

CITY OF BELLEVUE
HUMAN SERVICES COMMISSION
MEETING MINUTES

October 20, 2025
6:00 p.m.

Bellevue City Hall
Room 1E-113

COMMISSIONERS PRESENT: Chair Singh, Commissioners Gonzalez, Hays, Phan
COMMISSIONERS REMOTE: Vice Chair White
COMMISSIONERS ABSENT: Commissioners Perelman, Rashid
STAFF PRESENT: Christy Stangland, Toni Esparza, Donna Adair, Ruth Blaw,
Gysel Galaviz, Department of Parks & Community
Services
COUNCIL LIAISON: Not Present
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 Commissioner Phan who presided until the arrival of Chair Singh.

2. ROLL CALL

At the call of the roll, all Commissioners were present with the exception of Chair Singh, who arrived at 6:02 p.m, and Commissioners Perelman and Rashid.

3. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

A. October 6, 2025

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

4. ORAL AND WRITTEN COMMUNICATIONS - None

Commissioner Phan took a moment to note that in compliance with Washington state campaign laws regarding the use of public facilities during elections, no speaker may support or oppose a ballot measure, or support or oppose a candidate for an election, including one's own campaign.

5. COMMUNICATION FROM CITY COUNCIL, BOARDS AND COMMISSIONS – None

6. STAFF AND COMMISSIONER REPORTS – None

Senior Administrative Assistant Gysel Galaviz reported that Human Services Planner Andrew Ndayambaje would be monitoring at Porchlight on October 23 from 11:00 a.m. to noon. The Commissioners were also reminded that October 22 was Youth Link gumbo night starting at 6:00 p.m. Any Commissioner interested in attending either event should let staff know.

Human Services Manager Ruth Blaw announced that the Essentials Food and Hygiene Drive kicked off on October 1 and would run through November 15, with collection bins available throughout the city, including at City Hall. Twenty-one funded agencies will be collecting donated items such as hygiene products and nonperishable foods.

7. PUBLIC HEARING

A. Public Hearing on Human Services in Bellevue

Chair Singh explained that the public's input from the hearing would inform future human services funding recommendations and the city's Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) reporting.

Community Development Block Grant Administrator/Housing Repair Specialist Donna Adair provided an overview of the CDBG funding process, stating that the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) requires the city to hold two public hearings annually to gather community feedback on housing and human service needs. The input from the hearing will inform recommendations for the 2026 CDBG funding allocation. Funding amounts depend on HUD's annual formula allocation, which is announced following congressional approval of the federal budget. Once HUD finalizes the allocation, the city has 45 days to submit its Annual Action Plan which outlined the goals and priorities for use of the funds.

A motion to open the public hearing was made by Commissioner Phan. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Gonzalez and the motion carried unanimously.

Jackie Bui, Chief Operating Officer of Youth Eastside Services (YES), said the mission of the organization is to provide behavioral health interventions and prevention services to youth and families across East King County. There are growing challenges facing young people, including generational trauma, systemic inequities, and a worsening mental health crisis. Most behavioral health conditions emerge before age 24, making early intervention essential. The statistics are alarming: in 2023, King County emergency services responded to 868 nonfatal opioid overdoses among youth ages eleven to 24, half of which involved minors under 18. One in four teens reported serious depressive symptoms, with LGBTQ+ youth experiencing even higher rates. YES works to remove barriers to care through multilingual and culturally competent staff who speak nine languages and provide assistance with medical, dental, and basic needs. About half of YES clients rely on Medicaid, but federal funding cuts and administrative restrictions have jeopardized access for uninsured and undocumented youth. Locally, Bellevue School District's reduction of mental health staff, including one of YES's three contracted school-based

counselors, has limited service availability. YES is committed to health equity, diversity, and inclusion. Strong communities depend on supporting those facing the greatest hardships.

Greg Cohen, Area Director for the Boys and Girls Clubs of Bellevue, advocated for increased childcare funding. The speaker noted overseeing several elementary school clubhouses in East Bellevue, including three serving residents of low-income housing through the King County Housing Authority. A story was shared of a family from the Eastside Terrace Clubhouse who had faced financial and medical hardships but were able to continue participating thanks to full financial assistance provided by the Club. Such cases have doubled over the past year, underscoring the growing need for scholarship support to help families overcome unexpected challenges. The Commission was thanked for its time and commitment to Bellevue families.

