

CITY OF BELLEVUE
HUMAN SERVICES COMMISSION
MINUTES

June 1, 2021
6:00 p.m.

Bellevue City Hall
Virtual Meeting

COMMISSIONERS PRESENT: Chairperson Kline, Commissioners Amirfaiz, Ma, Piper

COMMISSIONERS ABSENT: Commissioners Mansfield, McClure, Mercer

STAFF PRESENT: Alex O'Reilly, Dee Dee Catalano, Christy Stangland,
Toni Esparza, Sara Holbrook, Department of Parks and
Community Services; Mark Tarantino, Police

GUEST SPEAKERS: None

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 Mansfield, who was excused, and Commissioners McClure and Mercer.

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. May 4, 2021

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

4. ORAL AND WRITTEN COMMUNICATIONS – None

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

6. STAFF AND COMMISSIONER REPORTS

Chair Kline reported that she attended the most recent meeting of the Parks and Community Services Board. She said it was interesting to see how that body operates. Human Services Planner Christy Stangland did an excellent job of presenting the Commission's information. The Board appreciated hearing the perspective of the Commission and to learn what the Commission is working on. Councilmember Zahn brought up a few areas she would like to

see focused on, including the effects of the Black Lives Matter movement and how it might have impacted constituents and how it may impact applications for funding.

Human Services Manager Alex O'Reilly noted that it was intern Sara Holbrook's last Commission meeting. She thanked Ms. Holbrook for her work on behalf of the city.

Chair Kline voiced her appreciation for the work of Ms. Holbrook. She said it was disappointing that because of the pandemic and holding Commission meeting remotely, it had not been possible to interact directly. She said she hoped that once meetings are again held in person that Ms. Holbrook would stop by and spend some time in person with the Commission.

7. PUBLIC HEARING

A. Housing, Community Development and Human Services Needs in Bellevue

Chair Kline noted that the city is required to conduct an annual public hearing on housing, community development and human service needs. The information received will be used during the 2022 CDBG allocation process.

A motion to open the public hearing was made by Commissioner Ma. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Piper and the motion carried unanimously.

Mr. Dale Hoover with Sound Generations, said the organization operates Meals on Wheels providing nutritionally sound meals that offers over 30 choices, including culturally required meals. Bellevue's population increase has increased the demand for the Meals on Wheels program. The organization also operates the Volunteer Transportation Services program through which volunteer drivers take people to medical appointments, wait with them and then take them back home. The Minor Home Repair program is also run by the organization offering small repairs addressing electrical, plumbing and safety issues. The organization's social services programs includes Pathways, a resource that connects those who call in with the services they need. There is a program that teaches people how to be caregivers, and a program focused on health and wellness.

Ms. Rachel Krinsky spoke as co-chair of the King County Alliance for Human Services. She recognized that during the pandemic the human services providers, elected officials and representatives of human services commissions have collaborated to acquire and apply resources in innovative and effective ways to meet both preexisting and emerging needs. She thanked the Commission for its investments and innovative responses during the whole of the pandemic over the last year. She said the pandemic highlighted the stark racial divide in access to resources and opportunities in Bellevue and across King County. She recognized Bellevue's concerted efforts to prioritize resources for BIPOC and other communities where folks were most marginalized and hit the hardest by Covid-19 and the economic impacts. The Alliance recognizes that the needs will not be going away any time soon, and that there is a continuing need to invest in human services as the community begins to emerge from the pandemic. Ways to replace emergency Covid funds will need to be found. The additional support that has been so instrumental during the emergency for communities in general will be needed going forward. The Commission was asked to advocate for increased allocations going forward.

