

CITY OF BELLEVUE
CITY COUNCIL

Summary Minutes of Special Meeting

May 11, 2020
6:00 p.m.

Virtual Meeting
Bellevue, Washington

PRESENT: Mayor Robinson, Deputy Mayor Nieuwenhuis, and Councilmembers Barksdale, Lee, Robertson, Stokes, and Zahn

ABSENT: None.

1. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 6:00 p.m., with Mayor Robinson presiding.

2. Roll Call

All Councilmembers were present and participating remotely.

(a) Temporary Suspension of Council Rules

Mayor Robinson noted that in-person attendance at City Council meetings by Councilmembers and the public is prohibited under the governor's current stay-at-home order that will expire at 11:59 p.m. on May 31. A second order by the governor relates to the Open Public Meetings Act (OPMA) and restricts the topics that may be discussed during a Council meeting. As a result, there are several provisions in the Council's procedural rules, Resolution No. 8928, that the Council should temporarily suspend involving the Council's ability to participate remotely and the process for accepting communications from the public. Section 13 of Resolution No. 8928 allows a Council procedural vote to be temporarily suspended. When suspension is requested and no objection is offered, the Mayor may announce the rule suspended.

→ Deputy Mayor Nieuwenhuis moved to suspend until midnight on May 31, 2020, the provisions in Section 6.E of Resolution No. 8928 concerning the remote participation by Councilmembers, to allow all Councilmembers to participate remotely.

Hearing no objections, Mayor Robinson declared the rule suspended.

- Deputy Mayor Nieuwenhuis moved to suspend until midnight on May 31, 2020, the provisions in Section 8.D of Resolution No. 8928 concerning Oral Communications from the public, to allow public comment to be provided in writing regarding the topics on the meeting agenda and read during the Council meeting.

Hearing no objections to the motion, Mayor Robinson declared the rule suspended.

(b) Asian Pacific American Heritage Month Proclamation

Councilmember Lee read the proclamation declaring May as Asian Pacific American Heritage Month in Bellevue. He noted that approximately 36 percent of Bellevue's population is comprised of individuals of Asian or Pacific Islander heritage. He encouraged everyone to celebrate the rich diversity of this community and to enjoy and appreciate the many contributions of Asians and Pacific Islanders.

(c) National Nurses Week Proclamation

Councilmember Zahn said this proclamation is especially meaningful within the context of the current pandemic and the dedication and sacrifices of healthcare workers. She noted that there are more than three times as many Registered Nurses (RNs) as there are doctors in the United States. She read the proclamation recognizing May 6-12, 2020, as National Nurses Week in Bellevue and encouraged all residents to celebrate the contributions of the variety of nurses in our community.

(d) National Hospitals Week Proclamation

Councilmember Robertson noted the critical role of hospitals, especially during the current epidemic, and expressed appreciation for Overlake Hospital Medical Center and other local and regional medical facilities. She read the proclamation recognizing May 10-16, 2020, as National Hospitals Week in Bellevue. She encouraged everyone to appreciate and honor the contributions of hospitals in communities.

3. Approval of Agenda

- Deputy Mayor Nieuwenhuis moved to approve the agenda, and Councilmember Stokes seconded the motion.
- The motion carried by a vote of 7-0.

4. Written Communications

City Clerk Charmaine Arredondo said the Council did not receive any written communications to be read during the meeting.

5. Report of the City Manager

(a) Introduction of Parks and Community Services Department Director

City Manager Brad Miyake introduced Michael Shiosaki as the new Director of the Parks and Community Services Department. Mr. Miyake highlighted Mr. Shiosaki's 30 years of experience, including positions with the City of Seattle and City of Sammamish as well as previous employment with the City of Bellevue as a planning manager. He noted Mr. Shiosaki's reputation among his colleagues for his forward-thinking approach, collaborative style, and sound record of accomplishments.

City Manager Miyake thanked Shelley McVein, Parks Deputy Director, for her leadership as the Interim Director over the past year.

Mr. Shiosaki said he feels fortunate and excited to be working again for the City of Bellevue. He noted the City's prioritization of parks and its national reputation for its parks and open space system. He thanked Ms. McVein for her help and support as he transitions into his new position. Mr. Shiosaki said he looks forward to meeting the Councilmembers in person.

Mayor Robinson thanked Mr. Shiosaki and expressed appreciation for his lengthy experience.