Adam Adiba, founder and executive director of Africans on the Eastside, a community-based organization located in Bellevue, expressed appreciation for the opportunity to speak before leaders and advocates who are committed to strengthening the community through human services. Human services represent the heart of the community and encompasses the people, families and neighbors who make Bellevue a place of hope and opportunity. Grassroots organizations play a critical role as the bridge between systems and the individuals who often fall through the cracks, such as immigrants, refugees, single parents, young people, and elders, all of whom the organization calls “the forgotten voices.” Despite facing persistent challenges such as limited funding, lack of visibility and barriers to resources, the organizations continue to persevere. The Commission was urged to deepen its investment in and partnerships with grassroots organizations. True equity in human services requires funding those who are closest to both the pain and the solutions. The city was encouraged to make inclusion actionable by ensuring that local, culturally rooted organizations are full partners in shaping Bellevue’s future. Reflecting on decades of residence in Bellevue, the speaker expressed pride in having raised a family in the city while continuing to serve the community.

Griffin Cole, program manager for the Volunteer Services Program of Catholic Community Services, reported that during the first three quarters of 2025, 21 Bellevue residents received a total of 842 hours of volunteer service, well above the annual goal. The services enable older adults and individuals with disabilities to continue living independently in their homes through a network of volunteers, most of whom also live in Bellevue. The program currently includes 24 registered volunteers and the number continues to grow. Volunteers perform tasks such as providing transportation, tidying homes and working in yards. The model creates a network of caring volunteers where community members serve one another. Many volunteers report gaining more from giving their time than the clients do from receiving assistance. Gratitude was expressed for the Commission’s support and a request was made for continued support so that both older adults and the volunteers who serve them can continue to thrive within the Bellevue community.

George Gonzalez, assistant director at the Harborview Abuse and Trauma Center, reminded the Commissioners that the center’s mission is to provide trauma counseling for survivors of sexual assault and other significant trauma. The center also offers sexual assault nurse examinations, prevention education, and foster care assessment programs. Like many other organizations, Harborview has experienced cuts in funding while the demand for services continues to rise. The

center met its annual service goals within the first quarter of the year due to the intensity of need. Concern was voiced over the growing gap between demand and available resources, and the Commission was urged to consider the realities when making funding decisions. Harborview will continue to serve Bellevue residents in need, and the Commissioners were thanked for their ongoing and future support.

Kristina Mendieta, director of public affairs at Kinderling, a Bellevue-based organization founded over 62 years ago to serve children with developmental delays and disabilities, reported that Kinderling currently supports more than 600 Bellevue children annually with a focus on low- and moderate-income families. No family is ever turned away for lack of insurance or ability to pay. Each year, Kinderling budgets approximately \$3 million for uncompensated care and offers programs on a sliding scale or at no cost. The organization also provides direct assistance for basic needs through partnerships with local programs, distributing over \$100,000 in essential items such as diapers, baby formula, and clothing during the past year. The services are integrated with therapeutic programs. The Families in Transition (FIT) program assists families facing housing instability by connecting them with housing, employment, and food assistance resources. Some 83 percent of children in the FIT program achieve measurable developmental progress. The success of Kinderling's child care and preschool consultation program, which helps teachers address behavioral and developmental needs, is evident given that there is a 95 percent retention rate for the children served. Affordable, accessible child care is a crucial factor in family stability and the city was thanked for its partnership in ensuring that children of all abilities can thrive.

Debbie Lacey with Eastside for All expressed gratitude to the Commission and staff for their thoughtful work during the last budget and grant cycle, and recognized the challenges involved in balancing resources and priorities. The Commission was commended for allocating 25 percent of regular its biennial funding for 2025–2026 to culturally specific services, but a concern was voiced that the equity-based guidance has not been followed for the one-time \$2.8 million increase in human services funding. Had the same 25 percent standard been applied, immigrant-led organizations would have received approximately \$697,000 instead of less than \$170,000. The organizations are performing the most intensive work with the fewest resources and are critical first responders to crises such as immigration detention and enforcement actions. Translation services cannot replace multilingual and multicultural providers who bring lived experience and community trust, which is particularly vital during crises that demand compassion and cultural competence. East King County residents, including Bellevue neighbors, have faced detention and inhumane conditions without sufficient local support. While Bellevue declined prior requests for increased rapid-response funding, neighboring cities such as Kirkland and Redmond did provide investments of \$166,000 and \$250,000 respectively. The Commission was urged to restore Bellevue's leadership in equity and to ensure that at least 25 percent of future funding is directed to culturally specific and immigrant-led organizations. Eastside for All is committed to supporting the Commission in its upcoming deliberations in regard to critical funding decisions on behalf of the community.

