

CITY OF BELLEVUE
HUMAN SERVICES COMMISSION
MINUTES

April 2, 2024
6:00 p.m.

Bellevue City Hall
Room 1E-113

COMMISSIONERS PRESENT: Chair Singh, Commissioners Imfura, Rashid, White
COMMISSIONERS REMOTE: None
COMMISSIONERS ABSENT: None
STAFF PRESENT: Ruth Blaw, Christy Stangland, Toni Esparza, Andrew Ndayambaje, Gysel Galaviz, Department of Parks & Community Services
COUNCIL LIAISON: Councilmember Zahn
POLICE LIAISON: Major Mark Tarantino
GUEST SPEAKERS: Jesse Franklin, Rainier Athletics; Alonda Williams, Big Brothers and Big Sisters of Puget Sound; Tim Motts, Boys & Girls Clubs of Bellevue
RECORDING SECRETARY: Gerry Lindsay

1. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 6:01 p.m. by Chair Singh who presided.

2. ROLL CALL

Chair Singh took a moment to introduce and welcome the two newest Commissioners, Fetri Rashid and Jeanine Imfura.

All Commissioners were present.

3. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

A. February 21, 2024

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

Jayne Longoria with Domestic Violence Survivors, also known as Eastside DVS, a non-profit organization established in March 2023, informed the Commission that to date the organization has been running off of board member and community donations to help domestic violence survivors who are seeking immediate assistance fleeing their situations. The organization will be applying for city funding for the first time during the upcoming round. The organization was developed in light of the gap for services on the Eastside for community members in need of imminent and immediate help fleeing domestic violence situations. There is currently no one to call and nowhere to go for those in the moment of fleeing a domestic violence situation. All of the board members either work or live on the Eastside, and all of them have lived through domestic violence incidents and are domestic violence survivors. Seventy-five percent of the board members are Black and Jayme believes that will help to promote equity in funding. Only a small amount of funding will be sought from Eastside cities as the organization gains recognition. The city of Bellevue will be asked for \$10,000. The money will go toward hotel vouchers, rental assistance, cell phones temporary shelter for pets, clothing and hygiene supplies, and counseling services in partnership with For The Culture Counseling Services, a Black owned and operated behavioral health service.

Irene Muller with Essentials First said the organization focuses on hygiene access inequity and hygiene poverty and is based in Bellevue but has expanded to include locations in Bellevue, Redmond, Kent and Seattle. The expansion was triggered by a huge increase in need. The Bellevue location in 2022 served about 870 households; in 2023 that number increased to about 2300 households. Now with four operational locations many more families are being served. The agency advocates for hygiene specifically because the products are expensive and difficult to access for folks who primarily rely on public assistance to meet their basic needs. Existing programs do not offer the same provisions. Many recently arrived refugees are coming to the area, and there are other families at different stages of the immigration process and the agency is able to support them through the transitional time. Many of the families have children and/or are intergenerational households, some with elderly and disabled members. Additionally, veterans and folks re-entering from incarceration are also being served. The hope is to build a partnership with the community and the Commission with the aim of seeing access to hygiene products as no longer an issue.

Alex Tsimerman began with a Nazi salute and called the Commissioners dirty garbage rats, and Councilmember Zahn a Nazi pig. The Commission was urged to be careful when it comes to Ordinance 6752. Every three pages the same information is repeated. Six times it repeats the same thing in 29 pages. The document is signed by the Mayor and the City Attorney. It is a crime and they are both criminals. The Commission follows the ordinance which makes the Commissioners all freaking idiots. All the rules are only for the city and they have nothing to do with the constitution, national or state. Bellevue rules cannot be above the U.S. constitution or the state constitution, the Open Public Meetings Act or court decisions. The rules are fake and criminal. The Mayor and the City Attorney need to be prosecuted for what they have done. The Commission should just dismiss the rules.

Michael Iti, executive director of Chinese Information and Service Center, explained that the agency has been serving the community since 1972. The team consists of 140 bilingual staff who are able to serve immigrants from a number of language backgrounds. Services are offered in Seattle, South King County and on the Eastside. The organization has been a long-time partner with Bellevue Mini City Hall, and provides activities at North Bellevue Community Center and the Redmond Together Center. Copies of the focus group research conducted in the fall of 2023 was distributed to the Commissioners. The research was done with Russian speaking, older adult clients who are part of the organization's case management program. Some 800 Russian speaking clients are served on the Eastside and South King County; they are connected with caregivers and specialists so they can thrive in their own homes. The assessment found that social interaction, transportation, information, and assistance, and helping people navigate services are clear needs in the community.

