

CITY OF BELLEVUE
HUMAN SERVICES COMMISSION
MINUTES

September 1, 2020
6:00 p.m.

Bellevue City Hall
City Council Conference Room 1E-113

COMMISSIONERS PRESENT: Chairperson Ma, Commissioners Jain, Mansfield, Mercer, Piper

COMMISSIONERS ABSENT: Commissioner Amirfaiz, Kline

STAFF PRESENT: Alex O'Reilly, Dee Dee Catalano, Christy Stangland, Toni Esparza, Department of Parks and Community Services; Deputy Mayor Nieuwenhuis

GUEST SPEAKERS: None

RECORDING SECRETARY: Gerry Lindsay

1. CALL TO ORDER

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

2. ROLL CALL

Upon the call of the roll, all Commissioners were present with the exception of Commissioners Amirfaiz and Kline, both of whom were excused.

Chair Ma stated that because in-person meetings are prohibited by the Governor's emergency order, the Commission will be holding its meetings remotely for an unknown period of time. As a result, certain provisions in the Commission's bylaws needed to be suspended temporarily, including the provision concerning the ability of Commissioners to participate remotely, and the provision concerning the Commission's process for accepting communication from the public. In order to allow the Commission maximum flexibility to structure its agendas during the time period meetings are held remotely, the provisions in the bylaws related to the order of business also needed to be temporarily suspended.

According to the Commission's bylaws, if a procedure such as rule suspension is not addressed by the bylaws, the Commission may rely on the City Council Rules of Procedure, Resolution 8928. Section 13 of Resolution 8928 allows a City Council procedural rule to be temporarily suspended.

A motion to suspend, until such time as the Human Services Commission is no longer holding its meetings remotely, the provisions of Article V, Section G of the Commission's bylaws concerning remote participation by commissioners, in order to allow all Commissioners to participate fully in this meeting, was made by Commissioner Piper. Absent any objections, Chair Ma declared the motion adopted and the provisions in the bylaws to be suspended.

A motion to suspend for the September 1, 2020, meeting only the provisions in Article VI and Article VII of the Commission's Bylaws concerning oral communications from the public and to allow for public comment to be provided in writing and read during the Human Services Commission meeting, was made by Commissioner Piper. Absent any objections, Chair Ma

declared the motion adopted and the provisions in the bylaws to be suspended.

A motion to suspend until such time as the Human Services Commission is no longer holding its meetings remotely the “Order of Business” provisions in Article VI, Section D of the Commission’s bylaws was made by Commissioner Piper. Absent any objections, Chair Ma declared the motion adopted and the provisions in the bylaws to be suspended.

3. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

A. August 18, 2020

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

4. ORAL AND WRITTEN COMMUNICATIONS

Grant Coordinator Dee Dee Catalano said one written communication had been received from David Bowling, Executive Director of Congregations for the Homeless. The letter pointed out that in the last couple of months more men were living on the streets and in the woods, and stated those men need shelter and services. Each day about 110 men are seen at the emergency shelter day center who are seeking safe place to be and to receive meals, do their laundry, take showers and use the bathrooms. They also receive case management services while there. The shelter’s services now include the provision of facemasks and periodic Covid-19 testing in cooperation with King County Public Health. Between the Lincoln Center emergency shelter, the hotel rooms serving the most vulnerable, and the rotating shelter, safe places are being provided for over 150 men each night. An additional 90 men remain in homes through current housing options. The organization provides the full continuum of services and moves men from street to homes. Bellevue has invested significantly in the 24/7 year-round enhanced shelter, but the city should consider supporting all of the agency’s programs, including outreach, emergency low-barrier shelter, the rotating medium-barrier shelter, mental health and addiction support, housing navigation and permanent housing. Without the full continuum of services, the men will be left with very few options to live to their full potential and to achieve stability within the community. During 2019 Congregations for the Homeless served 1700 unduplicated men in need. Of those, 51 percent identified as men of color, with 30 percent being black men. The highest percentage of black men are served through the organization’s housing navigation program and they quickly obtain stable housing. Those numbers will be surpassed in 2020 due to the organization’s ability to keep the doors open to the emergency shelter year round and through the pandemic.

