

CITY OF BELLEVUE
HUMAN SERVICES COMMISSION
MINUTES

April 20, 2021
6:00 p.m.

Bellevue City Hall
City Council Conference Room 1E-113

COMMISSIONERS PRESENT: Chairperson Kline, Commissioners Amirfaiz, Ma, McClure, Mercer

COMMISSIONERS ABSENT: Commissioners Mansfield, Piper

STAFF PRESENT: Alex O'Reilly, Christy Stangland, Department of Parks and Community Services

GUEST SPEAKERS: Michael Itti, Chinese Information and Service Center; Dan Lassiter, Bellevue Network on Aging; Dale Hoover, Meals on Wheels; Belina Van, Catholic Community Services; Gazel Tan, Bellevue Network on Aging; Lalita Uppala, Indian American Community Services

RECORDING SECRETARY: Gerry Lindsay

1. CALL TO ORDER

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

2. ROLL CALL

Upon the call of the roll, all Commissioners were present with the exception of Commissioner Mercer, who arrived at 6:49 p.m., and Commissioners Mansfield and Piper, both of whom were excused

Chair Kline 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, the Commission's by-laws regarding remote participation and the order of business were suspended until such time as meetings were no longer being held remotely.

3. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

A. March 16, 2021

A motion to approve the minutes was made by Commissioner Amirfaiz. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Ma.

Chair Kline called attention to the third paragraph on page 10 and noted that "...less along the lines of capacity building and more along the lines of capability building..." should be changed to read "...and more along the lines of capability building."

The minutes as amended were approved unanimously.

4. ORAL AND WRITTEN COMMUNICATIONS – None
5. COMMUNICATIONS FROM CITY COUNCIL, COMMUNITY COUNCIL, BOARDS AND COMMISSIONS – None
6. STAFF AND COMMISSIONER REPORTS – None
7. INFORMATION FOR THE COMMISSION
 - A. Panel of Providers: Human Services Needs of Older Adults in Bellevue

Ms. O'Reilly welcomed the panelists and thanked them for their willingness to participate.

Mr. Dale Hoover with Sound Generations, former Senior Services of King County, said the organization has been operating the Meals on Wheels program since 1967. In all, the organization has eleven programs operating under the four pillars of nutrition, transportation, social work and wellness activities. In order to qualify for the Meals on Wheels program, persons must be aged 60 or over and have a medical or mental condition that makes it difficult to provide themselves with meals. Once a week each qualified person receives 14 meals delivered to them, all chosen from 29 menu items. Certified halal meals are offered along with vegetarian and vegan choices. The program operates entirely on donations; the clients do not have to pay for their meals. Particularly in southeast Bellevue, the Meals on Wheels program has seen an increase in clients from Asia and Southeast Asia.

With regard to transportation, Mr. Hoover said the organization operates the Hyde shuttle in other parts of the county. Volunteers driving their own cars take people to medical appointments and scheduling a ride is as easy as visiting soundgenerations.org and clicking on the volunteer transportation services. The volunteers take clients where they need to go, stay with them during their appointments, and then take them back home. Where volunteers are not available, the organization arranges for an Uber ride and pays for it.

Sound Generations has taken over the Geriatric Regional Assessment Team (GRAT) program that used to be at Evergreen Hospital. The program focuses on King County residents aged 55 and over who are isolated and escalating toward a crisis. Four clinicians and an on-staff psychiatrist work with the clients. After taking over the program in August 2020, the program has received 179 applications and has followed up on 89 of them.

Requests for volunteer transportation services continue to increase. All volunteers have been trained very well in all Covid protocols, primarily to assure riders that every precaution has

been taken to protect them.

Ms. O'Reilly asked how the Meals on Wheels meals have been impacted by the pandemic. Mr. Hoover said volunteers are now making the calls to clients to take food orders. Those orders are called in to Sound Generations staff, who fill the orders and deliver them to the locations where the volunteers pick them up and deliver them. The volunteers always deliver to the same clients who they get to know very well. During the time before the pandemic, many clients visited senior centers for their meals, but those people are now having their meals delivered.

