

CITY OF BELLEVUE
HUMAN SERVICES COMMISSION
MINUTES

November 7, 2023
6:00 p.m.

Bellevue City Hall
Room 1E-113

COMMISSIONERS PRESENT: Commissioners White

COMMISSIONERS REMOTE: Commissioners Amirfaiz, Piper, Jain

COMMISSIONERS ABSENT: Chair Mansfield, Vice Chair Singh, Commissioner Halsted

STAFF PRESENT: Christy Stangland, Toni Esparza, Asma Ahmed, Saada Hiltz, Ruth Blaw, Julie Kim, Department of Parks & Community Services

COUNCIL LIAISON: Deputy Mayor Nieuwenhuis

POLICE LIAISON: Major Mark Tarantino

GUEST SPEAKERS: Jeannie Anderson, Liliana Godinez, Wrap-Around Services Program; Dr. Deepa Yerrem, International Community Health Services; Sherry Williams, Healthpoint

RECORDING SECRETARY: Gerry Lindsay

1. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 6:02 by Commissioner White who presided.

2. ROLL CALL

All Commissioners were present with the exception of Chair Mansfield, Vice Chair Singh and Commissioner Halsted.

3. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

A. October 17, 2023

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

4. ORAL AND WRITTEN COMMUNICATIONS

Commissioner White took a moment to note that in compliance with Washington state public disclosure laws regarding the use of public facilities during elections, no election-related topics could be discussed during oral communications or any other public participation portions of the agenda, including promoting or opposing ballot measures, and supporting or opposing a

candidate for election, including oneself. Any speaker discussing topics of such a nature will be asked to stop. Additionally, 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.

Diana Schuetz with the King County Sexual Assault Resource Center thanked the Commission for its historic support and asked for continued support. The number of reported assaults continue to increase, but the good news is that the agency has been able to provide services to the victims at little to no cost, and the services have truly made a difference. A women who experienced a trauma 30 years ago and who was considering suicide got connected with the agency and after just six months of therapy has a turned-around life and has become a speaker for the program. The organization believes in a community free of sexual violence but until that day arrives support will continue to be provided in the form of legal advocacy and therapeutic services.

Alex Tsimerman expressed concern about the violence in Israel and crime in Bellevue. He spoke against the use of red-light cameras in Bellevue and expressed concern about the salaries of police officers.

Alex Tsimerman commented about Palestinians, Iranian Muslims, and Jews.

Commissioner White directed Alex Tsimerman to speak only about issues of relevance to the Commission.

Commissioner White cautioned Alex Tsimerman that the testimony had nothing to do with the work of the Commission.

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

Deputy Mayor Nieuwenhuis reported that City Manager Brad Miyake's last day with the city would be December 1. Diane Carlson has been selected by the Council to be the interim City Manager as a search is conducted for a new City Manager.

Deputy Mayor Nieuwenhuis informed the Commission that the city is on the verge of meeting its 2027 goals for the number of affordable housing units. The 2017 affordable housing goal was 2500 units over ten years, and there are currently over 2300 units in place. Additionally, a hundred shelter beds have been built since the Affordable Housing Strategy was developed and launched. There are an additional 1036 affordable housing units in the pipeline, many of which have leveraged the incentives that are in place, primarily the multifamily tax exemption. Using the 2022 housing needs assessment as a starting point, the city is currently evaluating new affordable housing targets as part of the Comprehensive Plan Periodic Update.

The city has also made considerable progress relative to the Next Right work which is focused on removing barriers to the construction of micro-apartments, allowing higher density and certain residential uses to incentivize more residential development over commercial development. Permit reviews and inspection fees are being reduced for affordable housing projects, and ADUs, duplexes, triplexes and quadplexes are being encouraged, including mechanisms for separate ownership.

The Council has been working on an ordinance supporting affordable housing construction as part of the Next Right work. The Council approved a temporary change to the Land Use Code to provide flexibility for projects preparing to submit permit applications for conversions from office space to residential.

Deputy Mayor Nieuwenhuis said the Council is currently working through the mid-biennium budget process. The budget that was adopted in November 2022 includes some significant investments in the critical areas of public safety, growth, urbanization, affordable housing, homelessness, equity and inclusion, and some environmental stewardship items.

Police Chief Shirley recently shared with the City Council that the overall crime rate in Bellevue dropped by 13 percent over the last year. The report also highlighted the police department's use of data and hotspot policing. The number of robberies, burglaries and car prowls all fell. There was a 59 percent drop in theft of car parts, primarily catalytic converters, but a 26 percent increase in car thefts, largely Hyundai and KIA models.

