CITY OF BELLEVUE
HUMAN SERVICES COMMISSION
MEETING MINUTES

October 6, 2025 6:00 p.m.	Bellevue City Hall Room 1E-113

COMMISSIONERS PRESENT:	Chair Singh, Vice Chair White Commissioners Gonzalez, Hays, Perelman, Phan, Rashid
COMMISSIONERS REMOTE:	Commissioner White
COMMISSIONERS ABSENT:	Commissioner Gonzalez
STAFF PRESENT:	Christy Stangland, Toni Esparza, Ruth Blaw, Andrew Ndayambaje, Gysel Galaviz, Department of Parks & Community Services
COUNCIL LIAISON:	Mayor Robinson
POLICE LIAISON:	Major Ellen Inman
GUEST SPEAKERS:	None
RECORDING SECRETARY:	Gerry Lindsay

1. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 6:00 p.m. by Chair Singh who presided.

2. ROLL CALL

At the roll of the call, all Commissioners were present with the exception of Commissioner Gonzalez.

3. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

A. September 8, 2025

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

B. September 15, 2025

It was noted that Commissioner Perelman was not shown as being present.

A motion to amend the minutes to reflect the presence of Commissioner Perelman was made by Commissioner Phan. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Rashid and the motion carried unanimously.

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

4. ORAL AND WRITTEN COMMUNICATIONS

Chair Singh took a moment to reminded those present that under Washington State campaign laws, RCW 42.17A.555, speakers cannot not use public facilities to support or oppose ballot measures or candidates, including their own campaigns.

Tim Motz, President and CEO of the Boys and Girls Club of Bellevue, emphasized the critical need for child care and after-school funding, describing it as a core human service in Bellevue. The organization serves approximately 16,000 children annually, with over 800 participating in child care programs each day. He warned that $500,000 in federal grants, primarily from the Century 21 program, is in jeopardy due to federal budget cuts. The organization is working to expand to 20 sites for the upcoming year, while also addressing long waitlists. Gratitude was expressed for the city's ongoing partnership and it was noted that over 70 percent of participants identify as BIPOC, with many receiving financial assistance or subsidies. The Commission was thanked for its support and for recognizing the importance of after-school programs in fostering community well-being.

Terra Hakam, a board member and volunteer advocate with Family Law CASA of King County, introduced the organization's work assisting low-income families involved in complex custody cases and providing free advocacy and case management services. The organization currently has ten open cases involving Bellevue residents, seven of which concern children. The organization is committed to positive long-term outcomes for children, families and communities navigating economic injustice across King County. Free advocacy services are provided for children involved in family law cases, including domestic conflict and abuse. More than half of the parents in such cases cannot afford legal representation. The situations faced by the children are heartbreaking and there are long-lasting consequences. The importance of ensuring children's voices are represented in court proceedings was highlighted. The city was thanked for its partnership and urged continued funding support to sustain the organization's services for vulnerable families and children.

Griffin Cole, Program Manager for the Volunteer Services Program at Catholic Community Services, explained that the program helps older adults and individuals with disabilities remain independent in their homes through volunteer assistance. A Bellevue resident, identified as F.K., was noted as someone who receives transportation to medical appointments and grocery assistance through the program's volunteers. Beyond the practical tasks, such support helps clients maintain their independence and stability. In the first half of 2025 alone, the program provided over 600 hours of service help to more than 20 Bellevue residents. The Commission was thanked for its ongoing support, allowing older adults to continue living safely and comfortably in their own homes.

Jesse Franklin, Executive Director and Founding Mentor of Rainier Athletes and a proud graduate of the Bellevue School District and Sammamish High School, explained that Rainier

Athletes is a long-term, one-on-one youth mentoring organization that has partnered with the Bellevue School District for 12 years through a data-sharing memorandum of understanding. The organization identifies students most distant from educational, economic, and social opportunities. All students in the program qualify for free or reduced lunch, 98 percent identify as students of color, and 75 percent speak a language other than English at home. All graduating seniors in the program are the first in their families to pursue post-secondary degrees and educational opportunities after high school. The organization pairs students with mentors who share similar lived experiences, often through partnerships with corporate affinity groups such as the Corporate Latinos Network. Mentoring begins in fourth grade and continues through high school and beyond. The program connects students to extracurricular activities including sports, theater, dance, robotics and debate under what is described as one team mentoring model. This year marked a milestone as the first cohort of students mentored from fourth grade graduated from college or certification programs. The Commission was urged to continue investing in youth and families. Mentoring serves as an upstream approach to behavioral health. Bellevue School District data shows that one in four students in grades six through twelve have reported thoughts of self-harm. Recent budget reductions have cut the number of mental health counselors from 20 to five, and the number of elementary assistant principals from 17 to three. The importance of prevention and early intervention through mentoring programs was stressed.