Commissioner Amirfaiz asked if meals are provided during Ramadan. Mr. Hoover said no meals specific to Ramadan are delivered. He reiterated that certified Halal meals are offered. The meals are frozen when they are delivered, and they are delivered once a week.

Chair Kline asked what kind of training the delivery volunteers receive in regard to what they should do if a recipient does not answer the door or is showing signs of distress. Mr. Hoover said the volunteers have with them the phone numbers of their clients and they will call the number several times. They also call in to the office if they get no response. Foods that cannot be delivered are taken back to the office and put in a freezer. Someone from the agency then calls the family member contact for the client to seek a resolution. The in-house staff and volunteers receive extensive training to notice when someone appears to be acting in an unusual way. They are trained to ask questions aimed at ascertaining whether or not the clients need assistance from a social worker.

Commissioner McClure asked what kind of growth is anticipated in terms of demand for services over the next couple of years, particular as the population ages. Mr. Hoover said in 2019 the Meals on Wheels program delivered 439,000 meals throughout King County. In 2020 that number increased to 480,000. The projection for 2021 is in the neighborhood of 518,000. Meals delivered to Bellevue clients in 2019 totaled 6100. That increased to 8100 clients in 2020, and the projection is for a seven to nine percent increase in 2021.

Mr. Michael Itti, Executive Director of Chinese Information and Service Center, said the organization was created in 1972 by community volunteers. Over the last 49 years, the program has expanded to serve children, families and youth in office locations in Seattle, Bellevue, Lake Hills and Kent, as well as in the Redmond Together Center and some two dozen community based sites around the county such as libraries and community centers. Many programs are held at the North Bellevue Senior Center through the Eastside Community Living Connections program. Programs are offered daily, including exercise classes and ESL classes, and help in navigating healthcare options. Ten social activities are held weekly. Some 400 seniors are served through the programs. During the summer months an annual senior resource fair is held to which several community partners are invited to showcase how they can serve older adults.

Mr. Itti said Chinese Information and Service Center also offers a program called In-Home Care Case Management. The long-time program is offered in partnership with the state offering long-term care support to about 2000 older adults. Of those, 850 are Russian

speaking and most of them live in East King County. The program connects seniors with a range of specialists after a needs assessment. Those who qualify are low-income seniors or disabled adults.

Another program that is connected to state funding is the Family Caregiver Support Program. Many seniors utilize a caregiver through an agency, but others like to utilize a non-paid caregiver like a family member or relative. Those non-paid caregivers are supported through training, education and counseling, as well as through the provision of temporary caregivers where needed. There are about 300 people enrolled in the program.

One of the newest programs is the Family Resource Support Program. It is funded through the cities of Bellevue, Redmond, Kirkland and Issaquah. The program provides support to the Russian- and Chinese-speaking communities in East King County. Through the program people are connected to resources needed to maintain their wellbeing in the community. The program was launched in 2021 and the estimation is that it will serve about 900 families and individuals.

A one-day Russian senior day program was recently launched. Located at North Bellevue Senior Center, it promotes the physical, social and emotional wellbeing of Russian-speaking seniors. The program provides structured activities and classes on Tuesdays, and also utilizes virtual programming.

Mr. Itti said the rise in violence and hate crimes against Asians is of concern. The city of Bellevue recently launched the Hate Has No Place in Bellevue program, but there is a clear need to help community members report incidents, which are largely underreported for various reasons such as a language barrier and the relationship between communities and governments and law enforcement. Chinese Information and Service Center is part of the coalition against hate and violence that the King County office of equity and social justice helped to launch in the middle of 2020. The agency has bilingual staff who can speak Cantonese, Mandarin, Russian, Spanish and Vietnamese who receive reports from community members and who then provide case management and support. There are six other partners in the coalition, including Eastside For All. To date nearly 200 reports have been collected by Chinese Information and Service Center, but there is a clear need to sustain the effort through outreach to faith organizations, businesses and education systems.

Many fire departments, including Bellevue's are doing good work in their communities helping to vaccinate older adults. However, there is a clear need to educate seniors about the vaccine. Many seniors have concerns about the safety of the vaccine, and that is a big hurdle to overcome, especially for those seniors who are isolated and who speak little or no English.

