

The Human Services Commission approved these minutes on May 7, 2019

CITY OF BELLEVUE
HUMAN SERVICES COMMISSION
MINUTES

April 16, 2019
6:00 p.m.

Bellevue City Hall
City Council Conference Room 1E-113

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

COMMISSIONERS ABSENT: Commissioner Ma

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

GUESTS: Stan Gunno, Rita Badh, Jodie Nishioka, Ana Jimenez-Inman, Joyce Bottenberg, Sammamish

Derek Franklin, Monica Negrila, Senthis Chandran, Rebecca Smith, Susan Leonelli, Lorretta Jancoski, Matthew Meyer, Issaquah

Jonathan Stutz, Melissa Bartoletti, Diane Bell, Michelle Alten-Kaehler, Leslie Miller, Max Resiman, Dave Godfrey, Adam White, Kirkland

Anny Smith, Jacob Brown, Kristin Muscott, Vibhas Chandorkar, Alaric Bien, Sawn Roland, Redmond

RECORDING SECRETARY: Gerry Lindsay

1. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 6:10 p.m. by Chair Mercer who presided.

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

2. WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

Human Services Planner Christy Stangland thanked everyone for attending and introduced Deputy Mayor Robinson.

Deputy Mayor Robinson said she serves as a member of the Eastside Human Services Forum, as City Council liaison to the Bellevue Human Services Commission, and as Bellevue's representative for the Mental Health and Drug Dependency Oversight Committee. She said it is good to see all of the agencies rowing in the same direction and working toward similar goals. There are, however, a lot of funding dollars going to organizations that the Eastside is not taking advantage of, not because Eastside agencies are doing something wrong but rather because the MIDD staff are not thinking about the Eastside when they come up with people to do programs. However, every time new funds are presented, they say they do not have enough subjects for what they are trying to do, thus what they want to do cannot be validated. The fact is the Eastside has many people who could use the services and there needs to be a concerted effort to connect with the agencies to talk about what they are offering and what the Eastside is needing. Of particular note are the needs of the homeless population and the associated mental illness and substance abuse challenges they face. There are a number of programs being funded by the MIDD that address those issues whether someone is on Medicaid or not. A group of people should be brought together to look at what is available through MIDD funding.

3. DEBRIEF ON THE HUMAN SERVICES FUNDING PROCESS

Ms. Badh from Sammamish noted that five cities were represented, each with differences and similarities in terms of priorities, funding levels and experience. She noted that Bellevue's Human Services Commission is 32 years old while the Sammamish Human Services Commission just celebrated its first birthday. She said the intent of the meeting was to debrief on the funding process and to share information about how other commissions handle things.

Chair Mercer said Bellevue works on a two-year funding cycle. The off year is spent in developing the Needs Update and thinking about what might be funded in future cycles. A number of guests are brought in to discuss various issues and the Commissioners conduct agency visits to gain a fuller understanding of what is going on in the community. In the funding year, and prior to receipt of the applications, the Commission determines what its focus areas will be based on the Needs Update. Once the applications come in, they are divided into the goal areas. The lion's share of the applications fall into the first goal area which has to do with homelessness and homeless prevention. Each Commissioner is given a notebook containing all of the applications. While every Commissioner reads every application, the Commission is divided into groups to which specific applications are assigned for review. During the review process, the group that specifically reviewed a particular application will lead the discussion.

Continuing, Chair Mercer said there has been much debate over the years about using a scorecard in reviewing the applications. Given how many review iterations each application goes through, the Commission has concluded that using a scorecard does not work well. The first round of reviews involves a simple read-

through of each application to call out some specific points and items that raise questions. The first round also involves an initial conclusion as to whether or not the application should be considered for funding. In the second round a draft allocations exercise is undertaken. The applications are read a second time but with the staff report for each application and with answers to questions raised during the first round in hand. It is in the third round that the allocations are adjusted to fit without the available funding.

Mr. Franklin said the city of Issaquah has \$495,000 per year to allocate to human services, broken down to a base funding amount of \$383,000 and a supplementary amount of \$112,000. The Commission took a close look at and focused on the needs identified in the 2017 community needs assessment. The Commission seeks to improve its process every year. Most recently a grants mission statement was developed to guide its work, and the city's supplement to the RFP was updated. The Commission also established a funding minimum for any grant, revised and simplified the scorecard used by the Commission, changed its review and scoring assignments, and welcomed new Commissioners. The applications are scored based on five criteria. Scorecards are used and a first-round practice time has been implemented especially to help new Commissioners understand what it looks and feels like to go through the application process. The process starts with a staff review that confirms all requirements are met. In the first round scoring is done and initial funding recommendations are made for each goal area. The Commission members responsible for scoring applications within their goal area must submit their scores within five days of each meeting, and four Commissioners are assigned to each application in order to gain more detail. In the second round, refinements and considerations are made across the full range of programs, then in the third round the final recommendations are determined.