Mr. Jack Edgerton, executive director of Eastside Baby Corner, thanked the Commission and the city for the support provided to the agency. The funding has been used to accomplish the mission of helping children to thrive by meeting their basic needs. Throughout the community families are struggling to pay rent, put food on the table and make sure their children have what they need to be healthy and to thrive. Eastside Baby Corner collaborates with 73 agency

partners and over 200 program sites to make sure children have basic health and safety needs met, and to help reduce family stress and provide the boost many families need in difficult times. The pandemic has highlighted the challenges that many families in the community are facing. The agency saw an overall increase of 33 percent in orders in 2020 over 2019. In all, Eastside Baby Corner distributed over four million items to families struggling to feed, clothe and provide for their children. Families in Bellevue are not immune to the ongoing effects of the pandemic and the resulting recession. Though unemployment is dropping and folks are getting out of their homes, the challenges families face continue. The agency will be there to support those families going forward. He voiced his appreciation for all the work the members of the Commission are doing to ensure that children and families have their basic needs met.

Ms. Catalano read into the record the written comments received.

Mr. David Bowling, executive director of Congregations for the Homeless, wrote to say the agency provides a wide array of services for people experiencing homelessness and those who were formerly homeless. One significant gap observed in the community is access to affordable options for men exiting homelessness. The coordinated entry for all systems for housing is not available to the vast majority of men who access shelters, and for those who are eligible, less than three percent were able to access housing in 2020. More affordable housing options are needed to help people falling into homelessness from getting stuck. Congregations for the Homeless has started a housing model that works. It operates four different single resident homes on the Eastside that currently house 20 different men who were formerly homeless. The shared housing model offers health communities and support for the men as they gain stability in housing. It allows them to gain rental history, job security and ultimately gives them the opportunity to move on to market-rate housing. With \$1.1 million, Congregations for the Homeless could buy a six-bedroom home that would house an average of nine men each year. The men would permanently exit homelessness instead of possibly languishing on the city's streets and in the city's woods. The average cost of building affordable housing in the Seattle area is over \$300,000. The Congregations for the Homeless model costs only \$183,000 per unit. The agency sees a huge need for such a housing resource and would love to purchase one home per year to grow the program. The agency also sees a huge need for expanding the mental health, addiction supports and employment supportive services on site at the shelter, thus reducing the burden on hospitals, police and fire, and crisis support teams.

Mr. Sean Heron, interim executive director of Imagine Housing, write to express the organization's gratitude to the City Council and the Human Services Commission for issuing the recent RFP to local agencies to leverage HB-1590 in support of affordable housing and related services. He said he planned to submit a proposal before the June 4 deadline for each of the three funding priority areas: behavioral health services, supportive services, and rental assistance. In response to the Covid-19 pandemic and shifts in the target population the organization services, Imagine Housing has expanded its supportive services programs to ensure that more than 1400 low-income individuals, 56 percent of whom are members of the BIPOC community, can attain and maintain housing stability in the city and across East King County. In 2020 Imagine Housing's dedicated resident support services hours increased by 300 percent, and the occupancy rate averaged 99 percent. The request for funds in the three strategy areas will be informed and driven by new strategies developed to ensure being able to meet increased resident needs that stem from the pandemic and other ongoing factors related to homelessness and housing instability. A healthy community should be inclusive to all who wish to call it home. By supporting low-income and BIPOC residents with the resources they need to maintain stability, build resiliency and become self-sufficient, Imagine Housing residents live a higher quality of life and contribute to the diversity, vibrancy and strength of the Bellevue community.

Ms. Enrica Hampton with Kinderling Center wrote to thank the Commission for the opportunity to provide written comment to help inform the development of Bellevue's human services funding plan. Among the many services offered by the agency is child care and preschool consultation. The program is designed to support child care and preschool providers caring for children ages birth to six in a variety of ways, including but not limited to classroom observation and teacher support; individual child observations; developmental screenings; educational training; family support and connections with appropriate resources and referrals; and working with providers and families to develop strategies to help support the child in child care. It is because of the city's generous and ongoing support that the agency has been able to provide its invaluable services to Bellevue residents. Covid-19 has magnified many systemic inequities faced by child care and preschool providers. Throughout the pandemic they have provided early care and education support to young children while trying to ensure the health and safety of the children in their care, all while simultaneously worrying about their own health, safety, finances and job security. Children are also stressed and are experiencing changes to routines, classrooms and teachers, and they may absorb the fears and worries of the adults around them. Stressed children show their feelings through behaviors, some of which might be more pronounced for children that demonstrate delays in their development. Support for child care and preschool provides is needed more than ever.

