

CITY OF BELLEVUE
HUMAN SERVICES COMMISSION
MINUTES

February 21, 2024
6:00 p.m.

Bellevue City Hall
Room 1E-113

COMMISSIONERS PRESENT: Vice Chair Singh, Commissioners Piper
COMMISSIONERS REMOTE: Commissioner Amirfaiz
COMMISSIONERS ABSENT: Chair Mansfield, Commissioner White
STAFF PRESENT: Christy Stangland, Toni Esparza, Ruth Blaw, Gysel Galaviz, Department of Parks & Community Services; Thara Johnson, Department of Community Development
COUNCIL LIAISON: Councilmember Zahn
POLICE LIAISON: Not Present
GUEST SPEAKERS:
RECORDING SECRETARY: Gerry Lindsay

1. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 6:02 by Vice Chair Singh who presided.

2. ROLL CALL

All Commissioners were present with the exception of Chair Mansfield and Commissioner White.

Vice Chair Singh welcomed Councilmember Zahn, new Council liaison to the Commission.

Councilmember Zahn reported being excited to serve as liaison to a Commission that serves such an important role in the city.

3. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

A. January 3, 2024

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

4. ORAL AND WRITTEN COMMUNICATIONS

Vice 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.

Phillip Peters, executive director of Renewal Food Bank, said the food bank is an amazing place that warmly welcomes everyone in the community who has a food need. The grocery style format allows customers to shop the shelves for food for their families according to their needs. High quality and culturally relevant foods are offered. In a given week, some 450 families access the services, which equates to 1500 individuals and about 64,000 bags of groceries annually. Other food banks have struggled, and some have even closed, redirecting their customers to Renewal Food Bank, thus there has been a spike of about 40 percent over the past year. The surging demand is putting a lot of pressure on the organization to meet the demand. In 2023, a thousand first-time families signed up to shop at the food bank. Concerted effort has been put into expanding the volunteer cohort in order to meet the demand. The number of volunteers that come on a weekly basis has tripled, and multilingual and culturally diverse volunteers have been especially sought.

Winnie Au, development and public relations manager for Renewal Food Bank, said the majority of the new customers are from BIPOC and immigrant families from eastern Europe, the Americas, and East and Southeast Asia. There has also been a significant increase in the number of unhoused individuals and LGBTQ community members. It is always difficult for persons to leave their home countries and start a new life in the United States. Renewal's multilingual staff and volunteers are always actively listening to the concerns and stories of the customers. The goal is always to see customers walk out the doors with bags of groceries and with dignity and a smile. Customers also sometimes choose to serve as volunteers.

Phillip Peters said Renewal Food Bank purchases no food; all of the food received is by donation from food drives and local grocery partners. All of the food would otherwise be thrown away. In the last six months of 2023 a total of a quarter of a million pounds of food was rescued. The food rescue operation is enhanced by having volunteers who specifically seek out even more health and wonderful food that would otherwise be thrown away.

Winnia Au noted that in addition to food rescue Renewal Food Bank plans to pursue other environmentally sustainable programs by encouraging customers to bring in reusable containers for bulk items, and by partnering with local farms to turn expired food into healthy soil in which to grow additional produce. Customers are also encouraged to try produce they may not be familiar with by offering food tasting. There are plans to utilize the kitchen as a platform for cultural exchange by inviting the staff, volunteers and customers from different backgrounds to come together.

Phillip Peters said Renewal Food Bank has expanded its space in order to keep up with the demand, all while sticking with the core values of offering dignity and respect to everyone. Space is set aside for partners to come in to offer additional services to meet the needs of the community.

Winnie Au said efforts are continuing to cultivate relationships with local businesses. Many of them send their employees to volunteer or provide donations of food and hygiene items. Tireless work is put into building connections with faith-based groups as well as businesses and individuals.

Phillip Peters said Renewal Food Bank is a vibrant community space where families and volunteers return week after week. Programs continue to be expanded to meet the needs of the community. The Commission was asked to expand funding to non-profits like Renewal Food Bank so that no one in the Bellevue community is left behind.

