

CITY OF BELLEVUE
HUMAN SERVICES COMMISSION
MINUTES

July 1, 2024
6:00 p.m.

Bellevue City Hall
Room 1E-113

COMMISSIONERS PRESENT: Chair Singh, Commissioners Gonzalez, Phan, Rashid, and Vice Chair White

COMMISSIONERS REMOTE: None

COMMISSIONERS ABSENT: Commissioners Imfura, Wong

STAFF PRESENT: Toni Esparza, Donna Adair, Asma Ahmed, Ruth Blaw, Saada Hilts, Andrew Ndayambaje, Gysel Galaviz, Department of Parks & Community Services

COUNCIL LIAISON: Councilmember Zahn

POLICE LIAISON: Major Mark Tarantino

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 Commissioners Imfura and Wong.

3. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

June 17, 2024

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

4. ORAL AND WRITTEN COMMUNICATIONS

Chair Singh took a moment to note that under Ordinance 6752, the topics about which the public may speak during a meeting are limited to subject matters related to the city of Bellevue government and within the powers and duties of the Human Services Commission. Additional information about the new rules of decorum governing conduct of the public during meetings can be found in Ordinance 6752.

Mallory Gustav, vice president of community services for Hopelink, thanked the Commission for its leadership and continued partnership. The Family Development Program (FDP) is unique in that it is a voluntary case management program that aims to stabilize families by increasing housing stability. Low-income families are only one crisis away from losing a stable home, which is why the FDP is so important. The program diverts families from entering the homelessness system. Many of the families served by the program do not qualify for other services provided to homeless families in that the focus is on keeping them in their homes. The program focuses on resource connection, and the services provided are tailored to the individual families and their needs. In calendar year 2023, FDP provided 628 case management hours to 49 families in Bellevue, which was about 153 individuals. Half of the funding to support the program came from the city of Bellevue. Sixty percent of the families served are BIPOC families. Families are enrolled in the program for an average of 530 days, and about 98 percent of the families that exit the program meet the goal of remaining stable in their housing. That success rate is a testament to the effectiveness of the program. There are currently 35 Bellevue families on the wait list. The FDP case manager is very well known in the community, has been serving families in the program for ten years, and is very rooted in the Russian community in Bellevue. Bellevue's funding supports the critical need and continuation of the program.

Alex Tsimerman began with a Nazi salute and called the Commissioners dirty damn Nazi antisemite pigs. A few weeks ago the city brought against the speaker criminal cases using an address that has not existed for ten years. Because it was not possible to come to the judge, an arrest was made followed by two days in jail. All of the case is a fraud. The prosecutor and the police lied under oath. The speaker reported winning two of the cases. Prosecution of another case continues because the city wants to stop the speaker. For many years not one honest policeman in Bellevue has been found.

Chair Singh informed the speaker that the Commission has nothing to do with the police department. The speaker said the focus was on human service and now the city government prosecuted the speaker four times. It has never happened before in state of Washington history. It is a huge problem, a fundamental problem. The Council interrupts in every meeting and made a special rule to prevent speaking. The Commission is part of the system, part of the corruption. The Commissioners are fascist Nazi gestapo and antisemites.

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

Councilmember Zahn reported that the city accepted a grant in the amount of \$3.1 million for home electrification and appliance rebates for heat pump incentives. Another agreement with Puget Sound Energy for \$850,000 is available for heat pump incentives for low-income households.

Councilmember Zahn also noted that the Council accepted the recommendation of the Planning Commission regarding the Land Use Code amendment and proposed city code relating to tree preservation and the city's tree canopy. The information will be translated into multiple languages to make sure everyone understands the new rules and will not inadvertently do something that violates the code. The Council also accepted the recommendation of the Planning

Commission regarding the Comprehensive Plan amendment on the Wilburton Vision Implementation. Some of the guiding principles are related to equitable outreach to the community and making sure the policies have equitable impacts. The Wilburton Vision Implementation includes housing affordable to all levels of affordability. The projection is that the Wilburton area itself will over the next 20 years see almost 5000 new jobs and 4000 new housing units. The themes voiced by the community around housing and helping small businesses to thrive are incorporated into the plan.