Mallory Gustave, Vice President of Community Services for Hopelink, attended with colleagues Chris Greer, Director of Housing and Case Management, and Lucy Pyatt, Director of Financial and Education Programs. The Commission was thanked for its continued partnership and support for community-based agencies. In 2024 Hopelink served 73,000 people through its community services and transportation programs, with 32,000 receiving community services, 5600 of whom were Bellevue residents. In the current year alone, the organization has already served 5200 Bellevue residents. The food programs are experiencing record demand, with 10,000 people served during the current month. The financial resiliency program, which provides case management and financial assistance, is turning away 14 households for everyone it serves. Clients face difficult choices, such as whether to pay rent, buy medication, or keep their utilities running. City funding covers only 25 percent of Hopelink's programs, and the organization carefully stewards those funds to maximize community impact. Hopelink focuses on preventing eviction, weatherizing homes, and providing education and long-term skill-building opportunities. In preparation for funding shortfalls, the organization made a $3.7 million reduction to its 2025 budget. Hopelink remains committed to transparency, accountability, and continued partnership with the city.

Kristy Hulverson, a former YouthLink board member and currently an adult board member, introduced Akira Sharma, a current YouthLink youth board member.

Akira Sharma explained that Bellevue YouthLink is a youth advisory board composed of twelve youth and six adult members. The Commissioners were invited to attend the annual YouthLink Gumbo Night on Wednesday, October 22, from 6:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. at the Crossroads Community Center. The event is a tradition of more than 26 years and is designed to foster dialogue between youth and community leaders over a shared meal. The evening provides an opportunity for youth to discuss issues affecting them and to build understanding with city leaders. Anyone wanting to attend was encouraged to RSVP through staff contact Patrick Alina.

Alex Tsimerman said the Commission is only human services for cockroaches and human slaves before delivering a highly charged and confrontational statement criticizing the Commission and city leadership. The Commission was accused of limiting public interaction, referencing and opposing the procedural rules. Inflammatory and derogatory language was directed toward city officials and the mayor. Dissatisfaction was expressed in regard to what was described as a lack of two-way communication between the public and city government. The assertion was made that such conduct undermines free speech and democratic participation.

Kristina Mendieta, Director of Public Affairs at Kindering, spoke on behalf of the nonprofit organization accompanied by colleague Galene Vaden, Director of Grants. Kindering is a non-profit organization based in Bellevue that annually serves thousands of children with diverse abilities. While Kindering continues to advocate for child care and early learning, there are other human service needs. In 2024, Kindering served 719 Bellevue children and nearly 500 families with early support and case management. Additionally, 50 Bellevue families were served through the Families in Transition program, funded in part by the city. The program provided over 3000 hours of direct services. Ninety Bellevue residents participated in the city-supported child care and preschool consultation program. Despite the strong service numbers, the need for support continues to grow, particularly due to recent federal immigration changes that have created new barriers for families seeking services. Many families are isolating themselves and avoiding public programs due to fear or uncertainty. The Commission was asked to consider two priorities in future funding recommendations: expanding case management services for families with very young children; and ensuring access to equitable, high-quality early learning through continued support for child care and preschool consultation programs. The Commission was thanked for keeping Bellevue's children and families at the heart of its funding decisions.

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

Mayor Robinson thanked the Commission in advance for the significant time and effort that the upcoming funding work will require, noting that the decisions will shape the community and represents a major investment in the city's future. The Chair was asked to consider entertaining a motion at the next meeting to amend the public comment rules to require that all remarks pertain specifically to Human Services Commission matters.

Mayor Robinson outlined for the Commission the Council's priorities and evaluation approach, noting that prevention is valued as a top priority because it yields long-term returns, particularly in regard to children. Reducing stress in early childhood supports learning and the named focus areas of housing stability, food security, child care, health care, behavioral health, mentoring, and case management. The Council wants to see measurable goals in applications; evidence that agencies can spend any awarded funds; confirmation that agencies serve Bellevue residents; and information about whether prior funds have been spent down, which is a consideration rather than a disqualifier.

