

The Human Services Commission approved these minutes on March 20, 2018

CITY OF BELLEVUE
HUMAN SERVICES COMMISSION
MINUTES

February 21, 2018
6:00 p.m.

Bellevue City Hall
City Council Conference Room 1E-120

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

COMMISSIONERS ABSENT: Commissioners Ma, McEachran, Perelman

STAFF PRESENT: Alex O'Reilly, Dee Dee Catalano, Christy Stangland, Regina Alexander, Department of Parks and Community Services; Major John McCracken, Police

GUEST SPEAKERS: Matthew Valdespino, Hero House; Jerry Kröon, Eastside Legal Assistance Program; Ruchi Chavekar, India Association of Western WA; Karina Wiggins, Friends of Youth; Shannon Rae, Solid Ground

RECORDING SECRETARY: Gerry Lindsay

1. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 6:01 p.m. by Chair Mercer who presided.

2. ROLL CALL

Upon the call of the roll, all Commissioners were present with the exception of Commissioners Ma, McEachran and Perelman, all of whom were excused.

3. PETITIONS AND COMMUNICATIONS – None

4. STAFF AND COMMISSION REPORTS

There was agreement to move this agenda item to the end of the meeting.

5. PUBLIC HEARING

A. Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Housing and Human Services Needs

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

Mr. Valdespino with Hero House said the clubhouse model is focused on mental health rehabilitation. Individuals with severe mental illnesses who have come out of hospitalizations are assisted in reengaging with the community through the development of social and work skills. The agency has been in the Bellevue area since 2005 and recently moved to the Factoria area. Over the years the program has addressed various needs with the help of the city, and in the past two years especially the need for housing within the mentally ill community has increased. There are some 750 Hero House members. Of those, 250 are residents of Bellevue. Forty percent are in unstable housing, and 20 percent are homeless. The supportive housing program developed over the last year has successfully placed six members in housing utilizing a variety of vouchers but the need remains great. Hero House also works with its members in developing interpersonal skills and combating isolation. Currently in Washington state, the unemployment rate for individuals dealing with mental illness is 86 percent; for Hero House members, the rate is 50 percent, proof that the model works. The agency is working to expand its supported employment program while also expanding the in-house program that provides personal, emotional and professional training.

Mr. Jerry Kröon, Executive Director of Eastside Legal Assistance Program, said the agency has been a grantee of city funds for a number of years. ELAP has been providing legal assistance in east and southeast King County since 1989. He noted that for nearly every gap area highlighted by the Needs Update, the need for increasing civil legal aid comes up. A number of years ago the Washington State Bar and the Washington State Supreme Court decided to grant monopolies to civil legal aid organizations throughout the state; currently there are 17 such organizations, and ELAP is the one for east King County. (In 2017, for every 23 persons who came to the organization seeking aid, only one was helped.) Services are limited to those below 200 percent of the federal poverty level. A large percentage of the work centers on domestic violence, and in taking on cases, the level of lethality is looked at. The agency is constantly looking for work-arounds, for volunteer attorneys and for other ways to provide help to those in need. The agency conducts 26 clinics monthly in the Bellevue area, and some 1400 cases are addressed through those clinics, all with volunteer attorneys. For certain cases, however, particularly domestic violence, paid staff attorneys are needed to quickly handle cases. The agency is expanding to include a medical-legal partnership where an attorney will be located at Overlake Medical Center to work with low-income patients. ELAP is proud of having taken the lead along with the city and the county in working to save the Highland Village Apartments. Just as it is less expensive to save units than to build them, it is less

expensive to keep a person in their home than it is to take them from homelessness back into a home environment. Over the past year ELAP has been working with the city to provide Know Your Rights workshops and emergency planning clinics for immigrants and refugees. Thus far, over 900 families have been served in the Bellevue area.