Elba Moreira with Domestic Abuse Women's Network (DAWN) noted that the organization is located in Kent and had received prior support from Bellevue to serve domestic violence survivors in Bellevue and South King County. DAWN has assisted over a thousand people this

year, including more than 150 Bellevue residents. Domestic violence is a public health crisis and services are needed that will extend beyond shelter to include legal advocacy, prevention, and healthy-relationship education. The Commission was thanked for its past support, and a request was made to continue and to expand funding for the essential services.

A motion to close the public hearing was made by Commissioner Phan. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Gonzalez and the motion carried unanimously.

8. INFORMATION FOR THE COMMISSION – None

9. OLD BUSINESS – None

10. NEW BUSINESS

A. 2026 Draft Annual Action Plan Overview & CDBG Funding Recommendations

Ruth Blaw explained that the Annual Action Plan functions as the City's application to the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) for its formula grant and outlines the priorities and goals for how the city will use the 2026 entitlement funds. The city's five year Consolidated Plan was updated in 2024 for the years 2025-2029. The Annual Action Plan is developed annually to show how CDBG dollars will be used in carrying out the priorities. There are three principal goals in the Consolidated Plan: the preservation and improvement of access to affordable housing through the City's home repair program, which offers zero-interest deferred loans to low- and moderate-income homeowners and recycles loan repayments as program income; the provision of shelter and services for unhoused persons, currently supported through CDBG public services funding for Porchlight's day and overnight operations, subject to a statutory cap of 15 percent of the annual HUD award plus 15 percent of prior-year program income; and the enhancement of community and economic development by funding agencies that assist microenterprises, which are defined as businesses with five or fewer employees, through culturally and linguistically specific technical assistance, cohort training, licensing support, marketing, and networking, including a program focused on in-home childcare providers. Up to 20 percent of the annual entitlement may be used for administration, reporting, and planning, including development of the needs update. All CDBG activities must meet a national objective and be otherwise eligible under HUD rules.

Following final review of the 2026 CDBG funding recommendations, the Commission will act on the draft Annual Action Plan, which will then be posted on the City's website for a 30-day public comment period from October 23 to November 24. Because HUD's 2026 allocation and program income amounts remain uncertain, the action plan will remain a draft until HUD issues the allocation and approves the final plan; any necessary adjustments will follow the City's contingency approach.

Ruth Blaw noted that there had been some questions asked by Commissioners at the Commission's October 6 meeting. The questions, along with answers and explanations, were sent to the Commissioners along with the specific agency applications on October 8.

In response to an inquiry, it was clarified by Department of Parks and Community Services assistant director Toni Esparza that Commissioner Perlman had offered percentage concepts for a future discussion rather than specific dollar recommendations.

Commissioner Hays asked if the home repair program is at capacity due to grant limitations. Donna Adair confirmed that while the program is fully funded, additional funding is not available beyond current resources. Future program income will roll back into CDBG but it remains unpredictable and is addressed in the contingency plan.

Chair Singh asked about the status of the 4 Tomorrow safe parking program. Donna Adair explained that the agency had slowed its microenterprise program while launching a safe-parking pilot. In 2025 the City paused all CDBG programs due to funding uncertainty; the HUD funds for the year were not received until late September. Ruth Blaw clarified that CDBG funds do not fund safe parking. The safe-parking site closed when the building was condemned, and the agency is assisting clients while seeking a new location.

Donna Adair said the recommendation of the staff was to keep funding flat for 2026, maintaining the same agencies and amounts as in 2025, given the continuing uncertainty at the federal level and the fact that agencies executed their 2025 contracts in October and were just beginning to spend those funds. While several programs had continued operating earlier in the year, many agencies chose not to incur reimbursable costs before HUD funding was assured.

Commissioner Hays asked if any agencies were getting reimbursed for services already rendered. Donna Adair said agencies can technically invoice for expenditures back to the first of January, but most did not in light of the uncertainties about receiving funding. Public services is somewhat different in that the contract covers the operations of the shelter and thus they can invoice back to January for eligible operations.

