

The Human Services Commission approved these minutes on November 18, 2020

CITY OF BELLEVUE
HUMAN SERVICES COMMISSION
MINUTES

October 20, 2020
6:00 p.m.

Bellevue City Hall
Virtual Meeting

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

COMMISSIONERS ABSENT: Commissioner Mercer

STAFF PRESENT: Alex O'Reilly, Dee Dee Catalano, Christy Stangland, Department of Parks and Community Services; Franz Loewenherz, Department of Transportation; Jennifer Ewing, Department of Community Development; 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 with the exception of Commissioner Mercer who was excused.

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 October 20, 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. September 22, 2020

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

4. ORAL AND WRITTEN COMMUNICATIONS

Grant Coordinator Dee Dee Catalano noted the receipt of a written communication from Michael Ramos, Executive Director of the Church Council of Greater Seattle. The letter voiced concern related to the proposed 2021-2022 General fund funding cycle and pointed out what was called a glaring omission: the Muslim Community Resource Center. MCRC was once again denied funding by the Commission and such denial has happened for several years, leading the MCRC faith supporters to question the oversight. In terms of rental assistance, information and referral, food assistance, culturally-appropriate case management and immigrant and refugee attention, MCRC is distinguished in addressing specific needs with compassion among the residents of the City of Bellevue and beyond. MCRC's leaders, Khizer and Nickhath Sheriff, can speak directly to the services they provide and answer any questions you may have. The Commission was urged to speak to them before finalizing its decisions. In considering which agencies to fund, the staff noted priority criteria, including the pursuit of an equity lens, a focus on food and housing, financial assistance to keep people in their homes, dealing with the mental health stress of the pandemic, and addressing crises for women and children including domestic violence. The faith communities are hard-pressed to understand how MCRC, with its impressive and growing track-record in all of these areas, could be bypassed in this round of funding. If left without an explanation, the faith communities will feel an urgency to raise directly to the Bellevue City Council the question of why some faith-based organizations are supported while others that are people of color-led, including MCRC, are left without city funding or support.

Chair Ma thanked Mr. Ramos for his comments and added for the record that MCRC is in fact included in the Commission's funding recommendations. He said the Commission recommended \$10,000 to fund the MCRC information, referral and resources program. In addition, in August MCRC was one of only five organizations to be awarded CARES Act funds to provide emergency financial assistance; the award to the organization was \$45,000.

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

6. STAFF AND COMMISSIONER REPORTS

Human Services Manager Alex O'Reilly informed the Commission that the meeting was the last with Commissioner Jain. She noted that Commissioner Jain was resigning from the

Commission in order to provide family support to her daughter in San Francisco. She said the Commission and the staff would miss her and her wisdom.

Commissioner Jain thanked the staff and Commissioners and said it had been a privilege to serve as a member of the Commission. She said she had much greater insight into the level of work the city puts into the development and improvement of the community. She said her heart would continue to be with the Commission.

Commissioner Kline said she had enjoyed working with Commissioner Jain, especially during the recent funding cycle. She said she would miss her.

Commissioner Piper said it had indeed been a pleasure working with Commissioner Jain on the Commission. He thanked her for her voice of wisdom.

Commissioner Amirfaiz thanked Commissioner Jain for her grace and her service to the community. She said Commissioner Jain served as an important voice on the Commission.

Chair Ma also thanked Commissioner Jain for her work and effort. He said it had been a pleasure working with her and he wished her and her family all the best.

7. INFORMATION FOR THE COMMISSION

A. Crossroads Connect Program

Principal Transportation Planner Franz Loewenherz thanked the Commissioners for the opportunity to share information about Crossroads Connect, a new transit service that was launched rapidly in partnership with the Washington State Department of Transportation, King County, Hopelink and Spare Labs, a technology company that developed the user interface platform the public uses. The service has been deployed in the Crossroads/Lake Hills neighborhood in a variety of formats. The primary method for accessing the service is through the downloadable app. The user interface allows the user to indicate where they are, and a vehicle will pick them up in about 15 minutes and transport them to one of the Crossroads Connect pickup/drop-off locations.

Mr. Loewenherz said the Crossroads/Lake Hills neighborhood was chosen because of the priority populations identified there. An equity calculation is made by King County to determine areas of need, and that came into play in the decision to deploy the service in the neighborhood. Another factor centered around the recent reduced transit service levels as well as the suspension of one route in the neighborhood. The service also aligns well with the city's Transit Master Plan, which the Commission had a hand in developing ahead of the Council adopting it in 2014. The plan centers on the principles of providing frequent connections to major activity centers, and providing a reliable way to connect Bellevue's activity centers with the broader region. For areas with lower density, creative ways need to be found to address the needs. Another aspect of the project aligns with the city's smart mobility plan which aims to use innovation partnerships to employ emerging technologies to enhance efficiency and accessibility.

