

*The Human Services Commission approved these minutes on November 17, 2015*

CITY OF BELLEVUE  
HUMAN SERVICES COMMISSION  
MINUTES

October 20, 2015  
6:30 p.m.

Bellevue City Hall  
City Council Conference Room 1E-113

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

COMMISSIONERS ABSENT: Commissioner Perelman

STAFF PRESENT: Emily Leslie, Alex O'Reilly, Jaime Fajardo,  
Department of Parks and Community Services

GUEST SPEAKERS: Jean Pauley, Tuan Dang, Bellevue College; Da'Yo Hutchinson, Goodwill Industries; Tiane Hulet, Jewish Family Services; Judy Faast, Kelly Graham, Hopelink; Suzanne Seivert, English Language Learners Alliance

RECORDING SECRETARY: Gerry Lindsay

1. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 6:32 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 was excused.

3. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

A. September 15, 2015

Chair McEachran called attention to the last paragraph on page 7 and suggested that in the second sentence "...do not quite get with the elders..." should be revised to read "...do not fully understand the elders..."

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



4. PETITIONS AND COMMUNICATIONS - None

5. STAFF AND COMMISSION REPORTS

Commissioner Oxrieder reported that she attended the Hopelink fundraising luncheon and said she has always enjoyed hearing clients share their stories.

Chair McEachran said he also attended the event, which came close to meeting its million dollar goal. He said he also recently read through United Way's strategic plan for 2015-2020.

Human Services Manager Emily Leslie distributed to the Commissioners' information about the King County conversation to be held in Bellevue on October 22 focused on children and youth, and those living with mental illness and substance abuse. They are looking ahead to renewing the Mental Illness and Drug Dependency (MIDD) sales tax. Prop 1 on the ballot also has to do with some of the same issues.

Ms. Leslie called attention to the flyers for the two winter shelters. She said the women and family shelter opened on October 15 and is being run by Catholic Community Services under contract with Sophia Way. It will be at Redmond United Methodist through December 30 and will then move to St. Peters United Methodist in Bellevue for a few months. The single adult men's winter shelter will open on November 1 at the Sound Transit property in Bel-Red that the city leases. The men's shelter is operated by Congregations for the Homeless

Human Services Planner Alex O'Reilly distributed flyers regarding an event coming up on November 14. Nourishing Network is a group that is focused on alleviating hunger in east King County. They operate the food backpack program at various schools in the district. In order to bring together faith communities and other community members, they have planned an event to create an action plan to support one of the tent cities.

Intern Jaime Fajardo reported that he is currently working on a report that compiles the ESL and citizenship classes available in the community.

6. DISCUSSION

A. Update on ESL Program & Funding Changes

Ms. O'Reilly introduced the panel members and thanked them for their willing participation.

Ms. Suzanne Seivert with the English Language Learners Alliance (ELLA) explained that the organization is aimed at helping newcomers adjust to life in the United States through practicing English together and social activities. The focus is not on ESL classes but rather on English outside of the classroom. The group meets at

Crossroads Mall every Tuesday for two hours to simply talk with each other. Those who participate often feel very isolated in their homes. ELLA provides an opportunity to make connections and learn small talk.

Ms. Seivert said she also teaches a class on Wednesdays called English for Everyday Life where the focus is less on book learning and more on survival in the United States. Many of the students are just learning to drive and the instruction covers what to do in case of an accident or a breakdown. Instruction is given regarding how the school system works, what vocabulary will be needed in the event of a trip to the emergency room, and the vocabulary that will be needed when returning an item to a store. Recycling, banking and the post office are also topics. Idioms and pronunciation are also addressed. Things are done to help parents with young children get their kids adjusted, including teaching them preschool songs about well-known characters.

The classes are very well attended. Those who attend represent a number of different countries, though currently the majority are from China and Russia. Many are the spouses of those who have come to the area to work at tech companies, and most on are H-1B visas which means they cannot work.

Ms. Seivert said it has been challenging to find out everything that is happening in the community around ESL. She provided the Commissioners with copies of the programs she has been able to identify and noted that the information is also on the ELLA website.

Commissioner Oxrieder asked how many volunteers ELLA has. Ms. Seivert said she attends every event and there are six other primary volunteers. There are also volunteers who randomly participate in sessions. The funding flows in primarily from the members, though matching funds from been received from Microsoft and one of the Rotary clubs recently made a donation after a presentation was made to them. The operation exists on a budget of about \$1500 per year which basically covers printing costs. ELLA has 501(c)(3) status.

