

The Human Services Commission approved these minutes on March 1, 2016

CITY OF BELLEVUE
HUMAN SERVICES COMMISSION
MINUTES

February 2, 2016
6:30 p.m.

Bellevue City Hall
City Council Conference Room 1E-113

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

COMMISSIONERS ABSENT: None

STAFF PRESENT: Emily Leslie, Alex O'Reilly, Dee Dee Catalano, Jaime Fajardo, Department of Parks and Community Services; Councilmember Lynne Robinson

ALSO PRESENT: Leslie Miller, Kellen Baker, Karen Turner, Kimberly Scott, Margaret Schwender, City of Kirkland;

Alaric Bien, Steve Daschle, Will Maes, Carolyn Mansfield, Brooke Buckingham, City of Redmond;

David Fujimoto, Doug Strombom, Martha Sassorossi, Loretta Jancoski, Elizabeth Maupin, Mariah Bettise, City of Issaquah

Hillary Rossi, At Work!

Kim McCullen, LifeWire

Gigi Meinig, Aging and Disability Services

Meghan Altimore, Christy Becker, Hopelink

RECORDING SECRETARY: Gerry Lindsay

1. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 6:40 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 6:48 p.m.

3. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

A. January 5, 2016

A motion to approve the minutes as submitted was made by Commissioner Kline. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Villar and the motion carried unanimously.

4. PETITIONS AND COMMUNICATIONS

Ms. Gigi Meinig with Aging and Disability Services informed the Commission that a new program, called Community Living Connections, has just been developed by the agency. The program, which is funded by the Area Agency on Aging, replaces the information and assistance program and serves a far wider area and more cultures and language groups throughout King County. The program links older adults, people 18 years old and older with disabilities, their families and their caregivers to resources relative to Medicaid, nutrition programs, family caregiver programs, kinship care, care coordination, and Medicaid case management. A phone call is all that is required to tap into the program.

Human Services Planner Alex O'Reilly noted that the Eastside hub of the program is located at the Together Center in Redmond.

Ms. Leslie Miller, one of the area leads for the annual One Night Count, noted that while there was a 19 percent increase countywide, there was a 47 percent increase on the Eastside.

5. STAFF AND COMMISSION REPORTS

Human Services Manager Emily Leslie commented that over the past few months she and other city staff had met with staff from Hopelink and A Regional Coalition for Housing (ARCH). She noted that All Home, formerly the Committee to End Homelessness, has been tracking changes that have been happening nationally. One system change involves the conversion of transitional housing to permanent housing. The Seattle/King County area has one of the highest stocks of transitional housing of just about any urban area, but changing from transitional housing to permanent housing does not happen by a finger snap given the processes, procedures, commitments and agreements that must first be addressed. Hopelink was one of the first agencies to begin aligning with the new system change.

Ms. Meghan Altimore with Hopelink explained that the agency has 100 units of shelter and transitional housing operated at four different locations. Hopelink is the only agency outside the city of Seattle to have begun the realignment process. National research has shown that transitional housing sets up some artificial moves for families to have to go through. By definition, transitional housing is not temporary and it can keep families from finding stability. Because Pierce, King and Snohomish counties have so much transitional housing, owing to the Sound Families investments by the Gates Foundation, it makes the most sense to convert them to a permanent housing model.

Hopelink was chosen as an agency to turn transitional housing units into permanent housing with a full complement of services. A graduated rent structure will also be put in place to continue to help families progress economically so that they are able to make advancements toward their own self sufficiency. Hopelink's case managers found that the programs that had a transitional housing time limit yielded a different level of progress, so under the graduated rent structure, families that move in will at first qualify as homeless under the HUD standards. The housing will be provided at an affordable rent of 30 percent of their income, and along with it will come employment, education, financial literacy classes and case management so that the residents will have the opportunities needed to increase their household incomes. From there, over a period of three years the residents will go through a process of rent increases. Once the families are in a position to take on a greater share of their rent, they will chose to move out into market-rate housing.

