

CITY OF BELLEVUE
HUMAN SERVICES COMMISSION
MINUTES

April 5, 2022
6:00 p.m.

Bellevue City Hall
Virtual Meeting

COMMISSIONERS PRESENT: Chair Piper, Vice Chair Amirfaiz, Mansfield, Phan, Singh

COMMISSIONERS ABSENT: Commissioners Ma, Mercer

STAFF PRESENT: Christy Stangland, Toni Esparza, Leslie Miller, Department of Parks and Community Services

GUEST SPEAKERS: Sara Levin, United Way

RECORDING SECRETARY: Gerry Lindsay

1. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 6:04 p.m. by Chair Piper who presided.

2. ROLL CALL

Upon the call of the roll, all Commissioners were present with the exception of Commissioner Mercer, who was excused, and Commissioner Ma.

Chair Piper stated that the meeting and future meetings would be held remotely via Zoom.

New Commissioner Singh was welcomed along with new Human Services Manager Leslie Miller. The Commissioners and staff introduced themselves.

3. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

A. March 1, 2022

A motion to approve the minutes as submitted was made by Commissioner Mansfield. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Phan and the motion carried unanimously.

B. March 15, 2022

A motion to approve the minutes as submitted was made by Vice Chair Amirfaiz. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Phan and the motion carried unanimously.

4. ORAL AND WRITTEN COMMUNICATIONS

Chair Piper noted the receipt of a written communication from Hopelink.

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

6. STAFF AND COMMISSIONER REPORTS

Human Services Manager Leslie Miller reminded the Commissioners about the upcoming April 7 equity training session from 6:30 p.m. to 7:30 p.m. and noted that there would not be a regular Commission meeting on April 19.

7. INFORMATION FOR THE COMMISSION

A. Analysis of the Human Services Funding Awards to Improve Equity in Funding

Human Services Planner Christy Stangland noted that the data was compiled in response to a request from staff following a collaborative meeting with some BIPOC By and For agencies. The decision was made to provide information regarding both the regular 2021-2022 cycle of Human Services funding and all additional funding allocated. Christy Stangland clarified that BIPOC is an abbreviation for Black, Indigenous and People of Color. People of Color is a widely used umbrella term for all people of color. The BIPOC designation recognizes that Black and Indigenous people are severely impacted by systemic racial injustice. BIPOC By and For agencies are agencies that were created by, led by and staffed by BIPOC individuals and that are focused on serving the BIPOC community. BIPOC By and For agencies provide culturally and linguistically specific services.

Christy Stangland stated that between 2020 and 2021 the city allocated more than \$14 million in pandemic funding in addition to 1590 funding, and the city's ongoing human service funding totaled \$4.5 million. During the pandemic the Council emphasized to the Commission as they were forming recommendations to include a wide base of agencies, including agencies that provide culturally specific services.

The Commissioners were shown a chart indicating all funding amounts requested for 2020 and 2021 along with the amounts awarded. The numbers were broken down by BIPOC By and For agencies, all other agencies including shelters, and all other agencies excluding shelters. Christy Stangland stressed that at the direction of the Council, funding was prioritized for shelters. There was a significant increase in both the amount of funding to BIPOC By and For agencies and in the percentage of requested funds being funded. An increase in the funding available in 2021 allowed for fully or partially funding requests, some of which were allocated without an RFP. Using ARPA funding, the Commission was able to meet the requests of all of the agencies, leaving some funding to be allocated as the agencies spend down their awarded amounts.

Another chart with only the 2021-22 human services funding cycle requests and awards was shared with the Commission. It was broken down by the same categories. Christy Stangland noted that 34 percent of the BIPOC By and For agencies requests were awarded funding. By comparison, all other agencies that include shelter, and all other agencies that exclude shelter, 72 percent of the requested amounts were awarded. However, when focused on all funding for 2021, 81 percent of the requests from BIPOC By and For agencies were funded, which is in line with the direction from the Council to fund a wide variety of agencies that provide culturally specific services.

