

The Human Services Commission approved these minutes on January 3, 2017

CITY OF BELLEVUE
HUMAN SERVICES COMMISSION
MINUTES

November 15, 2016
6:00 p.m.

Bellevue City Hall
City Council Conference Room 1E-113

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

COMMISSIONERS ABSENT: Commissioner Bruels

STAFF PRESENT: Emily Leslie, 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 6:00 p.m. by Chair McEachran who presided.

2. ROLL CALL

Upon the call of the roll, all Commissioners were present with the exception of Commissioner Perelman, who arrived at 6:10 p.m., and Commissioner Bruels, who was excused.

3. PETITIONS AND COMMUNICATIONS – None

4. STAFF AND COMMISSION REPORTS

Commissioner Oxrieder reported that recently a woman expressed on NextDoor her concerns regarding the winter shelter in Wilburton, saying she did not feel safe taking her kids to eat at Chick Fil A. She said she along with a number of others chimed in in defense of the shelter and the need for it in the community to serve the homeless.

Human Services Manager Emily Leslie reported that the temporary shelter at Lincoln Center was set to open that evening even though the facility is not fully remodeled yet. She said the meeting with the Wilburton neighborhood went well. They came with a long list of questions that were answered in three languages. Since that meeting, the neighborhood has been very quiet.

Chair McEachran said he has been keeping a watch on the community reaction to the proposed permanent homeless shelter in Eastgate. He said it has been interesting to see how quickly the neighborhoods have been united through NextDoor. There has also been a move to replace the strong city manager form of government with a strong mayor format.

Intern Kayla Valy reported that she has been assisting in the process of finding answers to the long list of questions from the community regarding the permanent shelter.

Human Services Planner Alex O'Reilly said early in 2017 she would provide the Commission with an update regarding the work of the King County Mobility Coalition which she is co-chairing. She provided the Commissioners with an updated version of *Acceptable Travel in Your Community* that included a number of services and websites people can access to get where they need to go.

Ms. O'Reilly also reported she and Ms. Valy attended a training session at Puget Sound Regional Council on how to use the census website. She said the event was very informational.

Chair McEachran said in delivering the Commission's funding recommendations to the City Council, he came away with a heavy degree of pride for the work done, which clearly was appreciated by the Council. Ms. Leslie said it made a big difference to have all the Commissioners in the audience.

Ms. Leslie said the Council will be holding a study session on November 28 about the homeless shelter. The meeting will be helpful in determining where the Council stands with regard to the Eastgate location. She noted that while the Commission has not taken an official position, it has been funding the program since 2008 and will continue to fund it into the future. The Commission is not on the record in support of siting the shelter in any particular place.

Chair McEachran pointed out that the shelter has previously been successfully sited in neighborhoods. Ms. Leslie said it was most successfully sited in Bel-Red. The family winter shelter is located in a neighborhood and there has been no big outcry against it.

Chair McEachran noted that during the Council meeting a Councilmember asked what constitutes a low-barrier shelter. He suggested that at some point the Council may need to be briefed. Ms. Leslie said a winter shelter is by definition a low-barrier facility. Such facilities are specifically intended to get people out of the elements.

Commissioner Villar reported that the Salvation Army building has been completed and is open and operating.

5. DISCUSSION

A. Upcoming Legislative Preview

Ms. O'Reilly commented that while she is not a lobbyist, she does track legislative issues for the Eastside Human Services Forum and participates in the United Way Public Policy Impact Council on behalf of the Early Learning Impact Council.

Ms. O'Reilly said the legislature will be conducting a regular session that should wrap up by the end of April, unless a special session is called. It appears Republicans will hold a majority in the Senate, while the Democrats will have the majority in the House. The Democratic governor Jay Inslee was reelected for another term.

Usually in late November or early December the state budget office will offer a forecast of what to expect in terms of revenues for the coming year. While there is nothing official yet, it does appear revenues will increase in 2017 given the stronger economy. The governor usually releases his budget in mid-December. Most policy analysts believe the top issues for the upcoming session will include homelessness, McCleary funding and mental health.