Mr. Itti said community face certain stigmas in terms of accessing mental health services. In immigrant communities the stigma is worsened due to language barriers. Many find it difficult to find a provider who speaks their language and who also understands their cultural backgrounds. There is a need to provide more education and screening.

Another issue seniors face is the digital divide. Many older adults, particularly those with low

incomes, need access to devices and training in how to use them.

Ms. O'Reilly asked if asked of volunteers are used to provide training on how to use devices. Mr. Itti said it generally takes a family member or a staff person to walk clients through the learning process. Ipads are purchased and distributed because they tend to be more user friendly.

Ms. Stangland asked if the data on the number of reports in conjunction with the Coalition Against Hate and Violence will be made available. She allowed that information needs to be kept confidential but it would be useful to know what kinds of hate crimes and discrimination people are reporting. Mr. Itti said the agency is in the process of putting together information that can be publicly posted on the website. He said what is being seen in terms of local data mimics what is happening nationally. The majority of incidence involve verbal threats. More women than men are reporting incidents to the agency. The incidents are happening in public places like sidewalks, parks and in businesses.

Dan Lassiter, Community Services Supervisor for the North Bellevue Senior Center, told Mr. Itti that the virtual programs offered by Chinese Information and Service Center during the pandemic have been excellent. He said something like 60 people are attending ESL classes, a high never reached before going virtual. He said a number of programs for older adults are offered at the North Bellevue Senior Center. In 2003 a group got together and decided there was a need to provide support for older adults in the Bellevue, the outcome of which was the Bellevue Network on Aging. The group goes out into the community and works on various issues but especially transportation, housing, and how to age in place.

Mr. Lassiter commented that since 2003 when the first survey on recreation was done, it has been known that transportation is a major issue in the city. Over the years, various reports have found the same to be true, including the Human Services Needs Update. In 2019 a recreation survey was conducted and it was found that 20 percent of those surveyed said transportation is a barrier to participating in social and recreational activities. Eighty percent of the survey respondents were 60 years old and over, and just under half of them indicated they do not drive. The Access program is great but does not reach everyone. Options like GoGo Grandparent and Uber are expensive. The Hyde shuttle is not available to Bellevue residents. The Bellevue Transit Master Plan adopted in 2014 recognized that more could be done to improve transit services for people who depend on transit due to age or disability, particularly in lower-density areas and at non-peak hours. In addition to moving peak period commuters, transit has an important role to play in improving the mobility of people who need or want to access family and friends, recreation, education, entertainment and healthcare, all of which contribute to an individual's wellbeing.

Ms. Gazel Tan, Chair of the Bellevue Network on Aging, reported that there is a clear digital divide for seniors. Too many are not able to access information. The Bellevue Network on Aging intentionally went out to determine how to reach communities. One way that was done was by connecting with Meals on Wheels and using their volunteers to distribute printed materials along with meals. Ms. O'Reilly put the Bellevue Network on Aging in touch with the Bellevue School District's Family Resource Center through which information was

distributed about Covid and other issues.

Ms. Tan said the Bellevue Network on Aging is concerned that there are gaps that are not being addressed, including seniors who are homebound and lack access to the internet. How to identify those persons and reach out to them remains a question for the organization.

Ms. Tan said she recently had a good conversation with the director of senior programs for Bellevue Presbyterian Church and discovered that the church has a program that works with seniors who are unable to come to church. It is likely that other faith communities have lists of seniors facing similar circumstances.

One thing the Bellevue Network on Aging is very concerned about is affordable housing. Seniors who have lived in Bellevue for their entire lives are being priced out of their homes. Home ownership is expensive and property taxes continue to rise. There is a clear need to find ways to financially assist seniors in maintaining and live in their homes.

The Bellevue Network on Aging receives regular updates from the human services and planning departments. Where the numbers do not seem to add up, the Bellevue Network on Aging sets out to dig a little deeper. From the 2019-2020 Needs Update it was noted that 14 percent of Bellevue's residents are 65 years old or older, which is about 21,000 seniors. Also, 21 percent of those over the age of 64 are low income, and that is about 4400 seniors. There are 400 affordable rental units for low-income older adults. The math, clearly, does not add up.