Councilmember Zahn said the state of the city address was recently delivered at Meydenbauer Center. The event was recorded and Councilmember Zahn encouraged the Commissioners to share it with the community. It also was noted that the Eastside Human Services Forum recently held a half-day session focused on systems of oppression in human services and unintended consequences.

Looking forward, Councilmember Zahn said the Council will hold its first public hearing on the 2025-2026 budget and the capital investment programs. The Commissioners were asked to reach out to community members and encourage them to get involved. Also, a lunch and learn on providing mobile outreach services to families sponsored by Mary's Place is scheduled for July 9 from noon to 1:00 p.m. Additionally, a small business focus group session sponsored by the Chamber of Commerce is scheduled for July 15 from noon to 1:00 p.m. at Tutta Bella in Crossroads.

6. STAFF AND COMMISSIONER REPORTS

Human Services Manager Ruth Blaw allowed that the work of making funding decisions is the Commission's busiest time. The rest of the time is largely spent educating Commissioners about issues and topics via panel discussions and presentations. The Commissioners were queried as to their interest in having only one meeting per month during the months of September, October and November, and in lieu of the second meeting attending community events, educational presentations, or accompanying a planner on agency visits.

The Commissioners were supportive of the idea.

7. INFORMATION FOR THE COMMISSION – None

8. OLD BUSINESS – None

9. NEW BUSINESS

A. Updated CDBG Citizen Participation Plan

Community Development Block Grant Administrator/Housing Repair Specialist Donna Adair said the HUD has requirements for involving community members, stakeholders and agencies in all CDBG planning. The last update to the plan was done in 2019 prior to the pandemic. The only change proposed to the plan is to incorporate the concept of hybrid and virtual meetings.

A motion to approve the updated CDBG Citizen Participation Plan was made by Commissioner White. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Gonzalez and the motion carried unanimously.

B. Human Services Application Review

Ruth Blaw allowed that the work before the Commission is not easy. The requests submitted far outweigh the available resources to meet those needs. Given the anticipated need, the Council was asked to direct the Commission to create a strategic plan for the Council's approval, giving the Commission the guidelines needed to avoid spreading the funding too thinly to be effective, to prioritize the areas of greatest need, and to prioritize services that are culturally and linguistically specific. With the plan in hand, the Saturday workshop allowed each group to focus on the applications assigned to them. By applying the guidelines, each group came up with recommendations. The current work of the Commission is to review the recommendations and develop a final recommendation to be forwarded to the Council for approval.

Department of Parks and Community Services assistant director Toni Esparza said it is not a new thing to have more funding requests than available funding. For the current cycle, however, the gap between the two is even more stark. The number of applications has been climbing over time and it was known that the process of having the Commission sit in meetings and work through each individual application is not sustainable. Among other things, the strategic plan calls for including more community voices, which was addressed by holding the retreat. That leaves the Commission free to conduct a higher level review.

Ruth Blaw added that at the start of the process it was established that staff would not be going back to agencies with questions for reasons of fairness and in recognition of the limitations on staff time and resources.

Starting the review with the applications in the Culturally Specific Supportive Services category, Commissioner Phan noted that application 68, Cornerstone Medical Services, Korean Immigrant Senior Center Program, did not indicate how many residents are served. The recommended amount is \$50,000, whereas 4Tomorrow, Application 62, was earmarked for not receiving anything. Commissioner Phan proposed taking \$40,000 from Application 68 and giving it to Application 62. Cornerstone is seeking funds from the city for the first time, while 4Tomorrow is a well-known and established program. Commissioner White agreed.

Human Services Planner Saada Hilts noted that in reviewing the applications, the review group asked if 4Tomorrow actually provides services or make referrals, and noted that the agency will potentially be receiving funded for other service areas.