Ms. O'Reilly provided the Commissioners with copies of the draft Eastside Human Services Forum legislative agenda, which she noted had recently been updated. She noted that for the last four years, the agenda has focused on supporting access to basic needs and health services; making homelessness rare, brief and one-time; supporting older adults and people with disabilities; and strengthening early learning and youth programs. The Forum Board, which is comprised of local and regional elected officials, school board members and non-profit representatives, will meet on November 16 to discuss the issues and discuss what to support. Historically, the Eastside city councils have included the Forum's legislative agenda in their own legislative agendas or policy statements.

Commissioner Perelman asked how the issue of a \$15 minimum wage will play out on the Eastside. Ms. O'Reilly said currently workers in Seattle, Seatac and at the airport are required to be paid that amount. The Eastside Human Services Forum looked at the issue three years ago and made the decision to look at what it is calling access to opportunities, which is a much broader approach. Some who made presentations to the Forum indicated that raising the minimum wage can prohibit some folks from accessing other services because they are no longer eligible. While that is not a reason to sidestep the minimum wage issue, is it something that needs to be viewed more comprehensively. In the recently election, a measure to increase the minimum wage statewide was approved, though it does not rise to the level of \$15 per hour.

Commissioner Mercer said she did not see anything on the draft legislative agenda about diversity. She said she would like to see the agenda include something basic along the lines of supporting diversity. Ms. O'Reilly said the agenda was drafted

following concerted efforts on the part of the subcommittee members to reach out to lobbyists and advocacy groups in an attempt to learn what they will be focusing on in the upcoming session.

Ms. O'Reilly noted that while working to develop the 2016 agenda, the Forum realized it had no objective criteria on which to base decisions. Rather, good information from lobbyists about what was likely to come up during the session was relied on. In focusing on 2017, a rubric was developed for use as an evaluation tool, one element of which increases racial equity.

Commissioner Mercer said her concern was that diversity beyond just racial equity needs to be focused on given the outcome of the recent election. Ms. O'Reilly said the Forum has the latitude to add issues as they come up in the session.

Chair McEachran pointed out that equity and diversity is shown as an area of focus on the rubric and specifically references the Bellevue Diversity Advantage, the Cultural Navigator Program and the Emigrant and Refugee Coalition. He suggested that it should also reference the King County diversity statement.

Ms. O'Reilly said she and Ms. Valy participated in three meetings that focused on a number of legislative items that potentially could end up on the legislative agenda of United Way of King County. She said a racial equity screening tool was applied in coming up with a summary of how certain bills or budget items might fare. Four items made their way onto the United Way of King County legislative agenda as a result. There is no doubt that the upcoming session will have a different context for some things people have thought were going to happen. Between the United Way of King County and the Eastside Human Services Forum, efforts will continue to identify issues to support, many of which will be related to diversity and other topics highlighted by the recent election. Washington state has a history of going over and above what the federal government requires.

Chair McEachran commented that the city's diversity initiative is a model for the country to follow.

Commissioner Mercer said she appreciated that the Eastside Human Services Forum and United Way of King County will be responsive to issues as they arise, but suggested the better approach would be to be up front about the need to address diversity.

Commissioner Perelman pointed out that the concept of supporting access to basic needs incorporates the concept of diversity. She agreed that diversity generally should be given a higher profile. Commissioner Oxrieder suggested that could be accomplished by including a broad opening statement.

Ms. O'Reilly pointed out that areas that will be tracked include funding for affordable housing and homelessness, mental health, and early learning and homeless youth.

Ms. O'Reilly commented that Initiative 1433 sets the new minimum wage levels. More than 730,000 Washingtonians will be seeing raises over the next four years as the initiative gets phased in. Paid sick leave will begin in 2018. Additionally, ST-3, while controversial, includes a construction tax set aside for affordable housing related to transit-oriented development. The funds will also be available to serve vulnerable students.

