

CITY OF BELLEVUE
HUMAN SERVICES COMMISSION
MINUTES

October 17, 2023
6:00 p.m.

Bellevue City Hall
Room 1E-113

COMMISSIONERS PRESENT: Chair Mansfield, Vice Chair Singh, Commissioners Amirfaiz, Halsted, Jain

COMMISSIONERS REMOTE: None

COMMISSIONERS ABSENT: Commissioners Piper, White

STAFF PRESENT: Christy Stangland, Toni Esparza, Asma Ahmed, Saada Hiltz, Julie Kim, Department of Parks & Community Services

COUNCIL LIAISON: Not Present

POLICE LIAISON: Major Mark Tarantino

GUEST SPEAKERS: Zoë Erb, Khyree Smith, Brianna Jones, Communities Rise; Megan Beers, Liz Arjun, Health Management Associates

RECORDING SECRETARY: Gerry Lindsay

1. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 6:01 p.m. by Chair Mansfield who presided.

2. ROLL CALL

All Commissioners were present with the exception of Vice Chair Singh, who arrived at 6:20 p.m., and Commissioners Piper and White.

3. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

A. October 3, 2023

A motion to approve the minutes was made by Commissioner Halsted. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Jain and the motion carried without dissent; Commissioner Amirfaiz abstained from voting.

4. ORAL AND WRITTEN COMMUNICATIONS

Chair Mansfield took a moment to note that in compliance with Washington state public disclosure laws regarding the use of public facilities during elections, no election-related topics

could be discussed during oral communications or any other public participation portions of the agenda, including promoting or opposing ballot measures, and supporting or opposing a candidate for election, including oneself. Any speaker discussing topics of such a nature will be asked to stop. Additionally, under Ordinance 6752, the topics about which the public may speak during a meeting are limited to subject matters related to the city of Bellevue government and within the powers and duties of the Human Services Commission. Additional information about the new rules of decorum governing the conduct of the public during meetings can be found in Ordinance 6752.

Patrick Alina, Youth and Program Coordinator, invited the Commissioners to attend the annual gumbo night event on Wednesday, October 25 from 6:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. at Crossroads Community Center. The unique event is for Youth Link members and serves as an opportunity for them to interact with public officials, members of the city staff, and different city boards and commissions. The occasion celebrates the youth voice in the community and allows them to dialog about important topics affecting young people in the city in a social setting. The private event is not open to the public.

Brianna Cho, corporate relations coordinator for the Seattle non-profit Businesses Ending Slavery and Trafficking (BEST), acknowledged the grant awarded to the organization by the Commission to implement a public awareness campaign in Bellevue. Posters have been created that include the number for the National Human Trafficking Hotline. The campaign is unique in that it was created by a survivor of human trafficking. It is the first of its kind to have messaging that speaks directly to those who may be victims of human trafficking. So far, the work has included putting up the posters in various places, including at the Bellevue Art Museum, the libraries, Crossroads Mall and other places, including businesses. The Commission was thanked for its support.

5. COMMUNICATION FROM CITY COUNCIL, COMMUNITY COUNCIL, BOARDS AND COMMISSIONS - None
6. STAFF AND COMMISSIONER REPORTS – None
7. INFORMATION FOR THE COMMISSION
 - A. Communities Rise Capacity Building Program – Final Report

Khyree Smith, a capacity building program manager for Communities Rise, explained that the organization works with a number of non-profits and businesses to do capacity building and legal services. The general mission is to foster movements for building power in communities that are impacted by systematic oppression. The idea is to work with organizations to help them grow so they can continue serving their communities via more equitable systems. The team is comprised of staff who do the administrative and finance work; the legal experts; and the staff focused on capacity building.

Brianna Jones, co-executive director for capacity building for Communities Rise, explained that “capacity building” refers to the holistic work done to support non-profit and small business

organizations in fulfilling their missions to their communities. The work ranges from board development to community outreach, fundraising, grant writing and strategic planning. The work is community driven and views the leaders who are worked with as experts in their communities. The work highlights the strengths and assets they bring to the work, and collaborates with partners to create culturally informed best practices for the organizations.