Chair Singh pointed out that the 4Tomorrow application indicates the actual number of persons served in 2023 was 1100, and the projection is that that number will fall to 650.

Commissioner Phan said it was Cornerstone that did not indicate a number for residents served. It was noted in the Human Services Needs Update that community members are having a hard time finding resources and as such the culturally specific supportive services should be

prioritized to some degree. With regard to the full need/dream column, the Commissioner proposed including the amount needed to bring Applications 62 through 67 to their full ask.

With regard to Applications 69 through 78, Commissioner Phan noted being unaware of any organization like Application 76, Noticias, when it comes to taking school district information and translating it in real time and using social media to get information out to parents. At least \$10,000 should be given that application.

Chair Singh pointed out that the Bellevue School District is using new technology to get the same information out to parents in their native languages. Commissioner Phan agreed, but noted that Noticias goes beyond just emails, which many parents do not see, and uses social media to get the word out. Chair Singh said the school district's ability to effect translations and get information out is the reason the review group recommended against funding the application.

Commissioner White pointed out that Application 76 also did not include the number of persons served. The suggestion made was to add the full funding amount for Noticias to the full need/dream column.

There was agreement to include in the full need/dream column the amount needed to bring Applications 68 through 78 to their full ask.

With regard to Applications 79 through 87, Supportive Services for People with Disabilities or Older Adults, Commissioner White asked for some background information regarding Application 81, KidsQuest Children's Museum. Saada Hilts said the review committee in reviewing the application concluded the request did not fall under the specific human service needs. Toni Esparza added that the review group's conclusion was not a reflection on the work done by KidsQuest. When there are not enough dollars to meet the demand, it is always necessary to focus in whether or not request is focused on the highest need. The review committee concluded that the highest human services need is not access to a children's museum.

There was agreement to add to the full need/dream column the full amount needed to bring Applications 79 through 87 to their full ask.

Ruth Blaw noted that Applications 88 through 91 were categorized as culturally specific supportive services for people with disabilities and older adults. With regard to Application 88, Kin On Thriving Connections, Saada Hilts explained that the review group elected not to recommend funding, other than in the full need/dream column, as a way of going deeper with Application 89, Kin On, Multicultural Case Management.

The Commissioners made no changes to the section.

With regard to Applications 92 through 96, youth and young adults supportive services, Toni Esparza said the fact that no funding was recommended for most of the applications, other than in the full need/dream column, represented part of the shift away from the peanut butter approach of spreading dollars thinly over everything in favor of zeroing in the biggest gaps, one of which is culturally and linguistically specific services.

Commissioner Gonzalez suggested Application 94, Youth Eastside Services, Success Mentoring, should have full funding in the full need/dream column. Commissioner Phan suggested the same for Application 93, Rainier Athletes, and Commissioner White suggested the same for Application 95, Friends of Youth, Healthy Start. There was consensus to make those changes.

Turning to Goal Area 3, Safety from Abuse and Violence, Applications 97 through 104, Chair Singh asked why the review group chose not to fund Application 98, Domestic Violence Survivors, other than in the full need/dream column. Asma Ahmed said the group preferred putting the dollars elsewhere. Ruth Blaw added that the applicant is new.

Commissioner Phan said the applicant made the claim that it was the only program providing a specific service, which is not correct. The review group was disappointed that the agency claimed to not know anything about similar services being offered.

Commissioner White proposed adding to the full need/dream column the amount needed to bring each application up to their full ask. There was agreement to do that.

With regard to Goal Area 4, Mental and Physical Health, Applications 105 through 116, Ruth Blaw reminded the Commissioners that the funds shown in red are Housing Stability Program funds that cannot be supplanted by other funds. Those funds can only be used for behavioral health and housing-related services. The agencies are not precluded from receiving general dollars in addition to the 1590 dollars.

Commissioner White called for adding funds in the full need/dream column for Application 106, yes, and Application 116, International Community Health Services, to bring the applications to their full ask. There was agreement to do that.

