees about an African-American man who was working to supervise a visit between two people. The case involved implicit racism. He said the incident had led him to want to look into associations or non-profits that are coming up out of the communities that have more familiarity and trust, and want to strengthen trust in the Commission in the communities that need help.

Commissioner McEachran added that the NAACP, the Kirkland police department and the owner of the restaurant where the incident occurred have been working together to address the issue. He noted that the restaurant had closed for the day to

allow for staff training on diversity.

Commissioner McEachran commented that something consequential occurred at the November 19 City Council meeting with regard to affordable housing. He said the Deputy Mayor brought forward a memo regarding the removal of something called the eight-hour rule. Under the rule, if a Councilmember asks the staff to do something, it cannot exceed eight hours of preparation time. The request to remove the rule was related to a request for the staff to reignite the affordable housing plan approved by the City Council in 2017, particularly in regard to where the strategies have been advanced and where the numbers will not be reached. He said it would be well for the Commission to review the affordable housing TAG strategies. The Council priorities for 2016-2017 included a commitment to move the affordable housing strategy actions forward in full. However, the 2018-2019 Council priorities call for only moving Strategy 1 forward.

Chair Mercer said she had noted the announcement by the Bellevue School District of a new program under which they will provide grants to help their employees in pulling together a down payment for a house in Bellevue. While the district will put up 25 percent of the down payment, the district will also own a portion of the equity in the house. The program is innovative in many ways and bears watching over the next year to see how it plays out. She suggested it would be a good idea to make inquiries to see if any other organizations or companies have similar programs.

Chair Mercer said the Bellevue Welcomes Its Transgender Neighbors program was a great move toward diversity.

5. DISCUSSION

A. Bellevue Human Services Commission Bylaws

Assistant City Attorney Kathleen Kline reminded the Commission that the Council wants all city boards and commissions to have more uniform bylaws. They established a template for all to use and have allowed for making some modifications to meet the needs of each group. She called attention to the revisions that had been made to the Commission's proposed bylaws at the previous meeting, beginning with Article V, paragraph A, that had been redrafted to read "The regular meetings of the Human Services Commission shall generally be held at 6:00 p.m. on the 1st and 3rd Tuesday of each month..." She noted that the language also allowed for recessing the Commission for either the month of August or December.

Commissioner Kline asked if the paragraph could be written to allow the Commission to recess for both the months of August and December. Ms. Kline pointed out that under city code boards and commissions must meet at least once each month, but allows for recessing one month annually. Human Services Manager Alex O'Reilly said traditionally the Commission's annual meeting with the Parks and Community Services Board has counted as the December meeting.

Human Services Planner Christy Stangland asked if the December get-together with the Parks and Community Services Board would count as a meeting for the Commission if less than a quorum of members attends. Ms. Kline said she did not believe it would.

Commissioner Piper asked if the city code stipulates a set number of meetings per year or per month. Ms. Kline said the city code language is reflected in paragraph A of Article V, which states that there must be at least one meeting per month, with the exception of either August or December.

Commissioner Kline asked if the scheduling of a meeting in December in good faith would still count even if through unforeseen circumstances a quorum is not reached. Ms. Kline said there can be no meeting absent a quorum. Ms. Stangland pointed out that the December meeting is a holiday party and does not include any official Commission business. She asked if that can be counted as an official Commission meeting. Ms. Kline allowed that she would need to do a bit more research on that issue, but reiterated that absent a quorum there cannot be an official meeting.

Chair Mercer called attention to Article I, paragraph C, and the prohibition against the Commission participating in regional issues not specifically assigned to the Commission by the Council. She asked if it was assumed that all human services issues are in fact assigned to the Commission, even where they involve regional issues. Ms. Kline said the Commission's granted authority under the city code is very broad, which allows the Commission to do the work it needs to do.

Ms. Kline said order of business spelled out in paragraph D of Article VI was drafted to mirror the Commission's current agenda. She allowed that the section was one that is allowed to be tweaked.