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

Councilmember Zahn welcomed the two new Commissioners, noting that interviews have been scheduled to fill the remaining three vacancies.

The Commissioners were informed that the Council had determined the process to be used to fill the City Manager position. An external recruiting firm will be tapped. A City Manager profile will be created, and input will be sought from the community.

The city recently received some federal dollars, including \$500,000 for digital equity and affordable housing. The Council recognized Women's History Month in March as well as Sexual Assault Awareness Month in April.

A new ethics officer has been selected for the city. Once that contract is in place, any Councilmember or member of any board or commission that might have an ethics question can contact that person for confidential advice and information.

At the Council's recent retreat, a question was raised about remote participation and the requirement for Commissioners to inform staff by noon of the day before a meeting. For the City Council, the noticing requirement is by noon the day of the meeting. The Council will be looking to align rules for boards and commissions with those for the City Council.

Councilmember Zahn said there is support at the Council level for increasing the human service grant amount for the upcoming budget. A special Council meeting on the budget will be held on April 8 at 5:30 p.m. as part of helping the Council get a handle on the city's financial picture ahead of developing the 2025-2026 biannual budget.

The Commissioners were told that the Polaris at Eastgate, an affordable housing complex, is taking applications and should be opening its Phase I soon. The 100-unit housing project in Redmond operated by the Salvation Army offering permanent supportive housing is also close to opening. Two-thirds of those units will be for local Eastside single adults, and only one-third will

be coming through King County coordinated entry.

Answering a question asked by Chair Singh about the ethics office, Councilmember Zahn explained that they will handle any questions about conflicts of interest, the code of conduct and any ethics questions. The office will serve as a resource for both elected and appointed positions.

Major Mark Tarantino informed the Commission that later in April the Eastside light rail system will begin operations. The police department is standing up a unit whose sole responsibility will be to protect and patrol the rail line.

6. STAFF AND COMMISSIONER REPORTS

Human Services Manager Ruth Blaw reminded the Commissioners that the Commission's meetings are switching to Mondays starting on April 15. The Commission's May 20 meeting will be held at the Crossroads Community Center from 6:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m. and it will focus on equity in funding. There will not be a remote option that night.

7. INFORMATION FOR THE COMMISSION – None

8. OLD BUSINESS – None

9. NEW BUSINESS

A. Panel Conversation: Trends and Challenges with Youth Services

The panelists were introduced as Alonda Williams, president of Big Brothers and Big Sisters of Puget Sound, Jesse Franklin executive director and founder of Rainier Athletics, and Tim Motts, president and CEO for the Boys & Girls Club of Bellevue.

Human Services Planner Andrew Ndayambaje asked the panelists to address the question “What are the misconceptions or misunderstandings about the youth?”

Alonda Williams said adults often assume that young people are all the same when in fact they are not. There is so much access to information that the youth are allowed to understand and experience the world in very different ways. That shows up in a variety of ways, including in terms of digital fluency. It is one thing to be fluent on one's phone but quite a different thing to show up for a job and be able to use Teams, Word and other digital tools. While young people do spend a lot of time on their phones, they may not always be as digitally fluent as many think. Additionally, while it might be assumed that the youth have lots of friends by virtue of being online talking to people, there is in fact an epidemic of loneliness. Much has been said about the mental health challenges facing young people. Some 22 percent of 10th graders have considered suicide.

Jesse Franklin agreed with the previous speaker and added that many assume that young people lack resilience. The reality is that adults have a history of overcomplicating things for the youth. The youth have the resilience they were born with and it is the job of adults to support the youth

in bringing out qualities that already exist within them. New mentors that come in may hold assumptions about themselves in regard to being able to pass along life advice, when in fact often young people already have the right answers, having gotten them from their families and friends as well as their educators. There is a clear mental health crisis in place, and it shows up in a lot of different ways. The youth can have friends and still face mental health challenges. With access to information and access to noise, the youth are faced with numerous questions about who they are and how they fit in, and as a result they are losing the ability to access the qualities they possess. It should be recognized that just because someone seems alright because their grades are good or because their attendance is good, there is a need for the community to get to know them on a deeper level.

