

*The Human Services Commission approved these minutes on October 6, 2020*

CITY OF BELLEVUE  
HUMAN SERVICES COMMISSION  
MINUTES

September 15, 2020  
6:00 p.m.

Bellevue City Hall  
City Council Conference Room 1E-113

COMMISSIONERS PRESENT: Chairperson Ma, Commissioners Amirfaiz, Jain, Kline, Mansfield, Mercer, Piper

COMMISSIONERS ABSENT: None

STAFF PRESENT: Alex O'Reilly, Dee Dee Catalano, Christy Stangland, Toni Esparza, Department of Parks and Community Services; Deputy Mayor Nieuwenhuis

GUEST SPEAKERS: None

RECORDING SECRETARY: Gerry Lindsay

1. CALL TO ORDER

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

2. ROLL CALL

Upon the call of the roll, all Commissioners were present.

Chair Ma 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, certain provisions in the Commission's bylaws needed to be suspended temporarily, including the provision concerning the ability of Commissioners to participate remotely, and the provision concerning the Commission's process for accepting communication from the public. In order to allow the Commission maximum flexibility to structure its agendas during the time period meetings are held remotely, the provisions in the bylaws related to the order of business also needed to be temporarily suspended.

According to the Commission's bylaws, if a procedure such as rule suspension is not addressed by the bylaws, the Commission may rely on the City Council Rules of Procedure, Resolution 8928. Section 13 of Resolution 8928 allows a City Council procedural rule to be temporarily suspended.

A motion to suspend, until such time as the Human Services Commission is no longer holding its meetings remotely, the provisions of Article V, Section G of the Commission's bylaws concerning remote participation by commissioners, in order to allow all Commissioners to participate fully in this meeting, was made by Commissioner Kline. Absent any objections, Chair Ma declared the motion adopted and the provisions in the bylaws to be suspended.

A motion to suspend for the September 15, 2020, meeting only the provisions in Article VI and Article VII of the Commission's Bylaws concerning oral communications from the public and to allow for public comment to be provided in writing and read during the Human

Services Commission meeting, was made by Commissioner Kline. Absent any objections, Chair Ma declared the motion adopted and the provisions in the bylaws to be suspended.

A motion to suspend until such time as the Human Services Commission is no longer holding its meetings remotely the “Order of Business” provisions in Article VI, Section D of the Commission’s bylaws was made by Commissioner Kline. Absent any objections, Chair Ma declared the motion adopted and the provisions in the bylaws to be suspended.

3. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

A. August 27, 2020

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

4. ORAL AND WRITTEN COMMUNICATIONS

Grant Coordinator DeeDee Catalano noted that one written communication had been submitted by Kathy Fleming, Executive Director of Attain Housing in which she thanked the Commissioners for the work they do to support human services for Bellevue’s residents. It went on to say the city has supported Attain Housing for many years. Attain recognized over six years ago that the most cost-effective and least traumatic way to address the homelessness crisis was to prevent it in the first place. In 2019 Attain kept 241 families totaling 630 people from losing their homes. Of those, 235 were Bellevue residents, all of them low-income, and over 60 percent were extremely low-income. Forty-four percent were single mothers and 62 percent were persons of color. In 2020 the focus has been on supporting people they know could not receive support elsewhere, such as undocumented workers, legal tenants not necessarily included in a lease agreement, and people who did not qualify for unemployment or stimulus checks. Attain has transitioned from primarily a financial assistance program to including a great deal of case management and resource referral, and has increased the amount of support each household can receive, preventing clients from having to go to multiple agencies to patch together enough to cover several months of rent. The adjustments were made at the end of February just before the Covid-19 crisis began and they have since been made a permanent part of the program.

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

6. STAFF AND COMMISSIONER REPORTS – None

7. INFORMATION FOR THE COMMISSION

A. Round 3 of 2021-2022 Human Services Application Review

Chair Ma noted a public hearing on the Commission’s preliminary funding recommendations would be held on October 6, after which the Commission will vote on its final funding recommendations and forward them to the City Council.

Ms. Catalano reminded the Commissioners that during Round 3 the focus would be on balancing the funding recommendations with the available funding, including the recent very generous gift from Amazon of \$1 million to the human services fund to be spent over four years, or two funding cycles. Because the second year COLA of 3.44 percent would not be applied to the Amazon funds, the first half of the donation totaling \$500,000 will be split as

follows: \$245,768 added to the 2021 human services budget, and \$254,232 added to the 2022 budget. With those funds the total amount available for 2021 was \$4,154,368. She noted that if the Commission needed additional time for Round 3, an additional meeting would be scheduled for September 22.