Ms. O'Reilly asked if having item 10, Review of Commission Calendar, on the agenda would require a staff person to verbally review the Commission's agenda. She pointed out that the practice of the Commission is to have upcoming meetings listed on the printed agenda. Ms. Kline said having the information printed would be sufficient.

Chair Mercer pointed out that the Commission has not traditionally formally approved the agenda as part of each meeting. Ms. O'Reilly said the Commission could include that action, which is something that happens as part at many other meetings. Ms. Kline said the action is not required.

Commissioner Kline proposed expanding item 7 to include reports from Commissioners as well as from staff. There was consensus to make that change and to list as the order of business Call to order and Roll Call; Oral and Written Communications; Communications from City Council, Community Council, Boards and Commission; Staff and Commissioner Reports; New Business; Old Business;

Continued Oral Communications; Adjournment.

Chair Mercer called attention to Article XIII and asked if there was something the Commission needed to discuss. Ms. Kline said the language is drawn directly from the city code. Formal communications with the Council must represent the official majority or minority opinions of the Commission and not those of individual Commissioners. She allowed that some of the other boards and commissions are still working to identify what quarterly communications with the Council should look like, whether it be in person, in written form, or through the Council liaison.

With regard to Article VII, paragraph D.1, Ms. Kline noted that most boards and commissions allow for a total of 30 minutes for oral communications. She allowed, however, that the total time is a decision for each group to make individually. Ms. O'Reilly said it is rare for the Commission to have enough speakers to take up a total of 30 minutes during oral communications. There was consensus to allow a total of 30 minutes.

Commissioner Oxrieder raised the issue of when officers for the Commission are to be elected according to Article II, paragraph B. Ms. O'Reilly said traditionally the election of officers has been held in January. She allowed that the proposed bylaws indicate elections are to occur in June. Ms. Kline said the June date meshes with that of other boards and commissions. She suggested holding elections in January of 2019 and having the elected persons serve for a year and a half to get onto the June schedule. Ms. Stangland said the challenge for the Commission is that June is in the middle of the funding cycle, a time when a change of officers could prove to be problematic. The idea time to hold elections is January. Ms. Kline said it would be permissible to indicate in the bylaws that officers are to be elected the first meeting of January each year.

A motion to adopt the bylaws as amended was made by Commissioner Kline. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Ma and the motion carried unanimously.

6. DISCUSSION

A. Potential Revisions for the 2019-2020 Human Services Needs Update

Ms. Stangland noted that while she was on maternity leave, Megan Farwell spent time putting together some different models for the Commission to consider. Focus was given to who the stakeholders are, specifically who uses the Needs Update on a regular basis. It was concluded that the stakeholders are the Commission, the City Council, local non-profit agencies, and community members.

Chair Mercer noted that other boards and commissions use the data included in the document.

Commissioner McEachran suggested the police and fire departments should be

noted as well for reasons of collaboration. He noted that the Commission had received an update regarding Bellevue Fire Cares, and in the Budget One process the fire chief is seeking funding for a street person to address the homeless. That person will need deep collaboration. Ms. Stangland explained that when putting together the information it was assumed that the various city departments were using the document as a planning tool internally.

Commissioner Kline proposed specifically calling out the regional human services commissions and committees as stakeholders. Ms. O'Reilly said she has had numerous agencies personally tell her that they use the Needs Update.

Ms. Farwell stressed the fact that not all stakeholders use the Needs Update equally. While many could use the document, it should be focused on the primary audience.

Ms. Stangland commented that in July regional human services staff met and discussed having a regional needs update. She said there are challenges associated with developing such a document given a lack of specific Eastside data. The available data is generally city specific and does not include the unincorporated areas of King County. The Eastside Human Services Forum is taking the lead, however, on possibly developing a regional needs update sometime between 2020 and 2022. A supplemental Bellevue document may also need to be developed. The community survey used to inform the Needs Update is not inexpensive and would require a large budget to target the entire Eastside.

