

The Human Services Commission approved these minutes on November 19, 2019

CITY OF BELLEVUE
HUMAN SERVICES COMMISSION
MINUTES

October 15, 2019
6:00 p.m.

Bellevue City Hall
City Council Conference Room 1E-113

COMMISSIONERS PRESENT: Chairperson Mercer, Commissioners Amirfaiz, Jain, Kline, Mansfield, Piper

COMMISSIONERS ABSENT: Commissioner Ma

STAFF PRESENT: Alex O'Reilly, Dee Dee Catalano, Christy Stangland, Toni Esparza, Department of Parks and Community Services; Councilmember Robinson

GUEST SPEAKERS: Jerry Kroon, Eastside Legal Assistance Program

RECORDING SECRETARY: Gerry Lindsay

1. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 6:00 p.m. by Chair Mercer who presided.

2. ROLL CALL

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

3. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

A. September 4, 2019

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

B. September 17, 2019

A motion to approve the minutes as submitted was made by Commissioner Mansfield. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Jain carried without dissent; Commissioner Piper abstained from voting.

4. ORAL AND WRITTEN COMMUNICATIONS – None

5. COMMUNICATIONS FROM CITY COUNCIL, COMMUNITY COUNCIL, BOARDS AND COMMISSIONS – None

6. STAFF AND COMMISSIONER REPORTS

Commissioner Piper said he recently had the honor of joining the Bellevue Essentials class and acting as one of three commissioner liaisons during their mock commission meeting.

7. INFORMATION FOR THE COMMISSION

Mr. Devin Konick-Seese introduced himself as the new human services intern. He said he is working on a dual masters program at the University of Washington in social work and public administration. He noted that he had previously worked at Compass Housing Alliance and Asian Counseling and Referral Service.

7. DISCUSSION

A. Eastside Legal Assistance Program (ELAP) Update

Human Services Manager Alex O'Reilly welcomed Mr. Jerry Kroon, Executive Director of the Eastside Legal Assistance Program, the civil legal aid provider for east King County. The program began in 1989 providing programs strictly by volunteer attorneys. That is a function ELAP continues to provide at some 35 different clinics monthly. During 2019, the clinics will reach over a thousand people, all of whom are low-income at 200 percent or below the federal poverty level. The second value stream began in 1995 on the hiring of the first staff attorney to provide services to victims and survivors of domestic violence. A part-time staff attorney was hired in 1995 and requests for services in that area immediately overwhelmed the ability of the organization to keep up. There are now four full-time staff attorneys that work only on domestic violence. During 2019, they will handle some 380 cases countywide.

Mr. Kroon said a couple of years ago a program was started in conjunction with the King County Prosecutor's Office. Under the program, ELAP employees are assigned to the two King County courthouses to serve as legal navigators for victims of crimes. They come to the prosecutor's office, they give testimony and a deposition, and the ELAP employees work with them and handle things like protection orders and parenting plans. The clients are all low-income residents. The program is the first of its kind in the nation. Harvard University is currently conducting a study on the public/private program. The goal for the first year was to help 160 cases, but in fact 643 clients were assisted. Well over 3000 clients have been worked with since the start of the program, with clients seeking assistance an average of 3.2 times each for additional referrals.

A fourth program called the medical/legal partnership program was started a year

ago. The program involves attorneys working with low-income persons in medical clinics to help solve what are referred to as health-harming legal issues. For instance, a client may be experiencing asthma triggered by mold that their landlord will not address. Often a letter from an attorney can push a landlord to make the needed repair. The program has been very effective in helping what medical clinics call super users. The program enjoys relationships with a number of different health clinics, including Seamar, International Community Health Services, and Healthpoint.

Mr. Kroon said a new program was recently launched in Kirkland at the request of that city's human services commission. The program involves having an attorney work with low-income Kirkland residents primarily on housing stability issues but also on other issues. The program has been operational for only about a month but great things are expected to come out of it.