Deputy Mayor Nieuwenhuis welcomed Mr. Shiosaki and thanked Ms. McVein for all of her hard work.

Councilmember Barksdale welcomed Mr. Shiosaki and said he looks forward to meeting him and working together.

Councilmember Robertson noted her strong support for Bellevue's parks and her special interest in the development of an aquatic center.

Councilmember Stokes concurred with Ms. Robertson's advocacy for a new aquatic center. Mr. Stokes noted that the Parks and Community Services Department includes the human services division. He observed that Mr. Shiosaki's background includes experience in that area as well.

Councilmember Lee welcomed Mr. Shiosaki to his new job and concurred with Mr. Stokes' comments regarding the importance of human services. Mr. Lee said that Mr. Shiosaki's perspective and overall experience are well suited for Bellevue.

Councilmember Zahn welcomed Mr. Shiosaki and noted that she is the Council's liaison to the Parks and Community Services Board. Ms. Zahn said she looked forward to working together.

6. Council Business and New Initiatives

(a) 2020 Reappointments to Boards and Commissions

Councilmember Stokes recommended reappointing Ashmita Gulati to the Arts Commission. He noted her extensive contacts throughout the region and her enthusiasm for the work of the Arts Commission.

Mayor Robinson said she has been following Ms. Gulati's "It's Still a Wonderful World" series during the COVID-19 crisis.

Councilmember Zahn recommended the reappointment of Pamela Unger and David Hamilton to the Parks and Community Services Board.

Councilmember Robertson recommended the reappointment of current Chair Lei Wu and Kyrylo Tropin to continue serving on the Transportation Commission.

→ Deputy Mayor Nieuwenhuis moved to approve the recommended reappointments to the Arts Commission, Parks and Community Services Board, and Transportation Commission. Councilmember Robertson seconded the motion.

→ The motion carried by a vote of 7-0.

7. Study Session

(a) Overview of New Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Funds

City Manager Miyake introduced discussion regarding newly available Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funds to address the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. He noted that the demand for human services and financial assistance has increased significantly. He highlighted the City's recent efforts to provide technical assistance to businesses and to defer the payment of business and occupation (B&O) taxes.

Mr. Miyake said that new CDBG funds related to the COVID-19 outbreak as well as unspent funds from the previous CDBG process are now available for distribution. Staff is seeking Council direction regarding the allocation of the funds.

Nathan McCommon, Deputy City Manager, said that federal CDBG funds have been used for years to help low and moderate income Bellevue residents. Staff is seeking Council direction to prepare legislation regarding the allocation of funds for adoption at a future meeting. Mr. McCommon said the federal government has temporarily suspended certain rules regarding the use of CDBG funds.

Mr. McCommon recalled that on April 6, 2020, the Council authorized the distribution of \$450,000 for emergency COVID-19 assistance to a number of organizations already under contract with the City. At that time, the most requested assistance was for help paying rent and/or other critical bills.

Mr. McCommon said that the newly available CDBG funds total \$489,623. The funds are available for the direct reimbursement of costs related to the COVID-19 pandemic. He noted the temporary allowances regarding the use of CDBG funds.

Toni Esparza, Assistant Director, Parks and Community Services Department, said that CDBG funds are typically directed primarily toward capital projects. However, the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) has temporarily relaxed its cap limiting the use of funds for public/human services to 15 percent of the grant amount. Ms. Esparza noted that funding is available from the previous CDBG cycle because two planned property acquisitions (Boys and Girls Clubs of Bellevue and LifeWire) did not move forward.

Mr. McCommon said the newly available \$489,623 in COVID-related funding and \$506,934 from the prior CDBG cycle total \$996,557.

Ms. Esparza said that the newly available funds must be used for activities directly related to the COVID-19 outbreak, and the City must meet one of three HUD objectives: 1) provide a service or product to low and moderate income individuals, 2) prevent and eliminate slums and blight (Bellevue does not have any areas that meet this definition), and 3) meet urgent needs. She said the City is waiting for guidance from HUD regarding the parameters of the third objective to meet urgent needs.

Mr. McCommon said the target constituencies for the use of COVID-19 funding are low and moderate income residents, low and moderate income neighborhoods (no Bellevue neighborhoods meet HUD's definition), low and moderate income business owners, and low and moderate income employees of small businesses. He noted that HUD has modified and streamlined its process for accessing grant funds. It shortened the public comment period from 30 days to five days and the HUD plan review period from 45 days to five days. The City may also modify its process by: 1) reducing the timeline to decide service allocations, 2) awarding contracts to agencies with existing agreements with the City, and 3) shortening the advertisement period for new applications.

