

CITY OF BELLEVUE
HUMAN SERVICES COMMISSION
MINUTES

December 5, 2023
6:00 p.m.

Bellevue City Hall
Room 1E-113

COMMISSIONERS PRESENT: Chair Mansfield, Vice Chair Singh, Commissioners Amirfaiz Halsted, Piper, White

COMMISSIONERS REMOTE: Commissioner Jain

COMMISSIONERS ABSENT: None

STAFF PRESENT: Christy Stangland, Toni Esparza, Ruth Blaw, Donna Adair, Gysel Galviz, Julie Kim, Department of Parks & Community Services

COUNCIL LIAISON: Not Present

POLICE LIAISON: Not Present

GUEST SPEAKERS: Megan Beers, Health Management Associates

RECORDING SECRETARY: Gerry Lindsay

1. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 6:00 by Chair Mansfield who presided.

2. ROLL CALL

All Commissioners were present with the exception of Commissioner Amirfaiz who arrived at 6:16 p.m.

Chair Mansfield took a moment to appreciate and acknowledge Commissioner Jain for serving on the Commission.

Vice Chair Singh thanked Commissioner Jain for serving as a member of the Commission.

Commissioner White also thanked Commissioner Jain for serving and voiced being excited to see what the next chapter will be.

Commissioner Halsted noted having been appointed to the Commission at the same time as Commissioner Jain. Congratulations and thanks were offered to Commissioner Jain.

Commissioner Piper thanked Commissioner Jain for serving on the Commission and for bringing unique perspectives to the table before offering congratulations on Commissioner Jain's next chapter.

Commissioner Jain said the intent certainly was to serve as a Commissioner for much longer. Leaving is very emotional and perhaps in the future it will be possible to serve again as a Commissioner. It was a pleasure serving as a member of the Commission.

Department of Parks and Community Services assistant director Toni Esparza echoed the notes of appreciation for the work of Commissioner Jain, who brought so many fresh questions to the conversations.

Chair Mansfield echoed the sentiments previously stated in thanking Commissioner Jain for serving on the Commission, adding that Commissioner Jain's insights and thoughtfulness will be missed.

3. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

A. November 7, 2023

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

4. ORAL AND WRITTEN COMMUNICATIONS

Chair Mansfield 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.

Jackie Bui, CEO for Youth Eastside Services, thanked the city for conducting a thorough human needs assessment process and for development the strategic plan. YES along with other agencies and clients were afforded the opportunity to provide input during the process. YES shares many common objectives with the city and the Commission that are outlined in the strategic plan and serves all residents of the community, with a particular focus on those who are impacted by systemic inequality. The agency strives to provide culturally and linguistically competent evidence-based mental health and substance use treatment services, as well as outreach and community building for all children, youth and family in the Bellevue community. Funding awarded to YES enables increasing access to behavioral health services to those in the community. Down the road the agency looks forward to partnering with the city in planning for affordable housing that allows families to live in the community where they have roots, and hopes to share in the visioning process for culturally welcoming green spaces and marketplaces where all citizens can contribute as consumers of local sources.

Kristina Brown, director of public affairs for Kindering, a Bellevue-based non-profit that supports children who have disabilities, developmental delays and adverse childhood experiences with support via therapies, education and family support services. The Commission was thanked for serving the community by putting together a human services strategic plan, and

for conducting the community-wide needs assessment. The Kindering team reviewed both documents and highlighted a number of items. Mental health support is at the top of the list of needed services. One often-overlooked aspect is infant mental health, which supports social and emotional development for infants through therapy for children and their parents. Kindering provides the service and is expanding to keep up with the demand. The report recognizes the significant increase in the number of students who are experiencing homelessness and the associated impact on education. Kindering's Child Care/Preschool consultation program, mentioned in the report, supports those needs. Over 75 percent of unhoused children under the age of five have at least one major developmental delay, and it is usually speech related. Kindering's Families in Transition program addresses the need. The Needs Update section that focuses on the needs of individuals living with disabilities acknowledges the difficulties families have navigating the Early Support for Infants and Toddlers system. Kindering is the largest early support provider in the state and offers significant outreach and navigational tools for the Early Support for Infants and Toddlers system. The Commission was thanked for specifically including people with disabilities in the equity goals. The Commission's rubric should be updated when assessing grant applications to continue including measurable and positive outcomes for people with disabilities as an equity priority.