The chief legal officer for Amazon, wrote an article in *Fortune* magazine in June 2019 in which he discussed the need for civil legal aid and its importance to communities and companies. The article pointed out that for every dollar of civil legal aid spent in Alabama, the state realizes \$11.95 in immediate and long-term benefits from other social service issues. Solving medical/legal issues can help to bring down medical costs. Keeping a person housed addresses the housing crisis. A study in Florida showed that for every dollar spent, seven dollars was saved. The Legal Service Corporation, which is funded by Congress, would like to see one civil legal aid attorney for every 5000 qualified low-income people in the country. Currently in Washington state there is one civil legal aid attorney for every 11,000 qualified people, while in east King County there is one for every 22,000 qualified people, and they are his six attorneys. The more the ratio can be reduced, the better the return on investment in social services there will be. A study done in 2015 by the Office of Civil Legal Aid in Washington found that on average a low-income person has nine legal issues ranging from minor to major. Survivors of domestic violence, however, average 18.2 legal issues.

Chair Mercer asked if on the medical side ELAP addresses billing and legal questions. Mr. Kroon said the program does cover those issues. He said ELAP also does a lot to address immigration issues. He said in November 2016 he received a phone call from the executive director of Northwest Immigrant Rights Project who reported being swamped by phone calls. A Know Your Rights workshop was held late that same month that was attended by some 250 people. The Mayor, police chief and superintendent of schools all attended and shared the message that in Bellevue people take care of each other. Since then one Know Your Rights workshops has been held each month on average. ELAP does not provide representation for immigrants in court, rather it refers clients back to the Northwest Immigrant Rights Project.

Mr. Kroon said having good representation in court is essential. Nationwide, a person representing themselves seeking a protection order from a court has a 33.5 percent chance of getting the order granted. With a hired attorney, their chances increase to

65 percent. The four ELAP attorneys who do nothing but protection orders have a win rate north of 95 percent. Admittedly, not every case is taken on under the approach of using protection orders as a shield rather than a spear.

Commissioner Kline asked if the legal navigators working at the courthouses are attorneys. Mr. Kroon said they are not. When the program started there were five organizations that each hired an attorney. A room was set up in the courthouse in which the five attorneys worked. A navigator was hired to triage cases, which freed up attorney time to work on other things. Referrals out are made for other human service issues.

Chair Mercer said she was anxious to see how the Kirkland program works out and how the cases handled differ from those addressed through other ELAP programs. Mr. Kroon said King County gave ELAP some funding for an attorney at the Domestic Abuse Women's Network in Kent. The number of clients the attorney can see compared to a traditional attorney's office is three times higher. The same is expected to be the case in Kirkland.

Chair Mercer thanked Mr. Kroon for his report and comments.

Deputy Mayor Robinson took a moment to address the King County Homeless Alliance. She said King County made a presentation to the City Council about their plans to pull together a leadership group comprised of two people from the Seattle City Council, one Sound Cities representative, two individuals experiencing homelessness, and various county representatives. The idea is to really attack the homelessness problem being experienced. The county will be putting a lot of money toward addressing the problem. She also suggested the Commissioners should review the Mental Health and Drug Dependency annual report and pay particular attention to how effective the dollars spent were by putting money toward dealing with the chronically homeless. The reported success rate was in the 90s percent range. Where everyone works together, the needle on homelessness can really be moved.

Deputy Mayor Robinson said the City Council had a spectrum of responses. At one end of the spectrum was an aversion to participating in the program before waiting a year to see what happens. At the other end of the spectrum there was a desire voiced to see some of the MIDD dollars directed toward issues being dealt with on the Eastside, and wanting a seat at the table. She said since then she has met with representatives from the King County Executive's office and discussed having people experiencing homelessness in a decision-making role in lieu of someone from an Eastside city. The City Council strongly believes it should have a seat at the table and be part of the decision-making process. It turns out Bellevue was not the only jurisdictions to express that sentiment. The thinking now is that maybe there should be two tables, one informational board and one decision-making board. That approach will not guarantee Bellevue having a seat at a table, but the city is pushing hard for it. The county wants to track numbers by collecting data, including names and birthdates. Congregations for the Homeless has indicated that very few

homeless persons shy away from giving information of that sort. No decisions have been made to date.

