

The Human Services Commission approved these minutes on April 1, 2014

CITY OF BELLEVUE
HUMAN SERVICES COMMISSION
MINUTES

March 4, 2014
6:30 p.m.

Bellevue City Hall
City Council Conference Room 1E-113

COMMISSIONERS PRESENT: Chairperson Perelman, Commissioners Bruels, Beighle, McEachran, Stout, Yantis

COMMISSIONERS ABSENT: Commissioner Plaskon

STAFF PRESENT: Emily Leslie, Alex O'Reilly, Joseph Adriano, Jessamyn Findlay, Department of Parks and Community Services

GUEST SPEAKERS: None

RECORDING SECRETARY: Gerry Lindsay

1. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 6:35 p.m. by Chair Perelman who presided.

2. ROLL CALL

Upon the call of the roll, all Commissioners were present with the exception of Commissioner Yantis, who arrived at 6:45 p.m., and Commissioner Plaskon.

3. PETITIONS AND COMMUNICATIONS

Ms. Gigi Meinig with the Area Agency for Aging, also known as Aging and Disability Services, PO Box 34215 Seattle, said the agency serves seniors and persons with disabilities throughout all of King County. She said she has been making the rounds of the area cities to see what they are doing with their human services dollars. She said of the 1655 seniors served in the Bellevue area, 810 are receiving some type of Medicaid services and case management. Funding from the federal and state governments flows through the Area Agency for Aging and the advisory council determines how the funds are to be put onto the street.

Answering a question asked by Commissioner Bruels, Ms. Meinig explained that Aging and Disability Services serves as a subcontractor to the state for in-home Medicaid case management services. DSHS is the front door and its focus is case management for people in facilities.

Commissioner Stout said she serves on the Downtown Livability Initiative CAC. She said the group recognizes that Bellevue's senior population is increasing, yet little has been done to address issues of accessibility. She suggested that Aging and Disability Services should send someone to make comments at each of the meetings to keep the issue at the forefront.

Human Services Planner Alex O'Reilly pointed out that former Human Services Commissioner Berta Seltzer is chair of the Aging and Disability Services Planning and Allocations Committee. Beverly Hayden, current Network on Aging member, also serves on the committee, and Cathy Von Wald, the city's Enterprise Manager and former coordinator for the Network on Aging, previously served on the committee.

4. STAFF AND COMMISSION REPORTS

Commissioner Beighle noted that along with Commissioners she recently visited The Sophia Way. She said it was learned that the agency will be impacted by the proposed King County Metro cuts in that the bus stop closest to their shelter will no longer have bus services after 6:00 p.m. The shelter does not open until 6:45. The shelter is averaging between 25 and 40 ladies at the shelter during the day. A nurse comes in once a week and a dental van visits the shelter two or three times each month. Legal services are also provided, and volunteers have been coming in to assist in getting shelter residents signed up for healthcare coverage. Foods for dinners are donated, and dry foods are brought in to serve at breakfast. The goal is 21 beds per night and the shelter has a wait list. Eastside residents are given priority. The ladies are all given chores to do, and there is a gardening program. Each lady is given a handcrafted quilt to use in the shelter and to take with them when they leave. A safe parking program at the church has also been implemented on a pilot basis.

Commissioner McEachran said he participated in the visit and was struck by the cleanliness and sense of home. The shelter is safe and secure and the staff respond deeply to each individual person.

Commissioner Stout said she would like to see more places where women could drop in and spend the day if they are not feeling well or are experiencing a period of emotional crisis, rather than having to spend the day on the streets.

Commissioner Stout said the City Council at its March 3 meeting was given an update regarding the work of the Downtown Livability Initiative CAC. She noted that affordable housing was highlighted as an issue under consideration. The Council also discussed the fact that her term on the Human Services Commission, along with the term of Planning Commissioner Hal Ferris, will be ending before the work of the CAC is completed; the Council has concluded that both should remain on the CAC until the final report is submitted.

Ms. O'Reilly informed the Commissioners that Bellevue Fire Cares is a program being operated by the Bellevue Fire Department. Based on a model from Spokane, case management is provided to 9-1-1 system frequent flyers identified as having long-term needs. The Bellevue program involves students from the University of Washington School of Social Work. The program also has two interns, one from Eastern Washington University and one from the University of Southern California.

Ms. O'Reilly reported that she will be attending the Redmond Human Services Commission on March 10 to give a short presentation on the Needs Update, and will give a similar presentation to the Probation Advisory Board on March 20.

5. DISCUSSION

A. 2015-2016 Funding Focus Areas

Ms. O'Reilly called attention to and asked for comments on the draft focus areas document reflecting the Commission's conversation at its February 20 meeting.

Commissioner Beighle said staff did an excellent job of capturing the overarching factors in the rewrite. Commissioner McEachran concurred and noted his particular pleasure with the wording of paragraph five.

Commissioner Stout said she was pleased to see the section supporting the full spectrum of community needs. She suggested, however, that the document should clearly reaffirm the five goal areas and the Commission's intention to continue funding critical infrastructure.

Commissioner Beighle called attention to the second paragraph on page 2 under "technical assistance" and suggested the second sentence is awkwardly worded. Ms. O'Reilly agreed it could be better written.