Based on staff's work with service agencies and other stakeholders, four principles for the allocation of CDBG funds have been developed: 1) target the most urgent needs, 2) find the best value for the investment, 3) seek the expedient approval of service providers, and 4) reach traditionally underserved populations with a specialized focus on cultural and linguistic diversity.

Ms. Esparza said the information sources used to develop staff's recommendation included the City's Human Services Needs Assessment; human services agency reporting; and outside verified data collection from county, state and federal sources. The top four needs identified were: 1) services for individuals experiencing homelessness, 2) emergency financial assistance, 3) child care, and 4) legal services (including related to domestic violence). Ms. Esparza said the Bellevue Police Department has reported a 25 percent increase in domestic violence calls. LifeWire staff has reported a dramatic increase in the number of domestic violence survivors seeking legal assistance, especially for the filing of domestic violence protection orders.

Mr. McCommon said that one of the key principles for allocating the CDBG funds is to expedite the approval of service providers. He noted the potential for the early award of grants to services where there are few providers as well as providers that have already been vetted by the Human Services Commission. Grants requiring a longer lead time may include services that are not currently programmed, have many providers, and/or expand services to specialized trusted messengers who may or may not have been vetted by the City.

Mr. McCommon said that staff's recommendation meets all four of the principles guiding the allocation of CDBG funds and targets the top four service needs: 1) homeless services, \$489,623 (Congregations for the Homeless and The Sophia Way), 2) financial assistance, \$206,934 (Hopelink and a new provider that focuses on traditionally underserved communities), 3) child care, \$150,000 (Bellevue School District and Child Care Resources), and 4) legal assistance, \$150,000 (LifeWire, Consejo Counseling and Referral Service, and Eastside Legal Assistance Program).

Mr. McCommon said the above agencies have the organizational capacity to accept CDBG funds and can deliver the services to meet the most critical needs. He said staff further recommends that the City solicit applications from new agencies/providers that would meet the principle of providing services to underserved populations. As part of the effort to contract a new agency in the service category of emergency financial assistance, staff recommends reserving \$100,000 for that contract. Staff also recommends amending certain plans that are required by HUD, including the Citizen Participation Plan and the 2019 Action Plan to reallocate the prior year's funds to new projects.

Mr. McCommon said staff is seeking Council direction to: 1) prepare legislation to appropriate the prior and new CDBG funds, and 2) draft an amended HUD Action Plan and amended Citizen Participation Plan for approval at a future meeting.

Mayor Robinson noted that Deputy Mayor Nieuwenhuis is the Council liaison to the Human Services Commission.

Mr. Nieuwenhuis thanked staff for their data-driven work and recommendations. He noted the objectives of identifying the greatest needs and providing the highest value for the community. He asked how staff balanced the needs.

Ms. Esparza said that in identifying the greatest return on investments, staff's ranking of the needs prioritized those areas where it was felt the amount of dollars would make a significant impact for a single residence. She noted that preventing homelessness is a much stronger investment than trying to bring someone out of homelessness. She said that legal services and advocacy can play a role in keeping individuals out of crisis as well.

Responding to Mr. Nieuwenhuis, Ms. Esparza confirmed that the current needs will continue to be high priorities for the long term.

Councilmember Barksdale thanked staff for their analysis and recommendations and expressed appreciation for staff's holistic approach looking at both preventative and existing measures.

Responding to Councilmember Robertson, Ms. Esparza said that legal services and advocacy involves three organizations, two of which are focused on helping survivors of domestic violence. The third organization provides legal advocacy covering a wide range of topics and issues.

Councilmember Robertson expressed support for adding a provider that has been previously vetted by the Human Services Commission, regardless of whether the organization received a grant from the City in the past. However, she is not comfortable with using a provider that has not been vetted by the Human Services Commission. Ms. Robertson expressed support for option 1 reflecting the distribution of CDBG funds to vetted service providers. She said the Human Services Commission's regular vetting process addresses equity for underserved populations of diverse backgrounds.