6. STAFF AND COMMISSIONER REPORTS

Commissioner Perelman noted on upcoming participation in the Essentials for All initiative as a larger group. Donations have already come in.

Chair Singh noted that Commission members are planning a visit to PorchLight on October 23.

7. INFORMATION FOR THE COMMISSION

Human Services Manager Ruth Blaw said the Essentials for All Food and Hygiene Drive began on October 1 and will run through November 15. Collection bins have been placed around the city. Twenty-one funded agencies opted to receive donated items, and weekly collections are underway.

Ruth Blaw announced the Bellevue Community Court Grand Opening at the Bellevue Library on Tuesday, October 7, from 1:00 p.m. to 2:30 p.m., and affirmed that all are welcome to attend

Ruth Blaw reminded the Commissioners about the mandatory Zoom training on Thursday October 16 covering the Open Public Meetings Act and Public Records Act. Staff will confirm whether those who recently completed the training must attend again. Commissioners unable to join will need to coordinate a make-up date with staff.

The Commission was reminded about the annual YouthLink Gumbo Night on Wednesday October 22. Those wanting to go should RSVP with Senior Administrative Assistant Gysel Galaviz.

The Commission's meeting on October 20 will include a public hearing. The expectation is that there will be increased public comment and a vote on the Community Development Block Grant funding.

Human Services Planner Christy Stangland explained that staff are focused on monitoring visits. The Commission will be conducting monitoring visits at all of the currently funded agencies through the end of January. Any Commissioner interested in attending any monitoring visit should reach out to staff.

Commissioner Perelman requested that a schedule be posted so Commissioners could select visits, and staff agreed to provide one.

6. OLD BUSINESS – None

7. NEW BUSINESS

A. 2026 CDBG Funding Application Process
B. Proposed 2026 CDBG Allocations

Christy Stangland explained that all CDBG activities must meet a national objective and be an eligible activity. The three national objectives are: to benefit low- or moderate-income persons; to prevent or eliminate slums and blight; or to meet an urgent need. Bellevue's funding aligns with the objective to benefit low- and moderate-income persons. For 2026, the application was limited to agencies already funded in 2025. Staff reviewed the 2026 applications for eligibility. It was noted that during the meeting the Commission would need to make preliminary recommendations. At the October 20 meeting, staff will present the draft 2026 Annual Action Plan, and a public hearing will be conducted. The draft plan will be open for public comment from October 21 through November 21. The final CDBG recommendations are scheduled to go to the Council on November 18 as a consent agenda item.

The estimated budget for 2026 is $1 million. That includes an estimated entitlement from HUD totaling $850,000, and an estimated program income amount of $150,000.

CDBG funding includes caps in some of the funding categories. Administration and planning is capped at 20 percent of the total funding. Public funding is capped at 15 percent. There is no cap on capital spending, which includes home repair and microenterprise assistance programs.

Christy Stangland said the total request under the public service category is $200,000, all for PorchLight, which formerly was called Congregations for the Homeless. The recommendation of staff was $145,000 in funding. For Administration and Planning, the requested and recommended amounts total $195,000. The requests for other funds total $844,000, and the staff recommendation is for $660,000 in funding.

The Commissioners were reminded that the allocation of $145,921 for PorchLight was approved by the Commission on July 15, 2024 as a two-year funding recommendation for 2025 and extending through 2026.

Christy Stangland stressed that all funding recommendations are contingent on the city receiving its full 2026 HUD allocation.

Christy Stangland outlined the capital funding requests for 2026, beginning with 4Tomorrow which requested $150,000 dollars for microenterprise assistance. The staff recommendation is for $83,000, the same as their allocation for 2025.

Indian American Community Services requested $50,000, also for microenterprise assistance. The staff recommended is to fund the full requested amount.

Centro Cultural Mexicano requested $200,000 dollars for microenterprise assistance. The staff recommendation was for $83,000, matching the 2025 award.

Upward Boost requested $48,000 for microenterprise support to in-home child care providers. The staff recommendation was for $48,000, matching the 2025 award.

The City of Bellevue and King County Housing Authority Major Home Repair Program requested $396,000, and the staff recommendation was to fully fund the ask.

Chair Singh asked for clarification in regard to the administration and planning category. Christy Stangland explained that administrative funds are used to pay for the staffing needed to support the home repair program, including all screening and associated program administration. A portion of the administrative funds is used to conduct the city's Human Services Needs Update every other year.