Ms. Ruchi Charekar with the India Association of Western Washington said the organization provides resources for the South Asian community, including transportation and legal assistance. The agency hosts community programs weekly that include providing services to those in need. Major issues the agency intends to address with help from the city include support for mental health services, particularly for low-income residents. The agency also has a youth board focused on supporting the needs of the youth. Transportation is a major problem for seniors wanting to attend the community programs.

Ms. Karina Wiggins, Director of homeless youth services for Friends of Youth, thanked the Commission for its continued investment in and support of the services offered by the agency. She said young people from Bellevue access many of the services provided, including the drop-in center and the young adult shelter in Redmond, as well as the case management services located at the Redmond Youth Service Center, which is a hub for young people experiencing homelessness in north and east King County. The agency also operates a 12-bed shelter in Kirkland that is for minors across the Eastside who are experiencing homelessness. Young people also reside in the agency's transitional living programs who have self-identified as having lived or spent significant time on the streets of Bellevue, and those youth are now working or going to school in Bellevue. King County has committed to utilizing the coordinated entry for all system in order to prioritize housing for young adults facing homelessness, which means access to some of the agency's transitional living programs are open to any young person in King County, not just those from the Eastside. As homelessness continues to persist, the young adult shelter has averaged having to turn away eight to ten young people per night, which represents a significant uptick. Friends of Youth also offers 64 units of transitional living, 16 permanent supportive housing units, and 32 units of rapid re-housing resources, all to provide more young people with options for housing stability. The agency is the only provider offering support and transitional living for young families. During 2017, 97 percent of the young families in the program obtained permanent housing at the time of exit. Those being served by the program continue to be disproportionately young persons of color and the LGBTQ community, and the agency is committed to providing culturally responsive care to young people.

Ms. Shannon Rae with Solid Ground thanked the Commission for its continued support of the agency's Housing Stability Program. She said in 2015, 20 households were assisted in remaining in stable housing, and in 2017 that number rose to 26 households, all in the city of Bellevue. Prevention funds are vital in ensuring that families do not slip into homelessness. Solid Ground has a multitude of programs, including rapid re-housing, permanent supportive housing, transitional housing, family

shelter. It operates the Access bus service, provides poverty advocacy through the Poverty Action Network, and operates one of the regional access points for coordinated entry for all. The primary focus is on preventing homelessness.

Ms. Regina Alexander, head of the city's Probation Division, introduced herself to the Commissioners. She said she and Human Services Manager Alex O'Reilly have been working together and sharing resources. Ms. O'Reilly stated that the Probation Division is a part of the Department of Parks and Community Services.

A motion to close the public hearing was made by Commissioner Oxrieder. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Piper and the motion carried unanimously.

6. DISCUSSION

A. Bellevue Police Department: Overview of Affinity Groups

Major John McCracken said the current police chief was hired by Bellevue some three years ago and he brought with him a number of different programs from his previous agency. One of them was the concept of the advisory group panel that has been established. It took about a year and a half to get things up and running, but there are now seven councils that are currently fully functional. There are four majors in the Bellevue Police Department, each of whom oversees a council. A couple of the majors have two councils they oversee, and the chief tries to make it to all of them. Major McCracken said he interacts with the Latino Latina group which has designed a bilingual brochure to be handed out in the Hispanic community that describes what the Police Department does, what it is prepared to do is to help members of the community, what the police will and will not do, and the rights of people in the community. People who come from different parts of the world often have very different expectations when it comes to the police. The group is in the process of spreading information as widely as possible. The patrol officers carry the brochures and hand them out where they see a need. The ultimate goal is to be able to publish the brochure in a number of different languages.

In addition to the Latino Latina Council, there is an African-American Council, an Asian-Pacific Islander Council, an Interfaith Council, a Muslim Council, an LGBTQ Council, and a Youth Council is in process. Other councils are being planned.