Ms. Rosanne Carter, also with Kinderling, wrote to say Kinderling's Families in Transition (FIT) program provides early developmental support for young children birth through eight in families who are experiencing homelessness. The agency's expert staff provide early intervention services such as speech therapy, physical and occupational therapy, infant mental health, and education support, as well as educational screening, educational training for community partners, parent education, family support, specialized play groups, and important connections to basic needs services. The FIT program complements the work of organizations working to meet the basic needs of families and children experiencing homelessness. The FIT program's services are customized to adjust the high rate of developmental delays in children under age five without stable housing. Seventy-five percent have at least one developmental delay and 50 percent have two or more. Helping to overcome developmental delays at an early age provides tremendous long-term benefit to the children and cost savings to the school district. Covid has increased children's stress levels and risk factors as they experience changes to home, family and school routines, and as they observe the stress, fears and worries of the adults around them. They may be receiving less one-on-one attention, play and quality time from their caregivers. Children experiencing toxic stress display their behaviors through crying, refusing to comply with directions, clinginess, decreased communications, increased tantrums, and difficulties with separations. Parents are stressed beyond measure and many have experienced increased relationship challenges in the home. When FIT services are utilized, parents and children have strengthened relationships, parents have a better understanding of child development and behaviors and how to support them, families can access resources sooner, and parents report feeling more comfortable concerning their child's behaviors. The upcoming Eastgate Polaris project will have 363 units of affordable housing, 20 percent of which will be set aside for families with young children. The project will include an on-site child care center. The project will create opportunities for housing, early intervention, early child care and education programs to address the needs of young children facing homelessness.

A motion to close the public hearing was made by Commissioner Ma. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Piper and the motion carried unanimously.

8. DISCUSSION

A. Overview of Bellevue Behavioral Health and Housing Related Services Request for Proposal and Funding Recommendations Process

Ms. O'Reilly said a little over \$1.6 million has been received and is dedicated to an array of specific services related to behavioral health and housing. The Commission has been asked to form recommendations for how the funds should be allocated. Applications are due June 4.

Assistant Director of the Department of Parks and Community Services Toni Esparza said the new revenue was adopted by the Council and entails a one-tenth of one-percent sales tax. The city's leadership will determine how the dollars will be spent, in line with the guidance established by HB-1590. A minimum of 60 percent, and up to 100 percent, is to be spent on constructing or acquiring, and operations or maintenance of affordable housing, housing related services or behavioral health related facilities, or the land for those facilities. There are specific populations identified that either the housing or the services must be for. Those populations are individuals with behavioral health disabilities; veterans; senior citizens; individuals who are homeless or at risk of being homeless, including families with children; unaccompanied homeless youth or young adults; individuals with disabilities; and domestic violence survivors. Another portion of the bill allows for up to 40 percent of the funds to be spent on operations, delivery or evaluation of behavioral health treatment programs and services, and housing related services.

During the outreach efforts to stakeholders, the significant themes that have come up have included service-connected housing. Stakeholders reported that there is an increased level of care needed with residents to successfully maintain housing. Additionally, while the level of supportive services may vary based on the specific populations served by the funding, the feedback offered indicates that services can enhance housing stability overall for households in affordable housing. Another theme highlighted was a specific need for an increase in behavioral health services, a term that broadly includes both behavioral health and substance use disorder assessment and treatment.

Ms. Esparza said some specific outreach was done to the lived-experience communities, faith-based communities, and culturally specific agencies. Several themes were shared during that outreach, though many of them were also echoed in all other outreach efforts. The list included culturally specific and responsive services; behavioral health services, rental assistance, case management, affordable and subsidized housing, employment services, homeless prevention, housing with services, and the purchase of existing properties to make them affordable.