Jesse Franklin agreed and added the big misconception that things are back to some sense of normalcy for young people post-pandemic. From a youth development standpoint, those who were one year old when the pandemic began are now in kindergarten. Those children were raised in a very different environment, and that is a transcending element. Many who were in elementary school are not now ready for middle school, and those who were middle schoolers are not ready for high school. Kids at all ages are struggling with some form of youth development and relationship building issues. Some are only just learning to share. There has been nothing normal about the normal youth development processes they have gone through as young people.

Andrew Ndayambaje asked “What are the most significant human services needs and barriers impacting the youth?”

Tim Motts allowed that while the list is fairly long, it largely comes down to relationship building and having the space to work with one another on conflict resolution and just being able to be kids. With so much oversight facing them, the youth simply do not know how to create basic youth development or relationship strategies. Many are facing food insecurity, and telling them that they need to improve their grades will not succeed. If there is no caring adult at home to make sure they are being taken care of after school, when there is just basic chaos, it is very hard to get to other basic development needs. There needs to be a recognition of those barriers and how much the youth must get through before they can be reached in positive ways.

Jesse Franklin said high levels of poverty are being experienced in the city. Basic needs need to be met. There is an opportunity to move up the hierarchy and break the cycle of poverty and the cycle of trauma into love and belonging, self-actualization and goal setting. It needs to be recognized that socialization, mentorship and relationship building is part of mental health and is part of the solution. The focus needs to go beyond labeling kids as poor or with other labels and extend to the possibilities the youth can achieve.

Alonda Williams said one of the challenges in the community is that there are not enough similar conversations about the youth happening. Locally and nationally there is a lot of admiring the problem, and many are quick to point out the Surgeon General’s report without also pointing out that the Surgeon General also offered solutions that need to be followed. Mentoring is one, relationship building is another, as is investing in mental health. The idea of loneliness is not fully understood in terms of how devastating it can be to a young person and their

development. Recognizing that young people face a number of choices and multiple ways to be successful in life is critical.

Andrew Ndayambaje then asked the panelists to provide a brief overview of their programs and services provided that address the needs and barriers.

Jesse Franklin said Rainier Athletes has started the first school year of the second decade. Students are identified in fourth grade who face barriers to accessing opportunity in the classroom and in the community, including sports, STEM and arts activities. Each student is paired with a dedicated volunteer mentor and they meet in the school weekly from fourth grade through high school and beyond. The first cohort of students are in the third year of their next step, whatever that next step may be. Some of the high schoolers are focusing on things like apprenticeships and professional certificate programs, while others are looking to get into college. The focus with the students is less on what they want to be and more on who they want to be. Currently 160 families are being served, and there are more kids to serve than there are volunteers.

Tim Motts said Boys & Girls Club of Bellevue has been serving the community for nearly 75 years and currently has 18 locations. The mission is to enable all young people to reach their full potential as caring and responsible citizens. The school district has between 18,000 and 19,000 students, and the organization served 16,000 youth in some capacity in 2023 through things like sports programs, academic achievement, counseling services and computer classes. The organization provides after-school services every day up to 6:00 p.m. or 7 :00 p.m. depending on the location. There are also some before-school programs and preschool offerings. One unique statistic is that the organization is seeing the kids about 80 percent of the time. The two most attended sites are Ardmore Elementary and Medina Elementary. The organization is embedded with the Bellevue School District and serves as part of the mental health team. Youth Eastside Services keeps a full-time employee at the organization's Lake Hills clubhouse.

Alonda Williams said the 120-year-old Big Brothers Big Sisters organization has been in the community for 66 years. One thing that has come from that longevity is a lot of data locally and nationally about the power of mentoring. The vision is for every young person to have a mentor whose impact will last a lifetime. That is accomplished by creating one-to-one relationships. There are two programs, one is community based where the students and mentors meet in the community, and the other is school based where the mentors come into the schools that is more career based. The mentorships last an average of three years but many last much longer. The results have been a reduction in symptoms of depression and improvements in academic performance.

Andrew Ndayambaje asked the panelists what challenges the agencies are experiencing that the Commission should be aware of.

Alonda Williams shared that in just the last eight weeks two young people have died, one by suicide and the other from a health incident on a bus. Both were in the organization's program. The family and community associated with the girl who died by suicide did not believe in mental health support and thought the young girl was simply looking for attention. At a minimum,

everyone should take a youth mental health first aid class. The needs are great but, in some communities and homes mental health remains a stigma.