6. DISCUSSION

A. Mid-Biennium Review: Service Units and Annual Outcomes

Grant Coordinator Joseph Adriano said the mid-biennium review was different from the one produced two years ago. It discusses service unit performance by program as was the case previously, but it includes a section written by the agencies regarding their successes and challenges for their quarterly reports. He added that the outcomes measures were not included because a way had not been found to present the information in a way that would actually be useful. The outcomes statements will be useful when it comes time to assess programs for allocations and they will be incorporated into the staff reviews, so including them in the mid-biennium review would be somewhat redundant.

Mr. Adriano explained the matrix listing each of the funded programs along with their respective contract service units and the progress made toward the first-year goals. He noted that programs that had not met at least 90 percent of their service unit goals were flagged and subjected to a special conditions calculation to determine the cause.

Ms. Leslie said at the end of the year agencies that have not met their contract thresholds are asked for an explanation of the factors involved. Where there are reasonable explanations, the full contract amount is usually paid out, but over the years there have been occasions when agencies were paid less than the contract amount because they had not met their contract service unit goals.

Commissioner Stout commented that in the past some of the goals set by the agencies have been unrealistic, adding that in fact the service units actually delivered have been closer to reality than the goals.

Chair Perelman pointed out that during the last funding cycle there was discussion at the Commission level that some of the agencies were coming in with numbers that were very conservative. She said she hopes that in the next funding cycle the numbers presented will be more realistic in terms of the actual need. The fact is many of the agencies shown on the mid-biennium report as having reached their goals could in fact use more money to provide even more service units.

Mr. Adriano said he has had conversations with agencies in off years and in the months leading up to the application process in which he has shared with them the desire of the Commission to see agencies ask for what they really need, not just for what they think they can get. In most cases the talks have not yielded increased asks, in part because the agencies have said they did not want to appear to be greedy.

Commissioner Bruels said if by greedy an agency could mean it is feeling sheepish about its expenses, but it could also mean they are looking to be good stewards of the funds that are available. In the case of the latter meaning, they should be coming in asking for everything they need for the populations they serve in order to adequately fulfill their missions.

Commissioner Stout pointed out that the Commission has never operated on a zero budget basis. Traditionally the focus has been on giving agencies essentially what they received previously, plus a cost of living increase if there are sufficient funds. The agencies that come in seeking a ten percent increase, but which year after year are awarded only a cost of living increase, will naturally tend to be gun shy in filling out their requests.

Commissioner Yantis pointed out that the needs far exceeds the funds available for the Commission to allocate to address the needs. If all agencies were honest in asking for what they really need, the requests versus the available dollars would be

substantially out of balance. Furthermore, Bellevue's dollars are not intended to serve residents of other jurisdictions, which is why agencies are directed to obtain funding from a wide base of funders. It therefore stands to reason that the number of service units delivered will not accurately reflect services to Bellevue residents. The only way to fully correlate Bellevue dollars to Bellevue clients is for Bellevue to be the sole funder of a program. It might be more helpful to know how many service units are delivered using all funding sources.

Ms. Leslie clarified that for most programs city dollars do not purchase service units. The money is primarily used for staffing and other operating costs. Only in a handful of instances do Bellevue dollars pay for direct service units.

Commissioner Yantis suggested that given that information it would make more sense to look globally at how well agencies are doing rather than zeroing in on the number of service units delivered.

Mr. Adriano allowed that there are a lot of caveats regarding the demographic information in the mid-biennium report. He said there are difficulties associated with drawing conclusions about the population demographics from the data, though it can generally be said that the funded programs are targeted toward lower-income people. The usefulness of the demographic information collected is questioned every year by the city and the agencies; it is collected only because other cities want it.

7. DISCUSSION

A. Mid-Biennium Review: Agency Successes and Challenges

Intern Jessamyn Findlay said the agency narratives have been part of the mid-biennium reports since 2012 and are intended to give some insight into what is going on with the various agencies. She said in parsing the data, the most often cited successes were social connections, housing and employment, followed by mental health. The list of challenges included funding and organizational infrastructure. The number of agencies submitting narrative reports for 2013 ranged from 44 in the second quarter and 78 in the third quarter. The vast majority of the narratives highlighted were successes.

Ms. Findlay suggested the city should continue to encourage cross-agency social and service connections; where the work of agencies complement each other, funding dollars are stretched. She also suggested the need to continue tracking the rapid rehousing model that is changing the way housing is done in King County. The living wage debate that is going on regionally should also be closely followed.

Commissioner Bruels said he found the report to be outstanding and helpful.

8. NEW BUSINESS

Ms. Leslie reminded the Commissioners about the ARCH housing workshop slated for March 6 from 6:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. She asked the Commissioners wanting to go to RSVP the ARCH staff so there will be sufficient food and chairs.

Ms. Leslie also noted that a draft of the Human Services Element of the Comprehensive Plan will be presented to the Commission at its March 18 meeting. It will be the main agenda item.

Mr. Adriano said workshops for the agencies are coming up. He said they will be geared more toward new users, including previously funded agencies with new staff who have never used the website before. The first workshop will be in Seatac on March 12, and the second will be in Redmond on March 18.

Ms. Leslie commented that applications to fill the Commission seats that will be vacated in May will be going out soon. The Commission's Council liaison Councilmember Chelminiak will determine when the interviews will occur.

9. PETITIONS AND COMMUNICATIONS - None

10. ADJOURNMENT

Chair Perelman adjourned the meeting at 7:55 p.m.

Secretary to the Human Services Commission

Date

Chairperson of the Human Services Commission

Date