

The Human Services Commission approved these minutes on September 7, 2017

CITY OF BELLEVUE
HUMAN SERVICES COMMISSION
MINUTES

July 6, 2017
6:00 p.m.

Bellevue City Hall
City Council Conference Room 1E-120

COMMISSIONERS PRESENT: Chairperson Villar, Commissioners Kline, Ma, Mercer, Oxrieder

COMMISSIONERS ABSENT: Commissioners McEachran, Perelman

STAFF PRESENT: Alex O'Reilly, Dee Dee Catalano, Department of Parks and Community Services; Councilmember Lynn Robinson

GUEST SPEAKERS: None

RECORDING SECRETARY: Gerry Lindsay

1. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 6:04 p.m. by Chair Villar who presided.

2. ROLL CALL

Upon the call of the roll, all Commissioners were present with the exception of Commissioners McEachran and Perelman, both of whom were excused.

3. PETITIONS AND COMMUNICATIONS – None

4. STAFF AND COMMISSION REPORTS

Councilmember Robinson reminded the Commissioners that during the winter of 2009 an unsheltered person died. She said she was a member of the Parks and Community Services Board at the time and when asked about the notion of creating a temporary winter shelter for the homeless at Crossroads Community Center, the Board was generally supportive. Once opened, the shelter was completely full within two nights, making it clear that the homeless situation was more acute than first realized. The following year the winter shelter was opened again but at a different location in the community, all without complaints or issues. Sound Transit's purchase of land to construct the light rail line included an office building that will be torn down, so the decision was made to convert the building into a temporary winter shelter for men only. The Council has since determined that a permanent winter shelter for men

is needed, a decision that kicked off a two-year period during which staff investigated a number of different possible sites in the city. The recommendations were narrowed down and the focus quickly turned to the Eastgate site because King County was willing to donate part of the parking lot of the county health facility, meaning the city would not have to pay for the land. Imagine Housing came in with an offer to help create housing that would function as supportive housing. She said it has been her opinion that the city should do more than just shelter people, and that more should be done to get them into stable housing. The Eastgate site, in partnership with Congregations for the Homeless to provide support services, and with Imagine Housing, can serve to get people off the streets and into a shelter and ultimately into stable housing.

Councilmember Robinson said the Council took the Eastgate site to the community even though it has been public knowledge all along. Half the community thinks it is a great idea and the other half think it is a terrible idea. The Council has been listening to the concerns voiced and agrees there were questions to be answered, but Eastgate has been established as the preferred site. When the issue of whether or not the Eastgate Operating & Maintenance Facility East site should even be considered came to a vote before the Council, the other two possible sites, Lincoln Center and the Sound Transit maintenance and operations site (OMFE), were carefully considered. It was realized that there is much that remains unknown about those two sites, and even if everything were to fall into place, it would take much longer to get either of those sites up and running, it will cost more, and access to transportation will be limited. The Council voted to continue looking at Eastgate but to also look at the other two sites. The staff continue to recommend the Eastgate site. The hang-up with the OMFE site is that the city signed an Memorandum of Understanding that outlines what the city expects Sound Transit to do with the property that includes the creation of buildable parcels to support multifamily housing, office and some retail space.

Commissioner Mercer asked when the Council will make its final decision. Councilmember Robinson said the decision to pursue the Eastgate site has already been made by the Council. Until and unless the Council decides otherwise, that is the site that will go forward. A development agreement has not yet been signed, however, and crafting it will take into account the concerns of the community.

Commissioner Mercer stressed the need to work hard at making the shelter successful wherever it lands. She asked what the Commission should do to bring that about. Councilmember Robinson said there is research showing that no matter where a homeless shelter is sited, no one will welcome it. However, once a shelter is up and running, the community is generally fine with it. She said that gives her hope. No one has ever done what Bellevue intends to do, namely put a homeless shelter in an affluent community, so there are no statistics to rely on. The development agreement will outline all of the issues everyone is concerned about and will also protect the men who will utilize the shelter. A draft of the development agreement should be reviewed by the Commission with an eye on what success will look like for a shelter in

Bellevue. Clearly there will need to be community buy-in.

