

CITY OF BELLEVUE
HUMAN SERVICES COMMISSION
MINUTES

September 21, 2021
6:00 p.m.

Bellevue City Hall
Virtual Meeting

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

COMMISSIONERS ABSENT: Mercer

STAFF PRESENT: Alex O'Reilly, Dee Dee Catalano, Megan Farwell, Department of Parks and Community Services

GUEST SPEAKERS: None

RECORDING SECRETARY: Gerry Lindsay

1. CALL TO ORDER

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

2. ROLL CALL

Upon the call of the roll, all Commissioners were present with the exception of Commissioner Mercer who was 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. September 8, 2021

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

4. WRITTEN COMMUNICATIONS – None

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

6. STAFF AND COMMISSIONER REPORTS

7. INFORMATION FOR THE COMMISSION

A. 2022 Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Funding Allocations and Preliminary Funding Recommendations

Grant Coordinator Dee Dee Catalano reminded the Commissioners that under the basic CDBG rules, all activities must meet a national objective and be an eligible activity. The three national objectives are 1) benefiting low- or moderate-income persons; 2) eliminating slums or blight; and 3) meeting an urgent need. Bellevue's funding has always met the first objective. The list of eligible activities funded in the past by the city includes planning and administration, which is capped at 20 percent of the program year entitlement amount, plus 20 percent of the current year program income in the form of loan paybacks; public services, which is capped at 15 percent of the entitlement amount, plus 15 percent of the prior year program income; and capital projects, including the Major Home Repair Program, the Minor Home Repair Program, microenterprise assistance programs and pre-acquisition costs.

Continuing, Ms. Catalano said it cannot be known in advance what the next year's allocation amount will be. Estimates are made using the current year allocation, which for 2021 was \$841,239. Estimating program income is a guessing exercise and cannot be accurately predicted. Adjustments are made later based on the adopted contingency plan, or in extreme circumstances via an amendment to the plan. For 2022, the total estimated funding is \$1,047,795.

The currently funded agencies submitted application update forms to apply for 2022 funding. The applications have all been reviewed by staff for eligibility. The Commission will review the applications, make preliminary funding recommendations, conduct a public hearing, and then vote on final funding recommendations. The City Council is set to then approve the allocations on its consent agenda rather than requiring a full presentation. Essentially the allocations will be funding the currently funded programs which have already been approved by the Council. The alternate process is allowed by the CDBG procedures manual when a larger entitlement is not expected from the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). When the CARES Act funds were allocated to the cities, HUD waived the 15 percent cap on public services for program years 2019 and 2020, allowing for some flexibility in meeting the urgent need triggered by the pandemic. In May 2020 the Council awarded just over \$500,000 in unallocated prior year funds. The raising of the cap made it much easier to fund public service projects. As of August, the last contract for the unallocated prior year funds was completed and the funds were spent down.

Ms. Catalano said the 2022 CDBG applicants are the same 2021 funded agencies: planning and administration; Sound Generations Minor Home Repair Program; King County Housing Authority (KCHA) Major Home Repair Program; and the Seattle Business Education HUB Microenterprise Assistance Program. The one public service project funded was the Jewish Family Service Refugee and Immigrant Service Centers (JFS), which was a two-year contract that will not need to be reviewed again for 2022. The proposal of staff was to fund CDBG administration at \$104,337; CDBG planning at \$77,524; Sound Generations Minor Home Repair Program at \$44,100, which is about half their normal amount and which will allow them to spend down their 2021 allocation which that was slowed due to restrictions put in place by the Governor because of the pandemic; KCHA Major Home Repair Program at \$500,000; and Seattle Business Education HUB Microenterprise Assistance Program at \$175,000.

Chair Kline clarified that no general RFP had been sent out for 2022 CDBG funding. Ms. Catalano confirmed that. She added that she was not aware of any additional potential applicants, and said the likelihood is that there will be a return to the RFP process next year.

Commissioner Amirfaiz asked how the Seattle Business Education HUB microenterprise program differs from the previously funded Ventures microenterprise program. Ms. Catalano said Ventures offers a similar service and it was funded in 2020. The organization, however, elected not to apply for funding in 2021 because of how overwhelmed they were during the

pandemic in working with their existing clients. Commissioner Amirfaiz asked what the outcome is for the program and Ms. Catalano said classes are offered to low- to moderate-income business owners and are given one-on-one instruction in how to run a business. Microenterprise assistance that creates jobs is not an eligible activity, whereas the education classes are eligible. The subsequent reporting does not include the level of success of the businesses or the creation of any jobs, rather it focuses on the provision of education for those who are interested in starting a business.

Chair Kline said it would be good to know how diligent the attendees are about actually attending the training sessions. Ms. Catalano said she would follow up on that.

Ms. Catalano explained that in 2020 the Commission recommended \$146,834 for Jewish Family Service. She reiterated that the cap for public services is based on 15 percent of the entitlement amount and 15 percent of the prior year loan paybacks. It cannot be known what the loan paybacks will total until the year is completed. In 2020 the loan paybacks were at the historically low level of \$135,000. Accordingly, the cap was just under what the recommended funding was, so the allocation actually was \$144,600 in 2021. The loan paybacks for the current year have far exceeded the 2020 level, making the cap closer to \$148,000. She explained that was why JFS has the previous allocation amount of \$146,834 for 2022.

Answering a question asked by Commissioner Amirfaiz about the proposed allocation of \$500,000 to the Major Home Repair Program, Ms. Catalano clarified that the total includes the salary and benefits for the home repair specialist, and about \$4000 in other fees such as title searches and lead paint testing.

A motion to approve the preliminary funding recommendations as presented by staff was made by Commissioner Ma. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Piper and the motion carried unanimously.

