

CITY OF BELLEVUE
HUMAN SERVICES COMMISSION
MINUTES

March 15, 2022
6:00 p.m.

Bellevue City Hall
Virtual Meeting

COMMISSIONERS PRESENT: Chair Piper, Vice Chair Amirfaiz, Ma, Mansfield,
Mercer, Phan

COMMISSIONERS ABSENT: None

STAFF PRESENT: Christy Stangland, Toni Esparza, Donna Adair,
Department of Parks and Community Services;
Elizabeth de Regt, Department of Community
Development

GUEST SPEAKERS: None

RECORDING SECRETARY: Gerry Lindsay

1. CALL TO ORDER

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

2. ROLL CALL

Upon the call of the roll, all Commissioners were present.

Chair Piper stated that this evening's meeting and future meetings will be held remotely via Zoom.

3. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

A. February 15, 2022

A motion to approve the minutes as submitted was made by Vice Chair Amirfaiz. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Mercer and the motion carried without dissent; Chair Piper abstained from voting.

4. WRITTEN COMMUNICATIONS – None

5. COMMUNICATIONS FROM CITY COUNCIL, COMMUNITY COUNCIL,
BOARDS AND COMMISSIONS – None

6. STAFF AND COMMISSIONER REPORTS

Department of Parks and Community Services Assistant Director Toni Esparza took a moment to introduce Donna Adair, the new housing repair loan specialist who will also be taking over all Community Development Block Grant responsibilities for the human services division.

Toni Esparza informed the Commissioners that staff recently identified an opportunity to be more inclusive in the Commission's minutes. Accordingly, assumptions about the gender of individuals will no longer be reflected in the pronouns used.

7. PUBLIC HEARING

A. Housing, Community Development and Human Services Needs in Bellevue

Chair Piper noted that the city is required to conduct an annual public hearing on housing, community development and human services needs. The information received will be used during the 2023 CDBG and the Human Services Fund allocation processes in the fall.

A motion to open the public hearing was made by Commissioner Phan. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Mercer and the motion carried unanimously.

Jack Edgerton, executive director of Eastside Baby Corner and member of the King County Children and Youth Advisory Board, thanked the Commission and the city for their sustained support. Bellevue stands at the forefront of Washington state cities with planning and funding to address the critical human service needs of its citizens. For 32 years Eastside Baby Corner has provided critical basic needs items to the children of Bellevue families. The agency harnesses the power of the community through volunteers and donor support to address food and housing insecurity as well as income inequality. Support from the city and community has allowed the agency to keep its doors open throughout the pandemic; no weekly distribution was missed over the last two years. The list of Bellevue partners includes the Bellevue School District, LifeWire, Kinderling, King County Housing Authority, Hopelink, Imagine Housing and others, which collectively have helped to distribute over 4.3 million items with a total value of over \$3.3 million in 2021. The future will see emerging needs from families struggling, many for the first time, with the increasing cost of housing, transportation, and basic needs. One example is the cost of car seats, an item required by law, has increased by ten percent in just the first three months of 2022. Costs for basic items are increasing at a rate faster than salaries are rising. Eastside Baby Corner provides more than 225 essential items to help struggling families make ends meet. Goods from the agency help to reduce stress levels for parents and families, increase child health, safety, and welfare, and provide tangible support in a time of need.