Commissioner Kline asked how the councils are formed. Major McCracken explained that the chief and Major Kleinknecht reach out to the community and look for people who are already either involved in some way or another on a different council in a leadership role in the community. The focus was on demographic diversity, which is why the councils have members who are moms, students, representatives of youth organizations and others. Each council has between 15 and 20 members, and each council has had different agendas and issues. In the Hispanic Council their concerns have included deportation and whether or not the police would report them to ICE if they were in any way associated with a crime. The first several meetings for each

council were designed to develop a relationship with the Police Department and to outline what the police wants to see accomplished.

The Police Department set ten different goals for the advisory groups: developing two-way communication to build trust that goes both ways; building relationships; cultivating ambassadors within the various communities; opening blind spots and identifying issues; education both ways, which promotes education about the Police Department, and for the Police Department learning about the different cultures; recruiting to increase the diversity of the Police Department; breaking bread for unity; identifying community leaders; being a catalyst for change; and developing venues other than City Hall in which to share the message.

Commissioner Piper asked if there have been any common issues and agendas that span across the groups. Major McCracken said the groups have commonly felt they have not been heard in the past. The councils have provided them with the opportunity to be heard and the members have learned that their voices matter and that the police are listening.

Commissioner Oxrieder asked Major McCracken what interesting thing he had learned from his group that he had not expected. He said the folks on the different advisory groups do not want to be pigeonholed into any one particular category. They may be Hispanic or African-American, but none of them want to be typecast in those roles. When asked for input, many will preface their answer to note that they are speaking as a mom or as a citizen of Bellevue rather than as a member of a particular group. The members of the councils are all individuals as well as being members of a certain category, but they often do not even agree among themselves.

Answering a question asked by Chair Mercer, Major McCracken explained that when the chief first started working on the project, he wanted to get people onboard who were all-in, were willing to do some things they had not done before, and willing to voice their opinions on issues. The process he undertook to identify potential members of the various councils involved working with people who had somehow interacted with the Police Department in the past, or had a connection through a city organization, business or community group that had worked with the police in the past. Now that the groups are reaching their two-year mark, there is an interest in transitioning some members off who have done their time and replacing them with folks who will have additional insights. The process will never be done, and there will be times when the groups will be much more interactive depending on what is going on in the community. When the mosque at Main Street and 148th Avenue NE had a fire, work with the Muslim Advisory Group was well advanced and relationships had been established. The entire group showed up on a very cold night at 2:00 a.m. to show their support and to thank the Police Department for catching the bad guy right away, who happened to be a mentally disturbed person rather than someone committing a hate crime.

Major McCracken said the groups met more frequently initially but now meet quarterly. The groups space their meeting times to allow the chief to attend. Where an important issue arises, however, the groups can be called together on short notice.

With regard to the sector captain program, Major McCracken said when the program was instituted the city was divided into three different sections. The west sector takes in the downtown and everything to the west of I-405; the north section involves the area to the north of NE 8th Street; and the south sector has everything south of NE 8th Street. The purpose was to have a captain responsible for each sector of the city. The captains attend all community meetings related to their sector and give presentations on everything from active shooter situations to whether or not alarms are needed in homes. The information shared is real as opposed to just what gets posted on Facebook. The NextDoor app became active at about the same time the sector captain program was launched and it has proven to be a great way for neighbors to communicate with each other. The problem, though, is in making sure the information posted there is reliable. Stories have at times been blown out of proportion and in community meetings the captains can offer the truth. The captains are ultimately responsible for everything that goes on in their sector, so if there is an issue in need of being addressed, they tap into the available resources to address the issue. The program has proved to be very successful.

Commissioner Kline asked if the police ever respond to stories that are posted on NextDoor. Major McCracken explained that given the way the program is designed, the police do not monitor the messages that get posted there. The police can post things relative to certain areas of the city, and people can respond to those posts, but the police cannot simply jump in on a conversation to correct the record unless the conversation was initiated by the police.

