

CITY OF BELLEVUE  
HUMAN SERVICES COMMISSION  
MINUTES

June 17, 2024  
6:00 p.m.

Bellevue City Hall  
Room 1E-113

COMMISSIONERS PRESENT: Chair Singh, Commissioners Gonzalez, Imfura, Phan  
COMMISSIONERS REMOTE: Commissioner White  
COMMISSIONERS ABSENT: Commissioners Rashid, Wong  
STAFF PRESENT: Christy Stangland, Toni Esparza, Donna Adair, Ruth Blaw,  
Saada Hilts, Andrew Ndayambaje, Gysel Galvez,  
Department of Parks & Community Services  
COUNCIL LIAISON: Councilmember Zahn  
POLICE LIAISON: Not Present  
GUEST SPEAKERS: None  
RECORDING SECRETARY: Gerry Lindsay

1. CALL TO ORDER

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

2. ROLL CALL

All Commissioners were present with the exception of Commissioner Phan, who arrived at 6:01 p.m., and Commissioners Rashid and Wong.

3. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

A. May 6, 2024

A motion to approve the minutes was made by Commissioner Imfura. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Gonzalez and the motion carried unanimously.

B. May 20, 2024

A motion to approve the minutes was made by Commissioner Imfura. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Gonzalez and the motion carried unanimously.

C. June 8, 2024

A motion to approve the minutes was made by Commissioner Imfura. The motion was seconded

by Commissioner Gonzalez and the motion carried unanimously.

#### 4. ORAL AND WRITTEN COMMUNICATIONS

Faye Chien, community wellness and social services director for the non-profit Kin On Healthcare Center, which was founded in 1985 to serve underserved and underrepresented Asian seniors in King County. At the Bellevue location the organization provides evidence-based health and wellness workshops and social service to keep seniors physically, mentally and emotionally active under the goal of helping them age well in place. The Passionate Volunteer Navigation program received funding from the city in 2022. The program collaborates closely with people in the community to provide culturally and linguistically appropriate wellness programming and resources. Last year there were 35 volunteer instructors who conducted 1902 classes. The Thriving Connections program, which also received funding from the city in 2022, focuses on fostering social and cultural wellbeing through promoting proper nutrition, meaningful social connections, and efficacy. Social isolation is prevalent among Asian seniors. Inflation and rising housing costs have squeezed the resources of the already marginalized community. Continued funding from the city will enable continuing the provision of services to the Asian senior community.

Jeff Cory, one of three interim executive directors at Northwest Education Access, a non-profit organization working throughout King County in support of opportunity youth, including in Bellevue for the last ten years. Opportunity youth are young adults who are not in school and who are not working. The goal is to help them get reconnected to education and eventually to a career. It is estimated that there are about 20,000 opportunity youth in King County. Northwest Education Access is the only program specifically designed to help opportunity youth get back on track. Young folks are met where they are at with a focus on helping them develop a plan for their specific career goals. The organization fills a gap in services in Bellevue in that it is the only college access program specifically for low-income students that have left the traditional pathways.

#### 5. COMMUNICATION FROM CITY COUNCIL, COMMUNITY COUNCIL, BOARDS AND COMMISSIONS

Councilmember Zahn stated that in early May as part of the Comprehensive Plan update the City Council adopted more ambitious affordable housing targets to produce or preserve 5700 housing units in the next 20 years. The Council is also updating the city's procurement diversity inclusion plan, which originally was created in 2016. The intent is to remove the barriers to getting contracts with the city for small and diverse firms. Also in May the Council received an update regarding the Safe Parking pilot program. In the month the program has been open, 15 families have been served, two of which have already moved into stable housing. Within the remaining 13 families, there are 30 children. As the program continues to develop, programs for the children will be created.

Continuing, Councilmember Zahn said the Council has adopted a candidate profile for the city manager position. The Council voted to interview the interim city manager as the next step before deciding to pursue a national search with an outside consultant. On May 30 the Eastside

Leadership Initiative was launched by the Bellevue Chamber of Commerce. The event with a number of non-profits offered business leaders the opportunity to learn about the various non-profits in the community. The Eastside Human Services Forum hosted a virtual session on May 16 focused on data. On June 25 there will be a longer discussion on the topic with the theme being systems of oppression in human services and the unintended consequences.

On June 18 the realtors will be hosting the 30<sup>th</sup> annual housing issues briefing at Meydenbauer Center. Realtors are interested in making sure the city is bringing online all different levels of housing in terms of affordability.