Commissioner Ma said it was his understanding the shelter would be a low-barrier facility. Councilmember Robinson confirmed that and explained that simply means the men will not have to present identification to be allowed in. That, of course, will mean there will be no police background checks. The intent is for the city to build the shelter and have it operated by Congregations for the Homeless. There will be support services in the shelter and at the county health site. Imagine Housing will build housing behind and above the shelter that will be open to men and women. The shelter will also function as a day center. The fact is, the bulk of the men currently using the shelter are known to the shelter operators and many of them have jobs, which is why having good transit connections is vital. One option might be to operate the permanent shelter as a medium-barrier facility and to operate a separate low-barrier facility just in the winter months.

Commissioner Kline commented that many in the community are concerned the shelter will attract the homeless from other areas. The reality is that the low-barrier individuals are already in Bellevue and they are better off in the shelter, and the community itself is safer by having them sheltered.

5. DISCUSSION

A. Review of 2018 Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Applications

Grant Coordinator Dee Dee Catalano allowed that the spreadsheet should have included a line item for program income, which can be reprogrammed into another project. She also noted that the 2018 CDBG amount of \$1,080,847 was only an estimate. Three outside applications were received along with the Major Home Repair Program and the Planning and Administration applications. Up to 15 percent of the annual allocation can be spent on public services and those funds are awarded on a two-year cycle along with the general funds, which has already been determined for 2018.

Councilmember Robinson noted that for the last two years there have been funds left over that go into the Major Home Repair Program. She said it was her understanding that the funds can also be spent on a community center. Ms. Catalano said that is one way any extra funds can be allocated. She said HUD has specific guidelines that define eligible activities. The funds can be used for things like sidewalk and sewer projects, but only in low- or moderate-income neighborhoods. There are additional costs and administrative oversight involved in using funds for public facilities.

Human Services Manager Alex O'Reilly said the Commission annually establishes a contingency plan for how to address receiving either more or less than the anticipated allocation. The Major Home Repair Program has historically been able to spend extra funds in a timely fashion.

Councilmember Robinson asked if the Home Repair funds can be applied to multifamily rental units. Ms. O'Reilly said the city has prioritized the funds to be used for single family units occupied by the owner. Councilmember Robinson pointed out that one of the city's big pushes is to retail affordable housing, usually by partnering with agencies to purchase run-down developments and keep the rents low. If CDBG funds could be applied to rehabilitating units to retain units, it would be money well spent.

Commissioner Kline said historically CDBG funds have been allocated to ARCH for that very purpose. However, HUD monitoring has become much tighter and ARCH has not always been able to spend the funds in a timely manner, and has not always been able to identify projects in Bellevue. Ms. O'Reilly added that staff worked with Senior Planner Mike Kattermann and Associate Planner Janet Lewine during the development of the Affordable Housing Strategy, which includes a component that would involve expanding the Home Repair Program using other than CDBG dollars. As far as rehabilitating units is concerned, all units in the entire building must be affordable. Funds can be provided to an apartment owner to effect repairs in a unit rented to a low-income person, however that triggers a lot of oversight requirements.

Commissioner Kline pointed out that the total amount requested by the various CDBG applications was less than the projected 2018 allocation. Ms. Catalano said that was the case.

Commissioner Kline referenced the statement in the Bellevue Boys & Girls Club application indicating that CDBG funds can be used to purchase appliances and cabinets but not to pay for the work to install them. Ms. Catalano explained that installation would trigger the Davis-Bacon Act requirements for the entire project, increasing the overall cost and oversight activities.

With regard to the Bellevue Boys & Girls Club application, Commissioner Kline commented that the last time the agency was funded they were just over the threshold of serving 51 percent low-income kids. Ms. Catalano said the application states that 71 percent of their clients are low- or moderate-income. Commissioner Kline said she would appreciate having an explanation of how they came up with the 71 percent figure.

Answering a question asked by Commissioner Kline, Ms. Catalano said ARCH declined to submit an application for funds, and noted that the organization had not applied in 2016 either. The issue they face is having to spend the funds within the spending guidelines, which requires them to have a project ready to go.

Commissioner Kline asked staff if they were aware of any potential projects for which an application might still be made. Ms. Catalano said she was not aware of any.