Mr. Franklin said the vision statement helps to guide the granting process and informs the scoring process. The voting process uses a thumbs up, down and sideways approach. The \$4000 grant baseline helps the Commission limit the number of grants the staff must deal with. Having a structured timeline and tracking mechanism has worked well. The equity training the Commission has undertaken has helped in applying equity principles. City staff are engaged in the process which has been shown to be very helpful. The Commission has concluded it needs more clarity with regard to the regional and local impacts of funding services. The Commission also believes it would be helpful to educate grantees on outcome measures, what they look like, how to do them and how to report them. Some of the questions on the application should be changed to make the applications more helpful getting helpful information from grantees. The Commission has often talked about how helpful it would be to have some coordination between the various commissions relative to which agencies and programs are being funded.

Mr. Stutz said Kirkland came into the year with 92 program applications from 48 different agencies seeking more than \$4 million. That represented an increase from prior years in the number of applications as well as in the amount of funding

requested. He said the applications are divided into five categories for evaluation. The applications are individually reviewed but information is leveraged from joint commission meetings and the Eastside Human Services Forum. The Commission is very diverse which is a great benefit in helping to see issues from different perspectives. The equity lens training has been very helpful as well. The City Council has been and continues to be very supportive and does not believe the Commission must always do things the way they have always been done.

Continuing, Mr. Stutz said the Commission presented the Council with three different funding options: a base level funding package totaling \$735,000; maintaining program funding totaling \$906,000; and the preferred option that totaled \$1.4 million. The Council chose to go with the preferred option, which represented an increase in funding by 35 percent. The funds come from ongoing human services funding, a one-time funding increase, and dollars from the city's public safety sales tax. The city also receives CDBG funds.

New for the 2019-2020 funding cycle, the Commission developed areas of priorities within the goal areas. Dollars were then set aside for some RFPs to address needs not being met or adequately addressed by existing programs. The priority areas were emergency services for unsheltered residents, such as shelter, day center services, street outreach and legal services, all aimed at preventing homelessness; behavioral health services, domestic violence, sexual assault services, specialized services for children, and ways to navigate the system; and supporting the foundation of the community. An RFQ was issued for \$100,000 per year for a legal aid attorney, which was identified as a need not proposed by an agency; and \$30,000 for culturally specifically renovation programs.

Ms. Smith said the Redmond Human Services Commission does many of the same things previously mentioned. Initially the group meets to decide what its priorities will be based on local and national issues raised throughout the year, such as housing, healthcare and immigration. The Commission considers how the issues fit into the services and programs provided, and what services are offered by local organizations that are in line with the identified needs.

Ms. Smith said the Commission uses the ShareOne app and finds that it is a very useful tool, though it does have some limitations and issues. The Commission received 93 applications which were all reviewed individually by each Commissioner, largely because the Commissioners were new to the process and because there was a desire for each Commissioner to speak from a place of being fully informed. The review process involved giving each application a red, yellow or green indicator. A spreadsheet was used to determine the overall financial impact when working through the applications. The applications given a green indicator were those the Commissioners believed would go through to being funded. For those with a red indicator, the applicant was asked to visit with the Commission and give reasons why the application should be funded.

One of the good things the Commission decided to do was to consider each application individually without giving consideration to whether or not it had previously been funded. The approach moved the group away from the tendency to simply fund programs that have been historically funded and toward taking a close look at each proposal. The Commission sought from the City Council an increase in funding and received a one-time increase which was used to fund some programs not previously funded, particularly programs that could help people remain in their homes, including education, child care and employment programs. The Commission went to the Council with a recommendation and a backup plan.

Mr. Gunno said the Sammamish Human Services Commission is the new kid on the block. The seven-member board appointed by the City Council met for the first time in February 2018. One of the first tasks undertaken was the development of a health and human services needs assessment for the city. The Council in March approved the assessment which was broken down into five priority areas, specifically mental wellness, basic needs, domestic violence, cultural inclusion and seniors. In April the Commission started reviewing and scoring the 72 applications received. The scorecard rated in application in terms of Sammamish needs, service system coordination, program accessibility, service units and outcomes, and agency budget. The Commission was broken into subgroups, each of which was assigned a subset of the applications to evaluate. The subgroups then presented their findings to the full Commission which in turn discussed all of the applications and on the whole accepted the recommendations of the subgroups. The Commission worked with a total budget of a little over \$249,000 and chose to seek an increase of just over \$76,000 which the Council approved.

