

CITY OF BELLEVUE
HUMAN SERVICES COMMISSION
MINUTES

September 8, 2022
6:00 p.m.

Bellevue City Hall
Room 1E-113

COMMISSIONERS PRESENT: Chair Piper, Vice Chair Amirfaiz, Commissioners Ma, Mansfield, Singh

COMMISSIONERS ABSENT: None

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

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 with the exception of Commissioner Singh, who arrived at 6:50 p.m.

3. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

A. July 19, 2022

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

B. July 26, 2022

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

4. ORAL AND WRITTEN COMMUNICATIONS

Chair Piper noted the receipt of written communications from the Washington Poison Center and Solid Ground.

Alex Tsimerman, a Bellevue resident for 35 years, noted that Bellevue has 150,000 residents who cannot complain about what the local government does. What the people have to say is very important. He noted having fought against fascism for a lifetime. The Commission should accept the complaint and make a decision about it.

5. COMMUNICATIONS FROM CITY COUNCIL, COMMUNITY COUNCIL, BOARDS AND COMMISSIONS – None
6. STAFF AND COMMISSIONER REPORTS

Human Services Manager Leslie Miller briefly reviewed the Commission's calendar of agenda items and meeting dates.

7. PUBLIC HEARING

Leslie Miller noted the Commission had received an unprecedented 136 applications requesting twice the amount of funding available for allocation. The steps taken to reach the Commission's preliminary funding recommendations were outlined. Given that during the process the Council approved an ongoing housing stability program, so a number of applications were redirected to that RFP.

Chair Piper opened the public hearing.

King County Sexual Assault Resource Center survivor shared having been sexually assaulted by a high school teacher when 16 and 17 years old. That resulted in being in a very bad place for several years and struggles with self-blame and shame. After finally contacting the King County Sexual Assault Resource Center (KCSARC) 24-hour resource hotline, there was suddenly a network of people and help available. A legal advocate helped navigate the intimidating and complex legal system, answered endless questions, and walked through the civil suit options and preparations. The ultimate result was that the teacher surrendered his teaching license. KCSARC also brought in therapists who helped on the road to healing. KCSARC survivor reported now having become an advocate to help other survivors. The organization served over 5000 members of the community in 2021, half of whom are children and youth. KCSARC is alone in offering a 24-hour helpline and legal advocacy. All of their services are also provided in Spanish.

Cassandra Sage with Influence the Choice, a non-profit organization in Issaquah devoted to supporting the mental health of youth to prevent youth substance misuse. The Commission was thanked for recommending funding for the organization. In addition to promoting youth mental health, the program builds leadership skills for kids grades 6 through 12 in a way that builds resiliency and helps to manage life stressors.

Kristina Brown with Kinderling thanked the Commission for its ongoing support. Kinderling has served children with disabilities on the Eastside for 60 years. The child care and preschool consultation program helps providers care for children with developmental delays and behavioral challenges. The program also helps families that have children in child care connect with pediatric therapies and supports. The Commission was urged to restore funding for the program to the 2022 level given that the demand is high and the service is needed. The program for children who are homeless uses outreach to find children in need of services. It provides therapy, mental health and parent coaching, and connects families to resources. Funding for the program should also be increased to the 2022 level to support having trained staff with the capacity needed to serve the families. The Commission's first-time funding for the Parent-Child+ program is appreciated. The multiyear school-readiness program in English and Spanish for young children and their caregivers is focused on low-income immigrant and refugee families, 60 percent of whom are Bellevue residents.

Cathy Murahashi, education and outreach manager for Community Homes, noted that the organization provides, promotes and sustains exceptional community based housing for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities. The organization operates three

homes in Bellevue. The Commission was thanked for recommending funding for the housing readiness workshops, which are always well-received and appreciated.