Commissioner Mercer asked what the age range is for those who participate in the classes. Ms. Seivert said most are in their late 20s to mid 30s, though there are others who are older. A senior population has lately joined the group.

Ms. O'Reilly pointed out that Ms. Seivert is also very active with Eastside Pathways in the early learning collaborative.

Answering a question asked by Chair McEachran about the organization's structure, Ms. Seivert said ELLA has a board with four members. She said she builds the curriculum based on questions raised by the students and comments about what they would like to learn.

Ms. Kelly Graham, Hopelink adult education supervisor, said she oversees the GED and ESL programs for the agency. She said the programs offered are aimed at helping clients achieve stability and equip them to exit poverty. The adult education team works in sync with all of the programs offered by Hopelink. The program is part of the community and technical college system and as such is held to the same standards as the adult basic education programs offered by Bellevue College. In the ESL program, called English for Work, students develop basic language, academics, technology and employability skills while exploring career preparation topics. Classes are held twice weekly for one quarter and include online homework and one-on-one mentoring.

Ms. Graham noted that to date in 2015 the program has served 233 students, of which 78 are Bellevue residents. Sixty-three percent of the students are from households with low or very low income status. A few of the students are homeless. Because the classes are work focused, most of the students are working age adults. The majority of the students are female, Asian, White or Latino. Forty-two percent of the students in the GED program are immigrants or refugees.

Students come to the program via Hopelink's housing programs, from the foodbank and other services, and from the general community. Some are on H-1B visas and are the spouses of high tech workers. Some have visas that have expired and they are seeking asylum. With such a diverse group, there is no one-size-fits-all approach.

The list of trends being seen by the program include an increase in the number of H-1B visa holders. An immigration attorney recently gave a talk at Hopelink and talked about the increase in domestic abuse cases being seen in the H-1B visa population, often tied to the fact that they are largely homebound. The number of skilled immigrants with PhDs and Masters Degrees has increased recently and where possible they are guided through the recertification process. The number of people with low skill levels who do not fit into the fast-paced employment-transition programs has increased.

Ms. Graham said the program recently experienced a major funding cut. In fiscal year 2013-2014, funding for the program stood at just over \$144,000, but in fiscal year 2014-2015 the level of funding was reduced to just over \$76,000. Fewer dollars translates into fewer classes and fewer people helped. The community and technical college system has something called EL civics funding that typically has been used to support all English language learners, but the funds now can only be used to support English language learners who are co-enrolled in a college credit course; it is nearly impossible for an ESL Level I, II or III person to be funded through the funding stream.

Commissioner Oxrieder asked if the program is able to serve undocumented students. Ms. Graham allowed that it is.

Commissioner Kline asked how the program accommodates for students who are either undocumented or those who are not on pace for employment. Ms. Graham said funding will completely change for the 2015-2016 fiscal year and it will become necessary to rethink how programs for lower level students are funded.

Chair McEachran asked Ms. Graham about her program staff and she informed him she has two full-time ESL teachers and one full-time GED teacher.

Commissioner Mercer asked if there is any interaction between the program and the Bellevue School District and the children of English language learners. Ms. Graham said her programs are promoted within the school district and throughout past years classes have been offered for parents at the schools.

Ms. Tiane Hulet with Jewish Family Service said she teaches in the refugee and immigrant service center office. She said she is the only ESL teacher in the Bellevue office and works only part time. There is also a part-time citizenship teacher, a full-time employment specialist, and a couple of part-time employment specialists. She said the hour-and-a-half classes she teaches are held Monday through Thursday and include beginners in Levels I through III, and some who are reading at Level IV but not speaking that well. She explained that she drafts her own curriculum and determines the start and stop times and for the current year has been focused on basic language skills, academic skills for employability in specific job areas, and pronunciation skills. The largest student groups are from Persia and the former Soviet Union, though there are also Asians and those from a variety of African nations.

Ms. Hulet said the demand for ESL classes has grown over the past eight years, making it necessary to institute a waiting list. The length of the list has been mitigated by volunteers. Currently there are ten long-term volunteers, and service learning students from the University of Washington Bothell in need of a community engagement component help out as well by assisting in class and facilitating small group conversations.

The program faces a number of funding challenges. The cities of Bellevue, Redmond and Kirkland have not been as impacted by some of the legislative acrobatics over the past couple of years and it has been possible to keep the ESL program going, though there used to be three teachers and currently there is only one. There are some donors in the Jewish community who have designated funds specifically for Jewish initiatives benefitting Jews. There is a kosher food bank in operation that serves that population. But the refugee and immigrant service centers are not focused on serving the Jewish population and there are some donors who have said their funds can be used for that purpose.