Councilmember Stokes thanked staff for the presentation and expressed support for staff's funding recommendations related to homeless services, financial assistance, child care, and legal assistance. He said he is pleased that the City is able to help people during the current public health crisis.

Councilmember Lee thanked staff for their early work with the Council to distribute COVID-19 emergency funding of \$450,000 to human services providers. He encouraged additional investments that provide the greatest benefit to the most people. He expressed support for funding homeless services, financial assistance, and child care. However, he noted reluctance regarding legal services and assistance. He suggested that the City should focus on the underlying issues of situations instead of providing legal services.

Mr. Lee encouraged further investments related to supporting economic development. He would like to hear ideas about how the City can provide more help to small businesses, which are critical to the economic health of the community.

Councilmember Zahn thanked staff and expressed support for the guiding principles and the four service areas recommended for funding. She said she appreciates staff's ongoing coordination with nonprofit organizations and other agencies. Responding to Ms. Zahn, Ms. Esparza said she anticipates that senior adults are in need of financial assistance. Ms. Esparza said that legal services could be needed by senior adults as well, especially given the emerging fraud and predatory behavior during the current pandemic.

Mayor Robinson thanked congressional leaders for fighting to achieve federal government assistance. She noted that the 80-percent area median income (AMI) level represents a single individual earning \$56,000 or less annually or a family of four earning \$80,000 or less annually. She expressed support for funding the four service areas.

Ms. Robinson said that The Sophia Way is primarily a Kirkland responsibility that is currently in Bellevue, and Friends of Youth is a Redmond responsibility located in Redmond. She questioned funding The Sophia Way but not Friends of Youth when other cities are said to be funding services within their jurisdictions.

Ms. Esparza said the City has been in collaborative conversations with both the City of Kirkland and the City of Redmond to better understand what recommendations they anticipate will go through their governing authorities. Part of the discussion was how the cities can minimize administrative costs and streamline funding to the agencies. The concept was to not have every jurisdiction spreading their dollars among all four agencies. Ms. Esparza said that the City of Kirkland and the City of Redmond each have approximately \$200,000 in funding and will be developing recommendations for the use of the funds. Ms. Esparza said it is easier to gain approval for a reimbursement to an agency that is within a specific city's boundaries. However, it can be done if a local government can demonstrate that the agency serves its residents.

In further response to Mayor Robinson, Ms. Esparza said the City of Kirkland and the City of Redmond intend to recommend funding for Friends of Youth. Ms. Robinson said that Friends of Youth serves Bellevue's youth who currently have a tremendous need for assistance.

Responding to Mayor Robinson, Ms. Esparza said that residents may go directly to child care resources to access a subsidy that they then take to their child care provider. Ms. Robinson noted that the Boys and Girls Clubs of Bellevue are providing child care for healthcare workers, and they are in need of funding to continue to provide services.

Ms. Esparza said the City provides ongoing human services funding to the Boys and Girls Clubs of Bellevue. The Boys and Girls Clubs are currently partnering with the Bellevue School District to provide child care for healthcare workers. Ms. Esparza said the subsidies are directed more toward long-term child care than crisis child care. Responding to Mayor Robinson, Ms. Esparza said she was not sure whether frontline healthcare workers fall within the 80-percent AMI level but she will follow-up with more information.

Responding to Deputy Mayor Nieuwenhuis, Mr. McCommon confirmed that the Council would need to approve the addition of a new provider. Mr. Nieuwenhuis said he is ready to move forward.

Councilmember Stokes said the legal assistance does not involve paying personal attorneys for individuals. He said the agencies provide legal advocacy and guidance, and he supports including those organizations in the CDBG funding. Mr. Stokes expressed support for financial assistance to small businesses. However, he noted that is not the intended use for CDBG funds. Mr. Stokes said he is ready to move forward.

Councilmember Lee said he was adamant about the need for special attention to underrepresented and underserved populations. He said that many individuals do not know about the availability of resources or how to access the human services network. He said this is the time to find opportunities to take the extra step to address the needs of underserved individuals. He suggested exploring services from the Chinese Information and Service Center (CISC), International Community Health Services, and other agencies. Mr. Lee reiterated that it is critical to help underserved individuals and communities.

Councilmember Zahn noted that the agencies mentioned by Councilmember Lee have previously received funding from the City. Ms. Zahn questioned whether staff looked at agencies that provide culturally appropriate services. Ms. Esparza said staff would be looking for a new provider for that service. She said that while the City does contract with the agencies noted by Mr. Lee, the contracts do not include emergency financial assistance.