Alex Tsimerman began with a Nazi salute and said the draft strategic plan must have been drafted by people with low professional skills and who are mentally deficient. The city plans to build 95,000 new houses and bring in 200,000 new residents over the next 20 years or so. It is confusing how Bellevue can accept another 200,000 residents. It will be necessary to make the streets bigger or put metro services underground. It is not possible and someone should explain it. Bellevue will become a nightmare and it will be totally destroyed.

Chair Mansfield warned Alex Tsimerman about addressing topics that are not germane to the work of the Human Services Commission. Alex Tsimerman said the strategic plan includes facts and figures about city planning for growth and transportation.

5. COMMUNICATION FROM CITY COUNCIL, COMMUNITY COUNCIL, BOARDS AND COMMISSIONS – None
6. STAFF AND COMMISSIONER REPORTS

Human Services Manager Ruth Blaw announced that beginning in January, all Commission meetings will be video recorded and will become part of the public record. Also, at the Commission's first meeting in January action will be taken to elect new officers for 2024 and the Commissioners should come to the meeting prepared to make nominations.

Ruth Blaw introduced Gysel Galaviz, new senior administrative assistant.

The Commissioners were informed that the Commission's two meetings in January would occur on Wednesdays given that they both fall on weeks that have a Monday holiday.

The vacancy for Commissioner Jain's seat on the Commission was posted earlier and closes on December 6. A new Commissioner could be on board by January.

7. INFORMATION FOR THE COMMISSION – None

8. OLD BUSINESS - None

9. NEW BUSINESS

A. CDBG Amendments

Chair Mansfield noted that each year the city is required to submit to the Department of Housing and Urban Development an action plan outlining how the city plans to spend its entitlement funding for the year. The city must amend both its 2021 and 2023 annual action plans.

Community Development Block Grant Administrator/Housing Repair Specialist Donna Adair said the proposed amendments to the 2021 and 2023 Annual Action Plans are required by HUD. The 2021 amendment is needed because the Seattle Business Education Hub provided microenterprise assistance services to the community during that year, but experienced challenges with providing the required HUD documentation. General funds were used to support the services, thus the \$83,117.08 in CDBG funds allocated to Seattle Business Education Hub need to be reallocated to an existing eligible activity. The staff recommendation is to reallocate the funds to the 2023 major home repair program, an eligible activity with an active contract, and to cancel the 2021 Seattle Business Education Hub microenterprise activity. The program provides critical health and safety repairs to Bellevue residents, allowing them to safely maintain their homes. The current level of demand for the services support the expenditure of the resources in 2024.

Continuing, Donna Adair said a minor amendment to an Annual Action Plan is needed when a CDBG activity is canceled or when a contract is not carried out. Because Big Hug microenterprise assistance did not provide the documentation necessary to execute the contract as required by HUD, staff are proposing an amendment to cancel the 2023 Big Hug microenterprise activity, and reallocating the \$100,000 to the 2024 program year and include it in the 2024 Annual Action Plan as prior year unspent funds.

Commissioner Piper asked if any funds were dispersed to the organization. Donna Adair confirmed that because the contract was not executed, no funds were dispersed.

Commissioner Halsted asked if Big Hug provided services but failed to provide the paperwork necessary for reimbursement. Donna Adair said the contract was not executed when the organization failed to provide all of the HUD-required documentation. No services were provided by the organization as a result.

A motion to approve the amendment to the 2021 Annual Action Plan as proposed was made by Commissioner Piper. The motion was seconded by Vice Chair Singh and the motion carried unanimously.