The list of BIPOC By and For agencies that requested funding in 2020 and in 2021 was shown to the Commission, with those agencies that received funding highlighted. The 2021 list included some agencies that did not meet the city's requirements at the time the application was submitted. Those requirements were subsequently reviewed, making more agencies eligible for future funding. One agency on the 2021 list, Families of Color Seattle, did not receive funding in 2021 but did receive funding for 2022. In 2020, nine of the ten BIPOC By and For agencies that applied for funding were awarded funding. In 2021, ten of the 17

BIPOC By and For agencies that applied for funding were awarded funds. Three of the 17 did not meet the city's financial requirements.

For the 2021-22 City of Bellevue Human Services funding, 15 agencies that applied were BIPOC By and For agencies, with three agencies not meeting the city's funding requirements. Ten of these agencies were awarded funding.

In 2020, 13 percent, or 11 of 83, programs funded were BIPOC By and For programs, including four new programs. In 2021, 22 percent, or 20 of 91, programs funded were BIPOC By and For programs, including seven new programs. Specifically in regard to the 2021-2022 Human Services Fund cycle funding, 13 of 82 programs, or 16 percent, are BIPOC By and For programs, including three new programs.

Christy Stangland noted that in 2020, seven percent, or three of 44, of the funding awards went to agencies that were funded for the first time. In 2021, four percent, or two of 49, funding awards went to agencies that were funded for the first time. Four percent, or two of 48, of the funding awards in the 2021-2022 Human Services Fund cycle were awarded to first-time agencies.

In 2020, 50 percent, or 22 of 44, of the agencies that received funding were either Eastside-born or Eastside-based. In 2021, 51 percent, or 24 of 49, of the funded agencies were either Eastside-born or Eastside-based.

Additional efforts have been made over the last two years to achieve greater equity in funding. The funding eligibility requirements were revised to highlight only those requirements legally mandated for agencies by state or federal law. Agencies are no longer required to be registered with the state as charitable organizations or have 501(C)(3) designation. Technical assistance was offered to all applicants for the 2021-2022 funding, as well as to those agencies seeking 1590 funding. Technical assistance is also being offered for the 2023-2024 funding cycle. Interpreters can and will be provided upon request at all funding information sessions or any other city meeting to discuss human service funding. The city accepts funding applications and quarterly reports in languages other than English. The city is also funding a capacity building initiative through Communities Rise that will begin in June 2022. Finally, all members of the Human Services Commission will receive equity training.

Christy Stangland put to the Commissioners the question of how the Commission will maintain the progress made on funding BIPOC By and For agencies going forward. Chair Piper said the upcoming equity training will be an important element. It will be necessary to keep a constant focus on issues of equity during the funding process.

Vice Chair Amirfaiz stressed the need to not only maintain the progress made but to increase progress. That will to a large degree depend on the funding. Hopefully the Council will find some additional funding to be earmarked for some of the smaller ethnic-led agencies. It should be remembered that many members of communities of color go to non BIPOC-led agencies to seek services, often because larger agencies are able to offer more than the smaller agencies can offer.

Commissioner Phan agreed that other agencies serve families and individuals of color and asked if the city has access to that data. Christy Stangland answered that demographic information is gathered from the agencies. Commissioner Phan stressed the need to do whatever can be done to help the agencies that help the BIPOC community.

Vice Chair Amirfaiz referred to the comment made that Black and Indigenous people are severely impacted by systemic racial injustices and asked why the comment did not include

Brown people. Christy Stangland explained that BIPOC specifically is a reference to Black and Indigenous populations. Vice Chair Amirfaiz pointed out that Brown persons fall under the definition of people of color. Leslie Miller allowed that people of color is an often-used umbrella term. The history of the nation, however, has involved different experiences, including anti-Black racism and enslavement, and Indigenous genocide. Often those experiences become invisible and the BIPOC reference is a way to specifically recognize the difference.