Alex Tsimerman began with a Nazi salute and called the Commissioners dirty garbage rates and Nazi pigs. What is happening is that there is a new bylaw that is a Nazi fascist restriction. Commissions cannot allow public comment at the end of meetings. Having spoken to Mayor Robinson about why only ten people can talk and why there is a 30-minute limit, it is clear the limits are only because of Alex Tsimerman. At a public meeting in Redmond on February 20, 40 people were allowed to speak. That happens often. Bellevue's limitation on freedom of speech is not happening in other cities. The Commission will do nothing about it because by definition the Commissioners are slaves and rats.

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

Councilmember Zahn voiced appreciation on behalf of the City Council for the hard work done by the Commissioners and staff on the needs assessment and the strategic plan, both of which were unanimously supported by the Council.

Councilmember Zahn also reported that the Council will soon be moving its meeting date to Tuesdays, which will directly impact the Human Services Commission. The flexibility of the Commission is appreciated.

There are interviews upcoming for candidates to fill the current vacancies on the Commission.

The Council unanimously voted to approve the safe parking program and the contract with 4Tomorrow. The program will be launched within the next month or so to serve the clients who fit the criteria and who are committed to a pathway out of sleeping in their cars.

The Council also voted unanimously on the ARCH funding proposal.

6. STAFF AND COMMISSIONER REPORTS

Commissioner Amirfaiz took a moment to announce stepping down from the Commission. Gratitude was expressed to the Commissioners and the staff in saying it had been a joy and an honor to serve on the Commission.

Human Services Manager Ruth Blaw pointed out that the Council's move to meeting on Tuesdays necessitates the Commission moving its meetings from Tuesdays to Mondays starting

in April. The Commissioners were reminded that the option to participate remotely will continue, but under the bylaws staff must be made aware no later than noon the day before a meeting.

Ruth Blaw shared that the equity in funding training is slated for May 20. There will not be a remote option for that training, the location of which is yet to be determined. On June 8 from 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. the Commission will hold its retreat. The community will be invited to attend to discuss funding recommendations.

Vice Chair Singh was thanked for attending the Council meeting at which the needs assessment and strategic plans were presented. Ruth Blaw said it makes a big difference to have members of the Commission verbalize their support in a public meeting.

Ruth Blaw pointed out that currently there are four vacancies on the Commission. Work is under way to see those seats filled.

Vice Chair Singh took a moment to thank Commissioner Amirfaiz for serving on the Commission and for being a team member. It was stated that much was learned from watching Commissioner Amirfaiz, particularly about how to keep an eye on the numbers during the allocation process.

Commissioner Piper said it had been a pleasure and an honor serving with Commissioner Amirfaiz over the last five years. The comments of Vice Chair Singh about having learned so much from Commissioner Amirfaiz were echoed by Commissioner Piper, who added that Commissioner Amirfaiz was always an important voice in all the deliberations.

Human Services Planner Christy Stangland concurred with the comments and noted that in every conversation Commissioner Amirfaiz voiced opinions and beliefs, even if they were not aligned with the rest of the Commission. That allowed for rich conversations that led to decisions that may not otherwise have been made.

Ruth Blaw voiced appreciation for the fact that Commissioner Amirfaiz never took the role of being a Commissioner lightly, always serving passionately and thoughtfully.

Department of Parks and Community Services assistant director Toni Esparza commented that Commissioner Amirfaiz came to the table with professional experience and personal experience, all of which made the conversations so much fuller and richer.

Councilmember Zahn said it is clear that the legacy and fingerprints of Commissioner Amirfaiz are all over the work of the Commission.

7. INFORMATION FOR THE COMMISSION – None
8. OLD BUSINESS – None
9. NEW BUSINESS

A. Comprehensive Plan Periodic Update

Comprehensive Planning Manager Thara Johnson with the Department of Community Development noted having worked closely together with human services staff over the last several months. It was stated that the requirement to periodically update the Comprehensive Plan comes from state law. The Growth Management Act directs cities to update their plans every ten years. The periodic update process allows for reexamining the vision, focus on how the community has grown, and to look for opportunities for changes. The current update is probably the most significant one ever undertaken by the city in terms of growth, the changes coming down from the state legislature, and the fact that the community has changed a lot in terms of diversity. City code also requires the Human Services Commission to provide recommendations on human services-related policies and topics.