Commissioner Villar observed that the new minimum wage requirements will need to be taken into account during the next budget cycle. Larger non-profits tend to increase their wages for everyone along the scale. That could trigger a need for them to seek more funding.

Commissioner Oxrieder said she recently read in the paper that Asian Counseling and Referral Service is concerned that it will need to lay off employees in order to manage the higher wage requirement.

6. DISCUSSION

A. Debrief 2017-2018 Funding Process

Grant Coordinator Dee Dee Catalano asked the Commissioners to comment on the application form and related questions, the application materials both printed and electronic, the rating/scoring sheet, the staff review forms, the team application reviews, the meeting schedule, having agencies invited to answer questions, and any other topics relating to the funding process.

Ms. Catalano reminded the Commissioners that Bellevue does not have carte blanche to determine what is contained in the joint application. The city can within reason, however, seek something different and more specific in the supplemental information that is specific to Bellevue.

Commissioner Villar recalled that one area of the application that was unsatisfactory was the percentages relative to outcomes. She said it was unusual for an agency to set a target the Commission was satisfied with. Ms. Catalano allowed that the outcomes were very generic.

Commissioner Mercer said the steps taken to standardize the application has diverted far afield from what the agencies like to use to tell their stories to the point of being completely unusable. She said she would rather return to having the agencies being allowed to use their own metrics to tell their stories, even if that makes it more difficult to compare one program with another.

Commissioner Perelman agreed and said she would prefer to limit the number of characters agencies are allowed to use to describe their programs than to standardize the questions.

Commissioner Oxrieder called attention to the question on the application asking the applicant to list up to five partnerships with other agencies. She noted that some applicants answered the question very well, but others simply provided lists. Commissioner Mercer suggested the question should be expanded to identify exactly how the partnerships provide benefit and are enhancing the services provided.

Chair McEachran said he liked the question because it points out the collaborative impact. Commissioner Mercer agreed and suggested some clarification around what specific information the question is attempting to elicit would be helpful.

Commissioner Mercer said she would also like to see the applicants asked about diversity in their hiring practices. Ms. O'Reilly said there have in the past been questions asked about cultural competence achievements within the organization. Having the question made some agencies stand out among others.

Commissioner Oxrieder observed that the question about hiring was answered by many with something like "we try to hire a diverse workforce." The statement could be interpreted as meaning they were not always able to do so.

Chair McEachran said he utilized the paper copies of the applications and did not use the electronic files at all. Ms. Leslie said some commissions, including Redmond, do not use paper at all, choosing instead to rely fully on electronic copies.

Commissioner Kline asked if there has been any movement in Bellevue toward a fully cloud-based system. Ms. Catalano said the ShareOne app allows for that, but it requires downloading a pdf of each application, which is somewhat cumbersome. All of the files on the thumb drive have already been downloaded for use by the Commissioners.

Commissioner Oxrieder said she also preferred the paper copies over the electronic files.

Commissioner Kline suggested that if there is going to be a move toward having the applications available only in electronic format, it would be good to start the process by having the Commission packets available electronically. Ms. Catalano said the only issue would lie in the fact that the Commissioners would all need to bring their own electronic devices to each meeting. Ms. Leslie noted that the Council does everything electronically, but they are assigned an iPad to use. Ms. Catalano said the Commission's packets could be scanned to pdf files and emailed to the Commissioners.

There was agreement to begin the process of having all electronic packets in 2017.

There was also agreement that the staff reviews were a very helpful tool. Commissioner Mercer pointed out that they were slightly different from the

applications as far as layout. Ms. Leslie explained that the staff reviews are based on certain criteria established by the Council many years ago. The applications are thus assessed according to the criteria, and the result admittedly does not line up perfectly with the questions in the application.