Ms. O'Reilly noted that it has been reported lately in the news that refugees from Syria may be coming to the area. She asked if Jewish Family Service has talked about serving that population. Ms. Hulet said she was not aware of any specific

plans, but noted that at a recent staff meeting the focus was on the number of immigrants worldwide that get resettled in the United States.

Answering a question asked by Chair McEachran about job-centric ESL classes, Ms. Hulet said the programs offered by Hopelink and Goodwill are very good and said she specifically did not want to duplicate them.

Ms. Da'Yo Hutchinson with Goodwill Industries said the classes offered in Bellevue involve only adult basic education instruction focused on ESOL and computers. All of the classes are open to the public in general and there are no income or visa requirements, though first preference is given to those who are looking for employment. People as young as 22 and as old as 86 have enrolled to take the classes, and often it is the older students who are motivated to find jobs and who are finding them.

Ms. Hutchinson said the workshops are based on writing resumes for employment and becoming employment ready. The workshops are also open to the public, and those who participate become eligible for social services and employment search services. The Bellevue site does not offer a great deal of case management or social services. Some who come seeking employment services do not have a resume of any kind, but they often leave with an interview. Employers often come on site and conduct events, including interviews.

A part-time ESOL instructor was hired to help address the increased need. It would be ideal to have a full-time ESOL instructor. Citizenship and talk time classes are not conducted by Goodwill due to a lack of staff, a need that could be addressed by volunteers.

Commissioner Kline asked about the number of students in the classes at any given time. Ms. Hutchinson said there are about 80 ESOL students enrolled in Levels I through IV. The students can be with the program for up to a year and a half depending on how quickly they learn. Returning students are given priority. Goodwill offers GED classes but not at the Bellevue office.

Ms. Hutchinson said Goodwill seeks to remove as many barriers as possible to help the students be successful. Transportation is a big issue and the students are assisted where needed. Goodwill can also pay for uniforms required for jobs, and can pay some college tuition costs.

Commissioner Bruels asked if there are any class fees or expectations for working at a Goodwill store. Ms. Hutchinson said there are no fees or any expectations.

Ms. O'Reilly asked what language groups are being served by the agency. Ms. Hutchinson said primarily Asian and Chinese populations are in the classes.

Mr. Tuan Dang, Associate Dean of Basic Studies and the English Language Institute at Bellevue College, said Bellevue College is the largest college in the Washington state community college system. It is also the third largest higher educational institution in the state behind only the University of Washington and Washington State University. The college serves 38,000 students per year and offers bachelors degrees, transfer degrees, professional and technical certificates, continuing education, career training, and community education classes.

Ms. Jean Pauley, ESL Program Chair at Bellevue College, said the college also offers basic studies programs, including ESL and GED. The purpose of the ESL program is to help refugees and immigrants improve their English skills to further their college or career goals. The program offers six levels of English from basic literacy to advanced and serves about a thousand students per year. Seventy-one percent of the students are female. At 53 percent, the largest ethnic group served is Asian; the next largest groups are Hispanic at 22 percent, and Russian/Eastern European at 21 percent. Most of the students are between the ages of 25 and 44, though there are some as young as 19 and some as old as 80. About 15 percent of the students are low-income and receive tuition waivers to cover the \$25 class fee. The college has for the past 20 years enjoyed a partnership with the city for the Preparing For Work program, a program that is vital for helping refugee and immigrant populations meet their needs for good English skills and job training. Within the program there are three classes offered: preparing for work, on-the-job communication, and working in English. There are about 160 unduplicated Bellevue residents in the program.

Mr. Dang explained that the Workforce Innovations Opportunity Act (WIOA) was signed into law in 2014 with an expected full enactment by 2016. The Act replaces the Workforce Investment Act which had previously been the source of funding for such programs across the country at institutions of higher education. WIOA was initiated as a reaction to immigration policy reforms. As new people come to the country, it is necessary to provide pathways for them to become involved members of their communities.

Ms. Pauley said students come to the Preparing for Work program to learn how to translate their skills and experiences into jobs. The program helps them improve their English language skills and helps them focus on job readiness, including written and oral communication, resume writing, cross cultural barriers to job searches, and how to promote themselves in an interview or work situation. The students leave the class with increased confidence prepared to put their skills to use in a job. Many give back by volunteering in the ESL program and in the wider Bellevue community.