Anita Mires, board president of the Washington State Poison Center, a non-profit that serves the entire state with emergency toxicology services. The Center operates 24/7/365. Persons can call the Center at any time with any concerns about poisoning or medication problems and they will be put in touch with a pharmacist, a doctor, or a nurse with specialized training in toxicology. There are 55 poison centers across the country, but the Washington state center is different in that it is a non-profit. The state funds about half of the annual budget and the balance is left to the Center to fundraise. In addition to providing information regarding poisoning, the Center provides community and clinical education about a wide range of topics. About 30 percent of the calls received come from emergency personnel. Over the last year the Center treated some 600 Bellevue residents who were exposed to harmful substances. About 200 of those were children younger than five. Poisonings of children are on the rise, particularly around things like edibles, household cleaners and hand sanitizers during the pandemic. Unfortunately, there has also been a rise in cases of self-harm, including about a hundred in Bellevue over the last year treated by the Center. The Center also treated about a hundred older residents, half of whom called after making a mistake in their medications wanting to know if they should go to the hospital. Of the 600 Bellevue residents treated in 2021, 489 did not have to go to the hospital, representing a huge savings on emergency room personnel and over \$700,000 in community health resources.

Cintia Valenzuela, a coordinator with 4 Tomorrow, said they have worked on issues such as housing stability and mental health resources for the Latinx community. The work done on coordinated events has included ELAP events for immigration information. The big need currently is mental health resources given the mental health disparities in the Latinx community. There has been a rise in members of the Latinx community wanting to seek therapy. More than 30 individuals have been referred to mental health services in the community. Unfortunately, those referrals have not met with a great deal of success. The clients are people who are experiencing bipolar disorders, people needing medication management, people who do not have insurance, and the barriers are impacting the Latinx community in Bellevue. The issues are also impacting the youth. There are not many behavioral health resources available in the school districts and there is a need to be proactive to keep things from getting worse.

Miriam Lara said they have five kids in the Bellevue School District. There is a great need for mental health resources in the community for older students and parents. There is a need for more resources for families whose students are involved in incidents such as fights in the schools. Families do not understand the process and do not know what they need to do and where they can go to get help.

Wendy Xona Romero said many organizations in the community have been a great help to their family and community. They concurred with the testimony of Miriam Lara about parents who need help following incidents of school violence. Families need more support in that area. Some things have happened in the schools that the parents have not been made aware due to a lack of communication between the schools and the parents. There are no officers at the schools anymore. Kids are getting together and attacking other kids. Kids are driving cars and pretending to shoot out the windows. More help is needed by way of more funding for the schools. Covid has had a great impact on kids, and they need more mental health help.

Miguel Mecina, chief program officer for Youth Eastside Services, noted the agency specializes in providing services for children, youth, and young adults in regard to mental health. Mental health is defined as treatment for mental health and substance abuse disorders. There are clear needs, beginning with the need for funding to attract and retain the qualified staff needed to provide services. Second is the need for funding to increase the provision of services. There was a shortage of programs before Covid and after Covid the level of needed services has grown exponentially. The agency currently has a waiting list of over 40 kids. Extra funding is needed in order to increase capacity in terms of staff. Third, youth are presenting with needs beyond just treatment of mental health and substance abuse problems.

Silvia Salazar, a mother of three, indicated they had received help from YES, Eastside Baby Corner and 4 Tomorrow. The past year has been very hard on the family and more youth mental health help is needed.

Malory Gustave-Trask, director of housing for Hopelink, thanked the Commission and the city for its ongoing support for social and human services in Bellevue. Hopelink is a multiservice organization that provides a myriad of programs in Bellevue and across the Eastside. The services offered help members of the community stabilize from the crisis of poverty by gaining necessary skills. In 2021 Hopelink served 736 Bellevue residents through many different programs. The adult education and employment program serve 94 Bellevue residents. The family development program served 136 Bellevue residents. The housing program housed 44 Bellevue residents with over a thousand bednights. The financial assistance program helped more than 160 households and 461 Bellevue residents, with a primary focus on rental assistance. The food program provided more than a million meals out of the Bellevue center. There continues to be an increased need for such programs across the region and in Bellevue. At the Bellevue center there is a wait list for most of the programs,

except for the food program. In 2021, 95 percent of the families served through the Bellevue center were less than 200 percent of the federal poverty level, which is an income of about \$33,000 per year. The lowest rent that currently can be found in Bellevue is about \$1500 per month and that is not sustainable for those at 200 percent of the federal poverty level. Hopelink needs funding for its affordable housing programs. There is a continued need for additional staff capacity and increased funding is needed to address that issue. There is an increased need for safe places for people to find respite so they can tap into their own resilience and find stability in their lives.