Based on the guidance relative what the funds can be used for and the feedback from the outreach efforts, the RFP was issued for just over \$1.6 million for allocation to the priority areas of behavioral health services, supportive services, and rental assistance. Behavioral health services promote mental health, resilience and well-being; enhance housing stability; and increase the provision of low-cost and/or no-cost mental health services and substance use disorder assessment and treatment. The RFP seeks applications for the specific areas of same-day mental health and substance use disorder assessments and treatments; medically assisted treatment for substance use disorders; culturally responsive services for historically underserved populations; services co-located at facilities and/or housing properties; and behavioral health therapeutic case management.

The priority area of supportive services is intended to help individual and families obtain and maintain their housing; address housing barriers that lead to housing instability and/or homelessness; and enhance overall housing stability. Within the category, the RFP seeks applications for case management services that help individuals and families achieve stable housing; and employment services.

The priority area of rental assistance seeks applications for programs that provide rental

assistance to help housing maintain housing; and move-in assistance for those transitioning from homelessness to housing.

Ms. O'Reilly noted that staff had previously sent the application to the Commissioners. The Council is anxious to see some early wins by using the funds already collected to help people in the community. The RFP was developed to mirror the biennial funding process, though with some obvious differences: it is not posted to the Share1 application, it is in Word format rather than Excel, and it is shortened and simplified. The new financial requirements were used in the RFP. Because of the way the funding will be provided, the two-year contracts will run from July 2021 to March 2022, and from April 2022 to December 2022.

Ms. O'Reilly noted that the RFP includes information about technical assistance. The budget includes funding to contract with Communities Rise, the non-profit organization that provided some assistance during the regular biennial process. Small agencies with budgets under \$500,000 which serve marginalized populations can contact a staff person through Communities Rise and receive assistance via Zoom or by phone. The staff will not write grants for agencies but will offer feedback.

The RFP included a list of definitions for services due to targeted services. The general fund biennial process funds a continuum of services and there is no specific description of what case management must address. Because of the language of HB-1590, it is necessary to be very specific about the types of services that are included in each of the three categories.

Ms. O'Reilly said staff will begin the process of reviewing and sorting the applications once they are submitted. Instead of having goals areas, they will be sorted into the three categories of behavioral health, supportive services and rental assistance. A link will be provided via OneDrive to the Commissioners as soon as possible. Staff will prepare shortened staff reviews for each application. Any applications that do not meet all the requirements will be put at the bottom of the spreadsheet.

There will not be a lot of time for the Commission to review the applications. The review process will begin on June 15 and continue on June 29. Then on July 19 staff and the Commission chair will present the recommendations to the Council during study session. Agencies will then be notified of their awards and the contracting process will begin.

Commissioner Ma asked why acquiring affordable housing was not included in the categories listed for the RFP. Ms. Esparza explained that for the larger portion of the revenues, as mandated by the state legislation, the work group is still working to put together a plan to present to the Council. How those dollars will be used has not yet been determined.

Chair Kline asked why child care was not included in the supportive services category. Ms. Esparza said child care did not rise to the same level as the other issues in the public input. She added that housing-related services is a very broad term and somewhat vague. The workgroup and project managers have reached out to other jurisdictions that have enacted the tax to better understand how they have defined the term, and the city's legal team has worked to define the term as well. Ms. O'Reilly added that child care continues to be a possibility as far as the work group is concerned, but the three chosen priority areas were deemed the low hanging fruit.

Commissioner Amirfaiz asked if the outreach was to service providers or actual community members. Ms. Esparza said it was both.

Commissioner Amirfaiz asked if the Communities Rise contract was specific to providing technical assistance in regard to the current RFP or if includes other areas. Ms. Esparza said

Communities Rise is providing technical assistance relative to applying for the available dollars. She added that the proposal sent to the Commissioners is related to the intended use of the Amazon donation dollars.