Commissioner Perelman noted that when the staff were asked to go back to some organizations with additional questions, the answers were not always in the same spot. Ms. Leslie said they were all at the end of the staff reviews. Ms. O'Reilly allowed that additional answers supplied after the staff reviews were completed were supplied separate from the staff reviews.

Commissioner Mercer said the scoring tool and the way things were weighted did not feel right. She said she would be willing to revisit it provided the Commissioners were given the opportunity to provide input. Ms. Catalano agreed and said time would be taken in 2017 before the application process begins to review and revise the tool.

Commissioner Mercer suggested the move to electronic materials should include the spreadsheet with the various different ratings in a format that can be manipulated.

Commissioner Villar commented that her scoring of the applications are often subjective as a result of other things going on in her life, even when every attempt is made to be qualitative.

Commissioner Perelman said her concern was with how the ratings are used, particularly whether or not the ratings actually define how funds are awarded to applications. An organization could be given a low rating simply because it did a poor job of filling out the application, but that may not ultimately have anything to do with the level at which the application is funded. Ms. Leslie commented that in the past the rating tool was used to assist the discussion of the initial review. The tool has never been intended to identify which applications should be funded and which should not be funded.

Commissioner Villar said it would be helpful to have a tool to identify what the individual Commissioners liked about each application, what concerns the applications raised, and what questions were generated by each application. She said she currently makes notes on the paper copies, and if the switch is made to electronic copies, there will need to be a way to continue making notes.

Commissioner Kline agreed. She said she has found that using the rating tool has added a lot of time to the process, in part because it caused her to look at applications in ways that she otherwise would not do. She said she did not find the tool necessarily useful based on how she knew the applications would subsequently be evaluated. If the questions were crafted to lead to conclusions and information that would be useful, the tool would be worthwhile. Commissioner Mercer agreed and said careful attention should be paid to the things that will really be looked at in reviewing the applications, how they should be graded, and how they should be weighted.

Chair McEachran recalled that the first funding cycle in which he participated left him glazed over. He said mentoring assisted him in getting through the process. He said it was clear by the time his second funding cycle rolled around that opinions had been formed in regard to certain applicants and the focus turned to the outcomes. He suggested that moving forward it would be helpful to have up front some sense of how the individual Commissioners are initially feeling about certain requests.

With regard to breaking into teams to review the applications, Ms. Leslie explained that there were many years in the past where all Commissioners read all of the applications. Staff would introduce each application, following which there would be discussion. The upshot was that staff was essentially leading the discussions. The move to the team approach turned the process in favor of having team members leading the discussions. From the perspective of staff, the team approach has led to more in-depth reviews by the Commissioners.

Chair McEachran and Commissioner Mercer voiced support for the team review approach. Commissioner Perelman agreed but noted that she personally reads all of the applications. Commissioner Mercer said she did the same but focused primarily on the applications assigned to her.

Ms. Leslie said a point is made to review every application equally, even where early on it is clear an application will likely not survive the review process for various reasons. Chair McEachran said the process builds credibility.

With regard to the meeting schedule, Ms. Catalano said the process is largely driven by the city's budget process. The clock starts ticking as soon as the application period closes, which for the 2017-2018 applications was two weeks earlier than in previous years. The first Commission meeting occurred just ten days after the application period closed, and the rushed process resulted in some mistakes slipping through the cracks. Some agencies were asked to make changes to their applications by staff from other cities, a fact that Bellevue staff did not have in hand by the time of the first meeting. If during the next cycle the first meeting is held a week or so later, sticking in an additional meeting in the schedule may be necessary in order to stay within the overall schedule deadlines.

Commissioner Mercer pointed out that the number of applications in Goal 1 is always large. She asked if the Commission's review could begin with Goal 4 or Goal 5 instead. Ms. Catalano noted that during the recent review process only one additional meeting was added to the schedule, and that meeting ultimately did not occur due to a lack of quorum. In the end, the Commission completed its work on time anyway, which was a testament to how well organized the reviews are and how efficiently the Commission works through and discusses the applications.