Ruth Blaw noted that Applications 117 through 119 were recommended for full funding. Only Application 120, Porchlight, included funding in the full need/dream column. There was agreement to add to the full need/dream column for Application 120 the amount needed to bring the amount up to the full ask.

Ruth Blaw noted that medical and dental services, general, Applications 121 through 127, was an area for which there was not as much money as the review groups would have hoped.

Commissioner Gonzalez suggested Applications 124 and 125, both HealthPoint, have funds added to the full need/dream column to bring them to their full ask. There was consensus to do so.

Ruth Blaw pointed out that the review group did not recommend funding for Applications 122 and 123, both Essence Health and Research Foundation, and also did not recommend adding funds to the full need/dream column for either.

There was agreement to add funding to the full need/dream column for Applications 126, Medical Teams International, and 127, Washington Poison Center, to bring them up to their full

asks.

Ruth Blaw noted there was only one application in the category of medical and dental services, culturally specific.

There was agreement to add to the full need/dream column the amount needed to bring the application up to its full ask.

Turning to Goal Area 5, Education, Employment and Supports, Ruth Blaw noted that the applications in the general education and employment category, Applications 129 through 132, were largely unfunded by the review group. No revisions were made to any of the applications.

The category of education and employment for people with disabilities, Applications 133 through 136, was pointed out as being fully balanced either through recommended funding or the full need/dream column. No changes were made to the applications.

With regard to Applications 137 through 139 education and employment for homeless and affordable housing participants, Ruth Blaw noted that the first two applications included Housing Stability Program dollars, and that application 139 included in the full need/dream column the amount needed to bring the application to its full ask.

Ruth Blaw said Application 140, Northwest Education Access, was the only application in the general education and employment for youth and young adults category, and was recommended for full funding.

Applications 141 through 149 were in the early learning and child care category.

Commissioner Phan explained that the review group elected not to recommend funding for Application 145, BrightSpark, child care information, as part of its determination of which application by the agency was the best fit. The Commissioner suggested that adding funding to the full need/dream column to bring each application in the category up to its full ask would be good. There was agreement to do that.

Ruth Blaw pointed out that the total of the full need/dream column for all applications was just over \$5 million.

Councilmember Zahn pointed out that for a couple of applications for which the ask was very large, the review groups recommended not to fully fund them. From the list of applications it is clear that human services needs are considerably underfunded, but it cannot be said with any certainty how the full Council will respond to such a large number in the full need/dream column. The Commissioners were urged to take another look at and be consistent in looking at the especially larger asks.

Councilmember Zahn also referred to the spreadsheet column labeled “Recommendations Aligned with the Strategic Plan” and asked how the allocation of the dollars were divided up between the five goal areas. It was noted that the Commission had not elected to move dollars

between the goal areas.

Toni Esparza clarified that the first 61 applications as shown on the spreadsheet were the recommendations made by the Commission at its previous meeting. The Commissioners were urged to take a few minutes to review those numbers for possible revisions.

Commissioner White voiced support for fully funding Application 17, Bellevue LifeSpring, rental assistance, in the full need/dream column.

Chair Singh pointed out that if the Commission elects to fully fund applications in the full need/dream column, the total of that column will increase and Councilmember Zahn will have to go to the Council and suggest the total represents a shortfall in funding human services. Commissioner White agreed, but stressed the need for keeping people in their homes as a way of reducing the need for services in other areas.

Commissioner Phan said Bellevue LifeSpring's ask for more than \$2 million is a lot. The agency struggled over the last year with fundraising, but should be able to raise what they need from other sources. Full funding should not come from the city.

The consensus was to not increase the amount in the full need/dream column for Application 17.

Commissioner Gonzalez recommended showing an amount in the full need/dream column to bring Application 31, Applications 33 through 41, and Applications 43 to 46, up to their full ask.

Ruth Blaw asked if Application 32, Bellevue LifeSpring, should have any amount added to the full need/dream column. Commissioner Gonzalez suggested \$50,000.