Vice Chair Amirfaiz pointed out that the history of the nation has also included negative treatment of Chinese Americans, Japanese Americans and many others. By focusing on just African Americans, Native Americans and other people of color may feel overlooked. Department of Parks and Community Services Assistant Director Toni Esparza allowed that the confusion lay in the wording that was used, adding that it is not the intention of staff to imply that any person of color has not experienced injustice and oppression in the community. Black and Indigenous persons are specifically called out in the definition of BIPOC. Vice Chair Amirfaiz said the overall intent is to be inclusive of everyone. People of color was the term of choice until someone came up with BIPOC, and people of color continues to be the more inclusive term. Leslie Miller suggested that the POC part of BIPOC continues to be inclusive.

Commissioner Singh voiced agreement with the comments made by Vice Chair Amirfaiz.

Commissioner Phan suggested the confusion might lie in the term BIPOC, how it is defined and who it is intended to include. Vice Chair Amirfaiz said the concern was that the staff presentation specifically highlighted the fact that Black and Indigenous people are severely impacted by systemic racial injustices, seemingly leaving out other people of color as also being negatively impacted. Language and words matter.

Toni Esparza explained that the data analysis included all communities represented by the term BIPOC. The definition given by staff was not intended to cause confusion.

B. Human Services Commission Special Presentation

Sara Levin, Vice President for Community Services for United Way of King County, said the organization as a whole and in King County in particular, has undergone a great deal of change over the last two decades, and particularly in the last two years. United Way is seen as an organization with a broad mission of investing in a wide range of human services. United Way of King County has its own mission and its own set of priorities, and it operates locally under the umbrella of the worldwide organization based on the needs of the community. For many years workplace giving served as a significant source of revenue for the organization, and for a long time the focus was on big numbers in terms of people served, but not necessarily on depth. The impact the organization has had over the decades is something to be proud of and many individuals and agencies in King County have benefited. For at least the last 15 years or so the organization has utilized a racial equity lens in reporting demographics and in thinking about who is impacted by issues.

An evolution began several years ago, but particularly with the 2015 strategic plan, that recognized the model used by the organization to raise money was not as relevant as it used to be. People now find it easy to go online, find a non-profit and donate online. Companies are less interested in having a United Way representative come in to pitch payroll donations. As revenue sources changed, the organization recognized that it was not sustainable to continue to be a broad human services funder. Donors, including high-wealth and non-high-wealth individuals, companies and government funders, were asking to see specific results and wanting the organization to become more focused. The 2015 strategic plan focused in on three

areas: ending homelessness, addressing or breaking the cycle of poverty, and equal access to education. It was clear that those impacted by those challenges were disproportionately people of color, so the decision was made to focus the organization's investments, its influential voice, and its opportunity to leverage private and public dollars on those three areas. In addition to ensuring that communities of color and non-profits serving those communities were receiving funding, the organization focused on how those non-profits were serving communities of color in ways that reflect the experiences and languages of those served.

Between 2015 and 2017, United Way made some major funding changes. It no longer broadly supports programs that served older adults, domestic violence programs unless tied to a domestic violence shelter, and broad-based youth programs. The organization also reduced and then stopped making investments in homeless shelters. The funding changes were challenging to agencies who had long depended on the organization's support. By turning to funding homelessness, poverty and education, a high priority was put on By and For organizations. The large organizations that served many young people or older adults, and which provided general services for those in need, became less competitive for United Way funding.

Sara Levin said United Way's new strategic road map updates the 2015 plan and goes very deep into racial equity. The mission is to bring the community together to support neighbors and work toward racial justice by transforming inequitable systems. The strategies in the plan include investing in BIPOC organizations and focusing on deliberate system changes. The organization has tracked the percentages of funding given to BIPOC organizations. In 2017 about 17 percent of the funding went to BIPOC organizations; currently the percentage stands at 40. The goal is to get to 50 percent funding in two years.

During the COVID pandemic and even before, United Way of King County had the benefit of being a powerful intermediary with government. A home visiting program called ParentChild+ is a national model that brings home visitors of the same language and culture as the family with a two- or three-year-old into homes twice a week for more than two years, working with both the caregiver and the child to help them prepare for preschool and then kindergarten. There are 16 organizations, most of which are BIPOC or BIPOC-focused, and Seattle and King County have contributed significant levy funding to United Way with the goal of ensuring that BIPOC families are being served appropriately and that BIPOC organizations are being funded. Another program, Love & Liberation, is a county funded program with some 13 out-of-school time programs, all of which are fully culturally focused in terms of service delivery. United Way of King County also receives significant government funding for rent assistance and distributing culturally appropriate foods.