Mr. Dang said the students' transformative experiences dovetail with the objectives of WIOA which seeks to bring opportunity to all new people who come to the country. Bellevue College is obligated both morally and legally to bring the students as close as possible to what they seek. There are, however, several populations of ESL students who cannot benefit from WIOA because they do not fall under the definitions listed in the Act, including students over the age of 50, spouses of high-wage

professionals, and professional-level immigrants who only need communication skills. People come to the United States seeking their dreams, and community colleges function as engines to help make those dreams come true. Bellevue College feels deeply its obligation to address the needs of everyone in the community, even if they are not served through WIOA. Bellevue College is not a single solution but rather is a contributor to the solution in union with other providers in the community. It is only through community that a sense of belonging can be created.

Ms. Pauley said Bellevue College is an open access college and as such the institution seeks to be inclusive rather than exclusive. During the current transitional year, students are being welcomed into the program. The curriculum has been restructured from its former focus on life skills to English language acquisition and job and career readiness.

Commissioner Kline asked when the revamped curriculum was launched. Ms. Pauley said an awareness of the need to change came about last year. The team got together and presented about the change during the winter quarter, then during spring quarter they all worked to develop contextualized curriculum plans for launching during the fall quarter.

Ms. Seivert said she saw an increase in students at the same time. She noted that Hopelink has gone the same route as well, moving from basic English skills to English for work. The problem is that the new focus leaves out so much of what is actually needed by the students.

Commissioner Kline asked if the flexibility exists to put that piece back in, even if it is in a separate class. Ms. Pauley said it could be done provided a different funding source were used. Funds from the federal and state governments will, however, have to be used for the college and career classes.

Asked by Commissioner Kline what kind of due diligence has to be done with respect to the intent of the students to actually look for a job. Mr. Dang said the students self report, but the program is required to collaborate tightly with workforce education on the campus through which there likely is some tracking done.

Commissioner Villar asked if the program can serve undocumented individuals who might not be able to seek employment due to their status. Mr. Dang said the question has come up before the basic skills council. He explained that the students can in fact be served, but the program would not gain any points for them that turn into funding. Bellevue College intends to serve those students as part of the open access reality.

Commissioner Bruels commented that people come to the United States seeking opportunity, but they also come fleeing violence and war, poverty, and other problems. Sadly, some are forced to come to the United States for trafficking purposes. He asked what is being done to screen for trauma, to form interventions, and to address the issue of trafficking. Ms. Hulet said her co-workers in the Bellevue

and Kent offices would be able to speak more directly to what they are seeing. The organization's new CEO has been working on developing an approach called ladders that begins with stability and moves from there to addressing other areas such as language, housing and employability.

Ms. Hutchinson reiterated that little case management happens at the Bellevue Goodwill. However, Goodwill's case management team members are all highly skilled in those areas and where the need arises referrals can be made. Goodwill does not have any particular screening questions it utilizes; the focus is on assessing needs.

Ms. O'Reilly pointed out that staff from the King County Library System had been invited to participate as part of the panel. They serve as a source of support for folks who are not a good fit for other programs due to their specific funding streams. They offer talk time, citizenship and some ESL classes. Jubilee Reach also offers some beginning level ESL classes that draw a lot of older adults from the Chinese and other Asian populations.

Commissioner Mercer said teachers in the Bellevue School District are often the first place families engage in any sort of official capacity. There should be a tight partnership between the various programs and the district in a spirit of collaborative impact. Ms. Seivert said it is very difficult to break into the Bellevue school system. There is a lot of privacy with ESL families. They will take flyers and hand them out, but they will not provide agencies access to parents directly.

Chair McEachran commented that for several years he has had concerns about the collaborative impact in the community where there are silos of opportunity that go unmet because people do not talk to each other. He said it is clear from the conversation that the DNA of the various programs has changed radically. Hopefully each agency has good grant writers who will be able to outline the deep transition under way and the clear need for help. He said the sense of collaboration among the panel organizations is clear.

**\*\*BREAK\*\***

Commissioner Oxrieder said she was pleased to hear there are organizations doing what Bellevue College may not be able to do. She said she used to participate in an a talk time program with mostly Japanese parents at Somerset Elementary. At that time the issue was not jobs but rather depression triggered by isolation and sitting alone at home without anyone to talk to. She said she hoped to see services continue that help integrate those people.