Natalie Minas said she has been working on the idea of taking the data that is available from Eastside human services commissions and committees with an eye on identifying their priorities. The idea is to eventually be able to compare across cities to see how they line up relative to the five goal areas, and what their funding looks like.

Commissioner McEachran said he regularly reads the needs information documents printed by regional human services groups. He noted that both Issaquah and Renton base their documents on Bellevue's Needs Update. Snoqualmie is currently working to initiate a human services committee, and North Bend is about to do the same. From the minutes of Snoqualmie's preliminary planning session that they will be basing their work on Bellevue's Needs Update. He suggested that instead of producing a regional document, the focus should be on identifying areas of collaboration and zeroing in on them.

Ms. O'Reilly said United Way of King County is working on the project with Ms. Minas. The vision is to take what has already been done and group together the themes the individual cities have identified in an overview format. New data will not be sought.

Commissioner Kline said Bellevue should step up and acknowledge the fact that there is evidence out there that everyone looks to Bellevue's Needs Update. Those who are not just using the data from that document are focusing their own research

on the Needs Update model and as an extension of Bellevue's data. While the actual survey is expensive, it would be great if it could be expanded to include other cities, with the included cities sharing in the cost. The result would be a document that is more useful to more people. She added that she would like to see the dollars spent on the planning process minimized in order to get more money to actual users. Moving in the direction of working jointly with other jurisdictions to identify needs on the Eastside could have that result.

Ms. Stangland said the hope going forward is that a user-friendly structure for Bellevue's Needs Update will be identified that will meet the needs of the stakeholders. Such a document could serve as the model for an Eastside approach.

Ms. Stangland explained that there were several reasons for seeking to revise the Needs Update, beginning with comments made by the Commission about the document being too lengthy, not being very visually appealing, and about the difficulty of finding specific data and information. A survey was sent out to every agency funding by the city to gain their feedback. While the number of responses was low, those who did provide comment indicated they do not want to lose any of the information currently contained in the Needs Update. The feedback from the various agencies was specific to their specific programs. There were some responses indicating that some agencies do not use the Needs Update at all. The feedback from the staff highlighted the fact that there is expiring data in the reports. Some data in the report is more than ten years old and new data is not available. The data used in the report should be as up to date as possible.

Ms. O'Reilly added that organizations, including state organizations, at times cut their budgets by not compiling reports. Some reports that used to be compiled every two years are simply no longer written, leaving data gaps.

Commissioner Ma asked if there was a way the city could use data collected by the non-profit agencies themselves. He allowed that such data might be tailored to match the needs of the individual agencies, it could prove to be useful generally. Ms. Stangland responded that there is agency data used throughout the document where appropriate. The issue is that the data can end up highlighting some agencies but not others.

Ms. Farwell added that there is a difference between provision data and prevalence. Information supplied by agencies about what services they provided is not the same thing as dictating what the need is. The Needs Update in its current format includes a lot of provision data. How to balance the data is a question for the Commission to address.

Chair Mercer asked if there are organizations that produce a similar needs report in which they describe the need across their service areas. Ms. O'Reilly answered that there are certain service areas, such as civil legal services, that are reported statewide. She said staff have relied on their report and have used their data to

generally show the need. United Way of King County used to produce a community report but it was discontinued some ten years ago.

Commissioner McEachran commented that metrics are good but narrative is better. He said he would like to see the Needs Update include data trends tied to narrative regarding effective practices.

Commissioner Kline said she would welcome having notes in the report indicating the areas for which the available data is limited.

Commissioner Ma said he assumed the needs can be extrapolated from provisional data based on the demand for services. Ms. Farwell said wait list data is useful in that regard, and some census and other publicly available data can be used in the same way. In other areas, however, including emergency financial services, there is no data about the demonstrated need, only service trend information. She agreed that narrative by individual service providers can be helpful but stressed that the question for the Commission is what the balance should be between showing what the city has done and the results, and serving as a true needs assessment for Bellevue. The current document has done both and that has led to difficulties in finding specific information in it.