Major Mark Tarantino reported that a new Assistant Chief for the police department has been brought on board. Constance Schlappy comes from Detroit and has 27 years with that agency and a lot of experience in community outreach and engagement.

6. STAFF AND COMMISSIONER REPORTS

The Commission was informed by Commissioner Jain that she would be resigning from the Commission effective in December due to pregnancy and a new job.

7. INFORMATION FOR THE COMMISSION – None

8. OLD BUSINESS – None

9. NEW BUSINESS

A. City of Bellevue Wrap-Around Services Program

Jeannie Anderson, wrap-around services coordinator at Lake Hills Elementary School, was joined by Liliana Godinez, wrap-around services coordinator at Stevenson Elementary School.

Liliana Godinez explained that the city's wrap-around services program was launched in 2005 through a collaborative effort between the city, the Bellevue School District and United Way

with the goal of revitalizing the community by infusing services needed by the community into local schools.

Jeannie Anderson said support is also provided to the feeder schools of Odle and Highland, diverse schools is high percentages of free and reduced lunch students.

Liliana Godinez said the work of the wrap-around program focuses on children, families, neighborhoods and community. Outcomes includes increased school readiness, a sense of belonging and ownership among children, families that are more involved in their children's education, families feeling welcome at their children's schools, and families having increased access to services. Additionally, the students and families are provided opportunities to celebrate their language, culture and diversity.

Jeannie Anderson said a strength-based approach is used to address the issues. The program helps to connect students and their families with mental health services, recreation opportunities, and with both medical and dental health services. With regard to academic need, the program helps families navigate the IEP process, and provides homework help throughout the school day and after school. When families come to the schools in crisis, triage is done to understand the need and initiate needed support. When Covid hit and the schools shut down, food banks were opened at Stevenson and Lake Hills that served about 600 families per week. Wi-fi hotspots and laptops were delivered to get marginalized families up and running.

Liliana Godinez said a needs assessment is conducted biannually of each individual school. The assessment covers feedback from students, parents, teachers, staff and community stakeholders. The 2022 assessment of Stevenson listed after-school programming, tutoring support, and access to legal and mental health services as the top priorities. The consensus among all of the survey participants was that when services are available, transportation is a significant barrier to participation. The immediate needs identified by the staff included tutoring and after-school homework help, mental health services, and access to recreation in natural environments. The need for transportation services was highlighted by community stakeholders, along with having enough staff to serve all the needs of the community.

Jeannie Anderson said the Lake Hills assessment highlighted similar themes but also included the need for events and get-togethers post-Covid. The students called for more holiday events and get-togethers. The students also called for more snacks, and sports activities. The parents unsurprisingly evoked having to work multiple jobs, making it challenging to help their kids with homework or transportation. Before- and after-school programming helps to make the school day work for many families. Parents also highlighted a desire to learn more about available free or affordable community resources. Many parents felt their children fell behind during the Covid shutdown and also highlighted kindergarten readiness, organized sports and activities, health services and nutrition, mental health and counseling, crisis intervention, and case management. The community partners stressed the need for more access to school facilities and highlighted language barriers and the need for more child care. Transportation and access to after-school care was highlighted along with a lack of continuity of resources.

Liliana Godinez stated that to ensure the work remains relative, there is periodic review of the

needs. Information gathered from parents, teachers and school staff identified the needs of both Lake Hills and Stevenson to be clothing and basic needs, including winter clothing, food insecurity, housing and shelter, an increase in the number of families experiencing homelessness, and a decrease in available emergency housing in the area. Also on the list was child care, after-school programming options, and transportation barriers. For families wanting to access recreational opportunities, the cost is often significant. Academic support outside of the school setting was highlighted along with access to free legal services, along with a general decrease in feeling safe, an increase in the number of families experiencing domestic violence, and the difficulties associated with navigating some of the services.

Liliana Godinez recognized the good work being done in the community resulting from investments in rental assistance services, access to free legal resources, after-school opportunities that are easy to access that are flexible and which offer scholarships and transportation, local child care subsidies, and navigation services that help families apply for child care. The flexible emergency assistance fund from Bellevue Lifespring helps to fill in financial gaps for families. The city's mediation service between tenants and landlords is also worth noting.

Deputy Mayor Nieuwenhuis noted that for many marginalized communities, their car is their lifeline for getting to and from schools and for accessing work and groceries. With car thefts on the rise, the question asked was about what the city is doing in terms of combating the trend. Major Mark Tarantino said the police department has been making available anti-theft devices in the form of steering wheel locks. The practice has been to put out a press release and then to hand them out until the supply is gone.