The Comprehensive Plan includes a vision for the city and serves as a plan for growth for a 20-year timeframe. It provides policy guidance, enabling the City Council to make decisions on a range of issues, including making capital investments. The plan itself exists in two volumes. Volume 1 includes the vision and the elements or chapters, some of which are required under state law, including a Human Services Element.

The Comprehensive Plan establishes the community's vision and desires for how they want the community to grow. It also leads to things like regulations which in turn lead to Zoning Code changes and what gets built and where. The plan also provides guidance to develop plans, like the human services strategic plan that lead to human services funding priorities. It also resolves policy guidance for things like programs like the home repair assistance program.

Continuing, Thara Johnson said the currently Comprehensive Plan Periodic Update effort was launched by the Council in February 2022. The first phase of the work focused on the vision and hearing from the community about what they want to see in terms of change. That was followed by the development of alternative ways the city could grow through the update. The scope of the update was discussed with the Human Services Commission in early 2022 and it was made clear the three main components or emphasis areas of the update work are sustainability, equity and housing.

An extensive environmental review process was launched as part of the update work. It involved a fair amount of community engagement in the form of deep dives in the summer of 2022. The different topic areas included housing, mobility, transportation and placemaking. The work led to the development of options for growth under direction from both the Planning Commission and the City Council. Over the last six months the focus has turned to policy changes supported by the environmental process.

The final phase of the work is just getting under way. Ultimately the Planning Commission will be conducting a public hearing on the entire Comprehensive Plan around June of 2024. The goal is to have the Council adopt the entire plan by September, well ahead of the December deadline established by state law.

A number of technical analyses have been done, including a racially disparate impacts analysis,

an equity analysis, climate vulnerability assessment, each of which are part of the Environmental Impact Statement. There has been extensive community engagement that included open house events, workshops, tabling events and surveys. A strategy team consisting of some 45 stakeholders with various areas of expertise was formed to provide grounding and feedback on various areas of emphasis. Presentations have also been made to various of the city's boards and commissions, including the Human Services Commission. In addition to the Growth Management Act, there are regional requirements housed in the Countywide Planning Policies, and Puget Sound Regional Council's Vision 2050, the region's growth strategy, each of which guides the update work.

With regard to community engagement, Thara Johnson said more than 5000 community members have been involved via number of different strategies. Engaging with the youth has been part of the process. A statistically valid survey yielded a lot of input. The wide variety of other opportunities to get involved included discussions held in different languages. In addition to Bellevue residents, input was sought from people who do not live in Bellevue but who work or recreate in Bellevue.

Christy Stangland asked for examples of targeted outreach to underrepresented populations. Thara Johnson said the cultural outreach assistants from the neighborhood area planning processes were tapped to serve as contacts. There was a representative from the South Asian community, one from the Latinx community, and one from the Chinese community. They did an excellent job of helping the city reach out to members of their groups. A number of tabling events were held at different locations across the city. The open houses and workshops were held in different languages. Interpreters were used at events as well. The diversity network group was involved in an open house and workshop just recently. There were also questionnaires focused on different topic areas, including housing, transportation, and human services.

There were certain themes that arose from the responses. Much was heard about calling out veterans as a group needing more access to services; the need to strengthen policies relating to the connection between housing affordability and homelessness; and making sure taxpayer dollars are not wasted by ensuring that programs are more effective. The respondents connected with the policies related to equity and inclusion in programming. Much has been done to engage the youth, the result of which was making connections with more than 200 students who offered their views on what the Comprehensive Plan should focus on and what is missing. More engagement work is planned with Newport High School. Of all the student responses, about 22 were focused on human services related issues, with a desire to see more of a focus on mental health and addiction, as well as the need for more supportive services. The youth also noted the policies relating to access to food should include a stronger tie to culturally relevant food.

Thara Johnson noted that the structure of the element itself has been changed. It is divided into the areas of policies with a citywide focus; policies that focus on the facilitator and educator perspective; policies that focus on the planner and funders perspective; and policies related to housing.

Toni Esparza said the vision statement focuses on being an equitable and caring community where everyone can thrive and belong. It lays out the various areas in which human services

support people with belonging, physical, behavioral health, economic and social needs. It talks about the investments made in the basic building blocks of the community to ensure the development of healthy individuals and families.