Commissioner Perelman observed that the CDBG administration category was the only one to receive an increase in funding over the previous year. Ruth Blaw explained that the increase is intended to more accurately represent the amount of time staff dedicate to CDBG-related work. Department of Parks and Community Services assistant director Toni Esparza added that because 2025 was a year in which staff time was heavily focused on developing the biennial needs update, more planning funds had been allocated, and the higher amount for 2026 reflects the ongoing workload. While the 2026 administration category is higher, the planning category is reduced from the 2025 allocation.

Commissioner Hays asked whether the listed organizations were the only ones that had applied for CDBG grants, or whether additional applications had been received. Christy Stangland said the 2026 application process was opened only to agencies receiving 2025 funding. One reason for that was the delay in receiving the 2025 funding allocation from HUD and uncertainty regarding the 2026 funding levels.

Commissioner Perelman observed that all organizations currently receiving funding were recommended for continued support and questioned whether the Commission should reexamine the priorities. Simply continuing prior allocations might overlook shifts in community needs or program impact. Christy Stangland said the staff recommendations are aimed at ensuring that all agencies meet minimum funding thresholds to sustain their programs. It is the Commission's role to evaluate whether funds should be reallocated based on priority and need. Commissioner Perelman stated that because of the current areas of need, some of the organizations should be prioritized over others.

Staff directed the PowerPoint presentation to a slide displaying the funding chart for reference. Ruth added that CDBG funds specifically support microenterprise programs, with the exception of PorchLight, which is funded through public service dollars allocated to shelter operations. The city does not fund microenterprise programs with any other dollars, meaning this grant category is unique.

Ruth Blaw clarified that CDBG specifically funds microenterprise programs. The requesting agencies are the only ones providing microenterprise programs.

Commissioner Perelman asked if PorchLight could in fact receive a higher allocation. Toni Esparza explained that there is a 15 percent federal cap that limits public service allocations. Microenterprise programs and planning and administration fall into different buckets. Adjustments could be made within microenterprise funding, but the total allocations must remain within the category limits.

Commissioner Perelman commented that some agencies, such as 4Tomorrow and Centro Cultural Mexicano, had requested significantly more funding than recommended. Additional information about certain agencies is still needed before making such a proposal.

Vice Chair White pointed out that 4 Tomorrow's request was substantially higher than its recommended award and asked staff how much unspent money remained from the agency's 2024 contract. Christy Stangland said there is $81,847 in unspent 2024 dollars and only recently began spending them down. Also asked was whether there was supporting data explaining why Centro Cultural Mexicano would accept $83,000 when it had requested $200,000. Gysel Galaviz explained that the organization had set $83,000 as the minimum funding amount necessary to sustain their operations.

Commissioner Perelman allowed that while small organizations often face administrative burdens in terms of CDBG compliance, it would be helpful to understand what 4 Tomorrow programs might be lost by accepting a lower funding amount. Ruth Blaw pointed out that all of the microenterprise programs continued to operate even after it was necessary for the city to pause their contracts given that the funds were late in arriving. The agencies will be reimbursed retroactively to January 1. The difference between the requested and recommended amounts would directly affect the number of clients served or service units completed. Gysel Galaviz elaborated that, for example, a program able to assist eight entrepreneurs with $83,000 could help more if fully funded at $200,000.

Christy Stangland added that agencies have historically requested more than the city can provide. Several organizations have consistently requested higher amounts as evidence of what it would take to actually meet the community need.

Answering a question asked by Commissioner Hays, Ruth Blaw said microenterprise programs are service investments designed to help individuals start small businesses or family enterprises. For example, 4 Tomorrow assists clients in obtaining business licenses, developing marketing strategies, and launching businesses. Centro Cultural Mexicano offers similar services. Upward Boost supports child care business development, and Indian American Community Services assists entrepreneurs within the East Indian community.

Commissioner Hays asked why the grants are listed as "capital" in some documents. Christy Stangland explained that under the federal CDBG classification, microenterprise assistance falls within a category labeled "other" or "capital," even though it functions as a service. Because of the complexity and compliance requirements associated with true capital projects, Bellevue typically directs its limited funds to microenterprise programs rather than infrastructure investments. Bellevue does not fund physical capital projects with CDBG dollars due to regulatory constraints and limited funding scale.

