

**CITY OF BELLEVUE  
PARKS & COMMUNITY SERVICES BOARD  
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES**

Tuesday  
May 10, 2022  
6:00 p.m.

*Via Zoom*

**BOARDMEMBERS PRESENT:** Chair Hamilton; Boardmembers Clark, Giampetro<sup>1</sup>, Kumar, Synn, Trescases<sup>2</sup>

**BOARDMEMBER ABSENT:**

**COUNCILMEMBER PRESENT:** Councilmember Stokes

**PARKS STAFF PRESENT:** Toni Esparza, Shelley McVein, Leslie Miller, Camron Parker, Mariam Sarwary, Michael Shiosaki, Christy Stangland

**OTHERS PRESENT:** Heidi Dean, Grant Keeney

**MINUTES TAKER:** Michelle Cash

1. **CALL TO ORDER/ROLL CALL:**

The meeting was called to order by Chair Hamilton at 6:02 p.m.

Chair Hamilton announced that there are a few procedural items that need to be addressed. As in-person meetings are prohibited by the Governor's emergency order concerning the Open Public Meetings Act, the Board will be holding its meetings remotely for an unknown period of time. The Board's Bylaws regarding remote participation and the order of business have been suspended until such time as the Board is no longer holding its meetings remotely.

2. **APPROVAL OF AGENDA:**

**Motion by Boardmember Synn and second by Boardmember Kumar to approve the meeting agenda as presented. Motion carried unanimously (5-0).**

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<sup>1</sup> Joined the meeting at 6:04 p.m.

<sup>2</sup> Joined the meeting at 6:27 p.m.

3. **APPROVAL OF MINUTES:**

**Motion by Boardmember Kumar and second by Boardmember Clark to approve the April 20, 2022 meeting minutes as presented. Motion carried unanimously (5-0).**

4. **WRITTEN/ORAL COMMUNICATIONS:**

Heidi Dean

Heidi Dean recently conducted an inventory of parking spaces within Bellevue parks to compare the allocated number of parking spaces to the number of parking spaces at Newport Hills Woodlawn Park. Heidi Dean will forward this information to Boardmembers.

Heidi Dean also asked Boardmembers to visit Newport Hills Woodlawn Park and look at the back part of the park where the gathering space is located. It is severely slopped with landscaping resulting in the community club not being able to use the space. The community will have no gathering space now, as promised. The community waited a decade or more for this space. Heidi Dean cited another property where an off-leash dog park can be located. The Newport Hills Woodlawn Park is now a regional dog park. The only other parks with this many parking spots include sports courts.

5. **COMMUNICATION FROM CITY COUNCIL:**

Councilmember Stokes provided the following report:

- Expressed appreciation for the staff presentation to Council last night.
- Council is in the process of interviews to fill the two vacancies on the Parks Board.
- Read a Commendation for Pamela Unger and Debra Kumar

Boardmembers expressed appreciation to Boardmembers Kumar and Unger.

6. **DIRECTOR'S REPORT:**

Michael Shiosaki provided some highlights from the recent Kelsey Creek Farm Sheep Shearing event. Thanks to Shelley Brittingham and her staff for spearheading this event.

7. **BOARD COMMUNICATIONS:**

Boardmember Clark attended the Kelsey Creek Farm Sheep Shearing event and commended planners for the convenient shuttle service. Boardmember Clark also thanked staff for the information about the Bellevue 2024 Open House.

Boardmember Giampetro observed a few celebrations in the Lake Hills neighborhood. The urban garden held an Easter Egg Hunt and then the Lake Hills Farmer's Stand had flowers on Mother's Day.

Boardmember Kumar spent time walking dogs at many of the parks throughout Bellevue.

Boardmember Trescases attended the Bellevue Downtown Association study tour in National Landing, Virginia. There are many similarities between Bellevue's tech boom and National Landing. Boardmember Trescases said that there are some interesting public/private partnerships in National Landing to create park spaces. Boardmember Trescases noted that in the public/private partnerships and when developers are building a private park space, the park component of the site gets pulled out of the permitting process and is run through the Parks Department. Therefore, the Parks Department consults on the park development, rather than the Planning Department. The other item of note is that Amazon is building dog parks and spaces that will be publicly accessible throughout National Landing. National Landing also considers the private/public partnership as part of their master planning for parks across the city (this is part of the downtown planning process). Boardmember Trescases expressed appreciation to Bellevue Downtown Association for coordinating this visit.

8. **CHAIR COMMUNICATION & DISCUSSION:**

Chair Hamilton enjoyed the Kelsey Creek Farm Sheep Shearing event.

9. **BOARDMEMBER/COMMITTEE/LIAISON REPORTS:**

No reports.