Councilmember Zahn expressed concern about whether there are adequate mental health services. Mr. McCommon said the regular human services grant process is underway and more information will be provided as it moves forward.

Mayor Robinson said there will be additional nonprofit and public funding sources to continue to address the most critical human services needs through the public health emergency. She expressed support for staff's recommendations. She said that Hopelink does a good job of distributing money to other agencies. She suggested working with them to ensure that the City is engaging the individuals and populations that are the most difficult to reach. She would like to see funding assistance for low-income hospital workers, especially in the area of child care.

Councilmember Robertson said she believes that any new service providers should be vetted by the Human Services Commission. She would not be comfortable funding a provider that has not gone through the Commission's extensive vetting process.

Mayor Robinson said it sounds like there is Council support for providing additional funding to the four service areas identified by staff. She said the Council will have an additional opportunity to review and discuss staff's recommendation the following week.

Mr. McCommon noted his understanding that the Council supports staff's recommendation, with the caveat that there will be further discussion regarding a potential additional provider.

Councilmember Lee expressed support for Option 1 as stated in the agenda memo: Provide direction to staff to prepare associated plans and an Ordinance to allocate new CDBG-CV dollars in the amount of \$489,623 plus \$506,934 from prior years' unspent funds for COVID-19 related expenses incurred for homeless services, emergency financial assistance, childcare, and legal assistance. In addition, direct staff to seek applications for one additional emergency financial assistance provider with an emphasis on reaching underserved populations. Staff will bring a recommendation back to Council for an additional \$100,000 allocation to an agency identified in this outreach.

Mayor Robinson requested that staff work with Hopelink to determine their ability to reach underserved populations. She suggested, if it would expedite the delivery of services, perhaps allocating funding to Hopelink to distribute to agencies that emphasize services for underserved populations. Ms. Robinson expressed support for Option 1.

Deputy Mayor Nieuwenhuis expressed support for Option 1, noting that he would like to move forward now and to have a later conversation about adding a new provider. He concurred with Councilmember Robertson's comment that any new agencies should be vetted by the Human Services Commission. He would prefer to continue working with current providers.

Councilmember Barksdale said he is comfortable with Option 1 and with future discussion regarding an additional provider if needed.

Councilmember Robertson and Councilmember Stokes expressed support for Option 1.

Councilmember Lee acknowledged that the Human Services Commission should normally vet service providers. However, he said this is an unusual situation. He expressed concern that if certain underserved individuals are not helped now, they may never recover from the negative impacts of the pandemic. Mr. Lee said he insists on providing funding to agencies that assist underserved populations. He said he is not concerned about the need to vet a new provider at this time. Mr. Lee expressed support for Option 1 as written in the agenda packet.

Councilmember Zahn said she supports Option 1 and appreciates Councilmember Lee's concerns regarding underserved individuals. She noted that three of the four agencies already funded by the City offer culturally appropriate, community based outreach. She expressed support for funding both Hopelink and the smaller underserved community trusted messengers.

Mayor Robinson noted her past experience as the Council liaison to the Human Services Commission. She said that two organizations assisting underserved individuals were denied grants during the last funding cycle due to essentially clerical errors in completing their forms. Since that time, there has been outreach to assist agencies that are completing their applications for the first time.

Mayor Robinson re-read Option 1 as provided in the agenda memo: Provide direction to staff to prepare associated plans and an Ordinance to allocate new CDBG-CV dollars in the amount of \$489,623 plus \$506,934 from prior years' unspent funds for COVID-19 related expenses incurred for homeless services, emergency financial assistance, childcare, and legal assistance. In addition, direct staff to seek applications for one additional emergency financial assistance provider with an emphasis on reaching underserved populations. Staff will bring a recommendation back to Council for an additional \$100,000 allocation to an agency identified in this outreach.

Referring to the second to the last sentence, Ms. Robinson said she does not believe the Council is asking staff to seek applications. However, the Council is interested in considering a recommendation from staff regarding agencies that reach certain underserved populations. She would like staff to bring a recommendation back to the Council for the use of the additional \$100,000 allocation to an agency identified in that outreach.

8. Adjournment

At 7:42 p.m., Mayor Robinson declared the meeting adjourned.

Charmaine Arredondo, CMC
City Clerk

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