Christy Stangland reminded the Commissioners of the need to form preliminary funding recommendations, with the understanding that the amounts could be adjusted following the upcoming public hearing.

Commissioner Perlman remarked that the unspent funds in 4 Tomorrow's coffers contrasts with other agencies that have already spent their allocations. The suggestion was made that the Commission might consider reducing 4 Tomorrow's 2026 recommendation and reallocating the funds to Centro Cultural Mexicano on the order of $40,000 to $50,000. Details are lacking as to why 4 Tomorrow's spending was delayed. Staff agreed to follow up to determine the cause of the delay, and to ask Centro Cultural Mexicano what they could achieve with additional funding.

Commissioner Perlman reiterated a call to provisionally reduce funding for 4 Tomorrow by $40,000 to $50,000 and to reallocate those funds to Centro Cultural Mexicano, pending additional information.

Commissioner Hays asked for clarification about the specific services funded through the grants, since the written descriptions are somewhat vague. Gysel Galaviz explained that the microenterprise programs operated by 4 Tomorrow, Indian American Community Services, and Centro Cultural Mexicano assist residents in starting small businesses, finding jobs, developing marketing plans, and obtaining business licenses. The Upwards Boost program supports child-care providers through an app designed to strengthen the infrastructure for home-based daycares. PorchLight operates a shelter program.

Chair Singh referenced the home repair loan program administered in partnership with the King County Housing Authority and asked if there are limits on how much assistance one household can receive, and how frequently. Christy Stangland responded that the program allows for a maximum of $30,000 per household per year, with a lifetime maximum of $60,000.

Commissioner Perlman asked if the allocation to the home repair program could be increased. Christy Stangland replied that the current recommendation is in line with the requested amount. The city typically does not fund agencies above their requested amounts . Toni Esparza said any increase beyond the requested amount would require the agency to resubmit revised documentation. The proposed funding level reflects the city's estimate of the work that could realistically be completed through the program.

Commissioner Perlman added that other agencies in the region provide similar services, and said the discussion could benefit from understanding how Bellevue's programs compare. Ruth Blaw agreed to send out the applications and gather answers to the pending questions so the Commission could revisit the issue at the next meeting.

C. Review of 2027-2028 Funding Percentages

Ruth Blaw directed the attention of the Commission to the funding recommendations worksheet and explained that the chart lists the major areas of need along the left side and the corresponding percentage allocations across the top. When the process is complete, the Commission's recommendations will be recorded in the rightmost column and forwarded to the City Council in January.

Ruth Blaw clarified that the first column represents the 2025–2026 funded percentages, which included one-time dollars the Council provided to support youth services, shelter, housing, and financial assistance. The second column shows the percentage distribution of that one-time funding. The third column indicates what the allocations would look like without the temporary funds, since the city did not expect that supplemental money to continue. The fourth column contains staff's initial recommendations, which were based on the third column rather than on the inflated totals that included the one-time funds. The Commissioners were informed that their task over the next several meetings would be to review the percentages and determine whether they reflect the community's current needs, the city's priorities, and the feedback received through the community needs assessment. It was noted that at the bottom of the chart there are two categories with target percentages: youth programs and culturally and linguistically specific programs. The city aims to keep at least 23 percent of all funding directed to youth programs and at least 26 percent allocated to culturally and linguistically specific programs.

Three priority areas were identified in the community needs update: shelter and transitional housing, financial assistance, and food and basic needs. Those areas have been most affected by rising costs and reductions in federal support.

Commissioner Phan asked how much the one-time funding totaled. Ruth Blaw said it was approximately $2.7 million over two years, with $1.3 million in the first year and $1.4 million in the second.

Commissioner Perlman expressed concern about the large number of funding categories. Maintaining many small categories could leave the Commission allocating fractional shares, such as one and a half percent, to areas like medical and dental care, despite the likelihood that more residents will soon lose their health insurance. Consolidating certain categories could increase flexibility and allow for wiser and more impactful allocations.

Chair Singh responded that the actual allocations will depend on which organizations apply. Commissioner Perlman agreed but pointed out that preventive medical and dental care can reduce costly emergency room use. Chair Singh acknowledged the point but said a greater immediate concern is the growing behavioral and mental health crisis. Christy Stangland confirmed that in the previous cycle the city funded ICHS for dental services only, not for medical care.