Ms. Tan said the Bellevue Network on Aging continues to follow community meetings and Council meetings as a way of providing a voice for seniors on how to solve the problems. The city's goal is to have 10,000 affordable housing units in the city over the next ten years available to low-income residents, not just seniors. Now three years into launching that goal, the city has 2500 new units in place. The demand is outpacing the supply as people continue to move to Bellevue. The population of people aged 65 and over living in Downtown Bellevue has grown by 268 percent in the past year or two, but they are unlikely to be living in affordable units. More affordable senior housing options are needed.

The Bellevue Network on Aging continues to gather and distribute necessary information, both electronically and in printed form.

Chair Kline commented that transportation continues to be an issue for the Commission. She said the Commission has been following the start of the Crossroads Connect shuttle service and she asked if that has made any impact. Mr. Lassiter said one member of the Bellevue Network on Aging, Hannah Kimball, has closely followed the program and was asked to get involved. He said it is unfortunate that the service started during Covid. No one wants to sit close to anyone else and thus it has been difficult to find riders. The program likely will need to be extended in order to see if it will work. If ultimately successful, it could be added to other parts of the city.

Chair Kline allowed that as much as the city needs new transportation options, the pandemic

has created new challenges for new programs.

Commissioner McClure asked what are the best options from a transportation perspective. Mr. Lassiter said about two years ago the Commission worked with King County Metro and the transportation department in an attempt to come up with the best solutions. To date, however, it has not been determined which solutions are the best. Many years ago, a bus loop was tried and it failed. A more expensive but workable solution would be to identify funding to cover Uber and other independent ride services.

Ms. O'Reilly said the work done a few years ago identified having a circulator or loop van in place, but the option is expensive and Metro did not have the money to invest at the time. The Access program is good but a lot of people who need the service do not qualify for the service.

Ms. Lalita Uppala with Indian American Community Services, formerly India Association of Western Washington, said the significant name change is being made to help the community understand that the organization is serious and intentional about providing basic, urgent and emergent services to the community. The agency truly wants to avoid becoming dinosaurs by engaging with the young adults who believe they are American with an Indian heritage. The organization has been around for three decades. It is primarily run by volunteers but now has four people on staff and a few contracted navigators who work with aging adults on health and wellness issues. Space is provided at the North Bellevue Senior Center on Thursdays. The agency's pop-up center model offers comprehensive services to families, new immigrant families, women and seniors. All programming is intergenerational.

In March 2020, the agency was instantly able to transfer all of its programs into the virtual realm. Every day of the week there are at least 55 to 60 seniors participating in health and wellness activities. Another 75 to 85 seniors join in for the Chai and Chat program, a culturally nuanced mental health support group. Starting in about a week, the program will be launched in McCollum Park in Kirkland where it will involve a master gardener and learning about and actually growing food. The program will offer seniors the opportunity to connect and to engage in horticultural therapy, a mode of mental health care. It is hoped that the program will also be able to launch in Bellevue.

Many seniors in the Indian community traditionally travel back to their home country annually. The pandemic has made that impossible and the result has been many seniors who are isolated, triggering mental health situations. The onus is on the agency to provide the kind of innovative programs that can help seniors connect with each other.

Ms. Uppala said during the summer of 2020 the agency partnered with the North Bellevue Community Center to conduct Covid testing. Not only did the program serve some 450 members of the Indian community, including 125 seniors, individuals from other communities also came in to be tested. With the vaccinations starting in January, the agency has partnered with Virginia Mason, King County Public Health, Microsoft Redmond Center and others to make sure all aging adults are prioritized to get vaccinated. By March 1 at least 2300 seniors had been vaccinated, including with the second doses.

Thanks to funding from the city of Bellevue, a large part of the work done by the agency has been in the area of rent assistance. As per the contract, very healthy partnerships were formed with 4 Tomorrow and the Bellevue School District to make sure the rent assistance funds went to individuals under 70 percent of area median income. Individuals from the Indian community were served, but the program is open to all.

Ms. Uppala noted that the city also provided the agency with mental health dollars. She informed the Commission that Covid has had a huge impact in the area of mental health, particularly in the immigrant and refugee communities which associate a huge stigma with mental health needs. What the agency has done is embed culturally appropriate mental health professionals in the system. The support groups are largely intergenerational, but there are facilitated support groups for seniors only, for youth only, and for women only. The opportunity has also been taken to form a buddy system with seniors in a virtual format.