Chair Mercer asked if there are places where there could be synergies between the police and the work of the Commission. Major McCracken said the Needs Update that was recently updated outlines very well the world in which the police currently operate, including the opioid problems and homelessness. Almost all crimes are in one way or another related to one of those issues or a combination of the two. There is clearly an overlap between what the police and the Commission are trying to accomplish. He said he grew up in Bellevue and has worked for the Police Department for 32 years. The city has changed over that time and as it continues to grow into a bigger city, there will continue to be problems. The police readily recognize that it cannot address all the problems alone. The more groups that can become part of the solution the better. He said in his role as liaison to the Commission from the Police Department he would be willing to bring in folks to give presentations on various issues.

Ms. O'Reilly noted that the Commission received a briefing in 2017 from a representative of the Opioid Task Force. She suggested the Commission would benefit from hearing from Bellevue's Police Department about the types of crimes

and level of problems the issue is causing in the city, and what resources the department has available when encountering persons on the street who are under the influence of the drugs. Major McCracken commented that the probation office deals with the issue as much as the Police Department does given that many who they deal with are having issues with drugs. The problem is not unique to Bellevue nor even to the Puget Sound region. He said he and other officers have visited different parts of the nation to attend conferences and training sessions, most recently Virginia, where a colleague from the middle of nowhere Minnesota described the exact same problems Bellevue and other cities are facing. The problem is deep and it is spread very wide. The information being circulated is that only the tip of the iceberg is visible. The problem is ingrained on the east coast and is working its way west. More than twice a month in Bellevue someone overdoses and dies from heroin, and in Seattle as many as a thousand die annually from drug overdoses specifically related to heroin. There are no easy fixes to the epidemic. The Police Department is working to have a good supply of Narcan, not only to treat those who have overdosed but to protect officers who are exposed to Fentanyl when responding to calls. The vast majority of thefts that occur in the community are committed by those seeking money to buy drugs.

Commissioner Piper asked if there is a nexus in Bellevue between drug use and gang activity. Major McCracken said Bellevue is lucky in that it experiences minimal gang activity. In the 80s Bellevue had legitimate gang problems and gang turf wars, but those times have come and gone, and to a large degree the cost of living in Bellevue is the reason. There still are gang problems, particularly in the Crossroads area, and gangs do come to the city from out of the area.

Chair Mercer asked how the Police Department interacts with the issue of homelessness. Major McCracken said the department has and utilizes a number of resources, including the winter shelters where officers often serve meals. Between the lack of space in the shelters and the fact that many who are homeless do not want help, not everyone can be helped. Mental illness is one reason people reject offers of help. The city's Cares Program reaches out to those suffering with mental illnesses but the fact is even when medicated many will be as they are for the rest of their lives.

Ms. O'Reilly noted that the outreach worker associated with Congregations for the Homeless men's shelter works closely with the Police Department in a team approach. Major McCracken said as planning continues for a permanent homeless shelter in the city, the topic continues to be a heated one for many in the community. There is no great answer, but it needs to happen and in more than one place in the city.

Chair Mercer asked if the Police Department is confident it can manage the issues that come with homeless shelters. Major McCracken said it is not a police issue, it is a human services issue, a resource issue and a social issue. Sadly, the police department ends up being the tip of the spear in dealing with the calls, which most

often are not for police issues. The Police Department will partner with others in addressing the problems, but it is not the solution to the problems. By way of example, he said the police are often called in to address someone on the side of the road who is holding a sign asking for money, possibly with a dog or child with them, even though what they are doing is not illegal. Additionally, some will call DSHS, who in turn directs the caller to contact the police. The police do respond to make an assessment and where there is a problem appropriate steps are taken.

Ms. O'Reilly urged Major McCracken to share with the Commission anything that comes up in the various advisory groups that is related to human services. Major McCracken said he would be happy to do that.

7. DISCUSSION

A. Human Services Funding Application / Supplemental

Ms. Catalano noted that the suggestions for change to the supplemental had been incorporated in the revised version.

Commissioner Oxrieder referred to page five of the supplemental and noted that the diversity section does not specifically mention sexual orientation. Ms. Catalano said she would make that change.