Commissioner Perlman suggested combining some categories that often overlap in practice, such as medical and dental with behavioral health, and navigation and legal case management with survivor advocacy and safety from violence, so that programs operating across those boundaries will not be underfunded. Toni Esparza cautioned that behavioral health draws on a distinct funding source with specific restrictions, so combining it with other categories might not create the intended flexibility. Ruth Blaw added that the Commission will be developing a contingency plan for adjusting the percentages once the actual applications arrive. For example, if no survivor advocacy proposals are submitted, funds earmarked for that line item could be reassigned.

Chair Singh pointed out that changing local conditions might alter the needs. A cooling rental market and other factors could lower the demand for shelter, potentially allowing for a rebalancing toward behavioral health, particularly if federal changes reduce medical coverage. Commissioner Perlman disagreed, asserting that shelter and transitional housing pressures are likely to rise as household budgets are squeezed by food prices and unexpected medical costs, even if rent growth flattens. Food programs are already overrun, which reflects a broader need.

Commissioner Hays asked how staff came up with the percentages based on the needs update.

Ruth Blaw explained that several categorical changes were driven by the needs data and by funding mechanics. Behavioral health was separated from medical and dental because behavioral health can access BHHRS funds, and the city receives far more behavioral health applications than medical and dental proposals. A new category, fostering well-being in the face of hate, bias, and discrimination, emerged from ARPA experience and from focus groups and agency feedback which indicated rising incidents and unmet needs; staff created a dedicated line to address that work. Financial assistance was also split out to reflect the Council's sustained priority on preventing eviction and keeping households stably housed through rent support. The three categories highlighted in purple on the worksheet represent the most critical needs identified in the update: shelter and transitional housing, financial assistance, and food and basic needs. The preliminary percentages represent a blend of insights from the needs assessment with historical funding patterns. They are intended to serve only as a starting point.

Commissioner Hays asked why the most critical categories do not command higher percentages in the draft. Ruth Blaw reiterated that the figures are baseline recommendations for deliberation purposes, and that the Commission can increase or decrease any category to match current priorities.

Answering a question asked by Commissioner Phan, Christy Stangland explained that housing stability involves services that keep people housed without directly paying rent or utilities. Examples include on-site case management and counseling supported by BHHRS funds, as well as resident services and supportive programs, such as Housing Connector, Imagine Housing, the Community Homes program for adults with developmental disabilities, and Hero House, which serves people with behavioral health conditions. The internal process that produced the draft was intentionally conservative because all listed areas are legitimate human service needs. Staff avoided making sweeping reallocations. The Commission's task is to use the needs update, community input, and current conditions to adjust the percentages so that the final recommendations reflect the collective judgment of Commission.

Commissioner Hays referenced Mayor Robinson's earlier comments about prevention and early childhood intervention and asked how the Commission might translate those priorities into measurable funding decisions, particularly in regard to whether a greater emphasis should be placed on behavioral health and childcare rather than on financial assistance. If those areas are to be prioritized, the percentages assigned to those categories should visibly reflect that status.

Chair Singh allowed that the three categories highlighted in purple on the chart have percentages of approximately 32 percent, eight percent, and eight percent, while the youth programming category as proposed stands at 29 percent. If youth programming is to be considered a top priority, its percentage should be higher. Commissioner Hays confirmed that was the point to be made.

Ruth Blaw confirmed for Commissioner Hays that the two line items in the lower section of the chart below the blue dividing line represent cross-cutting priorities rather than independent funding categories. The youth programs line tracks the total proportion of funds directed toward youth services across all categories. In the 2025–2026 cycle, 22.72 percent of the total funding supported youth programs. The Commission's goal for the coming cycle was to maintain or increase that figure, ideally reaching 23 percent. The culturally and linguistically specific programs line accounted for 25.44 percent of the total funding in the last cycle. The intent is to ensure at least 26 percent in the next cycle since the needs assessment identified such programs as being among the community's greatest needs. The percentages are only targets, not fixed allocations, and will depend on which applications are received.

Commissioner Hays asked if the 23 percent youth target applies within each service area or across the entire funding pool. Commissioner Perlman clarified that the target applies citywide, meaning roughly 23 percent of all funds, or about $230,000 dollars of the $1 million pool, should support youth, regardless of whether the funds appear under shelter, food, or behavioral health.

Commissioner Hays observed that while youth is clearly identified as a key priority, the top three categories do not fully reflect that emphasis numerically. Ruth Blaw responded that as the Commission discusses the categories and the percentages, changes can be proposed.