United Way of King County has focused on lessons learned through the process of changing its funding focus. One such lesson has been the need to be clear about why changes are made. Other lessons include giving lots of notice to existing grantees; being prepared for unhappy constituents; standing by the changes once they are made; shifting the focus back to the impact; identifying other forms of engagement; and celebrating the new engagement portfolio and focusing on racial injustice.

C. Planning for Upcoming Funding Process

Leslie Miller shared that the application portal for agencies opened on March 14, and on March 15 and 16 staff virtually provided a walk-through of the application and the process. During the months of April and May the Commission and staff will be preparing for the application review process and on centering equity. The application portal will close on April 28. The applications received will be reviewed May through July and the Commission will formulate draft recommendations. Following the August recess, the Commission will conduct

a public hearing to receive comments on the draft recommendations, then later in the fall the Commission will present its recommendations to the City Council.

Leslie Miller noted that in March the Commission agreed to form teams to review and discuss applications by focus area. The staff proposal was to form three teams: Commissioners Mercer and Ma; Chair Piper and Commissioners Phan and Singh; and Vice Chair Amirfaiz and Commissioner Mansfield.

With regard to funding sustainable agency operations, Leslie Miller noted that the Needs Update highlighted the fact that agencies are facing staffing challenges. Some agencies have been successful in raising salaries while others have been hindered by their funding levels. It can be expected that line-item costs in the applications will be higher. The cost of administration is also likely to be higher. Such costs include legitimate and necessary expenses in support of the goal of providing services, and there is a connection to equity. The recommendation of staff was to consider letting agencies know the Commission will welcome requests for awards that are up to 20 percent of administration costs.

Chair Piper asked if there is a benchmark tied to what area jurisdictions have done in terms of a percentage basis for administrative costs and suggested that 20 percent seems a bit high. Leslie Miller said the 20 percent level is generally recognized as the norm. It is a level that can ensure sustainable agency operations.

Speaking from a background of working in non-profits, Toni Esparza said the 20 percent figure is a familiar one. The advantages of determining ahead of time the level at which the city will fund administrative costs are giving agencies a heads up and avoiding allowing any unintentional biases enter into the conversation.

Leslie Miller added that small agencies face challenges in terms of funding their administrative costs, often because they do not ask for those funds specifically.

Vice Chair Amirfaiz commented that previous experience led to the conclusion that governments usually allowed up to ten percent for administrative costs. Agencies with multiple grants can allocate their administrative costs to their different grants. It is trickier for small organizations because they do not necessarily have multiple grants, thus it is necessary to give them more money. It makes sense to fund a percentage range, though 20 percent is too high.

Commissioner Phan voiced support for the 20 percent level. Agencies that have reserves or that are getting other grants likely will not ask for 20 percent of their administrative costs. Leslie Miller commented that reserves are generally there for emergency purposes. The issue with not funding administrative costs is that the long-term stability of agencies can be threatened if they are using reserves to fund administrative costs.

Vice Chair Amirfaiz commented that some agencies have reserves sufficient to cover six months or more of operating expenses.

Chair Piper asked if the intent was to let applicants know they should not hesitate to include administrative costs in their asks, or to have the Commission determine a percentage. Leslie Miller answered that for smaller agencies, having a determined percentage would in essence give them permission to ask for administrative costs without being worried that doing so will doom their ask. Toni Esparza agreed that was the intent of the staff. One option would be to just make sure agencies know they can ask for administrative costs. Much like other places where there are inequities in processes, those from historically marginalized groups are less likely to feel like they have the power to advocate for what they need. Small agencies can at

times be fearful or just be uninformed about their ability to do those things. The funding priorities adopted by the Commission in March included the challenge of agencies to cover their costs due to rising costs and the need to increase staff salaries in order to retain staff.

Commissioner Piper urged striking a balance in the language by giving a percentage range without being too specific or giving carte blanche to every organization to seek 20 percent.