Commissioner Oxrieder also commented that the document appears to put a great deal of weight on Eastside Pathways. Ms. O'Reilly said she would check with Department of Parks and Community Services Assistant Director Terry Smith and Department of Parks and Community Services Director Patrick Foran about the fact that the city participates in a number of Eastside Pathways collaboratives. Both men are involved with Eastside Pathways and it was suggested that the agencies should be encouraged to indicate if they are involved with the organization, and if so how. The bullet on collective impact was added at the urging of Commissioner McEachran.

Chair Mercer said she understood the notion of additional uploads, but was struck by seeing it as a requirement. She said she would rather the document encourage agencies to indicate their involvement with Eastside Pathways rather than require them to do so. Commissioner Oxrieder pointed out that as drafted agencies must justify why they are not associated with Eastside Pathways.

Chair Mercer said she was okay with the idea of providing agencies with something to upload, but wanted to avoid making it a requirement.

There was agreement to delete the first two sentences of the Eastside Pathways paragraph on page 5, and to revise the last paragraph before the four bullet paragraphs to read "...upload a Word document ... that tells us how you are participating in Eastside Pathways."

Commissioner Piper called attention to the second paragraph on page 6 and asked if the full \$685,000 is available for public services or if it is only 15 percent of that amount. Ms. Catalano allowed that the amount available for public services is limited to 15 percent of the total allocation.

Referring back to the collective impact bullet on page 5, Commissioner Oxrieder asked how it was different from partnerships. Ms. Stangland said both the diversity and collective impact bullets were included at the request of the Commission. Ms. O'Reilly allowed that a lot of agencies have partnerships of various kinds, such as providing space for an ELAP workshop. The discussion regarding collective impact has focused more on working toward common goals. Chair Mercer said the issue is the difference between the agencies who simply list all the agencies they make referrals to and those that actually work together toward a common goal. Commissioner Oxrieder said that could be clarified by indicating that partnerships do not include mere referrals. She stressed the need to make it clear what the term means.

Ms. O'Reilly commented that the document has been used for quite some time. Some changes have been made to it in the past for reasons that are no longer remembered. She allowed that anything that is confusing should probably just be deleted.

Chair Mercer said the document should be clear in indicating the Commission will look at what each agency's collective impact goals are. Partnerships are different in that they are defined simply as the relationships between organizations. While the two dovetail to some extent, they are certainly not the same thing.

There was agreement to retain the collective impact bullet, and to delete from the partnerships bullet the second sentence and change "collaborations" to "partnerships" in the last sentence. It was also noted that the dates in the footer on each page needed to be updated.

Chair Mercer suggested that in the future, in addition to Eastside Pathways, agencies involved with any of the regional or local initiatives listed on page 4 should be encouraged to explain their involvement. Ms. O'Reilly said there is a question in the application that asks for a description of their collaborations and partnerships. Chair Mercer stressed that Eastside Pathway should not be called out as the only collaborative.

A motion to approve the document as amended was made by Commissioner Piper. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Oxrieder and the motion carried unanimously.

4. STAFF AND COMMISSION REPORTS

Commissioner Kline noted that she participated in visiting ELAP and Hero House. Commissioner Kline said she learned the clinics are primarily put on by volunteers and coordinated by staff. The attorneys employed by the agency generally focus on cases of domestic violence. There is a clear need for more employed attorneys to address those cases. An internship program is offered to newly minted attorneys. The agency would like to eventually own its own building.

Commissioner Oxrieder said the visit to ELAP was very informative. She said she had not previously been aware of their focus on domestic violence or how broad a territory the agency covers. During the visit the issue of accessibility was discussed given the location of the agency.