Catherine Garrett, public programs manager for KidsQuest Museum. The museum is located in Downtown Bellevue and welcomes children zero to ten years old and their caregivers. The museum offers learning through play with an emphasis on whole family engagement. Play is critical to the health social, emotional and cognitive development of children. KidsQuest is committed to ensuring every child can experience the value and joy of learning through play. The museum's sensory hours are designed for children and adults who have sensory processing disorders and are offered on the third Thursday of every month from 3:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m. There is no charge. The staff receive annual specialized training for working with kids with sensory sensitivities. The museum partners with local organizations to provide resources for families, answers to questions, and onsite autism screening. Children with special needs need opportunities to learn through play in a supportive environment. The museum is an active member of Eastside Pathways and has the shared goal of using the collective impact framework to create educational equity and other opportunities for children in the community, of which sensory accessibility is one part. To date in 2022, the museum has gifted over \$10,000 in memberships and is currently working on projects to extend opportunities to additional underserved communities.

Debbi Halela, director of behavioral health services for Youth Eastside Services, noted the organization serves youth from birth to 22. Services are offered both at the agency site and onsite at schools in the Bellevue School District and Lake Washington School District. Combined with unprecedented high demand and significant staff attrition, the agency faced numerous challenges in 2021. The result was the need to put a pause on accepting new referrals while waiting to fill the open counselor positions, which was completed in early August, allowing for accepting new referrals. The school year has begun and the agency is equipped with the staff it needs to respond to the behavioral health needs in the community and in the schools. The Commission was thanked for its ongoing support for the behavioral health programs.

Jackie Bui, director of community based services for Youth Eastside Services, thanked the Commission for recommending funding. The Latino Heat program engages Hispanic youth and unaccompanied at-risk minors to keep them from dropping out of school through youth development and empowerment opportunities. The program creates a space where youth have a sense of belonging and healing. The Success program matches mentees with mentors to develop positive relationships. The community outreach counseling program provides social services and outreach counseling for youth along with case management at the Bellevue Boys & Girls Club. Youth Eastside Services is grateful for the support offered by the Commission.

Liliana Medina with Equity in Communication thanked the Commission for recommending funding for the project, which brings information weekly to both the Bellevue and Lake Washington school districts in culturally relevant ways. Sometimes mere translation is not enough; families need context for the information. It makes a big difference when parents understand how to navigate the system.

Nicole Lowe with the YMCA of Greater Seattle stated that early intervention for youth and young adults is critical to preventing inequities related to social determinants of health, and to allowing all kids, families and seniors to have equitable opportunities to improve their health and wellbeing, and to reach their full potential. The belief fuels the community-informed approach to a whole-person health framework to investigate, co-design and produce solutions that build individual and community resiliency and create safe, connected, peaceful and confident people. The Commission recommended funding for two programs, starting with the

Bellevue food truck program which has allowed the agency to support families in a unique way in partnership with the Bellevue School District and Washington businesses by providing families with food access and diverse meals. The program has been well received. The second program is the food program which has allowed the YMCA to break down barriers for youth and families gaining access to enrichment, fun and positive adult role models after the school day. The program is offered free of charge to any residents of the community that supports the program in partnership with Imagine Housing. The recommended funding for the two programs is appreciated.

Zanny Shehata spoke on behalf of Teen Link and Crisis Connections, a peer-to-peer emotional support hotline for teenagers in Washington state. Over years Bellevue's support has had a positive impact on the Teen Link program by playing a crucial role in the recruitment, training and retention of volunteers. More than 20 percent of the volunteers are Bellevue residents. The volunteers are at the heart of the program and every night when the phone lines open teenagers and staff come together to answer calls, chats and texts from youths who need help. The teen volunteers put their time and emotional energy into supporting their peers through issues such as bullying, self-harm, substance abuse and suicidal ideation. They offer accepting and listening ears to each caller because they know what it is like to be a teenager. The program is especially important given that suicide is the second leading cause of death in adolescents. The Commission was thanked for its continued support.