Chair Ma pointed out that the spreadsheet figures at the end of the September 1 Commission meeting incorrectly showed leftover funds. In fact, after many of the funding requests were held flat, the budget was in the red. He said he understood the need to fund the continuum of services, but noted that the Goal 1 shelters, where the need is great, is vastly underfunded. There is no room to go back and give COLA increases, and potentially some new programs should not be funded.

Ms. Catalano clarified that before the Amazon funding was added to the total, the spreadsheet was \$79,435 over budget. With the Amazon funding, there are some unallocated funds remaining, but it is a relatively small amount. Chair Ma stated that even if all of the Amazon funding were to be allocated to shelters, more would still be needed.

Human Services Manager Alex O'Reilly encouraged the Commissioners in going through the applications to keep in mind the additional funding column. She acknowledged that the circumstances the city is facing are far from usual, and said there is no known additional funding identified, but urged the Commissioners to put an amount in the additional funding column where there is agreement that a particular program would be funded if new dollars were to be found.

Commissioner Mercer allowed that at the previous Commission meeting she was one of the biggest proponents of being mindful of the continuum of services. She said she would support taking the unallocated funds and putting it toward the shelters, but only in conjunction with doing the hard work of deciding what should be pulled from other places to increase the funding going to the shelters, and for how long those pulls should last. She said she was uncertain where the Commission stood relative to trying to meet the full ask for the shelters, or some percentage.

Commissioner Mansfield noted that earlier in the review process the Commission was giving most applications a COLA increase. Later the Commission decided to just keep funding flat for the most part. Chair Ma stated that all applications to which the Commission had previously given a COLA increase have since been changed to flat funding. Any funding beyond a COLA increase given to any application has been left unchanged, though they should again be reviewed by the Commission.

Commissioner Piper said he was also a proponent of funding the continuum to the degree possible and of making every effort to be equitable across the board. He agreed that there is an acute need for shelter funding, but the Commission should also be willing to give new and smaller programs an opportunity by avoiding over-indexing the Goal 1 area.

Commissioner Amirfaiz said the process undertaken by the Commission has been very thoughtful. Housing programs, while needed, have become a black hole. She said she wanted to consider carefully where the dollars can make the biggest impact, adding that she also wanted to see the continuum of services funded to the degree possible. Many agencies that provide mental health services are struggling even though the services are needed to help people address the long-term homelessness disparities. She said she would like to see additional funds allocated to goal areas four and five.

Commissioner Jain agreed with Commissioner Amirfaiz regarding housing and the importance of the programs in the other goal areas. Funds should be distributed across all of

the goal areas. Most of the additional available funding from Amazon could be earmarked for housing and shelter without taking anything away from the other applications.

Commissioner Kline asked if the Council-allocated one-time funds for the two new shelters was included in the amounts shown in the spreadsheet. Ms. Catalano clarified that the funds for Congregation for the Homeless' emergency shelter and day center were included and shown in the 2020 awarded column. She said what the Commission recommended for 2020 is \$117,455 for the shelter and \$82,904 for the day center, which totals \$200,359. A COLA increase on the 2020 funding would be \$206,831. Commissioner Kline said it was confusing that the one-time Council funds were shown in the agency budgets but not in the Commission's budget.

Commissioner Mercer said she also was struggling to understand the numbers. She said the Council funding was given to the shelters for 2020, which is great, but she pointed out that there had been no specific expectation that the Commission would move money from other goal areas to meet the ask that was given in 2020 already.

Commissioner Kline said at a previous meeting the Commission talked about potentially allocating a percentage of the human services budget to shelters. At that time the point was made that rolling the Council's one-time dollars into the human services budget for the sake of allocation in reality was forcing the Commission to cannibalize some of the other programs to continue some portion of that one-time funding. She allowed that no instructions were handed down by the Council to do that, but said that is where she came up with her recommendation to give the COLA increases to that category. For any amounts beyond that, the Commission should give thoughtful consideration as to whether or not they should also go toward the shelters or if they should go toward funding the continuum. Adding dollar amounts to the additional funding column is one way the Commission can show the Council where additional funding would go if it were made available.