Commissioner Kline said the Hero House visit was also informative. They recently relocated to the Factoria area and that has been a big adjustment for many of their clients from the northern part of the city. The two-story building is on a hill, which also makes it difficult for some clients to walk from the bus stop. There are still renters occupying some of the ground-floor space but once the agency has access to the full building they are hoping to put in a couple of temporary shelter units. The organization is also getting ready to merge with a Hero House-type organization in Seattle, giving them a second location in downtown Seattle. The number of clients on the list is huge but that is largely because they never remove clients from the list; once someone joins Hero House, they are members forever and if they ever need additional support they can come back. Their employment program includes arrangements with a few organizations in the area, and if on any given day an employee cannot do their work, a member of Hero House will take their shift.

Ms. Stangland added that one of the Hero House members gave the tour. The agency uses the Hero House model to empower their members. The clients are encouraged to be as independent as possible, but where transportation is a significant issue for someone, the agency uses a retired van obtained from King County Metro, which pays for the gas and maintenance.

8. OLD BUSINESS

Ms. O'Reilly thanked the Commissioners for responding to request for dates for the training session on reading applications with an equity lens. Ms. Stangland noted that she had registered Commissioners Kline and Oxrieder for the March 8 session, Commissioners Perelman, Piper and McEachran for the March 15 session, and Chair Mercer and Commissioner Ma for the March 28 session.

Ms. Catalano called attention to the written statements submitted by International Community Health Service and Jewish Family Service.

Ms. Catalano reminded the Commissioners that Sound Mental Health had visited with the Commission in late 2017 and shared information about the difficulties they were having about meeting the service units for their various city contracts. They were at the time confident that they would be able to meet the targets by the end of the year, but in fact they did not and they did not submit any service units for any city contract, including Bellevue. Their system could not match up services they provided with their providers in their billing system, even after numerous claims that they could. Accordingly, the agency has withdrawn from their 2018 contract.

Commissioner Kline highlighted the need for the Commission to understand how the clients will be impacted as a result of the agency withdrawing from its contract. Ms. Catalano said it appears the agency is in fact serving clients but are for some reason unable to bill the contract cities for those services.

Ms. O'Reilly said staff was confident another provider could be found that would be able to use the funds to address what is clearly a high priority in the community.

With regard to the transportation survey, Ms. Stangland said the English version has been completed. She said she and Ms. O'Reilly met with Don Okazaki and Dan Lassiter to debrief on everything. One loud message was that people were not having their voices heard. Don provided a lot of information, but there was not much opportunity for people to indicate what is and is not working, and where the gaps are. King County Metro actually tried to put a lot of information into the meeting. The next meeting on March 20 will be more of a talking session and folks will be able to share.

Ms. O'Reilly said the timeline for the survey has been adjusted. The city budget timeline is not relevant given that the Commission will not be going to the city seeking another allocation. A non-profit likely will need to provide the services depending on what the solution is. King County Metro often works with cities and agencies that provide matching funds, but they have not been thinking the city would necessarily provide funds from its budget. They did, however, think that possibly agencies that apply to the city for funding would seek funds on behalf of a project, but that cannot happen because of the timeline. The planning effort will focus on developing some solutions, and ways will be sought to fund them.

Ms. Stangland said she would send the English-language survey out to the Commissioners on February 22. The process of trying to get the survey translated is under way. The survey has already been translated into Spanish and Russian but those have not yet been proofed. The Korean translation should be ready in about a week. The deadline for getting the surveys returned has been extended to March 16. Ms. O'Reilly added that a link to the survey will be added to the city's webpage and will be advertised via NextDoor.

Ms. Stangland said Don Okasaki talked about how vocal Claudia Balducci has been about the transportation needs on the Eastside. He feels like the survey information along with her advocacy will result in something.

Ms. O'Reilly said the agencies will be provided with the surveys to give to their clients, and they will be available at mini City Hall and at the men's shelter.

Chair Mercer proposed formally extending an invitation to the Transportation Commission to join the effort by sending someone to listen in as the issues are voiced.

9. NEW BUSINESS – None

10. PETITIONS AND COMMUNICATIONS – None

11. ADJOURNMENT

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

Chair Mercer adjourned the meeting at 8:21 p.m.

Secretary to the Human Services Commission

Date

Chairperson of the Human Services Commission

Date