Ms. Uppala said the agency has also gone into caregiver services for seniors. In an attempt to be culturally nuanced, the agency is working with Sound Generations and Jewish Family Services.

The agency also identified digital needs in the community, particularly after transitioning into digital programming. There was a huge need to teach seniors how to engage via zoom and Microsoft teams, about virtual ethics, and how to access the King County Library System online.

Commissioner Ma said he liked the cross generational approach as something that can very beneficial for all seniors. He said it can be a bridge for a number of different things from mental health to the technology divide. He said he would like to see the approach spread to other organizations.

Ms. Belina Van, Program Manager for Volunteer Services of King County, which is part of Catholic Community Services, explained that the program came out of cuts the state made 40 years ago to the caregiver program as a way of helping the 4000 seniors across the state who were left without help. The program serves low-income older adults and adults with disabilities. The list of tasks the program covers includes housework, yard work, laundry, transportation, and minor home repairs, all to help individual live independently in their own homes for as long and as safely as possible. In line with King County's public health guidelines, all in-home services have been halted due to the pandemic. In order to qualify for the program, clients must live in their own homes, have limited support from friends or family, and cannot qualify for COPES or other state programs.

Ms. Van said folks are feeling isolated and unable to socialize with their friends and family. That has been hard on many, especially when dealing with the death of someone. Throughout Covid, the program staff have been making friendly calls to folks as often as a few times each week, just to listen to them, to share stories, and to talk about various topics. Staff check with their clients to see if there are any additional services needed and when they say they do, referrals are made to other programs and services.

Transportation continues to be a primary service. Lately many requests have come in seeking transportation to receive the Covid vaccine. With the help of Hopelink, there has been a coordinated transportation helpline that has in part helped to identify the specific type of transportation is needed. Some will want the driver to stay with them through their appointment and then drive them back home. Others will want someone to help them navigate the procedures at their destination.

Many clients have health conditions and mobility issues that limits them from doing housework. It is hoped that at some point the teams will be able to resume in-house services in line with the guidelines put out by the county.

Ms. Van said she has been very intentional in hiring volunteers in order to better reflect the community. Often there are trust issues and finding a commonality between the volunteers and those being served is best for everyone involved.

B. Review of Latinx Cultural Navigator Applications: Discussion and Selection

Ms. O'Reilly reminded the Commissioners that during the previous funding cycle no applications were received that addressed the need for cultural navigation for the Latinx community. The Commission chose to set aside \$10,000 and to put out a request for qualifications (RFQ) to find an organization willing to provide the service. It was initially hoped that Bellevue would be able to pool its funding with other Eastside cities for the service, but both Redmond and Kirkland chose to use their funds for another project.

Former intern Megan Farwell was hired to develop the RFQ, which was released on March 19. Applications were received from two organizations and both of them were reviewed by the staff. Because the funding that was set aside was part of the overall funding recommendation that was approved by the Council, there is no need to go back to the Council with a recommendation regarding the RFQ. The request for qualifications (RFQ) associated with the RFQ was slimmed down and based on the new financial eligibility guidelines approved by the Commission on March 16.

The application received from 4 Tomorrow proposed using the funds for its Life Services program, which is a case management program that provides advocacy and help in finding resources for Latinx community members. The funds would be used for two staff to do the work, not for administration. Ms. O'Reilly pointed out that the agency was founded in 2019 and registered as a charitable organization with the state. Their 501(C)(3) status was awarded in August 2020 and as such is now required to submit a Form 990 annually. Due to the pandemic, most of their services are provided via telephone and the internet, though they do hold socially distanced appointments with clients. 4 Tomorrow has a strong connection with the Bellevue School District and the Family Connection Centers which is one place where appointments are held.