Donna Adair added that 4 Tomorrow's model includes cohorts that provide training for classes. Once the clients graduate from the program and achieve business licensing, they receive small grants. The bulk of the program's expenditures goes for the grants, a process that is now underway.

There was agreement by the Commissioners with the recommendations of the staff.

A motion to adopt the draft 2026 Annual Action Plan and approve the CDBG funding recommendations was made by Commissioner Hays. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Gonzalez and the motion carried unanimously.

B. Continued Review of the 2027-2028 Funding Percentages

Ruth Blaw outlined for the Commissioners the documents and materials included in the folders provided. Included were the human services chapter of the City's Comprehensive Plan, which contains relevant policies; a performance dashboard outlining outputs from funded programs; and the City's Strategic Plan, which sets broader human services goals and objectives. It was explained that the materials were meant to help clarify how Commissioners determine

allocations in a process that can be complex.

During discussion, one commissioner asked for clarification on the meaning of “culturally and linguistically specific services.” Ruth explained that such services are designed and delivered by members of the very community they are intended to serve, as distinct from “culturally and linguistically responsive” services, which adapt existing programs to the needs of diverse clients. Another commissioner added that a chart previously distributed also contained clear definitions of each service category for reference.

Commissioner Hays asked if there is a definition for culturally relevant and linguistically specific services. Ruth Blaw explained that such services are those that are designed and delivered by the people who are members of the community the services are intended to serve. All agencies should be culturally and linguistically responsive, meaning they are delivering services in ways that will meet the needs of whoever comes in their doors, but culturally relevant and linguistically specific services are different in the way they are designed and delivered.

Ruth Blaw said Commissioner Perlman had previously suggested combining financial assistance with housing stability; combining fostering well-being, safety from violence, navigation, and legal services; and combining behavioral health with medical and dental services. Commissioner Perelman also had proposed minor shifts in the percentage allocations, recommending small reductions in funding for some categories to increase allocations for food and financial assistance. In the opinion of staff, however, it would be better to maintain the existing category structure and percentage recommendations. The draft contingency plan allows for flexibility should funding requests in certain categories come in higher or lower than expected.

Chair Singh asked what the staff recommendation was for the youth program targets. Ruth Blaw said the staff recommendation was not to reduce the levels established in the previous cycle for youth and culturally specific services, and noted that while the allocation in the previous cycle was 22.7 percent, the new recommendation rounds figures to whole percentages.

Commissioner Phan raised a procedural question about ensuring the funding allocations remain balanced if additional funds become available after the recommendations are finalized. Ruth Blaw referred to the contingency plan and explained that any new funds would be distributed evenly among the three areas identified as most critical in the city’s Human Services Needs Update, namely shelter and shelter-based services, financial assistance, and food and basic needs. The City Council could still choose to allocate additional resources directly to specific areas, such as legal services, at its discretion.

Toni Esparza added that the Commission can amend the contingency plan if it wants to do so, and recalled that in the previous cycle the Commissioners had split supplemental funding differently.

Vice Chair White asked whether combining categories, if not done in the current funding cycle, could be reconsidered in future cycles. Ruth Blaw responded that while consolidation would not be implemented in the current cycle, reorganization could be considered in future cycles depending on evolving community needs and external factors. Human services priorities are

highly dynamic and are influenced by economic conditions, public health developments, and changing governmental policies, and therefore the framework may need to be reassessed in coming years.

Commissioner Hays asked how the current planning process accounted for anticipated Medicaid reductions under the federal administration. Ruth Blaw acknowledged that the most recent Human Services Needs Update was completed before the full scope of potential cuts became known. Future planning will need to consider the reductions as they could significantly affect service demand and funding availability. Such challenges highlight the importance of the Commission's work and the difficulty of balancing limited resources against growing community needs.

Toni Esparza suggested the Commission should ponder where dollars might go the furthest, particularly in light of reductions in federal funding. The Commissioners were encouraged to evaluate whether the allocations might be used to fill gaps in areas such as medical and dental services, or whether stronger investments should continue in shelter, food, and financial assistance. One reason staff recommended keeping the funding categories separate rather than merging them was to ensure that no area of need would lose focus or priority. The approach preserves each category while allowing for flexibility through the contingency plan.