9. OLD BUSINESS

Ms. Esparza stated that in 2020 Amazon made a generous pledge of one million dollars, half for allocation in 2021-2022 and half for allocation in 2023-2024. Since making the donation, Amazon has been meeting regularly with staff to understand how the process works and the needs being seen in the community. Throughout the course of the conversations, as the Commission has made funding recommendations to the Council, the spreadsheet has been shared with the Amazon representatives, including the third column outlining where the Commission would put additional dollars if any are made available. At one point Amazon inquired about anything that might be out of the box or otherwise different from the typical contracts the city would spend funds on if they were available. The desire of the Commission and the Council to increase the capacity of small emerging and diverse organizations was shared with them. In deciding to make another donation, Amazon reflected back on their conversations with staff. Their donation now stands at a little over \$1.4 million, with some of the dollars going for identified parks projects, some going for Neighborhood Enhancement Program projects, and some for tree planting through the Environmental Stewardship Initiative.

One million dollars of the total donation is dedicated to the Human Services Fund. Amazon's stated intent for their one million dollar donation is first to fund the Commission's third column, which largely is focused on shelter providers and a variety of types of services, but since the dollars are going into the Human Services Fund, recommendations for how to allocate them must come from the Commission and go through the Council for approval. The third column recommendations were made by the Commission in 2020, but they remain relevant to the needs being voiced in the community.

Amazon's second stated intent for the use of its donation was to fund the cohort model of Communities Rise. The idea is that the city would contract with Communities Rise who in turn would issue an RFP for agencies meeting the criteria based on their budgets, their target populations and the composition of their board and staff. Agencies would need to apply for funding, and the selected agencies would be supported for up to nine months in a cohort development model around how to apply for applications, how to formulate financial statements, and training around fundraising. Amazon's third stated intent is for any dollars left over to be reserved for the 2023-2024 funding cycle for allocation to sustain the needs into the future.

Commissioner Amirfaiz said she reviewed the Communities Rise budget and proposal and asked if there are in fact ten non-profit startups in Bellevue that would be interested in capacity building. Ms. O'Reilly said staff does not know what it does not know. The hope is that with active outreach up to ten agencies will be found, even if they are a bit beyond just starting up, so long as they are interested in gaining some skills in a very collegial manner that will help them build their capacity. It is known that there are some agencies that do not apply for funding from the city for various reasons.

Commissioner Amirfaiz noted that the struggles some agencies face go beyond just grant writing and extend to their websites, public relations and marketing, and other issues. She said she hoped the capacity building could focus on more than just on how to write grants. Ms. O'Reilly said the work Communities Rise will do includes helping agencies expand knowledge, skills and performance in governance, board leadership and training, vision, mission and values, strategic planning, program management, operations support, community

organizing, and equity. Individual organizations will need assistance in addressing a variety of things beyond grant writing.

Chair Kline said she was confused about whether or not Communities Rise will receive an allocation of \$181,000 regardless of the number of agencies that apply. Ms. O'Reilly said the process of firming up the proposal is still under way. There is \$40,300 earmarked for stipends, and that amount would be much lower if there were to be fewer applicants given that it will be allocated up to \$5000 per organization. There are other costs that would be reduced in the event of having fewer applicants. The allocation for salaries under the contract would remain steady regardless of the number of agencies involved. Communities Rise has been doing its cohort model with the city of Seattle and with King County for several years. She said staff intends to seek additional details about how their model works.

Ms. Catalano added that Communities Rise needs a certain number of participants for the program to run properly. Part of the program is the interaction among the cohort members. If only a few agencies express interest, it may not be possible to run the program.

Chair Kline said she wanted more information and transparency in regard to the personnel costs. The line item for salaries is enough for two or three people. Ms. O'Reilly said Communities Rise contract for staff for the programs rather than using their own permanent full-time staff. She said they bring in people who are able to address the cultures of the participant agencies.