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

6. STAFF AND COMMISSIONER REPORTS

Ms. Catalano informed the Commission that staff were working to schedule an additional meeting on September 22 in the event an additional meeting is needed.

7. INFORMATION FOR THE COMMISSION

A. Discussion of 2020-2021 Human Services General Fund Applications – Round 2, Goal 1

6. Catholic Community Services of King County – New Bethlehem Place

Commissioner Piper noted the requested amount was substantially increased over the previous funding allocation. He recommended keeping the funding flat. Commissioners Mercer, Jain and Mansfield agreed. Chair Ma argued for a COLA increase given that it is the only family shelter in the region.

Commissioner Mercer said by keeping the funding flat, more funds will be freed up for other things to cover the gaps in homelessness. Chair Ma said the intent behind keeping funding mostly flat was to free up funds for the applications in Goal 1, of which New Bethlehem Place is one.

Ms. O'Reilly pointed out that the increase in the funding level for 2021 over 2020 was about \$120,000. While that is a reasonably good increase, the increase in needs is much greater. She reminded the Commissioners about the column for other funding sources where additional amounts can be earmarked. Assistant Director of the Department of Parks and Community Services Toni Esparza added that the Commission previously had recognized a significant gap between the amounts requested from the shelters and their previous funding levels. The idea was proposed to hold most funded agencies flat and moving over any COLA amounts to help address the gap, though it will not cover it completely.

Chair Ma stressed the need to focus on the applications in Goal 1. That is where there is a huge gap and where there will continue to be a gap in the coming years. The homeless shelters and their programs and infrastructure need to be funded and ready to address the need. He reiterated his call for a COLA increase for the application. Commissioners Piper, Mercer, Mansfield and Jain said they were convinced by the argument.

There was agreement to fund the application with a COLA increase and to mark the application for additional consideration.

8. Congregations for the Homeless - 24/7 Enhanced Shelter Program.

Commissioner Mercer proposed a COLA increase for the application on the understanding that funds have been clawed back from other sources that will at some point need to be dispersed. Commissioner Piper concurred, as did Commissioner Jain. Commissioner Mansfield agreed as well and commented that other shelter areas will also need funding.

Chair Ma clarified that the Council had elected to allocate \$332,000 to the program along with the day center outside of the human services budget. Ms. Catalano noted that the Commission in the previous funding cycle allocated \$200,359 from the general fund. Chair Ma suggested that if a COLA increase is awarded, it should be based on the previous allocation not including the extra funds awarded by the Council.

There was agreement to give a COLA increase based on the previously funded amount from the general fund and to mark the application for additional consideration.

13. Congregations for the Homeless - Rotating Shelter

Commissioner Piper said the 28 percent increase in the ask over the previous allocation is meant to cover payroll expenses according to the application. He recommended a COLA increase only.

There was agreement to give the application a COLA increase and to mark the application for additional consideration.

16. Friends of Youth - Drop-In Services for Homeless Youth and Young Adults

Chair Ma said the program focuses on homeless youth. He said there is a clear need and he recommended a COLA funding increase.

There was agreement to give a COLA increase and to mark the application for additional consideration.

18. Friends of Youth - Youth and Young Adult Shelter

Chair Ma noted that the increase in the ask was about 189 percent. He said the program is important and that he wanted to see it funded at an increased level. He proposed a COLA increase and to consider additional funding once it is known how much more money there will be to allocate.

Commissioner Mansfield said he was willing to give more than a COLA increase but agreed to just a COLA initially and to look for additional funding sources.

Commissioner Mercer agreed the application is important and that it should be given more, but she also agreed to initially give just a COLA increase.

There was agreement to allocate a COLA increase and to mark the application for additional consideration.

21. Hopelink – Housing: Shelter only

Chair Ma noted the ask represented a slight decrease from the previous funding level and he proposed full funding.

Ms. Stangland explained that staff took Hopelink's application for all housing programs and split it between their shelter and other housing programs. The numbers were verified with Hopelink.