Commissioner Ma asked if the staff were in touch with ARCH to determine if that organization has projects that can use CDBG funds. Ms. Catalano said the staff are in contact with ARCH and stressed that it always comes down to having shovel-ready projects in Bellevue. Nothing has been heard from ARCH lately about that.

Human Services Manager Alex O'Reilly said when the ARCH board reviews projects for which applications for funding have been submitted, the agency asks the human services staff from the Eastside cities to attend the meeting to offer input on how the services package looks for those projects. Their RFP for 2022 has not yet gone out. She added that an RFP has been released by the city concerning the use of some of the HB-1590 funds. Human Services Coordinator Megan Farwell is working to finish up the contracts for the services side of the funding, which includes funds for behavioral health and housing-related services. ARCH is at the table for those allocations for affordable housing projects in Bellevue. Applications from developers are being received for the funds.

8. OLD BUSINESS

Ms. O'Reilly referenced an email she sent to the Commissioners on September 16 that included a couple of attachments, including an information sheet concerning American Rescue Plan Act funds. She said the 14 agencies that provide rental assistance to Bellevue residents were also provided with the information, which includes the federal rules that will need to be complied with. Also included as an attachment to the email was the budget previously discussed by the Commission on September 8. She said the email addressed a couple of the questions raised by Commissioners and asked if there were additional questions.

Ms. O'Reilly said one of the questions asked on September 8 was in regard to why some agencies applied for the amount of money they did. It was noted that some larger agencies applied for less funding than expected, and some small agencies applied for more than expected. She said she addressed in the email the fact that staff does not know the full thinking behind each application. As part of the application process, agencies were informed that funding was available and were asked how much they believed they could use within a year to prevent the eviction of Bellevue residents. The requested amounts were determined by the various agencies based on their own reasons. It is known that other funding is available for rental assistance, including some through King County, and the agencies receiving those funds may not have the capacity to take on more funding. It is no secret that federal dollars come with a lot of rules and reporting requirements.

Ms. O'Reilly noted that after the agencies were all awarded the amounts they had had requested, there was a remaining balance of \$285,546. The Commission asked how the dollars would be spent. She explained that they must be spent for rental, mortgage, or move-in assistance in accord with the ordinance signed by the City Council. She said the plan is to set the funds aside and to notify the funded agencies the dollars are available. Any agency that believes they can use the funds could request that their contracts increased.

Commissioner Ma asked how all of the required reporting information will be collected, and if data regarding evictions and the like will come to the Commission after the eviction moratorium ends. Ms. O'Reilly said part of the funds allocated by the Council to human services included funding for a two-year limited-term employee contract coordinator. The position has not yet been filled but a search is under way. She said currently she and Dr. Farwell are doing most of the work of getting the grants off the ground. The post-award monitoring required is significant, complicated, and specific. She agreed that data regarding the effectiveness of the programs to prevent evictions will be useful in funding future programs.

Dr. Farwell reminded the Commissioners that a menu of options for how the funds could be spent was presented to the Council. The menu included things impacted by Covid such as behavioral health, food assistance, transportation assistance and rental assistance, and the decision was made by the Council to focus on rental assistance. She highlighted the difficulty of measuring diversion from eviction, but there will be numbers provided in terms of the number of months of rental and mortgage assistance. The assumption is that those not receiving the assistance would be at a higher risk of eviction. Chair Kline added that even anecdotal information would be helpful. Commissioner Ma concurred.

Ms. O'Reilly said the agencies will be required to submit end-of-project reports that will include demographic information. A recent report indicated that when the eviction moratorium ends, as many as 60,000 people could be at risk of eviction. The beauty of the program is that it can pay for up to six months of back rent and three months going forward, which could entirely wipe out arrears amounts for many.

Chair Kline commented that the first folks who will have the benefit of knowing about the availability of the funds will be those who are already receiving services or are otherwise connected with the agencies. She asked if there was a way for the city to get the word out, or to require the agencies to do it. Ms. O'Reilly said staff have been asked to develop a communications plan. The agencies will advertise the funds through their usual channels, and the city is gearing up to create a single-page flyer giving contact information for each of the participating agencies. The flyer will be translated into the top five languages other than English and will be widely distributed once the agency contracts are signed and the funds are ready to be handed out. Chair Kline suggested getting the word out via the mainstream media

as well as through NextDoor.

9. NEW BUSINESS

Ms. O'Reilly said planning is under way for a virtual training meeting on October 26 for the joint human services commissions from Sammamish, Issaquah, Bellevue, Redmond and Kirkland. Debbie Lacey and a staff person from Chinese Information and Service Center will make a presentation on the King County Coalition Against Hate and Bias. They will share data about incidents that occurred on the Eastside and about the extent of the problem countywide and locally. She suggested the Commission's regularly scheduled meeting on October 19 should be canceled in favor of the joint commissions meeting.

Ms. O'Reilly pointed out that the City Clerk's office will be conducting a training session on the Open Public Meetings Act on October 20. The training is required every four years. Commissioners who have had the training less than four years ago will be exempted.

There was consensus to cancel the Commission's October 19 meeting.

Commissioner Ma congratulated Ms. O'Reilly on her pending retirement, and Chair Kline on her decision to leave the Commission.

Ms. O'Reilly said an announcement seeking someone to replace her would be posted fairly soon. She said after almost 25 years with the city she felt it was time to do something different with her life, such as mentoring students in the school of social work at the University of Washington.

The Commissioners expressed their appreciation for the service offered by Chair Kline on the Commission. Chair Kline said her term was slated to end in May in the middle of a funding cycle. She suggested it would be better to have a new Commissioners seated before the funding process starts. She said her resignation would be effective as soon as her replacement was appointed.

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 7:20 p.m.