10. **DISCUSSION/ACTION ITEMS:**

A. **Human Services Needs Update**

Christy Stangland, Human Services Planner, provided an overview of the findings in the 2021-22 Human Services Needs Update. She was joined by Toni Esparza, Assistant Director; and Leslie Miller, Human Services Manager.

Christy Stangland explained that the city's role in Human Services is as a:

- Planner: Assess and anticipate the needs and develop appropriate program responses.
- Facilitator: Convene and engage others in the community in problem solving to develop and improve services.
- Funder: Disburse federal Community Development Block Grant and General Fund dollars to support a network of services which respond to community needs.

Christy Stangland clarified that the Human Services division does not provide direct services. The division funds existing qualified and quality non-profit service providers in the community to provide human services to Bellevue residents.

The role of the Human Services Commission is to advise the City Council on all matters concerning human services planning and funding. Christy Stangland said that some of the Commission's specific duties include:

- Reviewing all requests for funding of human services.
- Developing recommendations on priorities for the allocation of city resources to meet the identified needs.
- Pursuing regional cooperation in the planning, funding, and delivery of human services.
- Reviewing and commenting on city actions that may affect the availability of human services in the city.
- Conducting studies, such as the Needs Update, and making recommendations to the City Council in the area of human services.

Christy Stangland noted that Human Services staff from East King County suburban cities collaborate to identify and address the changing needs in the community as well as prioritize funding services across regional boundaries to maximize resources and services.

To ensure collaboration across the East King County human services commissions, Bellevue hosts joint commission meetings. Christy Stangland said that these meetings include training and sharing to align, when possible. For instance, the East King County Commissioners are attending an equity training that provides a tool to increase equity in funding. Christy Stangland added that the Human Services staff also works to ensure that the voice of East King County is included in considerations for regional planning, such as contributing data and input to the sub-regional plans being developed by King County Regional Homelessness Authority.

Christy Stangland said that Bellevue has been a leader in developing a Human Service Needs Assessment and has maintained a biennial report since 1989. In order to represent the human services needs for all Bellevue residents to those making decisions, both at the city and county level, it is critical to have accurate and comprehensive data that includes community voices from throughout the city.

Christy Stangland noted that the needs update shows the city's growth and increasing diversity of the population across both culture and means. Christy Stangland added that this highlights the need to bring in voices of diverse culture and diverse means into conversations and decisions. It is necessary to continue to reach out and cultivate these voices so that they can educate Bellevue about the needs they are experiencing and share what can be contributed to the community. As part of the city's ongoing efforts to continue growing as a culturally competent and racially equitable organization and city, racial disparities throughout the report have been highlighted, when possible.

In addition to guiding funding, the needs update helps staff and other groups to make decisions to ensure that Bellevue residents have the help they need to enjoy a high quality of life. Bellevue's Human Needs Update provides important data for the entire community—it is used by human services providers, community groups, and those involved in regional planning.

Christy Stangland noted that both quantitative and qualitative data is gathered in a variety of ways for this report. A statistically valid phone and online survey was conducted with nearly 400 Bellevue residents participating in the community survey. The data was then analyzed to provide a comprehensive report. There were also nearly 30 community conversations and key informant interviews as well as a survey with providers and consumers of human services—inclusion of marginalized voices was prioritized.

Christy Stangland said that there were some common themes that emerged through all areas of need as data was collected. The following is a list of some of the new and emerging themes:

#### Impacts of COVID-19

- The pandemic has highlighted that health, social, and economic equity is still not a reality; COVID-19 has disproportionately impacted communities of color, putting them more at risk of getting sick and dying from COVID-19.
- Pre-pandemic safety nets were eliminated, which means post-pandemic that the slightest unexpected expense could plunge a household into homelessness, meaning vulnerable households will be living in an unstable situation for quite some time.
- COVID-19 guidelines led to social isolation for many individuals in our community, especially older adults and people with disabilities.
- Human service providers face capacity challenges, even without a global pandemic. However, COVID-19 has caused not only a tremendous increase in service need, but it has also required significant adjustments to how services are delivered. Both of these have stretched organizations' already-limited resources. In addition, agencies are reporting an increase in costs and a decrease in revenue.

#### Affordable Housing

- Lack of affordable housing is a significant concern. When these individuals can't afford to live in Bellevue, social systems start to strain or crumble.
- Affordable housing is the top community problem in the survey and most prominent theme during community conversation.
- The need for affordable housing has been well documented and is covered in great detail in the city's Affordable Housing Strategy report, which the council adopted in June of 2017.
- As the city invests in its Affordable Housing Action Plan, human service funding amplifies those investments by providing services that both prevent people from entering homelessness and also provide services that help individuals maintain their housing stability, such as rent assistance, behavioral health, case management and basic needs.