Chair Kline said she fully supports capacity building for smaller agencies. She pointed out the desire of the Commission to see grants made to smaller agencies, and said some portion of the \$181,000 could go a long way toward that goal. Ms. Esparza suggested investing in capacity building for eight to ten organizations may in the long run go much further than providing small grants of \$5000 or so to small agencies if they are not in fact able to sustain themselves over time. While there may be concerns that only a few agencies will step up wanting to join in the program, the criteria is not that an agency has to be operating in Bellevue, only that that is a priority; the criteria is that they serve Bellevue residents, which opens the pool to a larger number of agencies. She said it is likely that there are eight to ten agencies that will be interested.

Commissioner Amirfaiz commented that the FTE included in the proposal totals 2080 hours, which is a lot. She asked if it would be possible to go back to some of the smaller agencies who have in the past submitted proposals to ask them what they really need. She said most small non-profits have very few staff, and the turnover rate is very high. It could be overwhelming for some to do all of the capacity building outlined in the contract because they do not have the dedicated staff to go through the training. Asking first what it is they need and then putting the dollars into that specific training could benefit the agencies.

Commissioner Ma commented in regard to funding organizations that often the Commission falls into the trap of not trying to pay the people who are trying to do the work. It is sometimes difficult to see the value in organizing capacity building for non-profits and the labor and staffing required to be able to go out and do good work when they are not directly putting food in someone's hand or providing shelter. However, there is great value in investing in helping non-profits to become more organized. The dividends that will be paid may not be immediate or concrete things, but they will show up in the form of a non-profit being able to attract new volunteers which will eventually lead to concrete outcomes. He agreed with the need to be transparent.

Chair Kline agreed that agencies need money to run their operations. She said she is fully supportive of making sure agencies are adequately funded to operate effectively, but said

based just on the application there was not enough information to know what will be done with the high proportion of the dollars earmarked for personnel. The Commission needs to know what kinds of adjustments can be made to those dollars depending on how many applicants step forward. She agreed there is long-term value in capacity building but noted there were applications received from small agencies that were ready to go and would have moved ahead had they received funding.

Ms. Esparza pointed out that in the budget provided their indirect and administration costs were separated out. Those are not included in the line item for staffing so the \$93,000 would be for staff directly related to the service of the program. Chair Kline suggested the line item of \$9000 for other professional services could be for hiring folks for specific agency related issues.

Commissioner Piper agreed with the comments made by Chair Kline and suggested it was completely reasonable for the Commission to ask for transparency.

Ms. Stangland commented that some agencies that could hit the ground running if allocated funds may not have the infrastructure to be successful, and in fact may not be asking for what they need in order to meet the outcome requirements. The program is aimed at making sure agencies have the infrastructure they need to keep the doors open and function well.

Commissioner Amirfaiz said it would be helpful to know the cost breakdown of Communities Rise staff and the consultants they hire. She reiterated the need to ask the applicants what it is they need. Ms. Esparza pointed out that Communities Rise develops individualized coaching plans for each agency. The express desires of the cohorts determine the focus of the joint sessions. Each agency receives individual coaching based on their needs. Ms. O'Reilly added that Communities Rise develops a capacity assessment for each agency that includes development of a work plan, monthly coaching, five free workshops on topics selected by the cohorts, and a cohort meeting to discuss challenges and solutions.

Commissioner Ma suggested that applications like the one from Communities Rise often get the most scrutiny because they are not specifically concrete. He said the Commission would benefit from seeing the third party reviews of the Community Rise program. Ms. O'Reilly said she would be happy to send that out.

Ms. Esparza allowed that a vote on the proposal could await having additional information in hand and continued discussion.

10. NEW BUSINESS

Ms. O'Reilly said a request for applications for a limited term two-year employee has been issued. The employee would assist Ms. Catalano in contract coordination. The application will close on June 3.

11. CONTINUED ORAL COMMUNICATIONS – None

12. ADJOURNMENT

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

Chair Kline adjourned the meeting at 7:47 p.m.