Continuing, Brianna Jones explained that there are three pillars to capacity building, beginning with longer-term, relationship-centered cohort programs and direct legal services. Second is short-term technical assistance in terms of fundraising clinics, grant writing clinics, and legal clinics. Third is long-term equity and system change work that is focused on funder consulting, funder feedback, and capacity building coalitions.

Zoë Erb, co-manager of the capacity building program for Communities Rise, explained that the capacity building cohort had last year on the Eastside was funded by the city of Bellevue. The model supports eight to ten BIPOC-led organizations with monthly coaching, monthly peer workshops, spaces and stipends. Over the course of ten months, the program works on an organizational assessment, the development of a work plan, monthly coaching, and ten free workshops and gatherings on topics selected by the cohort to discuss in a community of peers. The stipends facilitated participation, which proved to be a game changer. The eligibility requirements for participating organizations varied but typically required a regional focus, budgets of less than \$500,000, and being led by the communities served.

Zoë Erb said the capacity building services provided by Communities Rise are all free. The fundraising clinic is currently offered quarterly but discussions are under way to increase their frequency given their popularity. Some community building and networking leads off the clinics, followed by an hour and a half appointment with a professional fundraiser who gives advice on upcoming fundraising events, fundraising strategies, donor mapping and more.

Khyree Smith said the grant writing clinics are held monthly and they are free and accessible to the public. The participants meet for 45 minutes to an hour with a grant writing consultant who can offer assistance in reviewing requests for proposals (RFP), application guidelines, or draft proposals. They can ask any questions they want about finding grants. People are free to attend the clinics as many times as they like. The clinics have ebbs and flows in regard to how often people show up, with the lowest attendance occurring in the winter months.

Commissioner Jain asked if organizations are only provided with one-time support, or if they are helped on an ongoing basis. Khyree Smith said those who attend the clinics generally get one-time support, but it is not uncommon for organizations to be encouraged to attend the next clinic to meet with either the same consultant or with a different consultant. Sometimes the work the clients need to do are thought to be associated with one issue, but at the clinic they find out that they actually need to work on something else. Open office hours are hosted every Tuesday from 11:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. where non-profits are able to come by and ask a wide variety of questions regarding capacity building and consulting questions.

Human Services Planner Christy Stangland asked if the clinics are virtual or if they are in-person events. Khyree Smith said they are all held virtually. While initially they were held in person, as

the popularity of the clinics grew and people were coming from much farther away, it made sense to make them virtual events.

Christy Stangland asked how the services that are not specifically cohort-funded are funded. Khyree Smith said the agency enjoys a broad funding base, including contracts. Brianna Jones said the cohorts are funded directly by cities and regional organizations. The clinics are supported via general operations grants.

Zoë Erb said the other services, like clinics and the short-term services in terms of capacity building, are longer processes and require more investment. There are currently eight organizations supporting the Seattle cohort. For RFP technical assistance, the focus lately has been on advocating and collaborating with funders to make sure they are creating accessible and equitable applications for RFPs and RFQs. The other aspect of RFP technical assistance is making sure that people who do not have access to a grant writer are able to get access.

Commissioner Amirfaiz asked if the grant writing consultants are in house or contracted. Khyree Smith said most of them are volunteers who are associated with the Puget Sound Grant Writing Association or who have been long-time grant writers. When it comes to training sessions, however, the work is usually contracted out.

Commissioner Jain asked if there are specific programs Communities Rise supports more than others, especially in grant writing. Khyree Smith said there generally are not so many in the grant writing clinics that it becomes necessary to prioritize them. The organization serves a lot of black and brown communities, a lot of non-profits that have budgets under \$500,000 per year, and organizations that deal with individuals who are socially disadvantaged.

Turning to the issue of legal services, Khyree Smith said they generally break down into three categories: legal training, legal clinics, and extended legal services. The training involves large group sessions on various topics related to building non-profit stability. The legal clinics are free one-hour meetings with volunteer attorneys, and the extended legal services are for more complex needs that require multiple hours to complete, such as amending bylaws, making sure board policies are in compliance, drafting contracts, and issues regarding intellectual property.

Zoë Erb asked the Commissioners about the type of capacity building that should be conducted on the Eastside.