### Living Wage

- A living wage is directly connected to the ability to keep up with the increasing housing costs.
- Concerns about the cost of living in Bellevue was also a prominent theme across all Community Conversations.
- Many providers stated that they are experiencing a staffing shortage due to their inability to pay a competitive wage. They reported that with the cost of living so high in East King County, it has added an extra challenge in maintaining staff since many cannot afford to live within a reasonable distance of their work.
- Another barrier for families with children is affordable, quality childcare, which is critical so that families can work and provide for their families. Many families struggled to find accessible, affordable childcare during the pandemic.

### Homelessness

- The need for low-barrier emergency shelter beds for all populations continues to grow in East King County.
- East King County has low-barrier shelters that provide services for each of the populations: single men, single women, families with children, and youth and young adults. The shelters are often either close to capacity or over capacity. When a shelter is over capacity, they provide local resources as well as refer individuals to shelter in either Seattle or South King County, forcing Bellevue residents to leave their city of residence in order to access resources.
- Preventing households from losing their housing is an important strategy for ending homelessness.
- Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, Washington State enacted an eviction moratorium that ended on October 31, 2021. Several housing stability programs are operating, including funding offered by City of Bellevue, such as CDBG-CV funding and ARPA funding. However, most experts still predict a “tsunami” of evictions.

### Behavioral Health and Substance Use Disorder

- Behavioral health needs in the community outweigh the capacity of providers and providers are reporting waiting lists for services ranging from three to six months.
- There is also a significant increase in need for behavioral health services for children and youth, including higher rates of youth suicidal ideation and attempt. The pandemic further intensified the strains on young people’s mental health and well-being, as well as on the youth mental health system.
- In community conversations, one provider stated “We have seen an increased need for counseling, especially for BIPOC counselors and substance use disorder counseling. We have lost a couple of people to suicide in the last few months due to mental health, so this needs to be addressed.”

### Domestic Violence

- Survivors of domestic violence are faced with barriers to housing and legal services. The high cost of housing in Bellevue creates a serious challenge for survivors who want to remain in the community to maintain their jobs and support systems.
- The rise in domestic violence was reported by several providers stating that people have been isolated due to COVID-19, which has led to increased stress for many households. This stress has resulted in more clients reporting domestic violence to the providers. However, domestic violence incidents are often under reported to police. Numbers reported to Bellevue Police remain similar to 2020 and previous years.

#### Culturally and Linguistically Responsive Services

- Despite the individual and collective efforts of our region's human service providers, there remain substantial challenges to ensure all members of Bellevue's diverse and growing community have the resources they need to thrive.
- The need for more culturally and linguistically responsive human services continues to grow as East King County becomes more diverse.
  - In addition to providing translated information, there is a need for more diverse staff that is not only bilingual but also culturally competent.
  - Many providers discussed the need for behavioral health services to be offered in the individual's primary language and by someone that understands the culture, since there is often a stigma in accessing services.

#### Racial and Ethnic Discrimination

- Racial and ethnic discrimination is a rising concern in the community.
- Both racial or ethnic discrimination and other types of discrimination is a community issue discussed in the majority of community conversations; it was also brought up by several providers in the provider's survey.
- The number of hate crimes and bias incidents, which include but is not limited to race and ethnicity hate crimes and bias incidents, have also increased both in the reports gathered by Bellevue Police Department and through reports gathered by King County Coalition Against Hate and Bias (KCCAHB), a community-led initiative is progressing to address hate and bias incidents by strengthening and networking communities who experience racist and bigoted treatment and all forms of oppression.
- Prior to the grant review process, the Human Services Commissioners are participating in a training to further develop their equity analysis skills and to aid them in applying that analysis to their funding processes, decisions, and relationships with human service organizations. This is the third funding cycle that the Commission has participated in this type of training.

### Access to Transportation Options

- Although transportation is not by definition a human service, it has shown up consistently as the biggest barrier to accessing human services, maintaining employment, and allowing people to remain involved in the community, avoiding isolation.
- The populations most significantly affected are older adults who can no longer drive, low income people who work odd shifts or can't afford public transportation, people with disabilities who don't qualify for an Access van but do have trouble taking the bus, and youth who need to get to jobs or services.

Christy Stangland said that the Human Services Commission will continue to discuss the implications of the report and the services that are critical to fund for the community. The data from this report, the knowledge gained through the panels during commission meetings ranging in topics from immigrants and refugees, school aged youth, older adults, the LGBTQIA+ community, transportation, and Addressing Hate and Bias incidents, and the equity training will be used throughout the human services funding process as they determine funding recommendations.

Christy Stangland noted that for the 2023-2024 biennial funding cycle, the Human Services Commission has received over 130 applications requesting over \$10 million for the estimated \$5.5 million in available funding. Human Services Commissioners are beginning to read the applications and will spend the spring and summer thoughtfully considering each application. The Commission will then bring their recommendations for funding to the Council in fall 2023.