Chair Villar asked if CDBG funds could be used to effect the repairs needed to the

current winter shelter in the Lincoln Center. Ms. Catalano said staff looked into using CDBG funds for that project but learned that because the building will eventually be demolished, putting CDBG funds into the building would be an ineligible activity. Ms. O'Reilly added that the money could be spent on the permanent shelter facility as soon as it ramps up. She said the city is currently in good shape relative to the spending limits. The projections regarding the 2018 federal budget are scary given that the President's budget zeros out CDBG altogether. It remains to be seen what Congress will do and when. Ms. O'Reilly added that over the years CDBG funding has risen and fallen, but this is the first time it has been proposed to be completely zeroed out. Advocacy groups are contacting their representatives about the benefits of the CDBG program.

Commissioner Ma asked if CDBG funds could be used for other public projects in the event requests do not add up to the allocation. Ms. Catalano said they can be, but because such projects trigger the Davis-Bacon Act, the amount of administrative work involved for such a small amount of money is overwhelming. Additionally, only 15 percent of the allocated funds can be used to provide public services, and traditionally those dollars have been set aside for Jewish Family Services. The Home Repair Program and Planning and Administration do not count as public services as defined by HUD. Ms. O'Reilly said the city could do some marketing to make it known to agencies that there are funds available and what they can be used for. Given the uncertainties going forward, staff would rather depend on doing a second RFP later in the year.

Ms. Catalano said the applications would be discussed again at the Commission's next meeting. The preliminary recommendations will be the subject of a public hearing on September 7th, then the Commission will develop a final recommendation and contingency plan to be forwarded to the City Council.

6. OLD BUSINESS

Ms. O'Reilly said it was suggested that the Commission should on occasion order pizza for the meal as a break to the usual sandwiches. She allowed that could be done and noted that there would need to be some agreement as to what kind and how many. There was consensus to order at least two and to have one of them be a meat pizza and one only cheese.

7. NEW BUSINESS

Ms. O'Reilly reminded the Commissioners that there would be no Commission meetings during August. She also pointed out that there were some meeting dates starting in September without a full agenda of items to discuss and encouraged the Commissioners to say what they would like to see covered.

Commissioner Oxrieder said she would like a report on what United Way has accomplished since changing all of its rules. Ms. O'Reilly said a representative could

report on their new focus on youth that has replaced their older adults programs.

Commissioner Mercer commented that Hopelink is also operating under a new model that does not include transitional housing and it might be helpful to get an update from them. Ms. O'Reilly said she would check with their staff.

Chair Villar said she would be interested in hearing from recent college graduates who are Bellevue residents about the job market. Ms. O'Reilly said the Eastside Pathways model runs from cradle to career and they may have some pertinent information. She said she would check with their staff.

Commissioner Oxrieder said she recently received an email from Eastside Pathways listing all of their committees but noted that nothing was included about what any of the committees have actually done. She said it would be helpful to have someone come and provide some information.

Commissioner Oxrieder said the Commission would benefit from having a report on the coordinated entry system. She also asked about plans for getting together with other human services commissions. Ms. Catalano said discussions are under way about making changes to the application, and added that once there is a draft to discuss she would bring it before the Commission. Ms. O'Reilly said a joint meeting is planned after the first of the year that will focus on reviewing applications through the lens of implicit bias.

Commissioner Mercer asked how reviewing applications without an implicit bias plays into the idea of stressing the need to pay attention to diversity and bring it to the forefront. Ms. Catalano said staff has been working with the City's Diversity Initiative staff to develop a training session for agencies on cultural competency, racial equity and diversity. Two training sessions are scheduled, one on September 11 and one on September 18. The intent is to inform agencies how to better serve diverse populations.

Ms. O'Reilly reported that at the Commission meeting on July 18 two staff from the Diversity Initiative will attend and report on the work done so far.

Commissioner Mercer noted that Councilmember Robinson had indicated the Commission should in some way be involved in drafting or reviewing the development agreement for the Eastgate shelter. Ms. O'Reilly said she would check with the staff who are assigned to the project and would communicate with them the desire of the Commission to be involved in some way.

Commissioner Kline highlighted the need to schedule a few agency visits. Commissioner Ma said he would like to visit Hopelink, particularly their transportation and Affordable Housing Programs. Commissioner Kline said it would be good to visit Eastside Baby Corner. Ms. O'Reilly suggested visiting the India Association of Western Washington. Commissioner Ma and Chair Villar mentioned Bridge

Ministries.

8. PETITIONS AND COMMUNICATIONS – None

9. ADJOURNMENT

Chair Villar adjourned the meeting at 7:48 p.m.

Secretary to the Human Services Commission

Date

Chairperson of the Human Services Commission

Date