Jesse Franklin said mental health is a topic that people can understand. Mentoring and relationship building needs to be thought of as part of the mental health service delivery model. It should not take an acute mental health crisis before people get involved. The challenge lies with educating donors and the community that relationships matter. In Bellevue, the need has outpaced the capacity to address the need. There are challenges with poverty and with affordable housing, but there is a clear need for the youth to have strong relationships and connections.

Tim Motts said the top challenge is the explosion of need in the childcare space from preschool all the way up through grade school. Childcare now costs more than a thousand dollars a month in King County. In 2019 the organization provided \$900,000 in scholarships and the current year is on track to reach \$2.5 million in scholarships. There are a hundred families currently on the very low-income list as determined by HUD who are not able to get scholarships due to the cost; to cover them all would mean awarding some \$3 million in scholarships, which is challenging on an \$8 million budget.

Commissioner White said it is great to see that there is overlap between the various programs. The information shared with help the Commission in making funding decisions.

Councilmember Zahn asked how the organizations are addressing the issue of living wage pay for their staff.

Alonda Williams said a minimum starting salary has been instituted for the staff. The salary level is a livable wage for a single person, but not necessarily for those with families. The organization also tries to make sure it offers a lot of time off to help alleviate the trauma they experience from dealing with situations.

Jesse Franklin noted that Rainier Athletics takes the same approach. The organization recognizes the importance of having lived experience, being part of the community, speaking the language of the community, and knowing the community. All salaries were increased by 50 percent to get closer to a living wage for all direct service personnel. College degrees or high school diplomas are no longer required for job applicants. Flexible time off is also given.

Tim Motts said 80 percent to 85 percent of the organization's \$8 million budget goes for staffing. The organization had up to a 30 percent turnover rate prior to the pandemic, and to address that after the pandemic several positions were adjusted to be more hybrid with full-time opportunities of up to 30 or 40 hours per week in conjunction to changing the minimum wage to \$21 per hour. That resulted in an extra million dollars annually in cost. Less than five percent of the organization's 140 employees live in Bellevue because of the cost of living in the city.

Chair Singh and the Commissioners thanked the panelists for their input.

B. 2023 Human Services Dashboard Review

Ruth Blaw said the collection of data was part of the Commission's strategic plan. A dashboard

has been developed to show the 2023 data, and the dashboard will be updated annually. IT is working to finalize the dashboard ahead of making it available online.

The dashboard represents a snapshot of achievements from 2023, which is the first year of the two-year funding cycle. Just over \$10 million was distributed, serving more than 62,000 residents through 187 programs. Nearly 250,000 shelter bed nights were provided. Ninety percent of the programs met or exceeded their service unit goals. Fifty-seven of the funded programs were funded for the first time. More than a thousand community members provided input to the Needs Update. Over \$1.3 million was distributed in the form of rental assistance, and 57 residents were supported with safe and stable housing through the home repair programs.

The dashboard included a graph showing how the total funds distributed were divided among the five goal areas. Nearly half of the funds were allocated to Goal 1, Housing Stability and Food Insecurity. The dashboard also highlights each of the goal areas in terms of the services included and the various funding sources.

Ruth Blaw provided the Commissioners with a handout showing each funded agency along with what their 2023 award was, their service units, and their outcomes.

The Commissioners were informed that the application process would close on April 8. The anticipation is that close to 150 applications will be submitted.

Chair Singh asked if agencies are still having to address Covid-related issues. Ruth Blaw said the biggest change is that ARPA funding will end in seven months. There is a proposal before the Council to consider increasing the human services allocation in large part due to ARPA funds expiring.

Councilmember Zahn allowed that the numbers can be confusing given that ARPA dollars are embedded within them. The city received two years of ARPA money at \$10 million each year. Some 75 percent to 80 percent of the money went to human services. It will be helpful to get a breakdown of what the numbers will look like without the ARPA funds.

Major Mark Tarantino observed that the dashboard indicates that \$10.3 million was distributed in 2023, yet the handout listing all the funded agencies totals \$21 million. Human Services Planner Christy Stangland explained that the dashboard does not include the critical ARPA funds. The ARPA contracts did not begin until June 2023 and very little spending occurred during that calendar year. However, the funds were awarded in 2023, accounting for the disparity.

