

The Human Services Commission approved these minutes on November 1, 2022.

CITY OF BELLEVUE
HUMAN SERVICES COMMISSION
MINUTES

October 18, 2022
6:00 p.m.

Bellevue City Hall
Room 1E-113

COMMISSIONERS PRESENT: Vice Chair Amirfaiz, Commissioners Mansfield, Singh, White

COMMISSIONERS ABSENT: Chair Piper

STAFF PRESENT: Christy Stangland, Toni Esparza, Asma Ahmed, Leslie Miller, Donna Adair, Department of Parks and Community Services; Major Mark Tarantino; Deputy Mayor Nieuwenhuis

GUEST SPEAKERS: None

RECORDING SECRETARY: Gerry Lindsay

1. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 6:04 p.m. by Vice Chair Amirfaiz who presided.

2. ROLL CALL

Upon the call of the roll, all Commissioners were present with the exception of Commissioner Singh, who arrived at 6:33 p.m., and Chair Piper who was excused.

3. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

A. September 8, 2022

A motion to approve the minutes was made by Commissioner Mansfield. The motion was seconded by Commissioner White, and the motion carried unanimously.

B. September 20, 2022

A motion to approve the minutes was made by Commissioner Mansfield. The motion was seconded by Commissioner White, and the motion carried unanimously.

4. ORAL AND WRITTEN COMMUNICATIONS – None

5. COMMUNICATIONS FROM CITY COUNCIL, COMMUNITY COUNCIL, BOARDS AND COMMISSIONS

Deputy Mayor Nieuwenhuis reported that ARCH recently celebrated its 30th anniversary with a nice reception at the Bellevue Botanical Gardens. The report submitted to the Council on the organization's 2023 budget and workplan includes support for the newly restructured

multifamily tax exemption; providing support and expertise as the city develops for transit-oriented development areas and affordable housing actions; providing training for property managers; a housing needs assessment; support for Bellevue-specific efforts in accord with the Housing Stability Program; and the city's Next Right work for housing priorities.

Continuing, Deputy Mayor Nieuwenhuis said the Council received the biannual Affordable Housing Strategy update which included a progress report on the overall affordable housing units achieved to date since initiation of the strategy in 2017. Since the program began, it has preserved or created over 2000 units, and there are an additional 800 in the development pipeline. While that means the initial goal for number of units will be exceeded, the need has only grown over time and there is much more work that needs to be done. The Council directed the Right Next work, the affordable housing program the city has prioritized for completion in the next 12 to 18 months. It includes reducing the barriers to micro apartments, allowing higher density in mixed use residential areas, and reducing the permitting costs for affordable housing projects. The Council unanimously approved the initiation of the Land Use Code amendments that will remove barriers to the development of micro apartments, such as parking requirements. Micro apartments present an opportunity to increase and diversify the city's overall housing supply. Other cities have adopted similar strategies and there is much that can be learned from them. The Planning Commission will begin consideration code amendments to remove barriers for micro apartments later in the year.

Deputy Mayor Nieuwenhuis announced that a new park had its grand opening last weekend. The Newport Hills Woodlawn Park is a wonderful park with grass, a children's play area, an adult fitness area, and covered facilities for picnics. There will also be a dog run associated with the park, but that element will not be online for another four to six months. There were a large number of residents who attended the grand opening.

6. STAFF AND COMMISSIONER REPORTS

Human Services Manager Leslie Miller reminded the Commissioners about participating in the upcoming parliamentary procedures training session.

7. PUBLIC HEARING

A. Public Hearing on the 2023 CDBG Draft Annual Action Plan and 2023 Preliminary Funding Recommendations

Community Development Block Grant Administrator/Housing Repair Specialist Donna Adair explained that the Annual Action Plan is part of the Consolidated Plan that is done every five years for CDBG funding. The Annual Action Plan outlines the city's use of the funds it receives and identifies the objectives and strategies that guide the city's investments. It is based on the 2023 funding recommendations and the goals identified in the five-year plan. A public hearing is required as part of the citizen participation plan that is also part of the Consolidated Plan. The Annual Action Plan is posted on the city's website and is open to public comment for 30 days.

A motion to open the public hearing was made by Commissioner Mansfield. The motion was seconded by Commissioner White, and the motion carried unanimously.

There were no members of the public wanting to provide comment.

A motion to close the public hearing was made by Commissioner Mansfield. The motion was seconded by Commissioner White, and the motion carried unanimously.