There was agreement to fully fund the application.

34. The Sophia Way - Helen's Place: Day Center & Emergency Shelter

Commissioner Jain said the combined emergency shelter offers 24/7/365 services to women. There has been an increase in the number of clients. The ask represents a very large increase over what was previously funded. She proposed funding at the \$100,000 level, a 20 percent increase.

Commissioner Mercer said she would prefer to treat the program the same as the other shelter programs by giving it a COLA increase and marking it for additional consideration. The other Commissioners concurred, as did Chair Ma.

There was consensus to give the application a COLA increase and to mark the application for additional consideration.

35. The Sophia Way - Sophia's Place Extended-Stay Shelter and Resource Center

Commissioner Jain proposed a COLA increase with an asterisk. She said the program is very important.

There was agreement to give the application a COLA increase and to mark the application for additional consideration.

25. LifeWire - Emergency Shelter (MSH)

Commissioner Jain said the important program partners with various organizations and is operated by staff who speak 11 languages. The ask is quite large. She proposed a COLA increase with an asterisk. Commissioners Mercer, Mansfield and Piper agreed.

Chair Ma agreed as well and stressed the need to give the application additional consideration later in the process with an eye on possibly giving more than a COLA increase.

There was agreement to give the application a COLA increase and to mark the application for additional consideration.

9. Congregations for the Homeless – Housing

Commissioner Piper said the ask represented only a modest increase. The number of residents served has remained steady and for the sake of consistency he recommended a COLA increase.

There was agreement to give the application a COLA increase.

10. Congregations for the Homeless - Housing Navigation

11. Congregations for the Homeless - On and Up Housing

Commissioner Mercer said the Housing Navigation program is new. She pointed out that the city already invests a lot of money in programs offered by the agency and she recommended funding the program ask at half the requested amount and flagging it for additional consideration.

Commissioner Piper said his recommendation was to pass on funding the Housing Navigation application and prioritizing the agency's On and Up Housing program with the funds instead. He said the program covers men who are in a critical transitional phase of homelessness. The projected number of residents served for 2021 anticipates an increase. Much of any funding for the Housing Navigation would be tied up in costs according to the application. He proposed funding the On and Up application at the \$50,000 level.

Commissioner Mercer said she held the opposite view. She said it felt to her as though On and Up Housing is targeted to a smaller subset whereas the Housing Navigation program could potentially fit a broader set of folks. Commissioner Jain agreed with Commissioner Mercer. Commissioner Mansfield agreed that the Housing Navigation program would touch more people and said he would fund the program while passing on the On and Up program.

Chair Ma argued that both programs are important and said he would prefer to see both funded. He said if he had to choose, however, he would fund the Housing Navigation program over On and Up.

Commissioner Piper said he could be persuaded to agree with the recommendation of Commissioner Mercer, and he agreed that the right approach would be to fund one program or the other but not both.

There was consensus to fund Housing Navigation at half the requested amount, and to not fund On and Up.

12. Congregations for the Homeless – Outreach

Commissioner Piper said the ask represents an increase of 166 percent, primarily to cover staffing and payroll costs. He recommended a COLA increase.

There was agreement to give the application a COLA increase.

17. Friends of Youth – TLP Housing for Homeless Young Adults and Young Families

Chair Ma argued in favor of funding the program with a COLA increase. Commissioners Mansfield and Jain agreed. Commissioner Mercer agreed as well but said she would include an asterisk with the application given that federal dollars for transitional living programs have been removed and thus the programs need funding from other sources. The program serves a youth age group for which it is difficult to find appropriate housing. Commissioner Piper agreed a COLA increase would be appropriate.

Human Services Planner Christy Stangland said staff had forwarded to the Commissioners email from Friends of Youth in which it was noted Friends of Youth reduced its ask for the transitional housing units to not include the units in Redmond at Avondale Park. Hopelink's contract with Friends of Youth states Hopelink will apply for funding from the suburban cities for all Avondale Park units and will pay Friends of Youth their portion for the units which they provide services. The funding for those Redmond units are not included in the request.