Dietra Clayton with Sophia Way thanked the Commission for its continued support, which is needed to help women find a home. Sophia Way offers two shelters, one for 21 women in Bellevue and one in Kirkland. The women who come to the shelters are often in survival mode and at the shelters they find a warm, safe place to take showers, sleep and access resources. Case managers focus on the overall health of the women and partner with the women to get them what they need in order to reach stability. Since 2008 the program has housed more than 5000 unhoused women. Typically between 80 and 110 women are helped per day. Since early 2020 Sophia Way has seen increased expenses related to the pandemic. There are now two 24/7 locations in operation, both of which are desperately needed. The data speaks volumes about the need. The Point in Time count identified 13,000 persons who were experiencing homelessness, only 57 percent of which were in shelters. At Sophia Way, 30 percent of the women served are over the age of 55, and that is increasing due to medical expenses, rents, cost of prescriptions and Social Security being capped at under a thousand dollars. Forty-eight percent of the women served are women of color; 46 percent identify as having some sort of disability; and 70 percent report domestic violence as a contributing factor to their homelessness. Astoundingly, 92 percent of those served make less than \$40,000 annually.

Holly Newman Dzyban, grants director for Big Brothers and Sisters of Puget Sound, noted also serving in the capacity of a volunteer mentor. The mentor program builds relationships that help young people decide where they want to go in life and how to get there. A partnership with Bellevue public schools began five years ago and marked the agency's official working in Bellevue, even though work had been going in Bellevue for some time via working with kids. The Commission was thanked for recognizing the work being done in the community by the organization and for recommending funding.

Dale Hoover with Sound Generations spoke on behalf of the meals on wheels program which has operated in Bellevue since 1967. The program provides meals for seniors, 81 percent of which were recommended by a medical facility. To date in 2022, the program has delivered more than 17,000 meals that are culturally appropriate. Bellevue's continued funding allows the program to continue operating. The agency also operates the volunteer transportation program that uses volunteers to take people to medical appointments. Transportation can be inordinately scary for seniors and the volunteer transportation program steps in to offer safe

rides. Through August 2022, a total of 807 trips were given. The Commission was thanked for its continued funding.

Jennifer Fischer, executive director of Bellevue LifeSpring, recognized the work done by the Commission on behalf of the city. Bellevue LifeSpring supports 4000 low-income students in the Bellevue community with emergency rent assistance to prevent homelessness, and with food to make sure they do not experience hunger. The Commission staff was also thanked for their work with and support for all the providers in the community.

Jonathan Prociv with Volunteer Services of Catholic Community Services of Western Washington, noted that the program connects volunteers in the area with older disabled adults that need chores done. Since coming out of Covid, there has been a spike in the number of persons requesting services. The volunteer base has not, however, increased that much. The hope is that the program will be able to expand its hours to get the requests of Bellevue citizens met. The support of the Commission is appreciated.

Rosalba Parra, a single mom with four children, reported being both thankful and fortunate to live in Bellevue. Over the years many organizations have provided help in one way or another. The Commission was thanked for helping the organizations that are helping the vulnerable families who live in the community. The Commission was thanked for always thinking about those in need in the community, and for allowing the community to share their stories.

Chair Piper closed the public hearing.

8. INFORMATION FOR THE COMMISSION – None

9. OLD BUSINESS – None

10. NEW BUSINESS

A. Commissioner Requests to Participate Remotely in Future Meetings

Commissioner Ma asked to be allowed to participate remotely for the September 20 meeting.

Chair Piper indicated not being able to attend the October 4 meeting.

11. CONTINUED ORAL COMMUNICATION

Dan Fey, director of the Center for Career Connections at Bellevue College, thanked the Commission for supporting the program that provides job training, job placements and resume assistance. It is the support of the city that allows the team to serve all the residents of Bellevue, not just those who have registered as students at the college.

12. ADJOURNMENT

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

Chair Piper adjourned the meeting at 7:05 p.m.