Commissioner Kline said it was exciting to see the interaction between the different organizations. She said it was unfortunate that the representatives from the King County Library System and Jubilee Reach were not present to share their information because both of those organizations are picking up pieces at the bottom end. She noted, however, that she had been disappointed to hear that there is more than just

money that would stop Hopelink and Bellevue College from offering the lower end classes, making it all the more important for other groups to pick up the loose ends. The unfortunate issue is that the other groups are not as easy to find by those who need the services. It is an area to keep an eye on over the next year or so.

Commissioner Bruels said it was interesting to see how the eyes of the organization representatives lit up when they began talking to each other. He said he could foresee the birth of something like an Eastside ESL coalition. Ms. Leslie pointed out that there actually used to be one that somehow faded away.

Chair McEachran said his church used to host a talk time on Tuesday evenings that was hosted by Bellevue College and the state. It was not unusual to have 100 people in attendance learning basic communication skills. He agreed with Commissioner Bruels that the eyes of the various organizations were opened by hearing what their cohorts had to report. Commissioner Bruels commented on the irony that programs whose basic reason for existing is communication are not communicating with each other.

Commissioner Mercer observed that local funding will be the way to get around the new federal restrictions. The groups probably would be open to delivering their services in other ways if other funding sources could be identified.

Chair McEachran said some are trying to find ways to integrate the older parents of sons or daughters who are in the area working at tech companies.

Commissioner Mercer said the Cultural Navigator Program is another aspect. The collaborative impact cannot be emphasized enough. Commissioner Mercer said she did not doubt that the various groups are not seeing the trauma-informed issues like human trafficking, mostly because they do not ask about it. The cultural navigator could point out what to look for.

Commissioner Mercer said one question the groups should have been asked is how much is being done to get into communities whose members are not necessarily coming forward looking for help.

Commissioner Villar said the discussion was the first she had heard about WIOA and the impact it is having. That is something the Commission will need to keep in mind during the next funding cycle. Hopefully some innovative grant proposals matching the new need will be presented.

Ms. O'Reilly pointed out that there are other groups and organizations in the community that are offering ESL instruction, including the Muslim Community Resource Center and Chinese Information and Service Center.

Commissioner Oxrieder said she believed having an Eastside ESL coalition formed would be very helpful. Chair McEachran agreed but suggested it should be organized but not too formal.

Commissioner Bruels stressed it is good for the Commission to be aware of the funding issues that are having an impact on ESL programs in the community. He also stressed the need to avoid the pitfalls associated with trying to backfill for funding cuts.

## 7. OLD BUSINESS

Chair McEachran reported that along with Ms. Leslie and Parks Director Patrick Foran he presented the Commission's recommendation for CDBG funding to the Council on October 19. He said the Commission's position was convincing based on the reasoned response to questions raised regarding dollar values. It was clear the Commission has the Council's full confidence.

Ms. Leslie allowed that in conversations leading up to the Council meeting concerns were raised about the appearance of the Commission's recommendation relative to ARCH. Of course the Commission had had the same discussion in drafting its recommendation. Once the rationale was clearly explained and understood, the concerns were allayed.

Ms. Leslie reported that she attended the recent ARCH staff Advisory Group meeting. She said there were four proposals reviewed, only one of which involves a project in Bellevue. Two of the proposals were from Imagine Housing, and it was clear that the one in Totem Lake involving senior housing is a top priority for ARCH. The Bellevue project is in the second tier. A lot of process will need to take place before any decisions are made.

## 8. NEW BUSINESS

Ms. O'Reilly reported that she participated in a half-day strategic planning effort two weeks ago around the Cultural Navigator Program. Included were some of the key developers of the program. They are anticipating growth given increases in the immigrant and refugee populations, but funding is not keeping up with that growth. The organization is at a place where it simply cannot meet the need with its current staffing level. Questions were also raised as to whether or not Chinese Information and Service Center will continue being the host organization. No decisions were made and things are not operating in crisis mode currently. She said she would keep the Commission updated as things move forward.

Ms. Leslie announced that the new Grant Coordinator, Dee Dee Catalano, will take up her duties beginning October 30.

Ms. Leslie also noted that the 16 cities that participate in the joint funding application process have been meeting recently. She said she has been working with the group that is focused on revising the funding application.

The Commissioners were reminded that the November 3 regular meeting of the Commission was canceled.

9. PETITIONS AND COMMUNICATIONS – None

10. ADJOURNMENT

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

Chair McEachran adjourned the meeting at 8:39 p.m.

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Secretary of the Human Services Commission

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Date

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Chairperson of the Human Services Commission

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Date