Councilmember Zahn said in presenting the Commission's recommendations to the full Council, it will be necessary to be armed with some context, particularly for the full need/dream column numbers.

Toni Esparza pointed out that once the Commission has made its recommendations, it will be asked to take the additional step of suggesting how in large themes the additional ask should be prioritized. The prioritization would be helpful for the Council to ponder should it be able to allocate some additional funds but not all.

The Commissioners worked through the basic needs programs applications in reviewing the full need/dream column amounts.

Commissioner Gonzalez reiterated the desire to see Application 34 have \$130,000 in the full need/dream column. The other Commissioners did not agree.

Chair Singh urged the Commissioners to reduce the amounts in the full need/dream column overall.

Commissioner Gonzalez proposed putting \$10,000 in the full need/dream column for

Application 38. There was agreement to do that.

Chair Singh suggested reducing the full need/dream column amount for Application 35 to \$150,000. The consensus was to leave funding in the column at \$172,560.

Commissioner Phan proposed reducing the amount in the full need/dream column for Application 143, Bellevue Boys & Girls Club. Chair Singh agreed with the previous earmarked amount of \$177,500. Commissioner Gonzalez called for putting \$400,000 in the column. Commissioner Phan agreed with the \$177,500.

Chair Singh commented that clearly the Commission wants to fund all the applications. The problem is that the Commission was given a certain budget. If the full need/dream column for each application will afford them their full ask, the indication will be that the Council should allocate more funds. The full need/dream column for each application should be reduced by a certain percentage using a formula.

Commissioner Phan said the whole point of having the full need/dream column is to highlight what is important and what the true need is.

Toni Esparza clarified that at the June 8 meeting not all of the review groups made it all the way to suggesting what to put in the extra column. It was also pointed out that while the Commission in reviewing the applications chose to use a formula in several sections to add to the full need/dream column the amount needed to bring the individual applications up to their full ask, that was not the approach used for every section.

Commissioner Rashid allowed being satisfied with the allocations made by the Commission in its review.

Commissioner White asked if the Commission has always utilized the full need/dream column approach. Toni Esparza said the Commission has always included a column showing what the Commission would allocate if there were additional funds. That column was previously used to inform how to spend the early Covid funds.

Ruth Blaw asked if in years past the Council has elected to allocate additional funding as a result of having the full need/dream column. Toni Esparza said the Council has not chosen to award extra funds for at least the last six years. The Council has taken the information into account in other ways given that gaps can inform other types of decisions. The Council adopted 1590 specifically to keep dollars in the city.

Councilmember Zahn added that the Housing Stability Program dollars were earmarked both for building and preserving affordable housing, and also for human services related to lower income housing needs. The city received two tranches of ARPA funds of \$10 million each for two years, and the bulk of those dollars were used to support human services with housing and homelessness services. Those funds are no longer available, and that is contributing to the proposal to add so much to the full need/dream column. The Commission's exercise relative to prioritizing how the full need/dream dollars should be spent will be very useful to the Council's

considerations.

There was consensus to leave the full need/dream column as currently drafted.

In regard to the earlier question about how the dollars were allocated to different places, and how dollars were moved around, Toni Esparza explained that as staff reviewed the applications, several things happened. First, a determination was made as to whether or not the individual applications were qualified by having submitted all necessary paperwork and asking for the minimum funding amount. The staff recommendations were then reviewed against the priorities in the Strategic Plan without being agency specific. There was no setting aside of specific amounts of dollars per goal area. At the retreat the Commissioners and the review groups formulated recommendations that did not represent a balanced budget, and funds were at that time moved from goal area to goal area as a result. Staff then took that information and zeroed in on how to get back to the balanced budget.

The agenda for the July 15 Commission meeting will not include any staff adjustments to the proposed allocations, other than where any mistakes were made in the math. The Commission will be asked to vote to finalize the recommendations at that meeting. Following that, and based on the Strategic Plan and other conversations, the staff will return with a high-level start to the prioritization process should the Council decide to allocate additional funds.

10. ADJOURNMENT

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