The policies in the citywide section have been updated to use more inclusive language and to emphasize the full role of the city in the provision of human services. HS-1 talks about people who may experience poverty, discrimination and oppression and gives some examples. It specifically calls out historically marginalized communities. HS-2 details all of the roles the staff and Commission intersect with, including facilitator, funder, planner and educator. With the role of facilitator and educator, the policies focus on support for human services funding, partnering with organizations, and educating community members. HS-3 has had language added to it about identification of inequities. HS-4 focuses on adopting as part of the Comprehensive Plan building community collaboration and support for the needs of residents. HS-6 was revised based on the climate vulnerability assessment and in recognition that some residents are more vulnerable than others during hazardous events. It calls out ways support can be provided to residents through support hubs.

Policies HS-9 and HS-10 are new. HS-9 calls for educating community members in a variety of formats about the critical human services that are available. It ties into the Needs Update and the fact that individuals continue to struggle with knowing where to go for resources. HS-10 focuses on the intersection between human services and diversity, equity and inclusion and making sure there is a tie in with the city's values on those things in support of the funding process.

The policies in the planer and funder section have been expanded to address what are known to be the changing needs of the community and to call out priority areas. HS-13 establishes the city's work of continuing to assess community needs. HS-20 focuses on the investments that need to be made to address inequities for some members of the community and recognizes the area as specifically in need of human services investments. HS-24 is new and specifically calls out the need to address the crisis of housing instability and homelessness by providing services that enable residents to remain housed or become re-housed. HS-25, also new, specifically speaks to the needs of children and youth and identifies the need to support services and investments that allow for their participation in the community and to ensure equitable outcomes in health, wellness, and education. HS-26, another new policy, focuses on the feedback around food, supporting investments that provide access to healthy, culturally responsive, and affordable food for all residents. HS-27 focuses on services and investments for older adults broadly and calls out including those who are low-income and experiencing homelessness so that they can access services and support to be included in community life and to be able to age in place. The policy is tied to information received for the Needs Update. Policies HS-28 and HS-29 focus on the need in the community around behavioral health services. HS-28 recognizes behavioral health conditions, including substance use disorders, as chronic and treatable diseases and focuses on managing them through the behavioral health system. HS-29 focuses on services and investments in equitable behavioral healthcare services needed to have a successful system overall.

Thara Johnson said housing and human services are closely linked and the work to update the Comprehensive Plan seeks to strengthen that connection. Policy HO-61 has been changed to

ensure the inclusion of opportunities to provide housing for those sections of the community who have unique needs, including supportive services for older adults, the youth and those with disabilities. HO-65 offers more policy language in support of preventing homelessness by offering more services, opportunities to provide additional shelters, and temporary and permanent housing.

Other areas where there are connections to the work of the Human Services Commission, and which are seeing policy changes, include the Community Engagement Element where policy support has been added around ensuring inclusive engagement. The definition of “community” has been expanded in line with the Racially Disparate Impact Analysis. Policies are also drafted to ensure engagement through all phases of a project or projects.

In the Land Use Element, policy language has been added in support of housing and job growth targets. The language calls for planning for at least 35,000 more housing units and 70,000 jobs. More support is also added around mixed use centers as well as planning for future neighborhood centers.

With regard to the Neighborhood Element, all exclusive language has been removed from various policies. Some policies that talk about neighborhood preservation were found to be in conflict with equity related approaches. Policies focused on public safety and community safety were also added.

The Housing Element has the most significant changes, some of which stem from state law as well as the need to plan for housing for all income levels. There is a focus on a variety of housing options and types. Bellevue lacks housing in what is called the missing middle, which is housing that is not single family or higher density multifamily. There are policies in support of housing supportability, as well as anti-displacement measures. The Racially Disparate Impact Analysis also provides guidance on policy areas.

The Capital Facilities Element does not have as many changes but does have policy support added to support things like sustainable building, materials and systems, as well as ensuring facilities that are resilient against climate impacts.

The Utilities Element has had more policy support added for things like low-impact development techniques as well as resilience for the utility infrastructure.