Commissioner Phan asked how long the Safe Parking pilot program is set to run. Councilmember Zahn said the pilot is for one year, after which it will be evaluated for continued funding. The building being used is not a permanent building. While city owned, there are plans for future development of the space. Those in the program sleep in their cars in a secured fenced area, and use the building for cooking and the like. Each participating family is referred by 4Tomorrow.

6. STAFF AND COMMISSIONER REPORTS – None
7. INFORMATION FOR THE COMMISSION – None
8. OLD BUSINESS – None
9. NEW BUSINESS

#### A. Human Services Application Review

Chair Singh noted that at the June 8 special meeting the Commission collaborated with community members and human services staff to develop preliminary recommendations for funding.

Human Services Manager Ruth Blaw said much has been done toward developing funding recommendations, but there remains a lot to do. Commissioners with a conflict of interest in regard to any agency under consideration for funding should make that known, avoid participating in the discussions around those applications, and not participate in the voting regarding those applications.

Councilmember Zahn reported being a member of the board of Sophia Way and Hopelink.

Ruth Blaw noted that the three workgroups from the special meeting were all represented, and said the planner for each group would summarize the work done by each group. It was noted that following the special meeting, the planners realigned the work with the strategic plan and the Council priorities, and in a separate document made sure the budget is balanced.

Human Services Planner Andrew Ndayambaje reported that Group 1 focused on Goal Area 1, housing stability and food security. There was a good discussion. Most of the recommendations

made were aligned with the strategic plan and the Council priorities. The recommendations relative to the dream bucket list included fully funding the Council priorities in terms of shelters, transitional housing, eviction prevention programs, and some other programs. The dream bucket list totaled a little over \$1.7 million.

Human Services Planner Saada Hilts said Group 2 addressed Goal Area 2, legal services and supportive services. The conversation was very productive and the group recommended funding for general supportive services, legal services, and youth mentor programs. After some discussion, the staff adjusted some of the recommendations to better align with the strategic plan, and to avoid spreading the available funding too thin. Some recommended funding that was not aligned with the Council priorities, and the team wanted to fully fund some general services and mentoring services programs, and those recommendations, totaling \$740,000, were moved into the extra funding column.

Human Services Planner Christy Stangland said Group 3 focused on Goal Area 3, safety from abuse and violence, Goal Area 4, mental and physical health, and Goal Area 5, education, employment and support. The group dealt with the fact that there is limited flexibility in regard to the housing stability funds. The group added funding for dental, education and employment, and went over budget in the end. Staff took into account feedback from the group, the strategic plan and the Council priorities in taking steps to balance the budget. The additional column totals just over a million dollars and includes funding for programs recommended for funding, and programs not recommended for funding. The group added an extra column given some reluctance in determining where the extra funds should fall.

Ruth Blaw shared with the Commissioners a spreadsheet combining all three groups, including the extra funding column. The Commissioners were reminded that shown in red on the spreadsheet were the Housing Stability Program dollars, which are funded differently and which are less flexible.

With regard to Goal Area 1, Chair Singh proposed increasing the allocation for Application 7, Sophia Way, by \$20,000, either by taking the funds entirely from Application 2, Porchlight, or by taking \$10,000 from Porchlight and \$10,000 from Application 4, Friends of Youth.

Commissioner Phan voiced reluctance to taking anything from Friends of Youth.

Chair Singh suggested \$10,000 could be taken from Application 1, Archdiocesan Housing, an application that is recommended for full funding, and \$10,000 from Application 2, Porchlight, and transferring the funds to Application 7, Sophia Way.

Commissioner Gonzalez also opposed taking funds from Friends of Youth, preferring to take funds from Porchlight.

Commissioner White agreed to take \$10,000 from Application 1 and giving it to Application 7.

The consensus was to move \$10,000 from Application 1 and transfer it to Application 7.

Answering a question asked by Chair Singh, Ruth Blaw explained that Application 17, Bellevue LifeSpring, had requested more than \$2 million for rental assistance. The initial recommendation from staff based on the priority of prevention eviction was \$120,000. The group concurred with the staff and proposed adding an additional \$30,000 to the dream column.

Chair Singh proposed funding Application 18, Cancer Lifeline, at the \$10,000 level, and to include \$5000 in the dream column. There is a clear need for assistance to those undergoing cancer treatment. The funds could be taken from rental assistance.