Ms. O'Reilly said the application received from Centro Cultural Mexicano proposed cultural navigator services to assist the Latinx community in accessing resources such as affordable

housing, navigating systems, and translation/interpretation. The services will be offered in Spanish and English by native speakers. The agency was founded in 2018 and is registered with the state as a charitable organization. On June 8, 2020, the agency was awarded 501(C)(3) status and as such will going forward be required to submit either a Form 990 or Form 990EZ at the end of their fiscal year. The application indicates the funding will be used primarily to cover staff costs, though some will also go for the executive director and an administration fee. The budget submitted included 25 percent for advertising costs, which the executive director explained includes outreach via Spanish language internet radio, Spanish language regional radio, and Spanish language articles and newspapers. Their office is located in Redmond and they are currently looking for rental space where they could have interactions in the community for appointments, and they are looking in the Crossroads area. Most of their services, however, will be provided virtually and through socially distanced appointments.

Chair Kline asked if Centro Cultural Mexicano has access to the school district offices like 4 Tomorrow does. Ms. O'Reilly said there is nothing to prevent the organization from using the Family Service Center for appointments. In the past, one place the cultural navigators met with people was at mini City Hall in Crossroads Shopping Center, but of course that facility is still closed due to the pandemic. Once that facility is open again, the navigator could meet there as well for in-person appointments.

Commissioner Amirfaiz said she liked both applications. She said the only advantage she could see for 4 Tomorrow is that they already have offices.

Commissioner McClure agreed that both are good agencies. She pointed out that 4 Tomorrow has access to the Bellevue population, but Centro Cultural Mexicano is focused specifically on the Latinx community and their board and executive director strongly represent the Latinx community.

Ms. O'Reilly pointed out that 4 Tomorrow is also a Latinx agency and will be providing their clients with bilingual language opportunities. They also have a diverse board, and the executive director is Latinx. In terms of access and language capabilities, both agencies are parallel.

Commissioner McClure commented that all things being equal, 4 Tomorrow has the benefit of already using avenues the Bellevue community is familiar with.

Commissioner Mercer concurred with Commissioner McClure and said the only advantage she saw between the two agencies is the fact that 4 Tomorrow already has offices in Bellevue.

Commissioner Ma said his preference was for 4 Tomorrow given that they are already set up for cultural navigation.

Chair Kline said her takeaway after reading the 4 Tomorrow application was that it was focused more on life skills than cultural navigation, though she recognized there is an overlap. She said she was somewhat troubled that both applications would use funds for salaries. The staff are already paid and as outlined the funds would be displacing funds to potentially be

used elsewhere. Neither application gave a clear explanation of what receiving the money would allow them to do above and beyond what they are already doing, except that Centro Cultural Mexicano would use some of the funds to advertise their services, which is a positive thing.

Commissioner Ma said his thinking was that the money would be used to fund an access point at the mini City Hall at Crossroads Shopping Center. Ms. O'Reilly said in talking with each applicant, both were hoping to use places like mini City Hall and the Crossroads Shopping Center because it is a good gathering place. As those sites become more accessible as the pandemic restrictions ease, either agency could build them in. Both programs are looking at how to fund the staff they have available. Both agencies have more need than they have staff capacity to address.

A motion to approve the 4 Tomorrow application for Latinx Cultural Navigator was made by Commissioner Ma. The motion was seconded by Commissioner McClure and the motion carried unanimously.

8. OLD BUSINESS

Commissioner Ma commented on the statement made by Ms. Tan about the gap between the need for affordable housing units and the number of affordable housing units available. He said that data should be highlighted in the Needs Update.

Ms. O'Reilly informed the Commission that the city submitted an application to the Department of Commerce for the CDBG-CV2 funds. Sometime in early May the city will be notified as to whether or not it will be awarded the funds.

Ms. Stangland stated that her presentation to the Council along with Ms. O'Reilly and Ms. Esparza regarding the work to develop the Human Services Needs Update also addressed the funding cycle and the work to ensure that all funds are effectively used. There was good feedback and overall it was positive.

9. NEW BUSINESS

Ms. O'Reilly stated that for the Commission's first meeting in May the Diversity Advantage Team will be present to talk about their program.

10. CONTINUED ORAL COMMUNICATIONS – None

11. ADJOURNMENT

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

Chair Kline adjourned the meeting at 7:51 p.m.

Secretary to the Human Services Commission

Date

Chairperson of the Human Services Commission

Date