Mr. Gunno said the Commission used a scorecard approach in working through the applications and likely will continue to do so. It yielded talking points for the group to discuss and allowed for setting aside any personal biases. The ShareOne app was not found to be user friendly and made it difficult for the Commission to use and to get feedback from some of the applicants.

Ms. Stangland opened the floor to questions from the panelists.

Ms. Jancoski with Issaquah asked how each city determines how much human services funding will be made available. She noted that Issaquah allocates \$10 per citizen.

Grant Coordinator Dee Dee Catalano said Bellevue's human services budget was set initially on property taxes and population. Each year the fund increases by a formula that takes into account population growth and 90 percent of the rate of inflation. For 2019, the budget was increased by 3.50 percent.

Ms. Miller said Kirkland does not have a formula in place, rather it has a set amount of \$735,000 as a base. Depending on the recommendation of the Commission, the

City Council tends to earmark a lot of one-time funding allocations. The challenge for the Commission is that the approach means developing multiple options.

Ms. Badh explained that the amount allocated is determined largely by the applications received. Sammamish does not have a formula in place.

Mr. Bien said Redmond has a per capita formula that increases annually based on population increases and the inflation factor. On top of that, the Commission sought and received from the Council additional one-time funding in the amount of \$100,000 for the current funding round, an amount that may or may not be there for the next funding cycle.

Ms. Jiménez-Inman asked if any of the cities had thought of dividing the budget money into local and regional pools and using a different application for each. Mr. Gunno said his Commission did not break out applications separately along those lines, but the issue did come into play when reviewing the applications.

Mr. White argued that nearly all of the issues are regional by their very nature, even those things that look local, like the Boys & Girls Club of Kirkland. If that agency was not funded by Kirkland, there would be ramifications for other cities within the region.

Commissioner McEachran suggested it would be helpful to have a breakdown of each city in terms of population, general fund revenues, human services budgets, percentage of general fund revenues, per capita spending and the methodologies used to determine the human services budgets.

Mr. Franklin said Issaquah grapples with the issue of relative importance. He agreed that there is significance to the services provided by each grantee given that most are interconnected in some way. He said the Commission tried to ferret out the things that have more of a regional focus and found it challenging. He some communication or cooperation between the cities could help get at that issue.

Chair Mercer allowed that there are applications from agencies that Bellevue views as having a regional impact, while others are viewed more as being local. The Commission wants to see agencies seeking funding from multiple sources and not just from Bellevue. In reviewing the financials, the Commission considers whether the agencies are seeking additional funds, and if so how much.

Mr. Gunno asked what Commissions do with the small grants that if funded would cost more to administer than the requested amount.

Ms. Smith said the Redmond Commission had that discussion but concluded that in some instances it makes sense for various reasons to award small grants to small organizations, particularly where a program shows the potential for filling a gap and growing into something bigger.

Mr. Stutz said he did not recall the Kirkland Commission having that particular discussion. He said the group focused on what each application brought to the table and the impact it could have if funded, even if at a lower dollar amount.

Mr. Gunno said all applications were reviewed, including those seeking low funding amounts. Most of them were folded into the “extra ask” column.

Ms. Miller said one of the strategies Kirkland uses is to ask each applicant to seek funding for all of their programs that show value. However, in shepherding public dollars, it is valid to review how much time the staff have to monitor the programs and agencies that get funded. That is one of the challenges in not having a minimum allocation amount and in growing the overall number of grants.

Human Services Planner Christy Stangland noted that Bellevue has a minimum allocation of \$5000. Chair Mercer said one criteria the Commission looks at is the financial health of the organizations seeking funding for their programs. Often smaller organizations find it a burden to do all that is required of agencies that receive funding. One question the Commission has been wrestling with is how small organizations that are serving minority populations or that are addressing a gap can break in and grow their organizations by beginning with a small grant. Bellevue staff have been asked to look into what mechanisms might be in place to address that. The Commission tends to err on the side of what it takes to fulfill all of the reporting requirements the city has.

Mr. Chandorkar asked if the city gives the commissions some guidance as to which areas should be given priority.