Chair Ma noted that the Commission had not previously focused on covering the gap. The only gap addressed was the COLA that was added, which is only an additional \$6000. Nothing of significance has been put toward the gap created by the one-time funding from the Council. He said he had no expectation of filling the gap to the level of the 2020 numbers because the dollars just are not there. He added that from his perspective, the dollars going into Goal 1 will be the most beneficial and offer the most bang for the buck. Mental health services are important, but without housing people will have even more stress and mental health issues, all of which leads to domestic violence, health issues and other problems. The Commission will not be doing the city a service if it does not meet the clear needs of the city that are resulting from the pandemic.

Commissioner Kline said because the Commission had put thoughtful consideration into the other applications, the balance of \$166,333 could be used to partially cover the shortfall. The Commission should also take a second look at all recommended adjustments to see if anything should be considered differently.

Ms. O'Reilly reminded the Commissioners that they had previously created a placeholder for the Latinx cultural navigator but without a recommended amount. She suggested the Commission may want to consider putting a dollar amount in that column before moving ahead with the final review. She added that the city of Redmond has yet to come up with an amount to set aside for the program, but the human services staff there believe an allocation will be determined. Kirkland previously chose to set aside \$30,000. The idea is to put out an RFQ in the new year with the combined amount from the three cities. She said there is a clear need for the program on the Eastside.

Commissioner Mercer voiced support for the proposal of Commissioner Kline to put the \$166,333 toward covering the shortfall, though she also said the Latinx placeholder should be given some priority. She said the Commission should review the funding recommendations made to date, and added that she was up for looking at the new programs and the very large programs to see if there are funds that could be moved out and put toward preserving funding for other areas. Additionally, when considering giving more to shelters, the Commission should be clear if dollars should flow to those programs the Council gave money to in 2020, or if it should flow to shelters as a whole.

Commissioner Mansfield said he was comfortable with putting the \$166,333 towards the gap. The Commission should also work to even out the types of programs in the homeless area with the funds.

Commissioner Piper noted that the Commission had previously tried to steer away from percentages, but he said he continued to struggle with putting the \$166,333 just into shelters. Some certainly should be allocated there, but not at the expense of new programs.

Commissioner Amirfaiz agreed with the need for wraparound services beyond just shelter programs. Even in good times people suffer from mental health issues and lack of skills relative to employment. Currently those services are even more important. A lot of money has gone into homelessness over the years yet the problem keeps increasing. Job retention and rental assistance are important factors for preventing homelessness, but others among the homeless have multiple and complex needs. The \$166,333 should be put where it will have the most impact.

Commissioner Jain said she favored allocating some money for the Latinx cultural navigator program, but the bulk of the \$166,333 should go to Congregations for the Homeless.

Commissioner Kline made the point that for some agencies their program is their budget given that they do not break up the whole into smaller pieces. She noted that for agencies like Congregations for the Homeless and Hopelink their budgets exceed \$3 million. Agencies divide their budgets between programs differently and have different motivations for doing that. She said she had for over a year been saying that the two new shelters starting up showed some degree of fiscal irresponsibility by not having secured more funding for ongoing operations. The reality is the two new shelters are operational and there is a clear need to keep them operational. The Council made the decision to put a little over \$400,000 into those programs for operating funds for the first year without making provision for ongoing funding. The Council has not specifically directed the Commission to fund those shelters, but the reality is both shelters need funding, and putting a substantial amount in for them is an absolute necessity. Even the full \$166,333 will not get to covering quite 50 percent of what the Council put in. The Commission should take a serious look at the other programs, starting with the ones for which new money has been suggested.

With regard to the additional funding column, Commissioner Mercer recommended going back to some of the recommendations for COLA increases and put some of those funds into the additional funding column.

Chair Ma proposed putting the entire \$166,333 into the homeless shelters and then to go back and discuss new programs and other things, possibly moving things around to fund the Latinx cultural navigator. Commissioner Mercer agreed to take that approach, as did Commissioners Mansfield, Piper, Jain and Kline. Commissioner Amirfaiz said she did not agree with taking that approach.

Commissioner Kline reiterated her desire to see the \$166,333 allocated to the two shelters to

which the Council provided the one-time funding, specifically the Congregations for the Homeless men's shelter and the Sophia Way day shelter. Ms. O'Reilly clarified that the additional funds allocated by the Council went only into the Congregations for the Homeless men's shelter, not the Sophia Way day center.