Ms. Leslie said the process would benefit from having a few more days between the application period closing and the Commission's first review meeting. Ms. Catalano allowed that the staff are motivated to not have too many additional meetings, and if moving the goals around makes sense, that can be done.

There was consensus that the approach of conducting the preliminary review without talking about money, then assigning dollar amounts during the full review, is tried and true and should be continued.

With regard to agency questions, Ms. Catalano noted that the written staff reviews included responses to Commissioner questions. Additionally, specific agencies were invited to address the Commission and answer questions directly. She said it became clear to staff that the questions to be answered in person by agency representatives needed to be known ahead of time, both so the Commission would be prepared to ask the questions, and so the agency would be prepared to answer them. There was agreement to make it known ahead of the meeting what questions would be asked.

Ms. O'Reilly said the questions asked of agencies by the Commission were not always of such magnitude that it was necessary for an agency representative to appear in person to verbally provide answers. Often when the representatives were asked to appear, they were simply asked questions they had already been asked for the staff review. Their appearance was really not necessary, unless their first answer had not been adequate.

Commissioner Villar agreed but said it was somewhat surprising how many of the respondents answered the questions differently in person. That could have been because different persons were involved.

Commissioner Perelman proposed limiting the requests to speak to a representative in person to those agencies the Commission sees as being on the bubble when it comes to funding them. The Commissioners agreed.

Chair McEachran praised the staff for encouraging agencies to read the Needs Update. He said agencies should also be encouraged to bring to the Commission on occasion some qualitative narrative regarding their work in the community.

Ms. Leslie voiced concern over the poor quality of the applications during the recent cycle, even from agencies that could rightly be expected to do better. She said during the interval before the next funding cycle she would encourage the cities provide some technical assistance to improve the quality of the applications. The approach has utilized periodically over the years.

Commissioner Mercer suggested that along with encouraging applicants to read over the Needs Update, the agencies should be informed that the Commission will be looking at specific areas, including other funding sources, diversity and collaborative impact in the community. Ms. O'Reilly agreed and suggested the technical assistance

could include explanations of what is meant by diversity, collaborative impact and use of data.

Commissioner Kline stressed the need to keep the financial part of the application as much the same as possible. The more consistent the financial information is from year to year, the easier it is for the agency to know exactly what information is important. It would be a mistake to go back to allowing the agencies to determine their own format for supplying financial information.

7. OLD BUSINESS

Ms. Leslie said the New Bethlehem Day Center in Kirkland would have its grand opening on November 16. She said the day center serves homeless families and will be a tremendous resource. A number of faith organizations came together to see the day center up and running. The facility is to be operated by Catholic Community Services, which also operates coordinated entry on the Eastside.

Commissioner Kline said she recently learned of a family that had no water in their home because they could not afford it and was too proud to seek assistance. She asked if, when a city water customer falls behind, the city could send out a notice listing available help resources. Ms. O'Reilly said during and after the recession the utility saw an increase in the number of water shutoffs. She said she could check with the utility now to see what if anything they are currently doing.

Chair McEachran mentioned that Hopelink is expanding its drop-off snack bags to include the Velocity housing project in South Kirkland. He said they would love to engage the school district to drop off snack packs for students. Ms. O'Reilly said the Backpack for Kids program sends boxes of food home with kids during school holidays. Breakfast After the Bell is a program that would require school districts with a high percentage of kids on the free or reduced lunch program to provide breakfast all morning.

8. NEW BUSINESS

Ms. Leslie reminded the Commissioners about the annual meeting of the Eastside Human Services Forum on December 14 in Kirkland. The speaker for the annual meeting will be conducting a workshop at Bellevue City Hall on December 15.

9. PETITIONS AND COMMUNICATIONS – None

10. ADJOURNMENT

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

Chair McEachran adjourned the meeting at 8:02 p.m.

Secretary to the Human Services Commission

Date

Chairperson of the Human Services Commission

Date