Commissioner Ma said he would like to see the needs based on public reports, with gaps filled in by using data from utility companies and the like. Some of the document should also be devoted to outlining service trends. Ms. Farwell cautioned that service trends and funding go hand in hand. Where there is an increase in funding in one area, there is probably going to be an increase in services in that area. She stressed the need to be cognizant of the relationship.

Ms. Farwell reiterated that conducting the survey is very expensive, and noted that it is very rigorous compared to what happens in other communities. She said the current Needs Update does not really highlight the survey data. A lot of energy goes into qualitative data collection as well, and to some degree both pieces get buried in among all the statistics. She said finding a way to better highlight the community voice should be identified.

Ms. Farwell said the potential revisions for the Needs Update included removing two of the sections from each of the goal areas, specifically the Why Is This Goal Area Important section because it is repetitive to other parts of the report, and the What's Working section also because of concerns regarding repetition and the potential for bias by highlighting certain agencies and not others. Ms. O'Reilly added that taking those two actions would result in a greatly reduced number of pages.

Commissioner Piper asked if there might be a way to capture information about why the goals are important. Ms. Farwell said there could be a one-pager at the beginning that talks about why each of the goals is important and how they connect to one another. What seems superfluous is the amount of real estate devoted to the topic at

the beginning of each section, especially when the rest of the report details much of the same information. Another change that could be made would be to move some of the community perceptions to the beginning of the chapter to capitalize on the feedback, as proposed in Option 1.

Chair Mercer suggested the approach cut out too much. For instance, several useful charts are left out. She said she wanted more data not less, and more visuals not less. It would be helpful to have a page for each specific targeted population along with highlights of the impacts across the areas for each of the populations. That would benefit the Commission when advocating for specific populations, and when determining if the needs are really being met for the different populations. She said she would like to see something like Option 3 for each goal area and for each of the target populations. Ms. Farwell countered that the intent of removing duplications in the report might not be achieved using that approach. Staff would need to produce very focused topical briefs as well as a brief for each of the special populations. Chair Mercer commented that the Commission hears a lot about diversity, a topic that is very important, and yet the needs report is not written in a way that allows for zeroing in on any specific population.

Commissioner Oxrieder said she did not disagree with Chair Mercer but stressed that the document should be something someone will take the time to read. The current document is not widely read, possibly not even by Councilmembers.

Chair Mercer voiced her support for Option 3 as a good way to display the information visually. Adding in the special populations would make the document something that could be ripped apart and handed to people looking at individual issues. Ms. O'Reilly said feedback from agencies has indicated they print out the sections that relate to their areas of focus and only use that information. The specific populations section addresses all of the goal areas, though some could be strengthened.

Commissioner McEachran said he has often used the executive summary to explain the work of the Commission. He suggested the reports given to different organizations should be checked, many of which take different trends, in order to create a fuller picture.

Ms. Farwell shared with the Commissioners for format purposes a brief she proposed for United Way of Snohomish County as part of their strategic realignment process. She noted that they identified a new mission of breaking the cycle of poverty and included ten areas in which research was needed to specifically connect each topic area to poverty. She noted that the document was very funder focused and pointed out that no provision data was included.

Commissioner Kline asked if using a similar format would mean abandoning the goal areas and shifting to topic areas instead. Ms. Farwell pointed out that various topics are housed in the various goal areas. For instance, Goal 1 has food, emergency

financial assistance, shelter and housing. The goal areas could be retained while still addressing topic areas specifically using a needs-focus approach.

Commissioner Kline noted that the focus areas were developed several years ago in order to align with the approach taken by United Way of King County. They were useful at the time, especially to show how the continuum was broken down. She said she was willing to do away with the goal areas, but voiced concern that the Snohomish County format could result in a document that is ever changing.