There was agreement to give the application a COLA increase and to mark the application for additional consideration.

21. Hopelink – Housing: Not including Emergency Shelter

Chair Ma noted the requested amount was less than what was awarded during the previous cycle. He proposed funding the application at the full ask.

There was agreement to fully fund the application.

23. Imagine Housing – Imagine Housing Supportive Services

Chair Ma said the agency does a good job in terms of affordable housing and giving support to clients. He recommended a COLA increase. The other Commissioners concurred. Due to his association with the agency, Commissioner Piper recused himself from discussing the application.

There was agreement to give the application a COLA increase.

28. MAPS – MCRC – Housing For Single Women

Commissioner Jain said the program offers transitional housing for single women. There are 15 available beds in Bellevue and they are looking to add more. The program targets women of the Islamic faith. She said the program has not previously sought funding from the city and she recommended passing on the application.

Chair Ma said the program is good but he agreed that due to the lack of funds it should not be funded.

There was agreement not to fund the application.

1. Attain Housing – 2021-22 Stable Home Program

Commissioner Piper recused himself from participating in the discussion of the application.

Commissioner Mercer said the program is good and has been previously funded by the Commission, though not in the last cycle. She recommended funding the application at half the ask.

Commissioner Mansfield said the program is important in the field of rental assistance in that it includes advisors and counselors. He said he would like to see it funded at more than half the ask, but would be willing to settle for half.

Chair Ma said he could agree to funding at half the ask, but he added that he wanted to look at how much the category would be funded and weigh that against the other categories in Goal 1.

There was agreement to fund the application at half the ask.

3. Bellevue LifeSpring – Emergency Rent Assistance

Commissioner Piper said the application is new to the Commission. The program doubled the number of residents served in 2021. He recommended funding the application at half the ask.

There was agreement to fund the application at half the ask.

5. Catholic Community Services - Emergency Assistance

Commissioner Mercer commented that there are a large number of rental assistance programs, making it difficult to decide which ones to fund. She suggested funding the application with a COLA increase. Commissioner Piper agreed and said that would be the consistent position.

There was agreement to give the application a COLA increase.

20. Hopelink - Financial Assistance Resiliency Program

Chair Ma recommended funding the program with a COLA increase.

There was agreement to fund the application with a COLA increase.

26. LifeWire - Housing Stability Program

Commissioner Jain pointed out that the percentage increase in the ask was substantial. She recommended funding the program with a COLA increase, and to include an asterisk.

Commissioner Mansfield agreed with the COLA increase. He said incidents of domestic violence will continue to be an issue so long as the pandemic continues.

There was agreement to give the application a COLA increase and to mark the application for additional consideration.

29. Mary's Place Seattle - A Place to Call Home: Mary's Place

Commissioner Jain said the program provides family and children with shelter, nutrition and

safety. She said while the program is good, she would recommend against funding it. The other Commissioners agreed.

Chair Ma said he wanted to see the program funded as a way of spreading out the number of organizations able to provide services, thus hopefully reaching more people. He proposed funding it at at least half the ask.

Commissioner Mercer commented that the space into which the program fits is very crowded. She argued that if the funding is split among a lot of organizations, the funds go largely to paying a lot of overhead. Two new providers have already been added to the area and adding a third is not necessary.

There was agreement not to fund the application.

31. Solid Ground WA - Housing Stability Project

Commissioner Jain said the increase in the ask was minimal and she proposed fully funding the request.

Commissioner Mercer said she would prefer to stay with a COLA increase for the sake of consistency even though that is only a little less than the full ask.

There was agreement to fund the application with a COLA increase.

33. The Salvation Army - Eastside Social Services

Commissioner Jain said the organization has a huge presence in the area and a large reach. She noted that the increase in the ask was substantial and recommended only a COLA increase.

There was agreement to fund the application with a COLA increase.

15. Eastside Legal Assistance Program - Housing Stability Program

Chair Ma stated that the service is definitely needed. He proposed funding the application at the \$25,000 level.

Commissioner Mansfield recommended funding at a level higher than that. He proposed allocating half the ask.

There was agreement to fund the application at half the ask.