Commissioner Hayes said the main concern is whether or not the Commission's funding percentages truly represent the stated priorities.

Commissioner Perelman pointed out that within the three top categories there are likely many services that will be impacting children. If the Commission decides the categories of shelter and housing, food and basic needs, and financial assistance are indeed the Commission's highest priorities, the percentages for them should be higher. Achieving that might require consolidating some of the smaller categories to create broader, more flexible funding pools. Otherwise, the Commission might spread the funds too thinly across many small allocations.

Commissioner Hayes agreed and stressed the need to ensure that the youth funding goal is connected meaningfully to each major category and that the allocations across the categories will hit the 23 percent target.

Commissioner Perlman asked which organizations currently provide youth-related shelter or family housing services. Christy Stangland said the Archdiocese, formerly Catholic Community Services, operates a family shelter. Friends of Youth serves youth ages 18 to 24 as well as families with young children. PorchLight operates a men's shelter, and Sophia Way operates a shelter for women. Hopelink offers both housing programs and limited shelter units, and MAPS-MCRC runs a transitional housing program. 4 Tomorrow also provides temporary housing assistance.

Commissioner Perlman asked about food programs and specifically wanted to know if the Bellevue School District's backpack program is funded. Christy Stangland confirmed that while there are no voucher programs, the city funds several food-support agencies, including school partnerships.

Commissioner Phan reflected on the Mayor's remarks concerning prevention and stated that while prevention and early intervention is valuable, the Commission's responsibility is to respond to the community's most urgent needs as outlined in the human services needs assessment. Given the severity of the immediate challenges regarding housing instability, food insecurity, and behavioral health, there is a limited capacity to fund upstream prevention, unless it directly intersects with critical services. The Mayor's emphasis on prevention is important, but the Commission must focus primarily on meeting essential needs as identified in the assessment.

Toni Esparza stressed that the Commission's contingency plan will provide for some flexibility. It will allow for making adjustments of plus or minus percentages per category depending on the applications received, and will become part of the package sent to the City Council. The mechanism will permit the Commission to respond to real-world conditions without fully reopening the funding framework.

Commissioner Perlman cautioned that for smaller categories, even a small two-percent shift could represent a disproportionately large change. Ruth Blaw reiterated that the percentages reflect the historical allocations. The proposed flexibility will help address shifts in need once the applications are received.

Commissioner Perlman returned to the category of medical and dental care and warned that the upcoming federal changes could significantly increase the local demand. Higher application volumes can be expected to come from organizations like ICHS, and that possibility should influence the Commission's planning. Chair Singh agreed that many new funding pressures are emerging and adjustments might become necessary.

Commissioner Perlman proposed specific preliminary adjustments for the Commission to discuss. The recommendations included increasing the financial assistance category by at least two percentage points, and combining housing stability with financial assistance since many of the same agencies operate in both areas. Also proposed was merging survivor advocacy with navigation of legal and case management services, with a combined target of nine percent for those programs. While behavioral health benefits from a separate funding stream, it is not entirely independent of local funding needs. Consequently, it makes sense to combine medical and dental services into a single category, since they currently represent only about one percent of the total funding. Leaving the percentage at such a low level could lead to underfunding critical health programs, especially given the expected increases in medical needs.

Commissioner Hayes voiced the understanding that the CDBG allocations were scheduled for a vote at the next meeting and asked when the percentage framework for Human Services funding needs to be finalized. Ruth Blaw explained that the Commission has until the end of November to complete its deliberations on the percentage allocations. The finalized recommendations will go to the City Council in January. The percentage buckets will be submitted to the Council ahead of making specific decisions regarding organizational funding.

Toni Esparza proposed creating a written summary of Commissioner Perlman's proposed category adjustments for the Commissioners to have in front of them at the next meeting to ensure the ideas are clearly represented.

Commissioner Perlman suggested it might be useful for the Commissioners to compare data from previous funding cycles to gain context for making decisions. Ruth Blaw reminded the Commission that the prior cycle included significant funding from the American Rescue Plan

Act (ARPA), which temporarily inflated the totals and making historical comparisons difficult. The ARPA funds came with their own constraints in terms of how they could be allocated within specific categories. Data from earlier years that did not have ARPA funds might offer clearer insight, but compiling those figures would require additional staff work.

10. ADJOURNMENT

Chair Singh adjourned the meeting at 8:00 p.m.