A motion to approve the amendment to the 2023 Annual Action Plan as proposed was made by Commissioner Piper. The motion was seconded by Commissioner White and the motion carried

unanimously.

B. Human Services Presentation of the Final Draft of the Strategic Plan

Toni Esparza said the mission statement in the strategic plan is to support residents with low and moderate incomes most impacted by systemic inequities, who are disproportionately people of color, immigrants, refugees, people with disabilities, and members of the LGBTQIA2S+ community. The vision states that Bellevue is a community in which each and every member has equitable access and opportunity to meet their essential physical, behavioral health, economic, and social needs; to feel a sense of belonging; and to thrive. The strategy is how the work is executed and includes several aspects of the role as spelled out in Comprehensive Plan policy: identification of the most significant needs and disparities in the city; investing in the basic building blocks of the community and advancing equitable outcomes for all through activities that include educating, facilitating and collaborating; increasing the understanding and building the capacity of the human services infrastructure to meet the needs of the residents who are most impacted by systemic inequity; planning and providing funding to catalyze efforts to bridge the gaps and to improve equitable access to those services.

Toni Esparza reminded the Commissioners that every two years a human services needs assessment is compiled and the results are published in the Human services Needs Update. That has been the history and practice of the city for many years and it is a part of the process undertaken in developing the strategic plan. Input was also sought from other sources, including the City Council in May and the Commission in July.

Megan Beers with Health Management Associates said the work to complete the Human Services Needs Update included participating in a variety of community engagement activities, including surveys that gathered the perspectives of more than a thousand people, focus groups, and through attending a variety of service provider network and coalition meetings. Subject matter expert interviews were used to fill in gaps. All of the community engagement data was considered in the context of publicly available quantitative data on demographic trends over a period of time. The design of the data collection was intended to center the voices of those with lived experiences, particularly those who might be consumers of the human services system, and those with intersectional identities.

Toni Esparza said all of that fed into the formation of four different objectives and their corresponding activities. There was a lot of discussion about how to get dollars out the door differently. Much of the work on the strategic plan was framed by the fact that Covid dollars are ending at the same time needs are escalating. The Council directed continuing to advance and improve equitable funding through equity-centered processes and framework. There was an emphasis from the Council on the pay to agencies and ensuring livable wages for their workers. The Council expressed an interest in understanding the connection back to the community for the services provided by measuring and showing the impact of the investments.

Megan Beers many of the themes align with what was heard in the community engagement, particularly around co-design and being able to partner in an ongoing way with the city around designing services for communities. Across the data collection methods, emphasis needs to be

placed on increasing access to culturally and linguistically specific supports that are provided by members of the community themselves. There is also a need to increase the response to unmet service needs.

Toni Esparza said the first draft objective is to expand equity-focused and data-driven decision-making that best addresses the most significant community needs, prioritizing investments in the areas of greatest disparities for Bellevue residents. The associated activities are to 1) conduct data-driven assessments, including both community voice and quantitative data, to identify the specific needs and disparities experienced by different population groups within Bellevue; 2) utilize these assessments to adopt funding priorities that shift funding recommendations to address the most significant disparities; 3) continue to implement a training program for all stakeholders involved in the application review process; 4) develop a standardized rubric for evaluating funding applications to include the following: the Commission's adopted funding priorities; joint proposals that incorporate collaborative efforts to solve complex systemic issues; the capacity to provide culturally and or linguistically specific human services; the provision of services that fill service gaps for the most marginalized communities; and scoring criteria and scoring system; 5) create a process for application review that includes a diverse panel of community members and allows for reviewers to provide qualitative feedback in addition to numerical scores; 6) analyze funding recommendations and allocations by disaggregated data and recommend adjustments for future processes to improve equitable distribution of funds; and 7) publish a reporting dashboard to monitor stewardship of city resources and excellent services to Bellevue residents.