Commissioner Gonzalez voiced support for not making the change, and the other Commissioners concurred.

Turning to Goal Area 2, Ruth Blaw noted that many of the applications were not able to be funded with their original amounts. Many of the asks are in the dream column, and those numbers can be increased if the Commission believes that in an ideal situation they would get more funding. Department of Parks and Community Services assistant director Toni Esparza added that the dream column is important when it comes to communicating the message that more funding is needed for the important services.

Chair Singh said the group discussed putting \$100,000 in the dream column for Application 64, Centro Cultural Mexicano. There was consensus to make that change.

Commissioner Phan asked what the reasoning was behind not recommending funding for Application 62, 4 Tomorrow, other than in the dream column. Human Services Planner Saada Hilts said the conversation focused on other areas for which the agency was funded and on how to get funds to 4 Tomorrow applications in other goal areas that were not funded.

Councilmember Zahn asked why so many applications in Goal Area 2 were not recommended for funding, and why the dream column amount does not reflect the full requested amount.

Commissioner Gonzalez suggested putting the full ask in the dream column for Application 53, Bellevue School District, and Application 62, 4 Tomorrow.

Commissioner Phan said it was very difficult for the group to come to grips with the funding. Given unlimited funds, each application would be fully funded. What ended up in the dream column were the amounts the group would have given if the funds were available.

Saada Hilts said the group did in fact recommend funding for all of the areas. In trying to align things with the strategic plan and Council priorities, the recommendations ended up getting shifted into the dream column. Toni Esparza added that the allocations in the spreadsheet are balanced. Adding funds to one application requires removing funds from another.

Commissioner White agreed with Commissioner Phan in that the group was focused on what was available to allocate. The dream column is more of a yes or no reality. There was one application in Group 1 one the group chose not to fund because someone in the group had had multiple bad experiences with the organization. Funds were added to the dream column, but

based on the discussion, the decision was made to take a step back from that organization.

Community Development Block Grant Administrator/Housing Repair Specialist Donna Adair said the group 2 group was not focused on the extra dollars, and did not have time to capture what that should be.

Ruth Blaw encouraged the Commissioners to loosen their thinking about the dream column and to feel free to increase those numbers to amounts the Commission would allocate should there be dollars available.

Councilmember Zahn commented that during its retreat, the Council agreed that human services funding is important, particularly in light of the fact that AARPA funding has ended. The Council expects to receive from the Commission recommendations regarding a list of applications that should be funded but which are not able to be fully funded within the \$6.9 million. More than just a wish list, the applications in the dream column should reflect the actual need, not just something it would be nice to have. Rather than being called the dream column, it should be called the full need column.

Commissioner Phan cautioned against moving through the list of applications too quickly. Accordingly the focus was turned back to Goal Area 1, applications 1 through 7, with particular attention given to the full need column.

Toni Esparza said with regard to the previous action to take \$10,000 from Application 1, Archdiocesan Housing, that same amount should be added to the Application 1 full need column. Additionally, the increase of \$10,000 for Application 7, Sophia Way, should be deducted from the Application 7 full need column.

Turning to applications 8 through 12, Ruth Blaw noted that each application was fully funded when including the full need column. The same is true of applications 13 to 16, and for applications 18 to 23, but not for application 17.

Commissioner Phan questioned why fundraising by Bellevue LifeSpring had fallen by such a large amount. Ruth Blaw said a number of agencies generally have indicated that fundraising incomes are only a fraction of what they were before Covid. Andrew Ndayambaje pointed out that agencies are missing ARPA funding.

With regard to applications 24 through 30, Ruth Blaw noted that only applications 26 And 27 were not fully funded.

Toni Esparza noted that Application 26, Housing Connector, and Application 27, Imagine Housing, use funding from the Housing Stability Program. Toni Esparza said either application could be funded with general funds, but the Housing Stability Program dollars cannot be moved elsewhere. The full need column could include general fund dollars.

Commissioner Imfura proposed adding to the full need column for Application 26 the amount necessary to bring the full amount to \$100,000.

Commissioner White explained that because Application was for a program new to Bellevue, the review group elected to not include any dollars in the full need column. The group wanted to wait and see how the program does after its first year. Toni Esparza clarified that the program is not new in Bellevue and is in fact already operational on the Eastside. The city, however, has not previously contracted with the organization.

Chair Singh suggested adding the amount needed to the full need column for Application 26 to bring the total up to \$100,000.