Commissioner Hays questioned why behavioral health was allocated 18 percent while financial assistance received only 6 percent, noting that the Human Services Needs Update had identified financial assistance as a top community priority. Ruth Blaw explained that the higher allocation for behavioral health reflects the existence of a dedicated funding source, the Behavioral Health and Housing-Related Human Services (BHHRs) sales tax which provides substantial revenues that are legally restricted to behavioral health and supportive housing services; the funds cannot be used for food or rental assistance. Because of the statutory restrictions, the behavioral health category appears larger when viewed in the aggregate.

Christy Stangland clarified that the BHHRs funding comes from a countywide sales tax, not a federal grant. It supports services such as behavioral health treatment, substance use counseling, and case management for people at risk of homelessness or living in supportive housing. The tax was adopted in 2022 and generates approximately \$1.6 million to \$1.7 million per year for Bellevue. That amount represents roughly 25 percent of the \$4.8 million allocated from the general fund. The funds cannot supplant any existing general fund expenditures. Agencies receiving human services funding prior to adoption of the sales tax can only be used to increase the agency's funding beyond its prior baseline; the funds cannot replace the original Human Services Funds dollars.

Commissioner Hays stressed the need to see how the 18 percent allocation for behavioral health is broken down in terms of the BHHRs and general fund dollars. Ruth Blaw said staff would bring a printout of the allocation to the next Commission meeting.

Commissioner Hays asked whether agencies with programs that cross multiple service areas, such as shelter and financial assistance, can receive funding from more than one category. Ruth Blaw said agency applications only cover one service. Where an agency provides multiple types

of services, they must submit more than one application, each one under the relevant category. For example, an organization like 4 Tomorrow could submit one application under shelter services and another under behavioral health if it delivers both. The city hopes to include a supplemental question in the application process to allow agencies to describe cross-category work.

Christy Stangland allowed that in the past there have been instances that evoked questions about which category a program falls into, the agency representatives have been asked to present before the Commission. However, such questions must directly pertain to funding decisions rather than general curiosity. Toni Esparza added that a new concept was introduced during the previous funding cycle in which questions during the funding deliberations were not put to the agencies. The application volume had become so large that taking questions back to agencies was creating a fairness issue. The staff committed to providing technical assistance to agencies to assist them in filling out their applications in ways that gave the Commission all the answers needed.

Ruth Blaw added that staff is currently in the process of creating an evaluation rubric and summary sheet to accompany each application. The document will include key information such as the number of Bellevue residents served, whether the program is culturally and linguistically specific, and whether it represents a new applicant. The Commissioners will be asked to identify additional data points that would be useful. The rubric will serve as a concise reference guide when reviewing applications.

Ruth Blaw confirmed that the same application is used by 17 area cities, including Renton and Auburn.

Commissioner Hays asked how Bellevue's funding process aligns with those of neighboring cities, and asked if knowledge of other allocations from other cities might inform Bellevue's decisions. Chair Singh said Bellevue routinely receives data from nearby cities, such as Redmond and Renton, showing what agencies were funded and at what levels in prior cycles. Christy Stangland added that while all of the cities conduct their funding processes within similar timelines, Bellevue is typically among the first to complete its cycle, which limits real-time coordination. The Commissioners can, however, review the historical data regarding agency requests and awards from the surrounding jurisdictions.

Commissioner Hays suggested that greater regional collaboration, including perhaps the pooling resources with nearby cities, might increase efficiency and expand the collective impact. Chair Singh noted that countywide coordination already occurs under King County's human services structure. Toni Esparza pointed out that any pooled funding approach across jurisdictional boundaries would require policy direction from the City Council. While staff from multiple cities already collaborate extensively behind the scenes, the creation of a shared funding pool distributed across jurisdictions would be a matter for the City Council to consider and approve.

Commissioner Phan asked how proposals are handled if they do not neatly fit within any of the existing categories. Ruth Blaw said the navigation, legal, case management, and other supportive services categories are intentionally broad to accommodate various programs.

Ruth Blaw reminded the Commission that there was still time to review the materials thoroughly before taking action. The Commissioners were invited to submit any follow-up questions by email or phone, and staff committed to providing any additional data needed for future deliberation. The final recommendations would not be presented to City Council until January.

11. ADJOURNMENT

Chair Singh adjourned the meeting at 7:34 p.m.