4. Bellevue LifeSpring - Food Assistance for Children (Breaktime-Mealtime)

Commissioner Piper recommended funding the food assistance program. The program gives \$25 food vouchers to children during school breaks when school lunches are not provided, and the projection is that the program will serve 2700 children in 2021. He proposed funding the application at the \$25,000 level.

Commissioner Jain said she would be okay with funding at that level but would want to see an asterisk included.

Chair Ma commented that the program operates via vouchers which could be difficult for some to get. He agreed with the proposed funding level, however.

Ms. O'Reilly said the program previously handed out food boxes, but it was found that often the food provided was not culturally appropriate. The switch to vouchers in the form of Safeway cards makes it possible for people to purchase their own foods.

Commissioner Mercer said she was not sure how the kids get the vouchers. Ms. O'Reilly said LifeSpring has been working with the Bellevue School District all through the shutdown. They have been bringing the food cards to the district who then mails them out and hands them out at the district's family connection centers.

There was agreement to fund the program at the \$25,000 level.

19. Hopelink - Emergency Food

Chair Ma said the program is important for getting food to those who need it. He recommended funding with a COLA increase.

There was consensus to fund the application with a COLA increase.

27. MAPS – MCRC - Food & Gas Card Distribution Program

Commissioner Jain said the program distributes food and gas cards. She argued that at the requested funding amount, the program likely will not make much of a difference in the community. She recommended passing on the application.

Chair Ma agreed. He said he did not believe the program would be an effective use of dollars in the food category. Commissioner Piper agreed the program would not have the same impact as other programs.

There was consensus not to fund the application.

30. Renewal Food Bank - Food Bank

Commissioner Jain said the program is well established and was not seeking an increase. She recommended fully funding the request.

There was agreement to fully fund the application.

32. Sound Generations - Meals on Wheels

Commissioner Jain said the program provides meals to the senior population. Their ask is an increase of only 14 percent. Given the increases in the pricing of food and the clear need for the program, she proposed fully funding the application.

Commissioner Mercer said she would prefer to stay at the COLA increase level. Commissioner Piper agreed for the sake of consistency. Commissioner Mansfield said he was torn between giving the application the full ask or just going with a COLA increase, but she said he could be persuaded to go with a COLA for the sake of consistency.

Chair Ma agreed with the COLA increase but wanted to see an asterisk included.

There was consensus to fund the application with a COLA increase and to mark the application for additional consideration.

14. Eastside Baby Corner - Meeting Basic Needs for Children

Chair Ma said the program meets the needs of children. The established program should be given a COLA increase.

Commissioner Mercer pointed out that the application is one that was included on the percentage of budget list. Ms. Catalano agreed but pointed out that the program also receives over \$4 million in in-kind donations. Commissioner Mercer said she would support a COLA increase.

There was consensus to fund the application with a COLA increase.

Ms. O'Reilly reminded the Commissioners that while working on Goal 2, the Commission established a rubric by which most applications would be funded flat. She highlighted the need to go back to Goals 3, 4 and 5 and apply the same methodology. Chair Ma said it was his understanding that staff would retroactively review and adjust all applications to which the Commission had allotted a COLA increase, and Ms. Catalano confirmed that had been done. Ms. O'Reilly suggested that in the third round of reviews the Commission would need to start applying an equity lens relative to Black, indigenous and people of color by population.

Chair Ma asked the Commissioners to share their general thoughts and comments about how to distribute any funds that might be left.

Commissioner Jain said she was inclined to give more to the homeless shelters.

Commissioner Mercer said she was torn between focusing on the shelters and the applications in the other goal areas that address the full spectrum of services.

Commissioner Piper said he also was torn. He said he could understand overindexing on Goal 1, but said he did not want to do that beyond incremental dollars at the expense of other goal areas.

Commissioner Mansfield said working through the funding cycle entirely remotely is very difficult. He said he agreed that homelessness and shelters are a priority, but in rushing to fund those programs care should be given to avoid overlooking other priorities, such as the youth. He said he wanted to make sure homelessness is not overfunded by taking away from other areas.