Ms. Smith said Redmond has received applications from large organizations seeking small dollar amounts for particular programs. She said the Commission had not received a lot of guidance from the city in that regard. The Commission focuses on its priorities and how they have changed in each funding cycle as determined by the Commissioners and by the staff.

Ms. O'Reilly said the findings from the needs assessment that is compiled every two years are presented to the City Council. The Council considers the findings and provides the Commission with direction on areas of importance, but the Commission largely is directed to prioritize the focus areas highlighted by the community itself.

Commissioner McEachran said each city has a comprehensive plan, and every Commissioner should read the section related to human services, housing and economic development. The Bellevue Council identifies its two-year priorities and the Commission works to sync them with the findings of the Needs Update.

Mr. Roland commented that if small-dollar applications are not included in the discussion process, the outcome will be exclusionary and contradictory to the charter of the Commission. He urged every Commission to do all it can to make sure every

application is considered. He allowed that there is a legitimate administrative burden that comes with handling multiple grants. The question might be what level of administrative oversight is needed relative to small-dollar grants.

Mr. Meyer noted that in Issaquah agencies are encouraged to apply for what they need. Some agencies that submitted applications seeking less than the minimum dollar amount were asked if they would be willing to increase their ask to the minimum level. He added that his observation has been that application requests for existing programs are increasing at a rate greater than the increase in available funding, and that is in addition to new applications submitted every year. He asked what other cities have in terms of methods to evaluate programs and whether their asks are commensurate with the need.

Mr. Stutz said Kirkland categorizes the applications by the goal areas and that helps the Commission gain an understanding of what is on the table. Within that, the Commission looks for areas of overlap and multiplicities. The outcomes measurement serves to help the Commission keep track of how well the agencies are doing in providing their services, and helps the agencies become more data focused.

Ms. Bell said because Kirkland is results focused, and because the Commission serves as a steward of taxpayer money, the fact that new applications are submitted every year by new organizations with no track record makes for some difficulties. The Commission recognizes that it may have to consider taking a chance on new organizations.

4. TABLE DISCUSSIONS

The attendees broke into small groups to discuss the issues of equity training, things that would have been helpful, and regionality versus locality.

5. LARGE GROUP SHARING

Mr. White reported that the group at his table talked about regionalization and how the various groups can work through that while maintaining a focus on and being responsible to their cities and the tax dollars they are charged with shepherding. He allowed that there is no one right answer but suggested there are a lot of solutions that can be identified.

Ms. Nishioka said her table talked a lot about equity training and how it affects the work of the individual commissions. She said overall the group found the equity training sessions to be a useful tool and in many ways very powerful. There was a discussion about making sure new commissioners take the equity training sessions, and councilmembers as well. There was also a discussion around capacity building and making sure smaller organizations receive the support they need in seeking grants. It was also discussed that commissioners would benefit from having some financial training to make it easier for them in reading through the financials of

organizations seeking funding. The group talked some about the outcome goals and the fact that the commissioners might benefit from training on the application and what the grantees are being asked to do.

Mr. Gunno reported that his group looked at finding a way to streamline the application process to make it easier to use. The need to conduct more site visits was discussed as well, as was the need for more outreach. Ms. Badh added that regionality versus locality was discussed in terms of funding.

Mr. Chandran said his table discussed the fact that it would be helpful for the city and the county to assist in the grant-writing process. Also discussed was the idea of providing more training relative to the main issues affecting the region and the local communities as a way of getting commission members up to speed.

Ms. Jiménez-Inman said her group focused on the need for culturally sensitive training. She said commissioners come from different backgrounds and cultures and as such assume certain things when working with specific agencies that may be totally wrong.

Ms. Negrila said one thing that stood out for her during the discussion was a statement made by Mr. Stutz to the effect that it would be helpful to have more input from clients, those who actually benefit from the funding. Ultimately the commissions exist to serve and support those in need in the community, and their voices should be heard.

Ms. Negrila commented that it was heartwarming to see the compassion evoked by the various commission members for the work they do. She said the joint session had given her more hope in the system. She noted her appreciation for the work of the staff who support the commissions. She suggested it would make sense to bolster regional efforts by putting together a regional needs assessment covering the entire Eastside, and to develop best practices to be shared among and employed by the commissions.

Ms. Negrila announced that the next joint meeting of the commissions was slated for September 17.

4. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 8:02 p.m.

Secretary to the Human Services Commission

Date

Chairperson of the Human Services Commission

Date