The feedback that drove the second objective was direction from the Council valuing equity-centered processes and agency funding. There was a real emphasis on supporting the agencies. Several Councilmembers talked about capacity building in terms of funding new agencies, supporting the ability of agencies to operate in a sustainable way, reaching out to new agencies, and supporting the internal resources of agencies for operations.

Megan Beers said the community feedback considered in driving the second objective were similar to those used for the first objective in addition to the importance of collaboration, partnering with the community, the unique vantage point the city's human services team has, and the value service providers place on opportunities to be involved in co-design. There was also a resounding call for increased access to culturally and linguistically specific support.

Toni Esparza said the second objective focuses on increasing the capacity of Bellevue's human services system by providing equitable access to human services funding opportunities, to support organizations in meeting the needs of and reducing disparities among Bellevue's most marginalized residents. The associated activities are to 1) continue to expand outreach to community-based organizations to provide information about the availability and process of applying for human services funding; 2) promote access to funding opportunities for organizations that may not have the infrastructure or experience with similar application processes; 3) continue to provide information and resources to support new and less experienced providers in the funding application and contracting process; and 4) adopt the best practice of a standardized 20 percent for indirect and administrative costs in contracts with city funds in order to sustain the human services continuum. A wage study conducted by the University of

Washington noted that human service sector staff make 30 percent less than employee in other fields. Another study conducted by King County and a partner agency found that about 70 percent of those employed by human service agencies are contemplating leaving their field due to a lack of sustainability for themselves in doing the work.

Toni Esparza said Council feedback that informed the third objective emphasized how important trusted messengers are to the community and in serving the community. They also noted the concept of making human services investments to address racism as a public health issue in an effort to address systemic inequity. A request was made to expand service to the community by funding new agencies that are responsive to Bellevue's increasing diversity, and continuing to advance and improve equitable funding.

Megan Beers said the quantitative data helps to tell the story of what was heard in the community engagement efforts about the pace at which Bellevue's demographics have shifted over time. Providers and residents alike voiced the fact that the changes have happened more quickly than the human services ecosystem has been able to keep pace with, leaving a gap between human services funding, the services offered, and who the community represents.

Toni Esparza said the third objective is to expand access for Bellevue residents to culturally and linguistically specific human services. The percentage of Bellevue's population that identifies as BIPOC more than doubled since 2000, and the percentage of residents born outside the United States grew at a similar pace. Nearly 50 percent of Bellevue residents speak a language other than English at home, and 15.6 percent have limited English proficiency. The activities associated with the third objective are: 1) regularly identify service gaps by cultural and linguistic community and incorporate gaps into priorities for that funding cycle; and 2) set targets in each funding cycle for the allocation of funds for culturally and linguistically specific services to meet the needs of Bellevue's increasingly diverse community.

Toni Esparza said the Council feedback that drove the fourth objective included an emphasis on capacity building; the need for strategies that increase investment in the human services system that can help demonstrate the impact of the investments; the need to increase outreach to stakeholders; and expanding the capacity of the system.

Megan Beers said in terms of community engagement the feedback highlighted the unique role the city can play in facilitating collaboration toward facilitating the resources needed to meet the needs. Nearly two-thirds of organizations noted changes in the availability of funding sources and they are anticipating concerns about the loss of service access that will likely follow from the changes.

Toni Esparza said the fourth objective focuses on increasing key stakeholders' awareness regarding the city's human service needs, including disparities by community, and serving as a catalyst to collaboratively address those needs. The associated activities are derived from the acknowledgement that the city has changed so fast in many ways. The activities are: 1) increase outreach to corporate stakeholders to increase awareness of the needs of Bellevue's most vulnerable residents; 2) support provider forums focused on human services gaps and invite corporate stakeholder participation to gain firsthand insights into challenges; and 3)

facilitate opportunities for corporate stakeholders to respond directly to the human services needs of Bellevue's residents and the human services agencies that serve them.