Chair Ma allowed that he had been strongly in support of putting a lot of resources into Goal 1 due to the acute need resulting from the pandemic. In addition to Covid-19, homelessness is attributable to national failings that local municipalities are having to cover. He said the Clubhouse application, which is in Goal 5, was having difficulty in finding jobs for their clients for the very reason that their clients were struggling with basic needs, including shelter. He agreed with the need to fund the continuum of services, but during times of acute need in Goal 1, the applications in that category need to be given priority. In terms of spreading out the money, the focus should be on the specific target populations. Domestic violence survivors should be targeted given all that is going on.

Having updated the spreadsheet, Ms. Catalano reported that the Goal 1 total was \$1.123 million. She said that left an unallocated balance totaling \$335,958.

Commissioner Jain said her preference was to focus on the Goal 1 applications in terms of the unallocated funds.

Commissioner Mercer said the total unallocated funds was less than she anticipated. She said she was not inclined to simply focus the unallocated funds to the applications in Goal 1, rather that she would prefer to earmark some dollars for each of the goal areas and particularly those applications marked for flat funding. She proposed divvying up the unallocated funds by percentage, with the bulk of it going for Goal 1 and the other shares going to the other goal areas.

Commissioner Piper agreed with the approach suggested by Commissioner Mercer. He agreed some of the applications in the non-Goal 1 areas should be flagged for additional funding. He also pointed out the challenges new applicants face and said he wanted the Commission to be thoughtful in that respect.

Ms. O'Reilly suggested taking another look at the applications with an asterisk, especially those in Goal 1. She also reminded the Commissioners that in 2020 about 15 percent of the budget was allocated to shelters and day centers. Previously the staff brought forward two proposals: to increase that to 20 percent, and to increase it to 25 percent. The Commission chose not to go with a straight percentage, but it will be interesting to see what the percentage works out to be from the allocation decisions made by the Commission.

Commissioner Mansfield agreed that the largest percentage of the unallocated funds should be set aside for Goal 1. He stressed, however, that the Commission should go through all of the asterisked applications first.

Chair Ma asked what percentage of the unallocated funds should be reserved for Goal 1.

Commissioner Jain proposed 50 percent. Commissioner Piper agreed, adding that the balance would be divided among the other goal areas. Commissioner Mercer suggested allocating 45 percent to Goal 1. Commissioner Mansfield said his initial thinking was that only 30 percent should be marked for Goal 1, but said he would go along with the majority. Chair Ma said he would prefer to see between 60 and 70 percent given to Goal 1, but he also said he could agree to 50 percent. In the end there was consensus that 50 percent of the unallocated funds should be earmarked for Goal 1. He added that in going again through Goals 2, 3, 4 and 5, the Commission should look for potential areas to seek more money for.

Ms. O'Reilly noted that the Commission has had a priority for some time to try to add some new programs to the mix. She said staff would put together a small spreadsheet showing those applications the Commission has preliminarily chosen to fund that have not been funded in the past.

Ms. Catalano said the total ask of the subset of shelters and day centers was \$1.78 million, which is 44 percent of the overall budget. She said the total recommended by the Commission was \$1.123 million for Goal 1, which is 29 percent of the total budget. Of that, 16.3 percent was earmarked for shelters and day centers. If the full \$335,958 in unallocated funds were given to shelters and day centers, the percentage would increase to 24.94. If only half of the unallocated funds is handed to shelters and day centers, the percent would be 20.6.

9. NEW BUSINESS

Ms. O'Reilly noted that during the Commission's last meeting in August a question was raised about the navigators program at Mini City Hall at Crossroads. She said she was able to find out that the program does not differ much from the services staff at that location provide normally, rather it is just another way to brand and promote the services offered while Mini City Hall is closed.

10. CONTINUED ORAL COMMUNICATIONS – None

11. ADJOURNMENT

A motion to adjourn was made by Commissioner Piper. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Jain and the motion carried unanimously.

Chair Ma adjourned the meeting at 7:54 p.m.

Secretary to the Human Services Commission

Date

Chairperson of the Human Services Commission

Date