Daniel Fey spoke representing the Center for Career Connections at Bellevue College. The work of the Center is to make sure that all residents have access to high-quality education and training services to assist them in developing self-sufficiency and personal fulfillment. Over the last year the Center served about a thousand residents of the Eastside, most from Bellevue. They have largely been low-income individuals who have been left behind by the robust economy and who came to Bellevue College seeking job search skills, resume development skills, career planning assistance and counseling, and connection to education and training. The Center is open to the public, not just enrolled Bellevue College students.

Carol Ryan, development director for Attain Housing, thanked the Commission and the city for supporting the human services needs of local residents. Attain Housing has been serving Bellevue since 1989 by providing transitional housing and case management for families transitioning from homelessness. Over the last six years the agency has added to its programming rental assistance for Bellevue and Eastside families to keep them in their homes. It is far more cost effective to keep people in their homes than it is to have them enter into homelessness. Attain Housing clients are at the lowest income levels in East King County, which is one of Western Washington's most expensive housing areas. There simply is not enough affordable housing. The agency's rental assistance program, Stable Home, ensures that at-risk Eastside families will be able to keep a roof over their heads. The Stable Home program also provides move-in assistance and in 2021 distributed nearly \$230,000 to 158 families across the Eastside. Seventy of the individuals were Bellevue residents. Ninety-seven percent of the Stable Home clients remain in their homes three months after receiving rental or move-in assistance. Additionally, \$61,000 was distributed to six Bellevue families with massive rental debt. The need remains great, however.

A motion to close the public hearing was made by Vice Chair Amirfaiz. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Phan and the motion carried unanimously.

8. INFORMATION FOR THE COMMISSION

A. Comprehensive Plan Periodic Update Scope and Overview

Senior Planner Elizabeth de Regt with the Department of Community Development explained that the Comprehensive Plan periodic update process was launched by the City Council on February 28. At that time the Council directed all boards and commissions to contribute to the update.

Cities are required by the Growth Management Act to have Comprehensive Plans. The Comprehensive Plan is a key guiding document that addresses a range of topics in the individual chapters or elements. The plan looks out 20 years and once adopted in 2024 it will have a horizon year of 2044. Each element of the plan has its own vision statement followed by a series of policies that guide city actions and decisions, as well as capital investments.

Elizabeth de Regt noted that the Comprehensive Plan policies set the goals and direction for the community as a whole. The policies lead to the development of citywide regulations, plans

and programs, such as land use zoning that determines what gets built where; water systems that ensure the city has safe drinking water; and neighborhood traffic safety that works with neighbors to improve safety for pedestrians.

The current plan has elements that address such things as housing, transportation, and human services. Each of those elements has a vision section that includes some narrative along with goals and policies to support those goals. A map of land uses is also housed in the Comprehensive Plan, and it is what guides the vision for the city in terms of what uses are allowed. Volume 2 of the Comprehensive Plan houses the subarea or neighborhood area plans but they will not receive a great deal of attention during the update process.

The GMA requires periodic updates of the Comprehensive Plan every eight years. The state legislation also requires regional entities, including the Puget Sound Regional Council that has its own document that includes a set of policies called the Multicounty Planning Policies housed in the Vision 2050 document. Additionally, King County has a separate planning document that houses the Countywide Planning Policies. Those policies most directly impact Bellevue. The work to update the Comprehensive Plan will include reflecting the Council's updated vision.

The Countywide Planning Policies include growth targets relative to the number of housing units and jobs to be added over the next 20 years. The targets were developed through a collaborative effort involving all cities in the county and King County. The target for new housing units is 35,000. The issue is that the city currently has capacity for only 26,859 new housing units. The target for new jobs is 70,000 and the city is well situated to meet that target given its current capacity of 117,241 jobs. The update effort will plan for additional housing units and will seek to achieve an equitable jobs/housing balance.