Ms. Altimore said Hopelink Place is the first property that will be converted. The 20-unit facility opened in 2000 and has homeless families living there. Homeless families will continue to be housed there, but the units will convert from time-limited 24-month properties to what would be considered permanent with a projected average three- to five-year length of stay. Bellevue and Issaquah will be asked to formally approve the new process. The next property to be converted will be Avondale Park in Redmond, a 61-unit facility of which eight units will continue to be used for short-term shelter; the balance of the units will be converted to non time-limited units. Avondale Park has some extra federal regulations tied to it and neither Health and Human Services nor Housing and Urban Development have agreed as to what should happen; until they work out their differences, the site will continue to serve as transitional housing.

The ultimate goal is to continue serving homeless families in the community by making sure they are given all the skills and access to services they need.

Councilmember Robinson asked how the reduced inventory of shelter units will be compensated for. Ms. Altimore said the 90-day stay will still be available in the shelter units, but there will over time be a slowing of transitional housing. Hopelink is working with its community partners to make sure that a full complement of housing options will continue to be available, and will continue to advocate for more affordable housing on the Eastside. The multi-pronged approach will continue to highlight eviction prevention.

Elizabeth Maupin with Issaquah asked if there are particular things around which advocacy is needed in Olympia to support the new approach. Ms. Altimore said resources for affordable housing are always in need, as are workforce investments to make sure low-income people have access to the education and training needed to be able to get into higher wage opportunities.

Commissioner Kline asked what impact the move will have on Hopelink from a staffing standpoint. Ms. Altimore answered that the agency plans to continue with its current staffing levels. The hope is that as the families are able to move out of crisis, it will be possible to reduce staffing to some degree in favor of community-based case management through the family development program, thus no increase in staff costs is anticipated. Hopelink did choose not to keep some of its public funding that did not align with the changes and Hopelink has committed to fundraising to make up the difference.

Commissioner Villar voiced concern that the four- to five-year stay is optimistic given that there really is no moderate-income housing available in the area. She asked how the community can work on that problem. Ms. Altimore said the point is well taken. She said no one knows what the length of stay will ultimately look like. The eight Duvall Place housing units were the focus of the pilot program. There are two families there that have been there for the full six years the facility has been open, and the other six units have continued to evolve. In talks with partners Imagine Housing and Dash it is clear some households stay for long periods of time, but others very naturally move through. The anticipation is that some of the same shifts will be seen in the Hopelink housing. Affordable housing, created both with new construction and subsidies, will continue to be vital.

City of Bellevue intern Jaime Fajardo asked what the implications are for families relative to graduated rents. Ms. Altimore said the rates are preset before the residents move in. The idea behind the approach is that it will serve as an external motivator for the residents to work on increasing their incomes. However, families that are doing all they can in going to school, taking care of their children and participating in case management will not be moved out of their units if they cannot afford the increased rent, but the families not participating in their progress could be asked to leave, though only as a last resort.

Ms. Mercer asked how the rent hikes adjust over time as the market changes. She suggested that as market rates go up, those who are locked in at a very low rent will have no particular incentive to move out. Ms. Altimore said that has been part of the learning curve. The new federal funding source called Home Dollars actually dictates what the maximum rents can be, and as establishes that they can never exceed the Home maximum. Additionally, no renter can have more than a single rent increase in a 12-month period. The increases occur at six months, 18 months and 30 months; beyond that the Home changes are gradual, though the rents are still held lower than the market.

Carolyn Mansfield with the City of Redmond asked if kids will no longer be transported to their originating schools. Christy Becker, also with Hopelink, said under the Federal McKinney-Vento Act, the children of families that move are only covered for the remainder of a school year; after that the local school becomes their school of origin.

Commissioner Perelman asked if the model has been implemented on a larger scale in any city. Ms. Altimore said the Seattle Housing Authority proposed a similar model but never implemented it due to some community concerns. With the right support, the model presents the opportunity to create the throughput needed. The rapid rehousing model, which provides housing support for between three and six months, has no long-term tracking data. A study through the University of Washington just under way will track those who use the rapid rehousing resources.

