

The Human Services Commission approved these minutes on May 16, 2023.

CITY OF BELLEVUE  
HUMAN SERVICES COMMISSION  
MINUTES

May 2, 2023  
6:00 p.m.

Bellevue City Hall  
Room 1E-113

COMMISSIONERS PRESENT: Vice Chair Singh, Commissioners Halsted, Jain, Piper

COMMISSIONERS REMOTE: None

COMMISSIONERS ABSENT: Chair Mansfield, Commissioners Amirfaiz and White

STAFF PRESENT: Toni Esparza, Asma Ahmed, Saada Hilts, Andrew Ndayambaje, Department of Parks and Community Services; Thara Johnson, Department of Community Development

COUNCIL LIAISON: Not Present

POLICE LIAISON: Major Mark Tarantino

GUEST SPEAKERS:

RECORDING SECRETARY: Gerry Lindsay

1. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 6:07 p.m. by Vice Chair Singh who presided.

2. ROLL CALL

All Commissioners were present with the exception of Chair Mansfield and Commissioners Amirfaiz and White.

3. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

A. April 4, 2023

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

4. ORAL AND WRITTEN COMMUNICATIONS

Alex Tsimerman said that after speaking to the staff manager it was learned that the Commission

is not able to decide about previous complaints. The manager suggested taking the next step and talking with the director. After several attempts to make contact, there was no answer. If the Commission cannot make decisions, what is it doing? After the last meeting, twelve people made complaints, but the Commission does not give answers for even one complaint. The Commission has power but does not use it. Bellevue is a big city, and it has too many problems, including discrimination against white people.

## 5. COMMUNICATION FROM CITY COUNCIL, COMMUNITY COUNCIL, BOARDS AND COMMISSIONS

Major Tarantino invited the Commissioners to participate in an informational meeting about hate crimes and bias-related incidents. The event is slated for May 23 from 6:00 p.m. and 8:00 p.m. and it is sponsored by the police department, the King County prosecutor's office, and Eastside For All.

## 6. STAFF AND COMMISSIONER REPORTS

Department of Parks and Community Services assistant director Toni Esparza reported that on May 1 Chair Mansfield and staff presented the City Council with the Commission's recommendations for ARPA funding for critical services. The Council expressed a great deal of gratitude for the work of the Commission and then unanimously approved the recommendations. The Council also provided input about the upcoming strategic planning process.

## 7. INFORMATION FOR THE COMMISSION

### A. Comprehensive Plan Periodic Update

Comprehensive Planning Manager Thara Johnson with the Department of Community Development introduced James Chow who works primarily on affordable housing issues and who will also be supporting the update of both the Housing Element and the Human Services Element.

The Commission received its first briefing soon after the update work was initiated. Feedback from the community was sought via a vision survey which confirmed the major topic areas. Additional community engagement was carried out during the summer months of 2022 and those community discussions and workshops informed the development of a number of growth concepts. The community workshops were focused on placemaking, transportation, the environment, sustainability and housing. The Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) process that is under way is based on growth concepts. The EIS also addresses the BelRed Look Forward, a review process in regard to the BelRed plan that was adopted a decade ago, and the Wilburton Vision Implementation Plan. The intent is to have the Wilburton policy changes adopted by the end of 2023. The Comprehensive Plan Periodic Update policy changes are scheduled to be adopted by the Council in May 2024.

Thara Johnson explained that the Comprehensive Plan is the city's visionary document. It sets the vision for the city by outlining the citizens' perspectives on how they want the city to grow

over the next 20 years. The update will cover the period from 2024 to 2044. There are two separate volumes to the Comprehensive Plan. The various chapters or elements are in Volume 1. The elements provide guidance to city staff, boards and commissions, and the City Council in regard to making planning and capital investments decisions. Each element contains vision, a narrative section, goals and supporting policies. The Comprehensive Plan also contains maps of land use designations. Volume 2 of the Comprehensive Plan contains the various subarea plans. The Human Services Element is one of the 13 elements in Volume 1.