The update work will focus on planning for growth. That will trigger the need for land use map amendments to determining where new housing units will go, what types of units there should be, and what levels of affordability there should be. The work will also seek to expand housing options and access to affordable housing along with approaches to combat homelessness. There will also be a focus on creating vibrant places at a variety of scales and locations. Importantly, equity will be a huge part of the update. Particular attention will be given to traditionally underserved and underrepresented community members. The outreach efforts will be diverse and inclusive. The legacy of discrimination across land uses that has occurred in the past will be highlighted by the update process. There will be emphasis in the plan for environmental sustainability and resilience. The work will set the stage for all future planning in the city.

Elizabeth de Regt said there will be different streams of engagement ranging from public engagement events, surveys, and discussions to engagement by strategy teams, public comments at board and commission meetings, and input from the city's boards and commissions as well as the City Council. The four strategy teams will be comprised of stakeholders focuses on various issues, including livability, placemaking, sustainability and equity.

The work is slated to take two years. During the months of March and April 2022 the focus will be on affirming the vision at a high level. From May through July there will be deep dives into livability issues and the more contradictory vision elements with an eye on how they all fit together. September through November will usher in the task of laying the foundation for future planning by looking at specific initiatives and issues. During the first quarter of 2023 there will be deeper conversations with the community about various growth alternatives. The bulk of the rest of the year will be taken up with work to refine those alternatives and the policies and creating a draft document. The final draft will be brought before all the city's

boards and commissions, the public and the City Council for comments. The input received will inform final edits to the document.

The types of outreach activities include direct mailed questionnaires sent to every Bellevue household. There will also be specific announcements mailed out. The engagingbellevue.com website has an electronic version of the survey and allows people to ask questions and have them answered, to provide input, and to download information. A number of in-person and virtual community events are planned, including workshops, presentations on request, and tabling events, some of which have already occurred at various grocery stores. The survey has been translated into seven different languages. With regard to equity, cultural outreach assistants have been hired. They have connections in the community and often speak the language of specific communities and thus are able to better reach folks that often are not reached by planning efforts.

Elizabeth de Regt said issues related to human services will be addressed beginning in the fall of 2022 and the winter of 2023. Comments and feedback from the Human Services Commission will be sought during that time. Once there is a full draft of the entire plan, that will also be brought before the boards and commissions for additional comments.

Commissioner Phan asked for an example of a legacy of discrimination. Elizabeth de Regt said there have in the past been covenants that are racially exclusionary. While those are no longer legal, they still exist in many cities. The work will document such instances and identify how they have impacted and continue to impact residents. There were covenants that precluded non-white people from living in particular neighborhoods, thus non-white residents were put into other neighborhoods. If they are now facing displacement from those other neighborhoods, that non-equitable situation needs to be understood and addressed.

9. OLD BUSINESS

Christy Stangland referenced an email sent to the Commissioners about the upcoming joint equity training session. Commissioners who have not yet responded should do so. It was noted that the Commission's April 19 meeting will be canceled due to a conflict with the equity training.

Toni Esparza stated that the press release for the funding application was sent out on March 14. The application for funding from the Human Services Fund is now open to the public. The press release was translated into seven languages in addition to English. An information session was conducted earlier in the day, and another is slated for March 16.

The Commissioners were informed that Leslie Miller, the new human services manager, will start her work with the city on March 16 and should be attending the Commission's April 5 meeting.

10. NEW BUSINESS – None

11. CONTINUED ORAL COMMUNICATIONS – None

12. ADJOURNMENT

A motion to adjourn was made by Commissioner Mansfield. The motion was seconded by Vice Chair Amirfaiz and the motion carried unanimously.

Chair Piper adjourned the meeting at 7:09 p.m.