Vice Chair Singh pointed out that there is not much land left to develop in Bellevue and asked how the housing targets are to be met. Thara Johnson said part of the discussion with the Planning Commission involves where to look at land use density increases in the city. There will be density increases in the Wilburton commercial area which provides good opportunities given that the area is supported by light rail. Increased density and capacity is also being looked at in the BelRed area. New state legislation passed in 2023 requires all cities to allow for at least four units on every single-family lot, and up to six units if two of them are provided as affordable.

Vice Chair Singh noted that many neighborhood associations have their own bylaws. Thara Johnson allowed that it will be interesting to see how things play out as the new state laws get

implemented. The legislation does exempt subdivisions or developments that have covenants that restrict additional density.

Vice Chair Singh commented that in some neighborhoods older homes are being torn down and replaced with much larger homes. Thara Johnson agreed that much has been heard about that issue.

Answering a question asked by Vice Chair Singh about housing affordability and anti-displacement, Thara Johnson said policy language support has been included. As part of the update to the Comprehensive Plan, as well as the Wilburton planning initiative, the city will be evaluating its approach to housing and affordable housing. Work is under way by consultants on an economic analysis to evaluate what the impacts would be of going to a mandatory approach under which areas of the city that are given more density would be required to have a certain percentage set aside as affordable. The city currently has an incentive-based approach in areas like BelRed that allows for increased density in exchange for providing affordable housing.

Thara Johnson said in the Transportation Element more of a focus has been given to multimodal transportation through policy language. The same is true for pedestrian safety. The policy language is supportive of the city's Vision Zero goals. The Economic Development Element includes policy language support for anti-displacement measures for small businesses, and more of an emphasis on tourism and retail, and policy support for more higher education.

Under the climate and environment section, more policy language has been added in support of the tree canopy, climate change and resilience. The Parks, Recreation and Open Space Element has had more policy language in support of inclusive recreation as well as park access for underserved communities. To the Urban Design and the Arts Element, more policy language has been added in support of cultural and historic resources; in support of developing a BelRed Arts District; and in support of other specific urban design policies for various areas of the city.

Thara Johnson said the Human Services Commission's recommendations will be forwarded to the Planning Commission for discussion, which will hold a public hearing before forwarding the packet to the City Council for ultimate action by September.

Commissioner Amirfaiz asked if any of the Comprehensive Plan policies address raising the minimum wage for Bellevue residents so they can afford housing, and if the issue of safety has any bearing on the planning efforts. Thara Johnson said no policy language is being added specific to minimum wage. The emphasis is on adding more opportunities to expand the types of housing available, and on getting more affordable housing either through a mandatory approach or by expanding the existing incentive program. There is policy language being added that relates to public safety, a topic that came up often during the public outreach efforts. The public draft of all the policies was released in mid-January and an open house event was held shortly thereafter. The draft policies are posted to EngagingBellevue.

Vice Chair Singh commented that many empty nesters are finding it difficult financially to stay in their homes or to move to another home. Thara Johnson said the Comprehensive Plan policies are intended to provide guidance for future actions. The city's Affordable Housing Strategy and

the city's affordable housing is looking for different opportunities to help older adults. A fair amount was heard from older adults during the community engagement efforts. A lot of interest was expressed in the opportunities afforded under the new state legislation to redevelop their properties and stay on them. Those conversations will continue once the Comprehensive Plan is adopted.

Answering a question asked by Vice Chair Singh, Thara Johnson said Bellevue is part of the partnership with ARCH, the organization that does much of the work of managing applications for affordable housing, including from folks who need assistance with gaining housing. Along with the King County Housing Authority, ARCH vets applicants to make sure they meet certain requirements.

A motion to advance the Human Services Element to the Planning Commission was made by Commissioner Piper. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Piper. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Amirfaiz and the motion was carried unanimously.

B. Bylaws Adoption

A motion to adopt the bylaws as amended to bring them into alignment with city code was made by Commissioner Piper. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Amirfaiz and the motion was carried unanimously.

C. Election of Vice Chair

Vice Chair Singh commented that owing to the resignation of Commissioner Halsted, the Commission needed to elect a new Vice Chair. Nominations for the position were opened.

Commissioner Amirfaiz nominated Commissioner Piper. The nomination was seconded by Vice Chair Singh.

The nomination to elect Commissioner Piper to serve as Vice Chair was carried unanimously.