Doug Strombom with the City of Issaquah asked if the program is selective in determining which populations will be served by graduated rents. Ms. Altimore said Hopelink had a permanent housing subsidy program through King County that involved ten units in the community. As the funding was winding down, those in the units who were able to take on the rent for their units were worked with to assist them in getting their incomes up. There were a couple of families for whom the case managers worked to find them appropriately subsidized permanent housing. It will continue to be necessary to work family by family to determine what will work best for them.

6. DISCUSSION

A. Joint Meeting of Eastside Cities' Human Services Commissions/Advisory Committees – Bellevue, Issaquah, Kirkland, Redmond

Following introductions, Chair McEachran explained that the focus of the meeting would be a discussion of the 2015-2016 Human Services Needs Update.

Human Services Planner Alex O'Reilly said Bellevue launched the Needs Update in the late 1980s and has revised it regularly. Over the years the report has grown to include a lot more community input, but it has always involved a core set of data-gathering techniques, specifically a phone/online survey, provider surveys, consumer surveys, and community conversations. The document has proven useful in giving a solid snapshot of the human services issues, needs and trends. Everyone needs help from time to time, but the report points out that there are those in the community who are more vulnerable for various reasons.

Continuing, Ms. O'Reilly explained that for each chapter of the Needs Update there is a discussion of what is working along with the needs. The report is divided into goal

areas in an attempt to better understand the information. There are, however, themes and trends that cut across the various goal areas and specific populations.

It comes as no surprise to anyone that affordable housing remains the top issue. Of the 400 Bellevue residents who completed the survey, 68 percent said a lack of affordable housing is a major issue. Even though the unemployment rate is lower than it was in years past, many people still report needing more than one job just to make ends meet. That is particularly true in East King County. Substance abuse is an issue that is on the rise for youth and adults. Mental health issues also continue to be a very large concern across populations. Transportation and access comes up in nearly every conversation about human services; access to good services is limited when people cannot get to them. Diversity is increasing on the Eastside and in Bellevue, and that is bringing up the need for responsive services.

The Needs Update typically includes a special focus area, which for the 2013-2014 version was the Affordable Care Act. For the 2015-2016 report the Diversity Advantage Plan is given special focus. The Plan was adopted in December 2014 and includes a great deal of information and plenty of recommendations that are already being implemented.

Ms. O'Reilly said the five goal areas were originally drawn from United Way of King County. With regard to Goal 1, Food to Eat and a Roof Overhead, she noted that under the notion that people should not be paying more than 30 percent of their incomes for housing, the fact is that about 16 percent of renters and 13 percent of homeowners in Bellevue are paying more than 50 percent of their household incomes for housing. That puts those people at risk of not having what they need to cover other expenses, and puts them at risk for homelessness. The Eastside men's, women's and families winter shelters saw increases in 2015 over previous year, and to date for the current winter the numbers are up again.

With respect to Goal 2, Supportive Relationships Within Families, Neighborhoods and Communities, it was noted that low-cost legal assistance and information and referral are clear needs. The report highlights the need for low-cost or free legal assistance to remove barriers to things like immigration information, housing and employment. There has been an increase in calls made to 2-1-1 seeking basic needs and crisis information.

Goal 3, A Safe Haven from All Forms of Violence and Abuse, covers sexual assault and domestic violence programs. The number of reported domestic violence offenses statewide increased by 25 percent between 2011 and 2012, and Bellevue's police data mirrors the national statistics. Reports of elder and vulnerable adult abuse, including exploitation, have gone up statewide.

With regard to Goal 4, Health Care to be as Physically and Mentally Fit as Possible, Ms. O'Reilly pointed out that the Affordable Care Act has allowed more people than ever before to have health insurance. However, there are still many who are eligible

for insurance who cannot afford the premiums or the co-pay. Many in the latter group are continuing to show up in emergency rooms seeking treatment, and some have found that the prescriptions they need are not in their formulary for their plan. Substance abuse is on the rise, particularly heroin. Between 2013 and 2014, heroin deaths in King County increased by 58 percent. Treatment admissions for heroin abuse were up 101 percent.