Answering a question asked by Chair Mercer, Deputy Mayor Robinson said the concern for Eastside cities is that without direct input they will be told how to run their programs, or told what programs to run. There is data in hand from the Bellevue programs being run that show success, and the city should in fact be informing the decisions by those successes.

Commissioner Kline asked how the county group is intersecting with the shelter that will potentially be built in Bellevue for all of King County. Deputy Mayor Robinson said the property that they originally thought King County was going to give to Congregations for the Homeless must now be purchased. There will, accordingly, be no obligation to follow the county's directives once the property deal goes through. However, some of the programs people who are experiencing homelessness participate in are funded by MIDD dollars. Many of Bellevue's homeless are not even signed up for Medicaid and Congregations for the Homeless is doing a push to get folks signed up so they will be eligible for more programs through the county that utilize Medicaid dollars. The county will not be running the facility in Bellevue.

Chair Mercer said she would be interested to see how the county chooses to go about cracking the nut around rental assistance as an approach to addressing homelessness. Deputy Mayor Robinson said the topic has not been raised at any MIDD meeting she attended, but noted there is complete agreement that preventing homelessness is the most cost-effective approach.

Commissioner Kline said the problem is that the current approach to rental assistance involves funding the overhead of several agencies that are all providing the same service. The approach is very inefficient. If there were some unification of the process, dollars now spent on overhead could be used to address the actual problem.

Deputy Mayor Robinson said the MIDD is currently working to put together a program that is very much like Eastside Pathways. It will allow for tracking all the assistance received by individual clients, and who the providers are assisting with funds.

Deputy Mayor Robinson said the other thing talked about with the county representatives was the fact that there were more than 300 homeless children in the Bellevue School District last year. When 30 Bellevue was built, which had 60 units available for affordable housing, only three Bellevue School District families were given units. People from all over the area were brought in to fill the other units, including a family from Federal Way. A Bellevue School District family was actually housed in Federal Way, which means that child now must be bussed by the district to school in Bellevue. It is questionable as to whether that is really the best practice. The representatives allowed that the situation was one of their worst ideas.

Commissioner Amirfaiz asked if lessons learned from the Ten Year Plan to End Homelessness are being applied to avoid making the same mistakes again. Ms. O'Reilly said there was a report compiled by an agency called Focus Strategies. It was presented in December 2018 and it included a review of what was going on in Seattle/King County. The report has served as the basis for some of the changes Deputy Mayor Robinson outlined. One of the lessons learned was that there was no central authority, and one of the main recommendations was to create a single consolidated point organization with the authority to do planning and funding recommendations. Also recommended was including more lived-experience voices on advisory committees and the governing board.

Going back to rental assistance, Deputy Mayor Robinson said one of the biggest factors relating to mental illness in children is childhood stress, and one of the biggest stressors is unstable housing. Childhood stress is one of the biggest deterrents to early childhood learning. Everything points to stable housing and making sure the next generation does not have the same issues prior generations have had.

8. DISCUSSION

A. Review Draft 2020-2024 Consolidated Plan for Housing and Community Development and Review of the Analysis of Impediments to Fair Housing

Grant Coordinator Dee Dee Catalano explained that the Consolidated Plan is updated every five years. The current plan is about to expire. The plan outlines the overarching priorities and goals the city will use to guide its CDBG spending over the stated five-year period. The Annual Action Plan spells out the specific projects that will carry out the priorities and goals for each year of the consolidated plan. The first year action plan is always part of the Consolidated Plan; the subsequent annual plans are produced and considered individually.

The Consolidated Plan is a large document with many different sections, the most important of which is the goals section in that it guides all spending of CDBG funds. The goals carry out the priority needs and must be broad enough to encompass any project that might be considered over the five-year period covered by the Consolidated Plan. The goal outcome indicators are estimated numeric targets for the life of the plan, while the Annual Action Plans include specific goal outcome indicators relative to how many people will be served each year.

The priority needs in the plan are broad and all encompassing. They include affordable housing, making homelessness rare, brief and one time, and community and economic development.