D. 2025-2026 Funding Principles

Ruth Blaw informed the Commissioners that the Council has adopted funding priorities and the staff have reviewed the Needs Update and made some recommendations.

Christy Stangland said the funding priorities will be included in a supplemental and provided to the agencies so they can align their applications accordingly. The final document also serves as a tool for the Commission to use in reviewing funding applications. The process as envisioned includes community members participating as part of the process; there will be the expectation that they will read the funding priorities before the funding workshop.

Toni Esparza pointed out that the strategic plan already points out certain priorities for which the Council has indicated support. One thing called out the priority of culturally and linguistically specific services; another is filling gaps for marginalized communities. It was noted that the left

column of the document shows those priorities. The strategic plan also calls out priorities adopted by the Commission, and staff had offered ideas in the middle column for the Commissioners to comment on.

Commissioner Piper voiced approval for the document relative to Goal Area 1, noting specifically that the middle column captures what the Commission saw in the Needs Update.

Commissioner Amirfaiz said everything in the middle column for Goal Area 1 is great.

Toni Esparza confirmed for Vice Chair Singh that the number of persons served and the number of times is tracked. Staff will be bringing that data to the Commission soon as part of the report on 2023 funding. Vice Chair Singh stressed the need to keep an eye out for those who are abusing the system. Toni Esparza suggested that is best addressed through the monitoring of agencies.

Commissioner Piper commented on keeping in mind the human services continuum. There are acute needs, some of which is covered in the education and employment section, but more could possibly be added in the supportive relationships section. At times a disproportionate amount of time is focused on the acute needs to the detriment of other and critical areas. Toni Esparza said one approach would be to go through page by page and determine at the end what is missing and add it in. On the education and employment page, disparities in educational outcomes is called out, and the programs that speak to that could include youth enrichment. Under employment, there could be a focus on disparities in unemployment and programs that address that, such as the microenterprise programs. It should also be recognized that childcare can have an impact on employment.

Ruth Blaw turned to Goal Area 2, Supportive Relationships, and noted that staff identified resource navigation, the lack of knowledgeable human services programs and the need for increased help for residents to understand and connect to resources and support.

Christy Stangland said one big area for which a lot of applications are expected is culturally and linguistically specific services. It is called out as a Council priority in the supplemental, but it might be helpful to call it out in the document, which will be used as a tool for Commissioners and community members. Toni Esparza noted that as written in the plan, that is the overlay for any application; for any goal area, applications that address culturally and linguistically specific services will be prioritized.

Ruth Blaw said the priorities for Goal Area 3, Safety from Abuse and Violence, are violence prevention, survivor support and advocacy; a need for significant and ongoing need to support domestic violence survivors, and support for individuals experiencing other types of violence, sexual assault, abuse or trauma.

Vice Chair Singh voiced appreciation for referencing language barriers.

Commissioner Amirfaiz said it is known that there is a lot of underreporting in some communities due to fear or lack of knowledge about protective laws. Some language should be

included that will facilitate such reporting. That might take the form of outreach. Toni Esparza asked if it would be correct to capture that concern as a priority to support education and advocacy for those experiencing hate discrimination or bias. Commissioner Amirfaiz agreed.

Commissioner Piper suggested that expanding the definition by just a little would encompass the notion that everyone has an expectation and a right to be safe from all forms of abuse and violence. Toni Esparza said it is becoming well recognized how intersectional human services are becoming, overlapping with housing strategies, economic development, and even the arts community where marginalized communities sometimes find healing through the arts. Staff could explore other programs within the city and bring information back to the Commission in some form.

Councilmember Zahn commented that human trafficking victims do not fit the language as spelled out, yet the police actively work in that realm. It would seem that is something that fits within the broader category. Toni Esparza said human trafficking could be called out explicitly to capture it by more than just a loose reference.

Ruth Blaw said Mental and Physical Health is Goal Area 4. Behavioral health includes both mental health and substance use disorders. The staff priorities are behavioral health given the significant need for such services for the youth; and the need for substance use disorders services for the youth.

Turning to Goal Area 5, Education and Employment, Ruth Blaw echoed the comments of the Commission regarding childcare as a significant need along with youth enrichment, job training, and microenterprise.