Given that the Comprehensive Plan outlines the vision for the city over a long-term period, it forms the basis for the development regulations in the Land Use Code and leads to the development of various plans and programs.

Thara Johnson said under the Growth Management Act, cities were previously required to update their Comprehensive Plans every eight years. That update period has since been extended to every ten years to sync with the census. In addition, the Puget Sound Regional Council (PSRC), determines how the four-county region will grow and certifies a portion of all Comprehensive Plans. The PSRC administers transportation funding in line with what is outlined in the Comprehensive Plan. Each county is required to plan for a certain amount of allocated growth over the period of time covered by Vision 2050, which was adopted in 2020. The City Council updates its vision every few years and as the Comprehensive Plan is updated steps will be taken to ensure that it reflects their vision, which focuses on affordable housing, economic development, climate resilience and sustainability.

Vision 2050 is the region's growth strategy. The PSRC does a good job of analyzing how much growth the region will see over the next 20 years. Every county must determine how much of the overall growth it will take on, which then is allocated to the different cities within each county. The city works closely with King County and other jurisdictions. Councilmember Robertson has been active in working with the Growth Management Policy Council and was instrumental in making sure Bellevue's interests were recognized.

With regard to the streams of engagement, Thara Johnson said during the first phase there was a vision survey and a number of stakeholder discussions. A strategy team comprised of some 41 different stakeholders having different interests ranging from the developer community, the non-profit community and community members; it provides feedback on policy development. The city's various boards and commissions have been and will continue to be engaged throughout the process, as will the City Council. The Planning Commission officially has charge of the Comprehensive Plan, but it will welcome feedback from all city boards and commissions. The Planning Commission will conduct the public hearings and make a recommendation to the Council, which ultimately will adopt the plan.

Thara Johnson said the State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA) requires the assessment of environmental impacts. Given the amount of growth projected, there is a need to plan for a minimum of 35,000 housing units and 70,000 jobs. Under the Countywide Planning Policies, those are the city's established growth targets. The SEPA official in the Department of Development Services determined that an EIS was necessary to analyze the environmental impacts. Accordingly, the EIS includes four different growth alternatives. No Action, or

Alternative 0, represents what would happen if no changes were to be made to policies or land use within the city. Alternative 1 through 3 look at various components, such as adding capacity in different parts of the city. The preferred alternative is yet to be determined. Consultants have been hired to assist in the work, and additional analysis is being done on the issues of racially disparate impacts and displacement, and an economic analysis that is focused on the city's neighborhood centers.

Toni Esparza asked if housing and jobs projections have been on point in the past. Thara Johnson allowed that they have been, adding that there is a five-year mid-cycle check-in in place to evaluate progress to date. Not every jurisdiction is able to meet its growth targets, particularly its job targets, given a lack of emphasis on economic development.

Thara Johnson shared that Bellevue currently has capacity for 41,000 housing units and 124,000 jobs. Having capacity in excess of the adopted targets provides for more flexibility to accommodate market demands. The city's current capacity is sufficient to accommodate the adopted targets of 35,000 housing units and 70,000 jobs.

Vice Chair Singh asked about actions at the state legislature level that could result in zoning changes. Thara Johnson said the focus there is on adding housing to address the missing middle by expanding the types of housing allowed in certain zoning districts. Currently, most of Bellevue's single family residential areas only allow single family residential; they do not allow things like townhouses, triplexes and duplexes.

The EIS work was started in August 2022 with a scoping period. The growth concepts were presented to the community, the Council and the Planning Commission. The feedback generated was used to refine the concepts. A lot of technical work has been done on the four alternatives, each of which has a lot of environmental analysis associated with it. The draft EIS was issued on April 27, which is followed by a required 45-day public comment period. There are three public meetings scheduled to talk with the community; two of the meetings will be in-person and one will be virtual. The public comments received will be used to craft the final EIS, which will identify the preferred alternative. A final recommendation will be sent to the Council from the Planning Commission, and the Council will act to approve it, informing the city's growth strategy for the next 20 years.