Ruth Blaw turned to applications 31 through 39. Andrew Ndayambaje pointed out that after a full discussion, the review group recommended adding \$12,500 to the full need column for Application, 31, Backpack Brigade.

Commissioner White allowed that the group spent quite a lot of time on Application 31. The group agreed that adding to the full need column was not the perfect solution.

Commissioner Phan noted generally that more funding is needed for food. All of the applications in the category should be fully funded, except for Application 32, Bellevue LifeSpring. Renewal Food Bank, Application 35, is seeing a remarkable number of community members, and more affordable housing units are set to come online in the area where the food bank is located. The suggestion made was that the full need column for Application 33, Eat Happy, should show \$55,000; for Application 34, Hopelink, the full need column should show \$136,400; for Application 42, Sewa International, the full need column should show \$85,000.

Christy Stangland said the reason for Bellevue Lifespring's negative fundraising numbers was that the agency took a significant amount of funding from its reserves and showed it as fundraising for 2023. Toni Esparza added that the city wants agencies to have reserves.

There was agreement to accept the suggestion of Commissioner Phan relative to Applications 33, 34, and 42.

With regard to the full need column for Application 32, Bellevue Lifespring, Commissioner Gonzalez proposed adding \$25,000. The other Commissioners concurred.

Turning to Applications 43 through 46, Ruth Blaw noted that Application 44, Essential First, was not fully funded, and that the full need column included \$10,000. There were questions raised by the review group as to whether the program is as direct support as some of the other non-food providers. Application 45, also Essential First, was also not fully funded; neither was Application 46, KidVantage.

Commissioner Phan said no other organization donates feminine hygiene and hygiene products at the volume Essential First, Application 44, does. To see no funding recommended at all is worrisome.

Andrew Ndayambaje said the discussion by the review group focused on the fact that the agency

is being funded for the services through other programs. The Application 45 program does include the distribution of essential hygiene supplies to local food banks and other partners, and the review group took that into account.

Toni Esparza clarified that an agency funded to distribute food cards is not allowed to turn around and use the money for hygiene kits.

Commissioner Phan said both food and basic hygiene products are needed. To not include anything in the full need column and to not fund the requests, the message is that the Commission does not believe basic needs are not a priority. Application 44 should be funded in the recommendation column at \$10,000. There was agreement among the Commissioners to make that change.

Commissioner Phan proposed taking \$10,000 from Application 45, Essential First. Under Application 44, the agency is buying product and making the kits. Under Application 45, the agency works with a distributor to get products out to partner agencies. There was agreement with the suggestion of Commissioner Phan.

There also was agreement that the full need column for Applications 44, 45 and 46 should reflect full funding.

Moving to Goal Area 2, Ruth Blaw said the first application not recommended for funding and without funding in the full need column was Application 50, King County Bar Foundation.

Commissioner Phan asked what reasoning the review group relied on in choosing not to fund Application 50 or put anything in the full need column. Donna Adair said the group felt the services location is not very accessible given that it is in Seattle. The group initially concluded the application should be funded with \$5000, but given that the minimum contract amount is \$10,000, the group elected not to fund the application at all.

There was agreement to put \$10,000 in the full need column for Application 50.

Commissioner White proposed including \$38,000 in the full need column for Application 51, Indian American Community Services. There was agreement among Commissioners to do that.

With regard to applications 52 through 61, Toni Esparza shared that the review group discussed wanting the agencies to be funded. The lack of available funding meant all of the recommended funding had to go into the full need column.

There was consensus to include full funding in the full need column for Application 52, Assistance League of the Eastside, Application 53, Bellevue School District, Application 54, Crisis Connections King County 2-1-1, and Application 55, Crisis Connections Teen Link.

Donna Adair explained that the review group wanted to fund Application 56, Crisis Clinic, Washington Warm Line, at \$5000, but given the minimum contract amount, the decision was made not to recommend funding at all.



There was agreement to include the full ask in the full need column.

Donna Adair said the review group chose not to recommend funding for Application 60, Issaquah Food and Clothing Bank, simply because the food bank is located in Issaquah and as such would not serve Bellevue residents.

Commissioner Phan said the program does in fact serve Bellevue residents and suggested putting \$12,000 in the full need column. The other Commissioners concurred.

For Application 61, Youth Eastside Services, there was agreement to include the full ask in the full need column.

## 11. ADJOURNMENT

Chair Singh adjourned the meeting at 8:00 p.m.