8. INFORMATION FOR THE COMMISSION – None

9. NEW BUSINESS

A. The Commission Develops and Finalizes Its 2023-2024 Behavioral Health and Housing-Related Services Housing Stability Program Recommendations

Leslie Miller reminded the Commissioners that the city began collecting 0.1 percent sales and use tax at the beginning of 2021. In July the Council adopted a permanent program that earmarks 15 percent of the revenues for behavioral health and housing-related services not attached to any capital project. A total of eight applications were received for behavioral health services and eight for housing-related services. The framework created by staff is intended only to kickstart the Commission's discussion. The framework assigns a higher percentage of ask to behavioral health services because of the significant need for those services.

Commissioner Mansfield voiced agreement with the higher percentage of ask for behavioral health services. The need for the services is very high in Bellevue currently. Bellevue schools have a program called MHAT, which involves mental health services for students. The program is primarily funded by the federal government. However, the school district has voted to remove the program and cutting the services in the schools owing to the loss of federal funding. Absent the program, there will be an even higher need.

Commissioner White concurred, adding that the topic is very important and there is a clear need for solutions to address the need.

Vice Chair Amirfaiz reported having reviewed each of the applications and asked how the proposed allocations differ from the allocations made by the city a couple of months ago for behavioral health. Leslie Miller explained that a number of the applications received for Human Services Fund dollars were redirected to apply for the new funding. There are two categories funded with Human Services Fund allocations: culturally specific services that are proposed to be provided in the community; and on-site services for those who are housed or in shelters. None of the applicants under consideration received Human Services Fund dollars for behavioral health services.

Leslie Miller explained that because many of the applications lacked the information the Commissioners would need to reach reasoned decisions, the October 4 Commission meeting was canceled. Staff took the extra time to work with the applicants to get the necessary information.

Vice Chair Amirfaiz voiced disappointment that many agencies did not take the Commission's comments and recommendations to heart in terms of the outcomes. As they are, many of the outcomes do not tell much of a story. The lack of clarity is bothersome. The collective amount requested is significant, and the needs are real. In developing recommendations, there is a clear need to understand what difference the various programs will make. For instance, the incidence of drug overdoses in young people and adults is concerning, yet none of the applicants even talked about the issue. More thought should be put into the applications.

Department of Parks and Community Services assistant director Toni Esparza suggested the feedback should be used to guide how Commission feedback can be more directly provided to the agencies for future applications. The debrief meeting following the funding cycle could be used in part to allow Commissioners to decide what messages should be passed on to the agencies.

Leslie Miller added that staff, when addressing the scope of work, will be working to strengthening the outcomes.

Vice Chair Amirfaiz said the outcomes need to be in alignment with the needs. Many agencies talk about making referrals but do not specify to whom the referrals are made. Agencies say they are culturally specific but say nothing about the cultural treatments offered by the referral agencies.

Commissioner Mansfield agreed but pointed out that outcomes in the areas of behavioral or mental health are very hard to measure. They can in fact be tied to lifelong measures. Vice Chair Amirfaiz concurred but noted that in such instances outcomes should not be numbers, like serving a certain number of persons with a certain number of sessions. Some of the sessions are as short as 15 minutes and counseling for only 15 minutes cannot make much of a difference.

Deputy Mayor Nieuwenhuis assured the Commissioners that the Council is interested in outcomes. In some cases, outcomes can be difficult to highlight and in those instances the city should be open to allowing the agencies to offer what the outcomes might look like by their standards before the Commission decides if their outcomes make sense or not. There is a lot of money on the table, money that needs to go to community residents that are in desperate need of help. If they are not getting the help they need, in the next funding cycle it will need to be determined if there are other providers that have better defined outcomes.

Deputy Mayor Nieuwenhuis asked if there are any privacy restrictions attached to the reporting of outcomes. Leslie Miller said outcomes are always de-identified and the resulting information can be shared.

Toni Esparza agreed to bring a post-2022 report to the Commission on the outcomes, and to work with the Commission on a way to carry Commission feedback directly to the agencies.

A motion to approve the Housing Stability Program recommendations as proposed by the staff was made by Commissioner Mansfield. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Singh and the motion carried unanimously.

B. Commissioner Requests to Participate in Future Meetings Remotely

A motion to approve the requests of Vice Chair Amirfaiz and Commissioners Singh and White to participate remotely on November 1, and the requests of Vice Chair Amirfaiz and Commissioner Mansfield to participate remotely on November 15, was made by Commissioner Mansfield. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Singh and the motion carried unanimously.

11. CONTINUED ORAL COMMUNICATIONS – None

12. ADJOURNMENT

Vice Chair Amirfaiz adjourned the meeting at 6:49 p.m.