Commissioner McEachran said the various topic areas could be articulate in line with the seven-targets strategy of the Council. The Council always feels good when what the Commission is doing articulates with what they are doing. That may simply mean changing the words of the goal areas.

Ms. O'Reilly said one of the cornerstones of importance to the Council is what their constituents think is important. That is why the city invests over \$30,000 every other year to conduct the online and phone survey. The finance department also does a budget survey and a performance measured survey so they can know if the residents approve of how the city is spending their tax dollars. It will continue to be important for the Needs Update to include information about what Bellevue residents believe is important to them in terms of the needs. Over time the Council has provided a great deal of support based on the scientifically collected data indicating that people who live in Bellevue think. Because the same questions have been asked over the years, it is possible to identify trends.

Chair Mercer reiterated her desire to see the report include separate sections for individual populations in a shorter, targeted way. Commissioner Kline suggested that given the electronic nature of the document, it should be possible to gather such information through a sort function. Chair Mercer said certain data could certainly be hyperlinked, but it could also simply be coalesced into something that is usable.

Commissioner Ma suggested that approach could actually make the report even thicker, not pared down. Chair Mercer agreed that could be the case. She pointed out, however, that during the funding cycle the Commission focuses on the goal areas while at the same time looking at targeted populations. She said she would like to be able to bring out the various separate sections to make sure the needs of each is being addressed. She added that she would want to revisit the list of populations, and said it might be sufficient to produce a single page for each population with bullets of the top five issues and a couple of quotes that at a glance would yield information about the population.

Commissioner Ma pointed out that the previous Needs Update had just that. Chair Mercer noted the staff proposal would remove it. Ms. Farwell clarified that rather than taking out the information, the staff proposal streamlines some of the wording, and taking specific population information and incorporating it into each of the sections, with any information not fitting into a particular section being removed.

Ms. O'Reilly added that over time the Commission has made it clear it wants to include stories in the Needs Update. Some of the stories come from the qualitative data gathering, including from the community conversations and the provider surveys. There will still be a place for stories in the document.

Commissioner McEachran highlighted the need to outline how the Needs Update articulates with the Comprehensive Plan and Council initiatives. Having those ties in hand can help explain to people why the Commission funds the way it does.

There was agreement around truncating the document and the potential in some of the options presented. There also was consensus to avoid losing information on specific populations by burying it in the other information. The Commissioners agreed the document should maintain some stories and incorporate as many graphics as possible.

Chair Mercer commented that it is hard to pull out of the current Needs Update what is important and why. Having more lists with associated follow-up details would be very helpful. Ms. Farwell asked how to go about identifying the priorities. She pointed out that there were concerns with the stakeholder slide relative to who was left off and what order they were in when it was simply intended to be a list. If in an official document there is list ordered one through five of the most important things, there would need to be solid backing data for why those things were identified. Chair Mercer agreed the lists would need to be predicated on qualitative data.

Ms. O'Reilly suggested that it should be clear that lists in the document are not in priority order. That is the approach used in addressing the focus areas in the supplemental. Ms. Farwell pointed out that from the survey and the community conversations the top two issues will always be things like the cost of living and housing. She questioned where a list of top issues would reside in the Needs Update.

Commissioner Ma suggested there was an overall sentiment among the Commissioners that it is difficult to pull useful data from the Needs Update.

Chair Mercer pointed out that the current document in the section regarding seniors includes service trends. It highlights the need for long-term care and services, but it is necessary to go over a couple of pages to figure out the next one, which is more support for family caregivers and such. She argued that all of the headings are there and they are pulled out as being important, just not important enough to be at the beginning. The information should be pulled out and placed in a list up front to avoid having to read through the whole document to figure out the list of what is important.