Commissioner Piper commented that childcare is an issue that keeps many from being able to find jobs. Transportation is another huge barrier that maybe should be alluded to. Toni Esparza pointed out that there are few applications received that relate to transportation, other than possibly volunteer services that help people with transportation. King County Metro does offer a subsidized bus pass program that probation services utilizes for clients. The language could be revised to refer to access to affordable childcare and transportation.

Commissioner Amirfaiz said much has been heard from community members about not even having enough money to buy the gas they need to drive to work, and about a lack of funds to pay for needed car repairs. Toni Esparza said Goal Area 1 is drafted references financial assistance so residents can maintain stability and housing. Some agencies do use funds in that way to assist their clients.

Christy Stangland said Hopelink will pay for anything that will keep someone stably housed. That can include paying for prescriptions and car repairs on the argument that what keeps them from work could lead to the loss of their housing.

A motion to adopt the goal area language as written was made by Commissioner Piper. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Amirfaiz and the motion carried unanimously.

E. Opioid Settlement Proposal

Toni Esparza explained that various opioid distributors and sellers have extended the opportunity for settlement agreements to jurisdictions. By signing the agreements, jurisdictions agree not to sue the distributors and sellers. The city has signed on to some settlements and has already begun receiving funds, though some additional settlements may also be agreed to. The use of the funds are dictated by the settlement agreements, and oversight comes from the newly developed Opioid Abatement Council, but essentially the funds must be spent to help address the issue.

For Bellevue, the estimated funds to be received at \$250,000 per year for years one to seven; \$200,000 per year for years eight through ten; \$175,000 per year for years eleven to thirteen; and \$150,000 per year for years fourteen and fifteen.

To plan for the use of the funds, a cross-departmental work group was formed with representation from Parks & Community Services/human services and the police and fire departments, including Fire CARES. The group has been working to form a recommendation using available data, including what front-line staff are experiencing. There has been an extreme increase in fatal overdoses from fentanyl, all while it has been difficult to access resources when they are needed.

The group is recommending the addition of a focused Fire CARES social worker whose job would focus entirely on opioid use disorder, responding to individuals in the community who are in crisis, and supporting them in accessing services. The bulk of the funds would go to covering the cost of the employee, but the balance would be used to help address the barriers. For example, a person needing treatment that is offered in eastern Washington, they may need to get a TB test, which has a cost, might need a bus ticket, and might need to pay for a hotel stay. The

MOU also calls for getting feedback from the community on the proposal. To that end steps have been taken to reach out to both behavioral health providers and shelter providers seeking feedback. Some feedback has already been received with a suggestion to set aside a portion of the funds to contract for the service with some culturally specific communities.

Commissioner Piper asked if it is known how much funding other Eastside communities will be receiving. Toni Esparza said the amounts for surrounding small communities will be less. Some communities might seek to pool their funds to hire an outreach worker. Ruth Blaw added that some communities have also discussed making Narcan more readily available and offering training in how to use it.

Commissioner Piper voiced support for the recommendation of the team to hire a social worker focused on the issue, and for setting aside funds to address other issues and expenses. One major issue being faced is a shortage of bed space for treating opioid addictions, particularly in western Washington.

Commissioner Amirfaiz asked if part of the funds could also go toward education. Toni Esparza allowed that it can. The position will have multiple intents, with priority given to crisis response, but being tasked with education and prevention. Commissioner Amirfaiz said the education piece

could be handled by non-profits, including those with specific cultural competencies.

Councilmember Zahn said there have been conversations in King County around education and the One Pill Can Kill program. The education element could be handled as a collaboration with other cities using shared resources.

Commissioner Amirfaiz added that materials will be of no effect at all to parents unless they are translated into their specific language. Working with the organizations that serve as the primary messengers to their communities will go a long way.

Toni Esparza said the Commission's comments would be carried back to the work group along with feedback received from the community. The work group's proposal will ultimately go to a steering committee comprised of the directors of Parks & Community Services, police and fire who will give final approval before the proposal can be executed. The Commission will be kept informed going forward.

10. CONTINUED ORAL COMMUNICATIONS – None

11. ADJOURNMENT

Vice Chair Singh adjourned the meeting at 8:03 p.m.