Commissioner Halsted asked about the cohort run from March to August that involved a number of groups. Khyree Smith said seven different organizations were involved. The process involved organization assessments but also addressed issues around board management, executive coaching and the development of programming. Each organization had their own specific issues that made them stand out from their cohorts. In the cohort gatherings, a number of topics were discussed, all of which were based on what the cohorts had communicated as current needs. In addition to the cohort gatherings, workshops are sometimes offered that address various topics.

Brianna Jones highlighted the fact that the program facilitated one organization in hiring ten new staff, another in obtaining physical office space for the first time, and yet another organization

obtain its first multi-year funding.

Zoë Erb added that a full evaluation of the cohorts can be found on the Communities Rise website. It delves into the accomplishments of all the organizations.

B. 2023-2024 Human Services Needs Update Initial Findings

Megan Beers, senior consultant in the Seattle office of Health Management Associates, said the data collection for the Needs Update took place over a three-month period spanning the summer months and into the month of September. Community engagement was sought through a variety of means, including two surveys, focus groups, service provider network and coalition meetings and interviews. All of the data from the community will be considered in the context of other data sources, including data already collected by the city and other publicly available quantitative data.

Megan Beers noted that in setting out to do the work of designing the engagement plan, the intent was to focus on centering the voices of those with lived experiences within the human service system. To that end, those who are consumers of human services were over-sampled along with those with intersectional identities, including race, disability, sexual orientation and gender identity. All of the community engagement work builds on the work done by members of the human services staff in building trust and relationships.

There were 57 total responses to the providers survey, and there were 923 responses to the consumer and client survey. The provider groups and coalitions interviewed were Nourishing Networks, Eastside Homelessness Advisory Committee, Eastside Interfaith Social Concerns Council, and City of Bellevue Probation. The focus groups interviewed were LBGTQIA+, Older Adults, Latinx, and African Diaspora Community.

The provider survey was distributed to human service organizations serving the Bellevue community. In terms of those who responded, it was found that the organizations provide services to Bellevue as well as neighboring Eastside cities, though some also provide services in other parts of King County. The responding organizations ranged in size in terms of their annual budgets, and ranged in scope of the services provided.

The community survey was translated into ten languages: the eight most common languages and two additional languages based on community partner requests. The majority of respondents completed the survey in English. The survey was online, and attention was called to it via flyers that included a QR link posted in community centers and schools around the city, and via social media. The survey was open to individuals who live and/or work in Bellevue. Of the respondents, some 80 percent reported currently living in Bellevue, and half reported currently working in the city.

Fifty-three percent of the community survey respondents reported having participated in a human services program in the last two years. In addition to asking about participation in services, the respondents were asked if they had attempted to access a service. The 53 percent represents only those that made it to actually utilizing a service, thus the 53 percent is likely an

underrepresentation of consumers or potential consumers of human services.

Megan Beers said the success of the focus groups rested on partnerships the city has in place with providers. For each focus group conducted there was a partner identified that played a key role in helping to invite folks into the focus groups and in otherwise supporting the meetings. The four specific focus groups admittedly represent only a subset of the many diverse communities in Bellevue. The four were chosen for a number of different reasons, including groups that had not had prior opportunities to engage more fully relative to prior Needs Updates. As the data collection process proceeded, careful consideration was given to who was not being heard from through other means. Health Management Associates provided gift cards to the focus group participants as an acknowledgment for their time and expertise.

Commissioner Amirfaiz noted that Bellevue has large a large Arabic population as well as a large Indian population and asked why those groups were not specifically included in the focus groups. Megan Beers said roughly a third of the survey respondents were from the Southeast Asian community. The question about the Arabic community would require pulling out pieces of the data in order to answer. Christy Stangland added that targeted outreach happened to some of the organizations in order to hear from the Southeast Asian community and MAPS/MCRC also participated in the providers survey.

Commissioner Amirfaiz suggested that the survey respondents self-identify based on the categories provided. Someone from India, for instance, is unlikely to identify as White or Caucasian and often will just identify as Other. In those cases, their specific voices are not counted. Megan Beers said the categories for the survey were based on how Bellevue typically collects demographic data, though the respondents were allowed to self-identify via a typed in response.