With regard to the difficulties encountered in navigating paperwork, Deputy Mayor Nieuwenhuis asked how the processes can be simplified. Jeannie Anderson said the issue comes down to a combination of language barriers, the fact that the paperwork is technical, and the fact that the applications are only offered online. Liliana Godinez added that in working with families that do not have English as their native language, technical paperwork is difficult to translate. Often it takes someone sitting down with the applicants to walk through the application process. The library offers such services, as does Mini City Hall, but more of that personal approach is needed. Jeannie Anderson pointed out that many families that seek help are in fact illiterate, even in their native language, making the personalized approach the only option.

Commissioner White asked about efforts to bring in more people to help. Liliana Godinez said it requires a lot of relationship building with community partners, families and school district staff. Lately the focus has been on recruiting from the Indian community. Jeannie Anderson added that connections can be made by attending meetings such as Eastside Pathways and with service providers. Where there is a particular need, cold calling is often the only option.

B. Panel Conversation – Trends and Challenges in Community Health

Dr. Deepa Yerrem, chief medical officer for International Community Health Services, said the organization had a humble beginning and is now celebrating its 50th anniversary. Starting in a storefront in the International District of Seattle, the organization now has ten locations across King County, including four full-fledged clinics that offer medical, dental, behavioral health and

other enabling services. There is a drive to make sure the services reflect the community need. The Bellevue clinic was opened in 2014 along with a clinic in Shoreline. The organization also has a vision clinic and operates one of the school-based health centers at Highline Middle School. An assisted living facility was purchased in 2019 because of the increased need of the aging population; that led to offering various senior services.

In 2022, the agency served 3267 Bellevue residents, a seven percent increase from the prior year. The Bellevue clinic that same year served a total of 5864 patients, of which 4273 received medical services, and 2743 received dental care. About 1800 patients received mental health services, including substance abuse disorder treatment. The organization predominantly serves the Asian-American, Pacific Islander and Native Hawaiian populations, but five percent of those served are Black and African-American. Fifty-two percent of all patients speak a language other than English in the home, and just over 50 percent of those served in Bellevue are on Medicaid. Ten percent are on Medicare, and four percent are uninsured. A little over 21 percent of those seen at the Bellevue clinic are less than 18 years old, and almost 20 percent is closer to the age of 65.

Sherry Williams, vice president of community engagement and external relations for Healthpoint, noted that the organization is a federally qualified health center. The organization operates 12 primary care clinics, primarily in south King County, though there is a clinic in Redmond and another in Bothell. There are also six school-based clinics embedded in the Renton, Federal Way and Highline school districts, and there is an urgent care facility that partners closely with MultiCare. Twenty-five percent of the patient population lives in Bellevue but receive care in Redmond or Bothell. Healthpoint was created in 1971 in response to the civil rights movement. The top issues around the civil rights movement were housing, health, education and food. The mission of Healthpoint is to strengthen communities and improve the health of people by delivering quality healthcare services, breaking down barriers and providing access for all. There are no barriers to receiving care. The organization employs about 1100 persons, 35 percent of which speak a language other than English. In addition to healthcare services, the organization also provides parenting centering and diabetes centering services. Behavioral health and substance use disorder services are also provided.

Management Fellow Julie Kim asked about the misconceptions or misunderstandings that exist in the community regarding health needs or services.

Dr. Deepa Yerrem said Bellevue is usually considered to be an affluent community. The fact is that about 45 percent of those surveyed indicated they lack access to health insurance, and nine percent cannot get care because of the cost. Nineteen percent reported not being able to find affordable care. Affluence masks health disparities. There are difficulties in accessing care and in being able to afford care. The one-size-fits-all concept does not work in Bellevue, especially given that between 2010 and 2017, 73 percent of Bellevue's population growth was tied to foreign-born nationals. A little over 40 percent speak a language other than English at home. They all come with their own beliefs and ideas about healthcare and how to access it, and a cookie-cutter approach does not work. There needs to be healthcare systems that can fill in the gap. There is also a clear need for youth healthcare and behavioral healthcare. The needs of the youth have changed post-pandemic, with a clear increased need for mental health services. There

is a need for more of a focus on reproductive health education and related services. It is notable that 21 percent of Bellevue's population is under the age of 18.