Under Alternative 0, the No Action alternative, all future growth would be focused on Downtown, BelRed and East Main. Alternatives 1, 2 and 3 the Wilburton Commercial Study Area is added on, and the mixed-use centers of Crossroads, Factoria and Eastgate. Alternatives 2 and 3 add in areas well-served by transit, and the neighborhood centers such as Lake Hills shopping center, Kelsey Creek, Newport. Alternative 1 adds capacity to the urban core areas and the mixed use centers, and includes a gentle density increase in single family areas. Alternative 2 builds off of Alternative 1 and adds additional capacity to the areas well-served by transit and to the neighborhood centers. Alternative 3 has the most capacity in it builds on Alternative 2 by adding additional capacity around the neighborhood centers.

Each of the alternatives looks at different approaches to affordable housing. Currently Bellevue has an incentive-based approach; there are no mandatory requirements for affordable housing,

something being analyzed as part of the effort. Alternative 1 includes a combination of mandatory affordable housing and incentives. Alternative 2 focuses only on incentives, and Alternative 3 adds voluntary requirements for affordable housing to a mix of incentives and mandatory requirements.

The growth targets are the same for each alternative. Accordingly, the No Action alternative yields 41,000 housing units and 124,000 jobs. Alternative 1 would increase the number of housing units to 59,000 and the number of jobs to 179,000. Alternative 2 ups the number of housing units to 77,000 and the number of jobs to 177,000, while Alternative 3 increases the numbers to 95,000 housing units and 200,000 jobs.

Commissioner Halsted asked what it means to plan for jobs. Thara Johnson said planning for jobs means making sure there is capacity for more office and commercial space. The city's economic development team is also actively working to attract new businesses to Bellevue, including biotech firms.

Thara Johnson said the upcoming community engagement efforts will be aimed at informing the preferred alternative and ultimately the city's growth strategy for the next 20 years.

The framework used to analyzing the policies in the Comprehensive Plan elements divides the work into areas where new policies are needed based on changes to state law, changed conditions on the ground, or where new plans are in place; the repeal of policies that are no longer relevant, are unclear, conflict with state, regional or city direction, or that are redundant; policies that need to be modified to reflect a change in intent or application; and policies that might fit better in another element.

Changed circumstances can lead to the need for policy changes. For instance, policy gaps might be identified through updated department planning documents. Changes might be necessary based on new housing growth targets; new requirements for affordable housing and missing middle housing; the increasing diversity of user groups; or the impacts resulting from outside influences such as Covid-19 and the resulting increased human service needs.

With regard specifically to the Human Services Element, the recommended changes include updating policies to incorporate equity and to put an equity lens on all policies. Equity is a cornerstone of the update work in line with Council direction, Vision 2050 and the Countywide Planning Policies. The EIS includes an equity lens for each of the alternatives. All policies must incorporate equity in some way. Careful attention will be paid to aligning the Human Services Element more closely with the Housing Element. More policy support will be added for addressing homelessness, for funding human services priorities, and for addressing senior housing, group homes and supportive housing.

Commissioner Halsted asked if the Commission will be asked to delve into the specific policy issues and look for ways to incorporate them. Thara Johnson said the outline as presented represents the scope of the changes that need to be made to policies within the Human Services Element, but it is not an exhaustive list. The Commission will certainly be involved in reviewing and editing specific policy language.

Commissioner Piper commented that there are some areas of real need that the Commission has identified, including affordable child care and others.

Commissioner Jain stated that climate change is too often overlooked when considering emerging issues. Climate change has a direct impact on the livelihoods of people, especially low-income people. As the climate gets wetter and colder, things like homelessness and access to transportation will be impacted. Thara Johnson said that the EIS does include an analysis of the impacts of air quality and greenhouse gases emissions in relation to things like adding additional capacity close to freeways. Environmental justice issues certainly will come into play.