Toni Esparza added that the city has some adopted demographic questions that are based on census data, within which are some limitations such as the one pointed out by Commissioner Amirfaiz. MCRC was specifically asked for help in distributing the survey to their clients.

Commissioner Jain asked what the difference is between “support to address emotional needs” and “counseling services” on the human services utilization chart. Megan Beers said the chart does not necessarily show all human services currently funded by the city. The category “support to address emotional needs” could absolutely have an overlap with “counseling services,” but it is intended to capture other and more upstream prevention services, services that may happen outside of the typical counselor’s office.

Commissioner Amirfaiz asked about the 297 responses indicating “none of the above.” Megan Beers that of the 53 percent of survey respondents who reported having participated in at least one human service in the last two years, the “none of the above” category represents the portion of survey respondents who had not participated in at least one human service.

Commissioner Amirfaiz asked which eight languages the survey was translated into. Megan Beers said they were English, Spanish, Traditional Chinese, Simplified Chinese, Japanese, Korean, Russian and Vietnamese, and by request two additional African dialects. Commissioner

Amirfaiz asked about Arabic and Megan Beers said there were no requests for that language. Toni Esparza added that the languages used for translation are determined by the Title VI regulations that determine the representative populations in the city.

Turning to the themes shared by the community, Megan Beers said knowledge of available resources and barriers to service access rose to the top. About half of the survey respondents indicated they would not necessarily know where to go if they needed to access a human service. Quite a lot was heard, particularly in the focus groups, about the pathways folks are relying on, which are primarily internet searches and referrals from other organizations. There were also discussions about the transition to online or electronic services access versus on paper or by physical person outreach. Various communities, including older adults and the immigrant and refugee communities, and persons with disabilities, indicated that the transition to primarily online resources creates barriers for some.

The range of barriers to accessing human services that were highlighted included language and cultural barriers, limitations on hours of accessibility, and transportation challenges, particularly for seniors. Where the sample size allows, the survey responses were disaggregated by race and the data showed the highest percentage of respondents participating in human services were in the Black or African American and Hispanic, Latino or Spanish origin communities. The lowest percentage of those who indicated a lack of knowledge in regard to where to access services was the Black or African American community.

Additionally, the data was broken down across service areas. To the question “I was able to find this service in my community,” the top three responses, indicating less availability of a service, were support to address needs about substance use, support to address discrimination or racism, and support to find affordable housing.

A number of questions were asked in the survey about access. One question was “I was able to receive this service from an organization who supported by cultural and language needs.” Overall, 43 percent indicated agreement, but when disaggregated by race, agreement was indicated by only 30 percent of Asians, nine percent of Black or African American, and 44 percent of Hispanic, Latino or Spanish Origin.

Answering a question asked by Commissioner Jain, Toni Esparza noted that of the more than 900 persons who responded to the community survey, 53 percent, or a little over 450, reported having participated in at least one human service in the last two years. The percentages across all the subsequent questions represent the 450 or so. For example, 43 percent of the 450 indicated having been able to receive a service from an organization who supported their cultural and language needs; the remainder of the 450 indicated no on the same question.

Megan Beers highlighted the amount of variability in looking across the long list of service areas in terms of how accessible folks have found the services to be. Zeroing in on support to address racism and discrimination, it was noted the category ranked among the lowest in terms of how folks are perceiving the service. Folks reported limited access to the support, long wait times when access to the support was identified, and not being able to receive the support in culturally or linguistically appropriate ways.

In addition to the feedback from the community around specific service areas, needs and barriers to access, quite a lot was heard that was not specific to service areas. Quite a lot was heard about what relationships look like with providers and the city, and what folks want in terms of building a more accessible and equitable human services system. One theme shared by the community focused on collaboration and coordination. The community highlighted the importance of collaboration, both among service providers and between the city and service providers. They also called out the role that the city can play in facilitating collaboration and being nimble in responding to changing needs in the community. Additionally, they called out the importance of involving folks in the process of designing services for impacted communities.