Ms. Catalano said Goal One is focused on preserving and improving access to affordable housing. The activities that fall under the goal include the major and minor home repair programs and anything related to affordable housing. Goal Two is aimed

at providing shelter and services for people experiencing homelessness through activities such as services that prevent or divert people from homelessness, the provision of case management and other services for people experiencing homelessness, and supporting the construction of emergency shelters. Under Goal Three, enhance community and economic development, the activities include all public services, the Microenterprise Assistance program and other economic development programs, and public facilities.

Ms. Catalano informed the Commissioners that the 30-day comment period on the plan started October 4 and would end November 5 when the Commission will hold a public hearing. Once the Commission approves the Consolidated Plan, it will be submitted to the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) and once the federal budget is approved the city will receive its direct entitlement for 2020.

Turning to the Analysis of Impediments to Fair Housing document, Ms. Catalano explained that it was prepared by King County on behalf of the HOME consortium cities, which are the four cities that receive their CDBG dollars directly from HUD. The plan is required of all jurisdictions that receive CDBG funding. Each of the four cities, which are Auburn, Bellevue, Federal Way and Kent, will along with King County adopt the Analysis of Impediments document.

There are no big surprises in the key findings outlined in the document. King County has become more diverse; low-income and immigrant communities experience disproportionate housing needs; housing prices have increased dramatically; and field testing has shown some evidence of housing discrimination. The goals aimed at addressing those issues include investing in programs that provide education and enforcement of the fair housing laws; more housing for vulnerable populations; more housing choices; more affordable housing overall; and reporting annually on the fair housing goals and progress made.

Ms. Catalano said the fair housing testing done did not include representative sampling. Done by the Fair Housing Center of Washington, the testing was done on two topics. The first was discriminatory policies in the housing industry, which include a required willingness to grant reasonable accommodation and reasonable modifications, along with a willingness to accept alternate sources of income, such as vouchers and disability income. The second area tested was for discriminatory differential treatment against classes that are protected by law, including race/color, national origin, disability, gender identity, and housing choice voucher recipient. The tests were conducted via email and telephone inquiry, as well as site-based testing with persons posing as potential renters from both protected classes and non-protected classes.

A total of 16 discriminatory policies tests were done throughout King County. In seven instances there were violations. There were 66 differential treatment tests conducted, 34 of which were in the Northeast subregion. Of those, 18 violations were registered. The remaining 32 tests were conducted in South King County, and 14 violations were

registered. Of the six tests conducted in Bellevue, there were three violations observed.

The recommendations made following the testing were to conduct additional fair housing testing in 2020; to increase fair housing training for property managers and landlords, and to make violators aware of their actions and bring them into compliance with fair housing law. Ms. Catalano noted that CDBG planning dollars can be used for that kind of activity.

Commissioner Kline asked if those that failed the testing were notified about their failure. Ms. Catalano explained that the testing organization only provides notification where there is a repeat violation. In this instance, no landlord was tested more than once. Should there be future violations by a landlord, there will be a letter sent out indicating they violated certain policies.

Deputy Mayor Robinson asked if there is any service offered in Bellevue along the lines of the Housing Justice Project in Kent, which works with people who have been wrongfully evicted. Assistant Director of the Department of Parks and Community Services Toni Esparza said ELAP offers similar services, including their Know Your Rights seminars.

9. DISCUSSION

A. Status of the Human Services Needs Update

Human Services Planner Christy Stangland said she along with Ms. O'Reilly and intern Megan Farwell have been working to develop a new format for the Needs Update. She explained that the Needs Update is a compilation of quantitative and qualitative data, an analysis of health and human services trends and issues that affect the quality of life of Bellevue residents, and a forecast of the most likely future aimed at helping the city prepare for changes in human services in a quickly changing environment. The document guides the funding recommendations made by the Commission. It also directs the work of the Human Services Division staff and provides information for other city departments, community groups, agencies and regional planning efforts.