Commenting on Education and Job Skills to Lead an Independent Life, which is Goal 5, Ms. O'Reilly observed that even with full-time employment, many are struggling to make ends meet. In 2015, the state minimum wage was \$9.47 per hour, and it has since increased to \$9.67 per hour. However, many families working for minimum wage find their incomes below the federal poverty level. Child care continues to be a challenge, even for families with moderate-level incomes, particularly where there are several children in need of care and some of them are quite young. The data indicates families can be paying up to a fifth of their family income for child care, particularly where the children are placed in quality early learning centers. Additionally, people with limited English skills have a hard time finding jobs that are above minimum wage. Single adults need an hourly wage in excess of the minimum wage in order to be able to pay all of their bills without a subsidy.

Ms. O'Reilly said the report calls out certain specific populations, including older adults who have a need for long-term services and support. Most older adults will need some long-term care at some point in their lives, but only about a third are projected to have the money they will need to pay for the help. In Bellevue, it has been calculated that 61 percent of the older adult renters are paying more than 30 percent of their income for rent.

The number of older adults with disabilities who are being cared for by aging parents increases annually, in part due to higher survival rates. For parents who are in their 80s, caring for their disabled child is an increasing difficulty that could trigger an increased need for housing and care.

With regard to refugees and immigrants, it was noted that the Eastside cities are seeing increases in those populations. In Bellevue alone in 2015, there were 87 languages and dialects spoken in the Bellevue School District; as of December that figure increased to 99. The issues involving those populations include English language classes, particularly those that are focused on employment, culturally appropriate health care, low-cost legal assistance, and school and governmental systems navigation assistance. In October 2015, there were 136 kids eligible for McKinney-Vento funds; nine years ago the number was only 58.

The Needs Update includes a section on veterans in the community and the services they need. There are in Bellevue veterans from earlier wars along with veterans from more recent conflicts. It is important for human services agencies to understand what services veterans are eligible for.

Bellevue has a misdemeanor Probation Department. The probation staff report that a large number of those they work with probably encountered adverse childhood experiences early in their lives, which has contributed to substance abuse, depression and intimate partner violence.

Breakout Sessions

Following the discussions, someone from each table shared a few of the ideas highlighted.

Ms. Leslie said those at her table talked about the issue of targeted funding that was highlighted at the Eastside Human Services Forum annual meeting in December 2015. Some regional funders are targeting certain areas, which means funding for other areas is being reduced. Attention will need to be paid to that during the upcoming funding cycle. She said the discussion also focused on programs that serve the region even they are not physically located in a particular jurisdiction, a good example of which are the shelter programs that are serving a regional need. Resources within each jurisdiction are limited and difficult choices will need to be made, so it will make sense to keep in mind regional services.

Grant Coordinator Dee Dee Catalano said her group discussed transportation issues and the difficulties many face in getting to and between Eastside cities. Lack of transportation has a wide effect on the delivery of human services. The group also talked about the need to advocate more as a region to address the root cause of problems rather than just the symptoms.

Commissioner Villar said her table also discussed transportation issues and the need to fund transportation services to help people access the human services they need. The group also raised the question of whether or not the local housing issue should be viewed as a federal issue given the number of people who have come to the region from outside the state. The importance of culturally appropriate services was discussed as well and the need to provide support to fledgling organizations that are working with various cultures so they can become viable organizations with sound structures.

Jaime Fajardo said those at his table talked about trends and needs, and addressed the need for regional coordination. The discussion centered at one point on how overwhelming it can be to navigate systems and structural problems within a community. The need to communicate with the individual city councils the true needs in each community and to advocate for additional funding was talked about as well. Regionally, there is a need to be more transparent about social problems and how to go about coordinating the conversations with other cities to better improve collaboration.

Ms. O'Reilly said her group talked quite a lot about how to do better at raising awareness about the needs in the community. It is not uncommon to see a large

fundraiser to address an issue in a far-off country, but it is sometimes difficult to find the political will or community support to address clear human service issues locally. Many commissions are taking ownership and other organizations are taking the time to communicate with their political leaders, but challenges remain. The group also talked about the difficulties associated with a lack of common metrics, which makes it difficult to tell the story regarding a return on investment.

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

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

Chair McEachran adjourned the meeting at 8:30 p.m.

_____	_____
Secretary to the Human Services Commission	Date
_____	_____
Chairperson of the Human Services Commission	Date