Commissioner Piper praised the staff for all the work that went into developing the strategic plan, and voiced being excited about the dashboard coming online. The rubric is something that has been talked about by the Commission for several years and is something that makes sense. With regard to the indirect cost of administration, the question asked was if the 20 percent figure was a benchmark received from the community. Toni Esparza said that figure is rapidly becoming a best practice for agencies and funders across the region. Some agencies indicated not being able to accept ARPA funding with a 15 percent rate for indirect funding. Megan Beers added that 20 percent is becoming a benchmark both regionally and nationally.

A motion to approve the final draft of the strategic plan was made by Commissioner White. The motion was seconded by Vice Chair Singh and the motion carried unanimously.

Toni Esparza said the plan will be before the Council on February 12 and the Commission chair will need to attend and help make the presentation. If the plan is adopted as is, the part about including the community voice will come into play. The current thinking is that the traditional staff framework would constitute the first round, and that round two would involve an all-day retreat involving community members and the Commission to form preliminary recommendations. The third round would involve adjusting and final adoption of those preliminary recommendations. The approach may actually significantly cut down on the overall number of meetings by effectively knocking out the most intense round in a single day. The Commissioners likely would be divided into three groups and paired with community members to review about 40 applications.

Commissioner White asked what month the work would be done and Toni Esparza answered that it might be June. Setting an actual date will follow approval of the plan by the Council.

The Commissioners weighed in regarding their availability during the month of June.

Commissioner Amirfaiz asked about the process for selecting the community members. Toni Esparza said the initial thinking is to look to groups currently appointed by the Council or City Manager's Office, such as the Youth Link Board, the Bellevue Diversity Advisory Network, and Centering Communities of Color.

Commissioner Amirfaiz cautioned that alliances the community members might have with any particular agencies could skew their perceptions of the grant process. The same could be true of the diversities represented. Toni Esparza explained that with regard to the groups mentioned, their appointments are considered through the lens of which voices are missing. There have been conversations around what a conflict of interest might look like for individuals. Working with legal, a system will be developed.

Chair Mansfield pointed out that those appointed to serve on various city boards are still volunteers, and just as with those who choose to come before the Commission to raise issues, it is always the loudest and most outspoken who step up. There are many groups in the community

that simply do not speak up and as such are not being represented. The community voices should not overpower the Commission's voice. Those selected to serve as part of the process will need to have as much education relative to the needs and the services the Commission has in order to be objective.

Answering a question asked by Commissioner Halsted, Toni Esparza said staff will come before the Commission in January seeking input on which datapoints to specifically call out in advance.

With regard to the collaboration and the co-creation aspects, Commissioner Halsted noted having come to the process without a full understanding of the prioritization of the various funds. The most important thing will be to have representation from as many of the demographic groups as possible.

Commissioner Piper voiced agreement with having as many voices as possible come to the table to talk about the needs in the community, but expressed concern about the idea of community members doing the work of the Commission. Their input should be sought, but the specific responsibilities of the Commission should not be done by others. The Commission has specific institutional knowledge when it comes to allocating the funds. Toni Esparza agreed, adding that the role of the Commission is enshrined in code. The outlined process will constitute a stop, but ultimately the Commission will move forward in the way it sees fit.

Commissioner Amirfaiz asked what will happen when decisions made by the Commission override recommendations made by the community members. Toni Esparza said the idea currently being evaluated does not include at any point having community members forming a recommendation apart of the Commission's. The retreat as anticipated will include all of the voices together and will yield preliminary recommendations. The work of the Commission would focus more on agency-level recommendations. It can be expected that in the end there will not be unanimous agreement. It will be necessary to be crystal clear from the beginning about what the various roles.

Commissioner Piper announced not being able to attend the Commission's January 3 meeting.

10. CONTINUED ORAL COMMUNICATIONS – None

11. ADJOURNMENT

Chair Mansfield adjourned the meeting at 7:12 p.m.