Commissioner Jain suggested a stand should be taken on supporting policies and organizations that actually adapt to more climate friendly changes. Climate change will continue to be a major issue going forward and it will particularly impact low-income families. With the issues raised, consideration can be given to whether or not there will be sufficient funding to address the concerns. Thara Johnson said the city has a grant from the state department of commerce that is being used to develop a climate resiliency plan. The work under way is evaluating the climate risks. The Commission might want to receive a briefing on that effort.

Toni Esparza allowed that another bullet could be added calling for addressing the effects of climate change on vulnerable populations.

Thara Johnson said the formal community engagement plan was approved by the Council when the Comprehensive Plan Periodic Update process was launched. Most of the elements have been implemented as part of the overall process, though some required some fine tuning. An aspect called the Comprehensive Plan Ambassadors involved having members of the community more engaged in spreading the word, but it did not generate much involvement and was not pushed. But there has been a concerted effort to reach out to traditionally underrepresented populations. Since the launch, there has been communication with some 5000 community members, though there has been some overlap in terms of the vision survey and a number of tabling events. The Cultural Outreach Assistants are community members representing the South Asian community, the Chinese community and the Latinx community and they have focused on engaging with those communities. There has been a clear desire to hear from Bellevue residents their views and comments about housing, which is such a critical issue. The strategy team provided a lot of feedback on the vision and helped to develop the growth concepts. The team will be relied on again in the fall as the focus turns specifically to the policy changes. The process also is taking into account those who want to live in Bellevue but cannot afford to do so, some of whom might actually work in Bellevue.

The statistically valid survey enjoyed 1152 respondents. To ensure it was statistically valid, there were a number of follow-up activities, including phone calls, to reduce any non-response bias. The results are weighted to reflect Bellevue's population in terms of age, dwelling type, ownership/rental, and income. A Lunch & Learn virtual event is planned for the afternoon of May 6 to go over some of the survey results.

Commissioner Jain asked how the survey ensures that the people in any particular zip code area

are proportionally represented. Some areas of the city have particular communities concentrated in them. If a larger portion of the survey is conducted in those areas, those communities will be overly represented in the sample. Thara Johnson said steps are taken to make sure the data collected is unbiased and fair across the different zip code areas. The dashboard showing the survey results can be parsed by neighborhood.

Thara Johnson said the top development priorities drawn from the survey results were homeownership opportunities for different incomes; preserving and enhancing the tree canopy; and the ability to walk to a meeting place such as a coffee shop or library. Sixty-seven percent of the respondents voiced support for new housing development throughout the city, and 54 percent supported new housing development in their neighborhoods. Having more locally accessible businesses ranked very close to walkability.

The survey was designed in part to hear specifically about the types of housing the respondents would like to see in the city and in their neighborhoods specifically. A large percentage of the respondents recognized the need for middle-scale housing, both low-scale residential and mixed use.

From the community engagement efforts, some of the major areas requiring updates in the Comprehensive Plan are equity, housing and climate change.

Thara Johnson said the Commission will be involved again in the fall once there is a preferred alternative defined. That is the point at which specific policy changes will be discussed. Once there is a draft of the updated Comprehensive Plan, there will be workshops scheduled to get feedback. The Planning Commission will hold a public hearing in early 2024 before forwarding a recommendation for Council action in the spring of 2024.

## B. Human Services Strategic Plan

Toni Esparza explained that the role of human services in the city is dictated by policy. It is the result of adopted resolution and is outlined in the Comprehensive Plan. The city's role as a whole is identified as a planner, funder, facilitator and in select cases as provider. A high priority is given to considering data in making decisions of which the Human Services Needs Update, surveys and census results are prime examples. Other examples of city policy documents that are data driven and which inform human services work are the Diversity Advantage Plan and the Affordable Housing Strategy. Strategic plans have been formulated and adopted to guide the city's work in a number of areas; up to this point, human services has not had an adopted strategic plan.

Continuing, Toni Esparza said the development of a human services strategic plan would need to be aligned with the Council vision for achieving human potential. It would also need to be aligned with the Comprehensive Plan. The plan would move beyond identifying needs to identifying strategies, goals and actions to achieve the best value for investments. A strategic plan would also help address questions around measure investment outcomes and would provide the opportunity for the city to examine and adjust current processes.