Megan Beers said there was not a stark difference between what was heard from providers and what was heard from community members beyond certain levels of specificity in the different focus areas. The questions put to providers were different from those put to community members. The providers were asked about changes in funding. Nearly two-thirds of the surveyed providers noted changes in the availability of funding sources and a lot of concern around the loss of service access that may flow from the changes. In terms of barriers to expansion, the providers were asked what they were seeing in terms of unmet needs, and if they are areas that should be leaned into. Many providers unsurprisingly noted unmet service needs in the community, including services they would either like to expand, provide more of, or add to their continuum of care. Most noted, however, the significant challenge of adequate funding, staffing and capacity to address the expansion.

Providers also spoke to the need for culturally and linguistically appropriate services, which they emphasized as an expanding need. One demographic area of dramatic and relatively quick change involved the number of Bellevue residents born outside the United States that occurred between 2010 and 2022. Providers highlighted the fact that the changing demographics in the city and the gaps that have emerged and widened between who makes up the human services provider community and the folks being served. The human services ecosystem and how the city invests in human services has not been able to keep pace with the changing demographic.

The provider survey highlighted a number of barriers to accessing care. The perspectives were fairly diverse and ranged from a lack of transportation to the cost of care, lack of providers with specialized knowledge, and distances traveled in order to receive services, among others.

The final theme that came through the provider survey and the provider conversations was around the unique role the city plays in convening partners for a collective impact. It was recognized that the city already plays a role in bringing providers together to share information. There was a clear resonance with the investments the city has made and the opportunities to continue expanding on the work and on the consistent consultation between the human services team, the Commission and providers in the community.

Commissioner Jain referred back to the chart on human services utilization and the 297 who indicated none of the above. That means only about 20 percent of the total number of survey respondents actually utilized a human service, and that 20 percent is further broken down into people with different languages and cultures, resulting in single digit percentages. That makes

one wonder about the credibility and statistical significance of the results. Megan Beers suggested the chart would be clearer if none of the above results were removed from it. The 53 percent does not include those who endorsed none of the above. The chart is intended to offer a breakdown of how folks responded to the question. Of the total number of respondents, 297 folks said they did not participate in any human service. It is true that the more fine-grained the level of analysis, the smaller the sample size.

Commissioner Halsted noted having reviewed the current Needs Update against the previous version of it to determine what has changed. Clearly there is a base of issues and services that are still needed. The difference lies more in things like process in terms of collaboration and co-creation, which focused more on community engagement. Megan Beers concurred. There are big challenges and needs across the board, but they primarily reflect what has been seen in the past. The process components are very important, but it is also clear that the need continues to outstrip the resources, which is an ongoing challenge. As the Needs Update is being developed, there is a focus on opportunities to partner differently and opportunities to expand on existing partnerships.

Toni Esparza allowed that there is quantitative data that will also be used in developing the Needs Update. The story those numbers tell is that the need is big, and more resources are needed to address the need. While there has always been systemic oppression and disproportionate impacts on some communities, the work highlighted a heightened level of crisis for certain communities as the pandemic era ends. Another theme being highlighted is the fact that agencies are also facing crises.

Christy Stangland added that as the Needs Update methodology has adjusted, the data from previous years is not necessarily fully comparable.

Major Mark Tarantino allowed that there are certainly gaps that are being missed for one reason or another. Officers working the streets often contact homeless persons who have various issues, and those persons likely are not being asked to respond to the survey. Christy Stangland said an attempt was made to address that to the degree possible through the providers survey, which included seeking input from shelter providers. The Needs Update represents only a snapshot and while the data may not be fully complete and may in some instances be outdated by the time it is published, it is the best available data. Toni Esparza added that the measurable quantitative data from other measurement tools will help to fill in some of the unknowns, and it will be included in the final report.

Commissioner Amirfaiz encouraged disaggregating the data to the extent possible, even though the work is cumbersome. This approach is the only way to make any meaningful impact. Megan Beers agreed.

Commissioner Amirfaiz voiced appreciation for the report offered by Communities Rise, but said the presentation was supposed to be a report on the funding provided by the city. The presentation did not address that. More needs to be shared about exactly what the agency did with the funds in terms of capacity building.

C. Commissioner Requests to Participate in Future Meetings Remotely

Commissioners Jain and Amirfaiz voiced a request to participate remotely on November 7.

10. CONTINUED ORAL COMMUNICATIONS – None

11. ADJOURNMENT

Chair Mansfield adjourned the meeting at 7:54 p.m.