Sherry Williams said poor people must go to community and public health clinics to get their healthcare needs addressed. They look to the school nursing departments for care for their children. The biggest misconceptions revolve around the question of where people go when they are in crisis involving critical and chronic illnesses where they are not afforded the opportunity to have a specialist on hand. Support services like pharmacies and counseling are not always affordable to that population.

Julie Kim commented that the demand for quality health services is increasing and asked the panelists to elaborate on the most significant human services needs and the barriers affecting health services access.

Sherry Williams said the social factors include education, which is needed in order to support oneself and one's family with income and insurance. The physical environment also affects individuals, as do behaviors like smoking, drinking and other risky behaviors. Healthcare support resources do provide the opportunity to determine what health and human services should be offered to individuals when they are at their most vulnerable. Voting is also important when it comes to support for things like roads, laws, schools, livable wage, rents and taxes.

Dr. Deepa Yerrem said access to quality mental health services, including substance use disorder treatment, can have the biggest impact. There are sizable populations that do not speak English and who hold their own beliefs and customs who need health services that are properly tailored for them. Quite a few refugees coming from Guatemala, Ukraine and Russia are showing up in the clinics, all of whom have their own specific needs and preconceived notions. Socially appropriate care for them is essential, along with interpretation services. Inflation is triggering increases in the cost of healthcare along with everything else, and healthcare is often an item people skip when they cannot afford all that they need.

Julie Kim asked if there are specific programs that address the needs and the barriers.

Sherry Williams called out Refugee Health as a primary service offered by Healthpoint. The program has services that go beyond what happens in the clinics by working closely with community partners who can provide extended services. The substance use disorder program addresses both behavioral health and psychological needs along with physical needs. Pharmacy care operates with a funding source that defers direct cost to the pharmacies, and the dollars are invested back into the clinics.

Dr. Deepa Yerrem said ICHS strives on community collaboration and advocacy, and is in fact a gold medal recipient from the National Association of Community Health Centers for its advocacy work. The organization provides culturally and linguistically appropriate care as part of its mission. That means taking into account the intricacies of each specific population. Immigrants from Southeast Asia have diseases that are prevalent to that area, including Hepatitis B, so to that end a program has been developed around that illness. A more organized effort was recently started to provide HIV care and treatment. ICHS collaborates with other organizations to

make things happen. Good working relationships are necessary in making sure everyone works together in providing for the socioeconomic needs of the populations, and to that end the organization partners with Crossroads Mini City Hall, Jubilee Reach, YMCA, Hopelink, the Bellevue School District, Youth Eastside Services, and with several Russian stores. Dental care is a much-needed service in Bellevue and ICHS offers a full dental clinic in Bellevue staffed with three dentists and three dental hygienists. An ARPA grant facilitates offering bilingual English/Spanish behavioral health care to the students at Highland Middle School, and the organization has hired pediatricians to provide services and help in the development of modules for health education of kids and adolescents.

Julie Kim asked what challenges the agencies are going through that the Commission should be aware of.

Dr. Deepa Yerrem said the biggest challenge for ICHA is around recruiting and retention of staff. Many staff in such a high-challenge environment run out of steam and burn out. Loss of staff leads to the curtailment of the services provided. There are also economic challenges as the cost of everything has gone up, from human services to medical care, drugs and supplies. Agencies rely on specific funds from various sources, including the Medicaid and Medicare programs where reimbursement tends to be challenging. The changing healthcare reimbursement environment generally is changing, mostly for the good, but that means organizations that are already strapped are having to change their whole systems, create new functions, and hire new people.

Sherry Williams agreed with that synopsis, adding that Community Health Centers has a platform for determining which challenges should be carried forward to local elected officials. The employment pipeline is certainly a challenge. Other priorities are school-based health programming, including telehealth, and pharmacy/medication support. Connectivity with community partners is something that is constantly an issue for Community Health Centers.

Commissioner White asked about telehealth, specifically whether or not there has been any spike. Dr. Deepa Yerrem said there was a big spike in telehealth services when Covid hit. There has since been a downward trend, at least for medical services. Currently about ten percent of ICHS services are provided via telehealth. Behavioral health services is an outlier, however, especially for the Bellevue clinic, where about 20 percent of the service is provided via telehealth.

Sherry Williams said the same is true for Community Health Centers. School students are opting to have more telehealth visits around behavioral health issues and social/psychological support.

C. Commissioner Requests to Participate in Future Meetings Remotely

Commissioner Piper requested remote participation for the December 5 meeting.

10. CONTINUED ORAL COMMUNICATIONS – None

11. ADJOURNMENT

Commissioner White adjourned the meeting at 7:32 p.m.