C. Analysis of the Human Services Funding Awards to Improve Equity in Funding

Christy Stangland said the goal of sharing the data was to highlight the areas that show progress related to equity in funding, and to identify opportunities for improvement. The Commission began formally analyzing its data recommendations for equity and funding in 2021 and has continued the work annually since. The Council has emphasized the need for the Human Services Commission to form recommendations for a wide base of agencies and agencies providing culturally and linguistically specific services.

Black Indigenous People of Color (BIPOC) By and For Agencies are defined as agencies that were created by, are predominantly led and staff by, and focus on serving a BIPOC community or communities. BIPOC By and For Agencies provide culturally and linguistically specific services.

For 2023, the list of human services funding sources were the city's Human Services General Fund at \$4.8 million; the Housing Stability Fund at \$1.75 million; CDBG dollars, though only the funds awarded outside of the city; and ARPA funds at \$6.5 million.

A chart shared with the Commission provided a breakdown of the BIPOC By and For Agencies funded compared to all agencies. The columns showed the requested funding amounts, the awarded funding amounts, and the funded amounts as a percentage of the requested amounts. The chart also identified funding for all agencies both with and without shelter funding. The Council has provided funding for the shelters and that has led to a significant portion of human services funding being dedicated to shelters.

In 2023, there were a total of 21 BIPOC By and For Agencies that applied for funding, of which 19 were funded. Eight of the agencies were funded for the first time. In all, 26 percent of the total number of agencies funded were BIPOC By and For Agencies.

Turning to BIPOC By and For programs, Christy Stangland said 28 percent of all programs funded with human services funding were for BIPOC By and For Agencies, and 54 percent of the BIPOC By and For programs were receiving funding for the first time. Of all the funded agencies, 33 percent received human services funding for the first time in 2023. Fifty-eight percent of the agencies that received funding in 2023 were Eastside-born and Eastside based.

In addition to focusing on funding equity, both the staff and the Commission have made efforts to improve equity in funding. The Commissioner who reviewed the applications all received equity training. The training will be offered again on May 20. Over the last year there have been several panel presentations from several agencies that serve marginalized communities. The panelists have shared the trends and challenges they witnessed and discussed the culturally and linguistically responsive services being provided to address those challenges. The city's capacity building initiative led by Communities Rise in 2022-2023 focused on supporting small, emerging, and midsize non-profit agencies that provided human services to immigrants, refugees, communities of color, low-income and other marginalized communities residing in Eastside cities. A portion of the 2023 ARPA funding was dedicated to a category of fostering wellbeing in the face of racial and ethnic discrimination as defined as the promotion of physical, mental and emotional wellbeing of populations impacted by racial and ethnic discrimination, namely BIPOC populations, immigrant and refugee communities, and/or historically marginalized communities through racially and culturally specific services. The prioritization of the groups considered the disproportional impact of Covid compounded with the preexisting disparities, including the pervasion of systematic racism and discrimination that has created barriers to living happy, healthy, and fulfilling lives.

Christy Stangland said technical assistance was offered by staff in various ways for all four

funding sources. The same is actively being done as part of the currently open application process. For examples, agencies that applied for ARPA funding were required to meet with staff prior to applying to receive the application process and timeline to discuss the funding requirements, determine the categories of funding, and to discuss potential outcomes and outputs. Language interpretation and translation is provided upon request at funding information sessions or at any other city meeting discussing human services funding. RFPs have been translated into Bellevue's top eight languages. The city accepts applications and quarterly reports in languages other than English.

Commissioner White said it was helpful to have all the information broken down. It emphasizes the good work the organizations are doing.

Chair Singh stressed the need to always show how many Bellevue residents are served by the various organizations. Christy Stangland said that number is shown on the dashboard, though not specifically by BIPOC By and For Agencies.

Department of Parks and Community Services assistant director Toni Esparza said staff has prepared another report showing the outcomes for every service provided. That document will be provided to the Commission in the near future, and it shows Bellevue residents served by BIPOC By and For Agencies.

10. CONTINUED ORAL COMMUNICATIONS – None

11. ADJOURNMENT

Chair Singh reminded the Commissioners that starting on April 15 the Commission will be meeting on the first and third Mondays of each month.

Chair Singh adjourned the meeting at 7:27 p.m.