Chair Ma said he was hesitant to put the full \$166,333 into Congregations for the Homeless. He said he would put the bulk of the money into that program, but the Commission should look at all of the shelters before making a final decision. Commissioner Piper agreed. Commissioner Amirfaiz said she continued to oppose the approach but agreed that if the funds are to go toward shelters, the Commission should look at all of them.

Commissioner Jain agreed with Commissioner Kline that the funds should be split between Congregations for the Homeless and Sophia Way. Commissioner Mercer agreed with that approach and added she would like to see included in the narrative to the Council that the Commission took the action on the belief that the Council wanted things to move in that direction.

Ms. O'Reilly noted that under Sophia Way there are in fact two programs. Helen's Place is the program that has just opened in Kirkland, while Sophia's Place Extended Stay Shelter and Resource Center is the one located in St. Luke's church. Both are for women and the latter is both a shelter and a day center. Commissioner Mercer said her preference was to split the funds between the Congregations for the Homeless men's shelter and Helen's Place.

Commissioner Mansfield agreed with Commissioners Kline and Mercer and said he would allocate 25 percent to Helen's Place and 75 percent to the men's shelter.

Commissioner Piper said he continued to feel strongly about equitably distributing the additional funds. He proposed dividing the \$166,333 proportionally among the shelters.

Commissioner Amirfaiz proposed including Friends of Youth as well in distributing the \$166,333. They address a younger population. Commissioner Jain agreed, noting that the application had been given an asterisk for additional consideration.

Chair Ma said he also agreed the funds should be split between Congregations for the Homeless, Sophia Way and Friends of Youth. He said the gap in funding between what Congregations for the Homeless needs and the funds available is just too large to fully bridge. He proposed 40 percent to Congregations for the Homeless, 30 percent for Sophia Way and 30 percent to Friends of Youth.

Commissioner Kline suggested the distribution should be done proportionally. She agreed the case could be made for a three-way split.

Ms. O'Reilly reminded the Commissioners that in fact there are four shelters, and noted the Commission had preliminarily allocated a COLA increase to New Bethlehem Place, the family shelter.

Ms. O'Reilly clarified that New Bethlehem Place was not seeking funds for a new program, only funds for its existing program. Ms. O'Reilly confirmed that and noted that during the previous funding cycle the family shelter and day center programs were separated into two proposals; for the current funding cycle, they have folded both programs into a single proposal. Ms. Stangland added that the shelter is now operating on a 24/7 model and its capacity has been increased. Ms. O'Reilly said that all but the Friends of Youth program are currently operating as 24/7 programs.

Commissioner Kline asked what the reason was behind the 189 percent increase in their ask. Commissioner Mercer explained that they lost their federal funding for that particular population, which is the older kids. Funding allocated to Friends of Youth would help to fill in that gap, while funding the other three shelters would largely go toward their expanded programming.

Chair Ma agreed the New Bethlehem program should be included in the distribution of the \$166,333. Commissioners Mercer, Mansfield, Piper and Amirfaiz agreed. Commissioner Jain said she agreed but said she would rather give more to Friends of Youth to help replace the federal funding they lost. Commissioner Kline pointed out that if the distribution is made based on the percentage of the requests, Friends of Youth would get a larger share.

Commissioner Mercer agreed with the notion of proportionally dividing up the funds, but said she did not favor using the individual asks for the percentages. She said the Commission has some responsibility to the two new programs being started up.

Commissioner Mansfield agreed with the need to keep the two new programs operational, but he said there was also a need to keep Friends of Youth operational in light of the fact that they have lost federal funding. He said he would prefer to proportionally divide the funds between the three agencies. Commissioner Piper agreed and said a proportional distribution would be the only defensible approach. Commissioner Amirfaiz agreed, as did Commissioner Jain.

Ms. Stangland pointed out that all of the applications, except for Friends of Youth, have their day centers included. She suggested the Commission may want to include the Friends of Youth day center in determining the allocation percentages.

Commissioner Piper proposed that rather than determining the percentages based on the ask of each application, the percentages should be based on the preliminary allocations determined by the Commission for each application. Commissioner Kline agreed with that approach.

Once the numbers were run using the agreed upon percentages, the allocation for Catholic Community Services exceeded the full request. There was agreement to reduce the allocation to match the full requested amount and the results were \$75,000 for Catholic Community Services; \$25,292 for Friends of Youth drop-in services; \$45,695 for Friends of Youth shelter; \$290,506 for Congregations for the Homeless; and \$113,730 for Sophia Way.