With regard to the use of provision data, Commissioner Ma said he wanted it to be distinct from the hard data in the document. He also said he liked the notion of putting the community vision and voice in the forefront along with a story early on that

captures the data. He said he liked the Snohomish County option but suggested it should include provision data in specific ways.

Ms. O'Reilly said she would work with Ms. Farwell and Ms. Stangland to develop another format and bring it back to the Commission for additional review early in 2019.

7. OLD BUSINESS

Ms. O'Reilly called attention to the letter dated November 16 that was included in the desk packet in which comments were included from two large agencies related to funding for MCRC.

Commissioner McEachran commented that the Budget One public hearing before the Council on November 19 had seven persons who addressed environmental issues. Also providing testimony was one member of the MCRC board of directors who made a direct appeal to the Council for \$50,000.

Ms. O'Reilly reported that she had not been contacted by anyone on the Council or from the City Manager's office. She said she would keep the Commission informed should there be any communications related to the Commission's funding recommendations. She allowed that the Commission was clear in communicating with the Commission's Council liaison about why funding for the organization was not recommended. The Council is scheduled to approve the budget at its first meeting in December.

Chair Mercer pointed out that the Commission had made it clear to the Council liaison that funding MCRC would be problematic because of financial audit issues with the agency. Commissioner McEachran said those points were addressed at the public hearing by the agency representative along with an indication that the audit issues are being addressed.

Ms. O'Reilly acknowledged that there is a need for a separate process to address the challenges smaller agencies face in seeking funding. Many of those agencies serve underrepresented persons in the community. The East and North funders group, which meets monthly, has held one meeting and has begun to develop a timeline for addressing the issue. Two jurisdictions in south King County have developed a parallel process and they will be announcing their awards in early December, following which there will be a process evaluation sometime in the new year. She said she would keep the Commission updated.

Chair Mercer asked the Commissioners to comment on funding MCRC should the Council come up with extra funds. Commissioner Ma said he personally felt that support from another agency provides some legitimacy. Commissioner Kline stressed that MCRC is not a small agency. It is large and substantial and their level of financial sophistication as demonstrated through communications between them and the

Commission did not rise to even the minimum level. As such it would not be prudent to fund the agency. The problem is in their hands and it can be fixed.

Commissioner Ma said he was not willing to make any changes to the Commission's funding recommendations unless directed to do so by the Council. He voiced support for the organization given the need to support the populations they deal with in the community.

Commissioner McEachran said the request made directly to the Council for funding is outside the scope of the Commission's work.

Commissioner Ma said if the Council were to come up with additional money and seek the opinion of the Commission in regard to funding the agency, he would not immediately change his mind and fund them, but that he would be willing to help guide them through the process and make any funding for them predicated on certain stipulations. Ms. Stangland said Redmond appears to be taking that approach.

Ms. O'Reilly allowed that the Commission has in the past included stipulations along with recommended funding. In those instances, however, the stipulations related to programmatic issues rather than organizational issues.

Commissioner Piper said he had had some fundamental concerns with the organization. He said if the Council were to come up with additional money, his inclination would be to put it somewhere else.

Chair Mercer pointed out that the organization was very fairly treated by the Commission during the funding process. It was clear the Commission wanted to fund them, but in the end it was the clear financial obligations that tipped the Commission's hand away from recommending funding. She said she was not willing to back away from that position and would also allocate any additional dollars the Council may come up with to other agencies.

With regard to the vacancy on the Commission, Ms. O'Reilly related that she confirmed with the City Clerk's office that press release would be released on November 26, and that the application process would remain open for two weeks, closing on December 7.

8. NEW BUSINESS – None
9. PETITIONS AND COMMUNICATIONS – None
10. ADJOURNMENT

A motion to adjourn was made by Commissioner McEachran. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Ma and the motion carried unanimously.

Chair Mercer adjourned the meeting at 8:10 p.m.

Secretary to the Human Services Commission

Date

Chairperson of the Human Services Commission

Date