Commissioner Singh proposed language giving up to 20 percent.

Commissioner Phan asked if the Commission is obligated to award funds for administrative costs simply on the strength of having been asked to do so. Leslie Miller said there can be negotiations with agencies in regard to how much the city will pay per service unit. An application is essentially a proposal for what an agency would like to do and a request for the funding needed. The Commission is free to determine what level of funding to provide and for what programs and services.

Christy Stangland said the reality is that funding applications are due at the end of the month. Many agencies have already filled out their applications or are well on their way to completing them. Putting the word out may not sway every agency, but it is important for the Commission to determine its comfort level in funding administrative costs.

Chair Piper proposed looking at each request on an agency-by-agency basis, adding that in principle a 20 percent cap is acceptable. The Commission should be free to determine what applicant agencies actually need.

There was consensus to accept Chair Piper's proposal.

The next topic of discussion was how funding priorities are implemented during the allocation process. Leslie Miller noted that the funding priority has shifted to previously funded programs instead of previously identified priorities in prior funding cycles.

Toni Esparza reiterated the fact that on March 1 the Commission adopted some funding priorities that were highlighted in the 2021-2022 Human Services Needs Update. The Commission highlighted Goal 5 as a whole as well as alternative forms of behavioral health services such as group coaching. The Commission underscored the need for more culturally and linguistically specific services.

Toni Esparza noted that historically the Commission has had three application review rounds. All Commissioners are tasked with reading all of the applications. The applications are divided up and assigned to individual teams which seek to become experts regarding their specific subset of applications. As part of the first round, the teams present an overview of their specific applications. The first-round review highlights any high-level concerns about funding certain applications. The second round sees the Commission putting rough numbers to the various applications. The request for dollars always exceeds the available dollars.

One approach that has been taken in the past has been that agencies applying for funding that historically have been funded, and where the Commission wants to fund them again, the temporary dollar amount listed is based on their previous funding level. Often that number is increased by the addition of a cost-of-living adjustment. While the numbers can be shifted, the approach creates a smaller and smaller pool of funds for any new agencies coming to the table. Toni Esparza said the suggestion of the staff was to not start the second round by referencing prior funding numbers, leaving all applicants at the table on a level playing field. The only exception would be for shelters which are considered critical infrastructure in the city.

Commissioner Phan noted support for the idea of having a level playing field. Commissioner Mansfield did as well and commented about being bothered by the approach taken during the last funding cycle given that it limits what can be offered to new agencies, programs or emerging needs. Commissioner Singh concurred as well.

Vice Chair Amirfaiz stressed the need to look at the capacity of the smaller organizations. The larger organizations also serve the ethnic communities. Each agency should be considered on an individual basis. At the end of the day what matters will be the resulting impacts. There should be a clear attempt to get at the demographics. For example, if an agency says they serve X number of Black people, they should be asked to clarify how many are African American and how many are African. Those who indicate they serve Caucasians should be asked to clarify how many are from Eastern Europe. Having that data will help to clarify the needs in the community and who is being served.

Toni Esparza pointed out that because the application already went out, and because it is a shared application among the funding cities, the demographic requests have already been issued. However, the staff can flush out some details and talk about the issue with the other cities.

There was consensus regarding the recommendation of staff to set a level playing field.

The final topic for discussion was ensuring that the priority areas identified in the Needs Update are funded. Leslie Miller explained that the shared funding process with the cities involves putting out a request for agencies to submit applications to fund services provided to the community. That does not necessarily mean that an application will meet the need, however. The recommendation of staff is that after the applications are reviewed, the Commission should take a moment to consider what, if anything, is missing. If the applications do not meet the needs identified in the Needs Update, some money should possibly be set aside for future RFPs. The Commission took that approach during the previous funding cycle with cultural navigation services.

There was consensus in favor of, once the review of applications is complete, asking what is missing and considering setting money aside for future RFPs to address the gaps.

8. OLD BUSINESS – None
9. NEW BUSINESS – None
10. CONTINUED ORAL COMMUNICATIONS – None
11. ADJOURNMENT

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

Chair Piper adjourned the meeting at 7:48 p.m.