The need to change the format of the Needs Update is predicated on the notion that the current format is too long and not always read. It is also difficult to pull useful information from it, and often includes information that is duplicated in the various chapters. The Commission-proposed recommendations for changing the document include shortening it; keeping the goal areas and the specific populations; utilizing clear headings and identifying information in each chapter; removing the explanation in each goal area explaining why the area is important; highlighting the community voice; and removing agency specific information without data.

To make the document more usable, the format was streamlined to improve consistency between sections. There is an outlining statement at the beginning of each chapter. Key findings have been added at the beginning of each chapter. A date threshold for old data has been set. The community voice portion has been moved to the beginning of each section. The overview has been redesigned, and the document was shortened by removing duplicate information, agency information without data, and old data points.

Ms. Stangland noted that the goal area structure includes an outline of what is in the chapter, followed by key findings. Where possible, each topic area is broken into three areas: community voice, which includes the community conversations, key informant interviews, the phone and online surveys, and the provider and consumer surveys; prevalence, which is all the data used to show the need; and the service trends outlining what is happening in the community. Each chapter will include charts and quotes. All population-specific data will be moved to the appropriate chapter.

The structure of the specific population chapters will begin with key findings, followed by an overview of the specific population. Information will be included under each relevant goal area along with additional issues for consideration. The general layout will be the same as for the goal areas with regard to community voice, prevalence and service trends, but without subheadings, and with regard to including charts and quotes throughout the chapter.

Referring to the issue of removing old data, Commissioner Kline said during the discussion there was some apprehension on the part of some Commissioners given that sources of information were drying up. The concern was that removing all old data could leave some topics without any data. Ms. Stangland said that has not turned out to be the case. The removal of old data did trigger the need to do a little more research in some areas to assure having relevant local data. Ms. O'Reilly added that staff also looked at the national data picture for specific issues, comparing it against local, county and state data.

Ms. O'Reilly commented that the Needs Update is produced every two years. The new modified version has been formatted with direction from the Commission. The final document will be presented to the Commission at the first meeting in January. Up until that time, pertinent and up-to-date data will be added to the document.

Chair Mercer commented that in past years the Needs Update has included a special topic. Ms. Stangland said the special topic in the upcoming document will be homelessness. Ms. O'Reilly said the decision was made to carry over the topic given how much has been done by the city on the issue, including the new year-round shelter for men. The work being done at the county level will also be captured in the homelessness focus area.

Commissioner Piper voiced his support for the format and commented that it is very responsive to the feedback provided by the Commission.

Commissioner Amirfaiz asked if it were possible to get data on truancy rates, suspensions and referrals for counseling from the school district. Ms. O'Reilly said she certainly could ask. Commissioner Amirfaiz said it would be good to have the information and have it correlated with ethnicity and race.

10. OLD BUSINESS

Ms. Catalano reported that the Commission had previously asked about Microenterprise Ventures receiving additional money should there be funds available. She said the organization was in fact very excited to hear that might be a possibility and indicated they could either offer another business basics course, or more in-depth courses to graduates of the business basics course. Additional funding could also be used to offer some one-on-one financial coaching in English or in Spanish.

11. NEW BUSINESS

Ms. O'Reilly informed the Commissioners that the City Manager's Office has taken on the task of assigning an iPad to each member of the city's boards and commissions. All agenda information will be posted to the iPads in a platform called Legistar and the move will facilitate going paperless. The rollout has already begun and the Parks and Community Services Board and the Human Services Commission will be next in line to migrate to the new system, likely in November. Training on use of the iPads and Legistar will be provided, either one-on-one or in small groups of fewer than three Commissioners. Each Commissioner will also be assigned a city of Bellevue email address.

With regard to the schedule, Ms. O'Reilly noted there would be two meetings in November. She added that the only meeting in December would be the annual holiday party held jointly with the Parks and Community Services Board.

Chair Mercer said she would not be able to attend the November 5 meeting.

12. CONTINUED ORAL COMMUNICATIONS – None

13. ADJOURNMENT

A motion to adjourn was made by Commissioner Piper. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Amirfaiz and the motion carried unanimously.

Chair Mercer adjourned the meeting at 7:47 p.m.

Secretary to the Human Services Commission

Date

Chairperson of the Human Services Commission

Date