### **Discussion:**

- How is "homeless student" defined? *Response: The McKinney Vento definition for homeless students is utilized.*
- Are there opportunities to partner with the school district? *Response: Staff works with the school district. There are also family support centers in the schools that will reach out to the city with questions or for assistance.*
- Regarding shelter capacity, what is the capacity of the men's shelter? *Response: Approximately 100. The shelter is either at capacity or over capacity on a regular basis. The youth and young adult centers also tend to be at or over capacity. In addition, the family shelter has a partnership with a motel so vouchers are often provided for them.*
- With linguistic barriers, what groups are not being served? *Response: There are so many languages spoken throughout the community. There is a need for additional linguistic services but don't have statistics at hand.*
- Where do parks and human services intersect? What should the parks board focus on and address for human services? *Response: Staff will collaborate with others to determine appropriate response.*



B. Parks Long-Term Funding Strategy

Camron Parker provided an overview of the proposed Parks long-term funding strategy letter that was included in the Board Packet. The following comments were made regarding the opening paragraphs of the letter:

- Add a note that voter initiatives, including levies and bonds, have been a necessary tool the community has used to develop the parks system. However, any levy funds should not impact the general fund allocation.
- Need to clarify the “why” for the community.
- Need to make things happen faster—what’s best for the city? How can we accomplish our goals? How big should the bond or levy be?
- Change the term “quick win” to “tangible and immediate return on investment.”
- Include reference to the “String of Pearls” to stress the importance of connectivity.

The following comments were made regarding the focus areas within the letter:

- Urban Parks System:
  - Move this focus area up in the list provided to Council.
  - Should the Meydenbauer Bay Park be included under Urban Parks System? *Response: This project is included under Water Access.*
  - Should the Spring District be specified in the Urban Parks System area of focus? *Response: The Spring District is a sub-neighborhood of BelRed.*
  - Should impact fees be considered? *Response: These fees may be considered; however, these are most likely not part of the voter initiative.*
  - Have enhanced investments been created for new parks in BelRed? *Response: There is a level of investment that has been designated for BelRed. The idea is to layer different types of funding. Alternate verbiage was suggested: “invest in the creation of new parks serving BelRed.”*
  - The descriptive paragraph should stress the importance to keep up with the growing population.
- Park Facilities:
  - Can we use a different term other than “facility?” *Response: This term correlates with the Parks & Open Space Systems Plan so changing the term may be confusing.*
- Active Recreation:
  - The way this section reads it sounds like things can only happen within existing parks (i.e., off leash dog parks or pickleball). Is this a correct assumption? *Response: can strike “within parks” and change to “improvements that increase public use and programming.”*

- When the aquatic center is developed will it generate revenue? *Response: It will generate revenue but will likely not generate more revenue than it costs to operate.*
- Should a separate bullet be provided for dog parks? After a brief discussion Boardmembers concurred to keep items related to dog parks as-is.
- Water Access:
  - Is this section necessary? *Response: Waterfront access is a high priority, which is why it's on the list.*
  - Should east Bellevue water access be called out, not just downtown?
  - Should the Grand Connection be mentioned here? Eastrail too?  
*Response: Within the Urban Park Systems section a note will be added about the Grand Connection, and the Wilburton area (Eastrail).*
  - Need to add a bullet about increasing walkable access to park facilities and trails.

Boardmember Trescases asked that the letter stress the importance of historic preservation for current resources. Camron Parker will add this information to the Park Facilities section of the letter.

Chair Hamilton asked if partnerships are called out in the letter. Camron Parker clarified that partnerships are sprinkled throughout the letter. However, there isn't a specific section or grouping for partnerships.

**Motion by Boardmember Synn and second by Boardmember Clark to extend the meeting until 8:35 p.m. Motion carried unanimously (6-0).**

There was a brief discussion about the Council priorities.

**Motion by Boardmember Clark and second by Boardmember Synn to extend the meeting until 8:45 p.m. Motion carried unanimously (6-0).**

**Motion by Boardmember Trescases and second by Boardmember Synn to approve the Parks Long-term Funding Strategy Letter to City Council, substantially in the form presented; and authorize the Board Chair and Vice-Chair to finalize any additional edits with staff. Motion carried unanimously (6-0).**

11. **NEW BUSINESS:**

None.

12. **PROPOSED AGENDA FOR NEXT MEETING:**

The following agenda items were proposed for a future Board meeting:

- 2023-2024 budget discussion
- Potential new board member additions
- Board elections

13. **OTHER COMMUNICATIONS:**

- A. Parks CIP Project Status Report
- B. E-mail re increased pool hours 4-22-2022
- C. Thank you note to Ranger Curtis from preschool

14. **ADJOURNMENT:**

At 8:39, Chair Hamilton declared the meeting adjourned.