The areas of focus will include the increased demand for funding from an increased number of entities. One question that could be asked would be whether or not the city should narrow its focus to a number of critical areas versus spreading available funds across the entire continuum. Other focus areas will be measuring impacts and progress, and the amount of General Funds invested in human services, along with the identified responsibilities for human services and the effectiveness of the city's human services funding in furthering equity.

Commissioner Jain asked how the city can go about actually measuring the impacts organizations say they will have when they ask for funding. Toni Esparza said there is a robust auditing process in place. Once the Commission makes a recommendation for funding, a number of steps are triggered. If an agency requests \$10,000 for a certain number of service units, but the Commission elects to only allocate \$5000, the first step is for staff to go back and adjust the agency's service unit numbers. That is called a Scope of Work and is what the actual contracts spell out. Agencies are required to report quarterly the number of service units provided and to be specific in regard to how they used the dollars awarded to them. All funding is reimbursement based, which means the service must be provided first. City staff engage in desk monitoring, which involves reviewing all materials submitted by the agencies, as well as in-person monitoring of every single agency.

Commissioner Piper stressed the importance of outputs versus outcomes. There is an opportunity to have a little more scrutiny at the macro level beyond the agency level in the next funding round. Attention should be given to how much the needle has actually been moved after allocating X million dollars. Toni Esparza said agencies are required to report outputs in the form of service units, but they are also required to report outcomes at the agency level. For instance, a shelter may say it will provide 100 bednights as its output, while its outcome might be X number of individuals transitioned into permanent housing. One question the Council frequently raises is why individuals moving into permanent housing does not necessarily mean there is a reduction in homelessness at the community level due to a variety of intersecting factors. The same kinds of output vs outcome plays out in the provision of behavioral health services. That does not in any way obviate the value of the outcomes at the individual agency level.

Commissioner Jain asked if tangible numbers are used when planning to achieve a certain level of reduction in a specific area, or if the focus is merely on achieving a reduction. If actual numbers were used, an impact analysis could be used to compare planning against funding allocation that achieved an actual impact. Additional planning could then be put into filling in any gaps. Using homelessness as an example, Toni Esparza explained that the funding allocated to homelessness service providers already does not meet the demand. Even if a set number of people to be served were to be determined, there is an insufficient number of providers on the Eastside to serve them all. Additionally, accessing a service does not necessarily mean that the community demand will go down. Focus could be given to moving people out of homelessness, but that could not necessarily be tied to a reduced demand for homelessness services in the community because there are too many factors contributing to the need for the services. The Commission may receive a number of fantastic applications for a number of qualified programs, and may be highly responsive to each one, choosing in the end to allocate a portion of the available funding to each program. Every agency would in that scenario receive some portion of their request, though it could only be a small portion. That may not allow the individual agencies



to be effective and may not allow for significant impacts to be made. One alternative would be to look at the data, choose the most significant areas of need and choose to invest heavily in those areas to more effectively be able to say an impact was made.

Commissioner Jain said what is missing is a clear, tangible goal to strive for. That would allow for a clear understanding about the gap in funding and what it would take to achieve the desired impact in the community. That would aid the Commission in knowing how much funding it needs. Toni Esparza said that is the type of feedback needed in looking for alternative ways to operate. In certain cases, it will come down to policy changes to address contributing factors.

Toni Esparza said an RFP has been issued for the development of the strategic plan. Because the strategic plan and the needs assessment update are viewed as one cohesive unit, a vendor will be hired to work on both. Once the contract is solidified, the process will move into community outreach and data gathering. A draft of the needs assessment will be brought before the Commission and the Council for review and comment. All feedback will be synthesized into strategic planning documents which will also be brought before the Commission before it is ultimately adopted by the Council.

C. Commissioner Requests for Participate in Future Meetings Remotely – None

10. CONTINUED ORAL COMMUNICATIONS – None

11. ADJOURNMENT

Vice Chair Singh adjourned the meeting at 7:40 p.m.