It was noted that left an additional \$10,000 to allocate and there was agreement to put it into the Latinx cultural navigator column.

Turning to the new programs, Chair Ma noted that the Commission had allocated \$35,000 to Attain Housing. In previous years funding to Hopelink was increased as part of consolidating it, and the increase was taken from Attain Housing. The way the Commission has done it, funding for Hopelink is being maintained and more is given to Attain Housing, increasing the overall funding. He also recommended taking another look at the Bridge Disability Ministries and Bridge of Promise applications for new funding.

Commissioner Mercer said she would be open to not funding either Bridge Disability Ministries or Bridge of Promise.

Ms. O'Reilly pointed out that both of the Bridge programs fall under the disabilities category. Throughout the review process there have been discussions about providing funding for people of all ages with disabilities. If both of those applications were left unfunded, the category in general would be largely overlooked.

Commissioner Mansfield said he would be willing to take some away from Bridge but said Attain Housing should remain unchanged. The program is unique and refers to a lot of other services.

Chair Ma said his proposal was not to take anything away from Attain Housing but rather to reduce the funding somewhat for Hopelink. He agreed with the notion of removing the funding for Bridge Disabilities Ministries.

Commissioner Piper recused himself from anything having to do with Attain Housing.

Commissioners Amirfaiz and Jain both indicated they wanted to see Attain Housing unchanged. Commissioner Jain said she would be okay with taking the funding from Bridge of Promise and putting the money toward the Latinx cultural navigator program.

Commissioner Kline suggested the Commission should take another look at the Eastside Legal Assistance Program (ELAP). The program is excellent and has accomplished good things, but there has been some money flow into the area of legal assistance for housing stability in just the last couple of weeks.

Chair Ma asked if there were any objections to not funding Bridge Disabilities Ministries. Commissioner Kline objected and stressed the need to fund disability programs. The agency fits into the model of Eastside Baby Corner in that it does a lot with non-financial donations and is able to make the financial donations it receives stretch a long way. The agency has been on the cusp for several years and is at the point where the Commission should fund it.

Commissioner Piper concurred with Commissioner Kline, as did Commissioners Mansfield and Jain.

With regard to decreasing the funding from the ELAP, Ms. Catalano explained that the King County Bar Association has been given \$700,000 for countywide legal services. Ms. O'Reilly confirmed that, adding that her assumption was that the funds came from the state. She noted that the \$100,000 request is for a full-time attorney dedicated just to the city of Bellevue. Reducing the funding level would not mean there will be no services provided at all in the city.

Chair Ma proposed reducing the amount allocated to ELAP by \$20,000 and shifting it to the cultural navigator program. Commissioners Mercer, Mansfield and Piper agreed.

Commissioner Amirfaiz did not agree with the proposal given the high need for eviction prevention services. She also pointed out little or nothing was known about other agencies with similar services and how much additional funding they have gotten. ELAP should not be penalized until that information is in hand. Commissioner Mercer noted that Commissioner Amirfaiz's argument had carried the day for her. Commissioner Jain said she did not want to see money taken away from ELAP.

Commissioner Kline said she only wanted the Commissioners to be aware of the fact that there is money flowing into the housing eviction prevention area. The application from ELAP is unique in that it specifically is targeted to Bellevue, and it is not specifically known how the funds from the King County Bar Association are going to flow. The more money given to the area the better. If making cuts becomes necessary, ELAP is one place to look.

Ms. O'Reilly said it was clear the Commission would need to conduct another meeting on September 22 to complete the work of recommending funding and the rationales. She said staff would do some research into the King County Bar Association funding and how it will



specifically impact Bellevue and provide a report at that additional meeting.

Ms. O'Reilly noted that throughout the review process the Commission has kept an eye on adding new programs that address equity and social justice related to diverse populations. She said that is something the Commissioners might want to ponder and start the next conversation with.

- 8. OLD BUSINESS – None
- 9. NEW BUSINESS – None
- 10. CONTINUED ORAL COMMUNICATIONS – None
- 11. ADJOURNMENT

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

Chair Ma adjourned the meeting at 7:58 p.m.

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Secretary to the Human Services Commission

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Date

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Chairperson of the Human Services Commission

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Date