In terms of mobility on demand, which is what Crossroads Connect is, Mr. Loewenherz underscored that access is not limited to using the free app. Many people do not have smart phones so a call-in option is included. Callers are connected to an operator who then dispatches a vehicle to the caller's location. One innovative aspect of the service is that it includes a partnership with Seattle Yellow Cab. If someone calls for a vehicle but the van is fully utilized and will take longer than 15 minutes to arrive, a Yellow Cab will be dispatched instead. The option allows for providing services without having to have a fleet of vans

waiting for someone to call in. From the app, one can choose Crossroads Connect only, which means they will exclusively receive the branded van; that could mean a potential longer wait, but brings with it the assurance that the vehicle is clean consistent with Metro guidelines, that all Covid-19 and that the service is truly Metro branded. The standard Metro fare applies, and free transfers are available. Those who are given rides in a taxi will not have to pay for it, but will have to pay for a connection to a bus.

Another innovative aspect of the project is that it allows the city to derive insight and to refine the service over time based on the data collected. The service was launched on October 1. It is available Monday through Friday from 3:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m. The limitation is that the pickup or drop-off point must occur at the station pair reflected on the map at Crossroads Shopping Center at 156th Avenue NE and NE 10th Street. It has already been decided that come November 2 the service area will be modified by expanding the boundaries to the north, south, east and west. The service hours will be expanded to noon to 9:00 p.m., and there will be six bus station pairs available for pickup and drop-off. The refinements will be made as a result of the data and the community input to date.

The van is Access paratransit capable. Access customers must log into the system and provide their code, and eligibility is determined. The Access service allows for any point-to-point travel within the service area and as such is not limited to any specific start or end point.

Mr. Loewenherz drew attention to the importance of the community feedback loop. He said the city is looking for people who will be active users, dubbed Super Users, who are willing to engage along the program journey that is currently set to run through June 2021. They will be asked to use the service and to periodically check in with the city and provide feedback. The feedback loop is being actively promoted through a number of different channels. There is a wealth of information available on the project webpage.

Commissioner Kline pointed out that International Community Health Services is within the service area. She suggested it would be a good idea to promote the service through that organization for their clients. She said any other social service agencies in the service area should also have the information to pass on to their clients. Mr. Loewenherz said he would work with Ms. O'Reilly to do that.

Ms. O'Reilly added that a group called the Providers Network, which is hosted out of Hopelink, which is in the general area, invites people to meet with them and share information. Mr. Loewenherz said that sounds like an ideal group to get the word out to.

Ms. O'Reilly said she was excited about the fact that the service seeks to fill the gap during the off-peak hours. The community planning effort done with King County Metro a couple of years ago highlighted the need to address the off-peak hours. Mr. Loewenherz allowed that October is not an ideal time to launch a program. To date there has been negligible usage. The next round of outreach has commenced, however.

Commissioner Kline suggested the Family Connections office at Sammamish High School and the similar office at Interlake High School should be informed about the service so they can share the information with those they work with. Ms. O'Reilly said the Family Connections programs are ramped up and are distributing food and hygiene supplies for families and their assistance is currently in high demand. She said she would connect Mr. Loewenherz with those programs.

Human Services Planner Christy Stangland asked if youth under the age of 18 are able to use the service without an adult. Mr. Loewenherz said they are on the Crossroads Connect branded van. The taxi is not an option for that demographic. Ms. Stangland noted that the

materials are translated into several languages and asked if someone who calls in is able to access interpreter services. Mr. Loewenherz said the call center for the project is Hopelink. Ms. Stangland said that agency does have interpretation options. Mr. Loewenherz said there are some language options within the app. The project webpage provides detailed instructions, and a project video is being produced that will make it easy for anyone to understand how to use the system.

B. Draft Environmental Stewardship Plan

Environmental Stewardship Program Manager Jennifer Ewing said work on the Environmental Stewardship Initiative has been under way for about a year. It is the city's sustainability program and is focused both on city operations and community programming around energy efficiency, recycling and renewable energy. The program has existed since 2007 and the current five-year plan spanned from 2013 to 2018. The Council provided direction to update the plan and to review the city's environmental goals.

Ms. Ewing said staff conducted an extensive assessment of progress made to date by looking at a number of key performance indicators as well the city's projects, programs and policies related to the environment. Some updated environmental goals have been drafted, and some outreach around the updated goals and targets was conducted toward the end of 2019. Since the beginning of the year the focus has been on developing actions for the plan and developing a draft plan, which is currently out for public comment.

Much of the work builds on more than a decade of different projects, both through the environmental stewardship program and projects in programs led by other departments, including utilities and transportation. The focus has been on measuring the impact of the various efforts in the five focus areas of climate change, energy, waste, mobility and land use in natural systems. The energy and natural systems areas are the main focus areas that have identified overlaps with human services.

The work has included the setting of long-term targets for the focus areas, including zero waste, reducing greenhouse gases emissions, reducing energy use, increasing renewable energy usage to 100 percent clean, and increasing walkable access to parks. The Council indicated a desire for some near-term goals as well so goals and targets were developed for 2030. The energy, walkable access to parks and tree canopy goals have a particular tie to human services.

After establishing the high-level goals the focus turned to a process of analyzing best practices and possible actions for the plan. Specific attention was given to what the city has been doing and how it can build on its successes. The analysis included looking at a number of different criteria, including the impact of the strategies, the costs, the benefits and any equity benefit an action might have.

Ms. Ewing called attention to some specific actions. She highlighted for the Commission the actions having an environmental justice component. The climate vulnerability assessment action is aimed at analyzing the long-term impacts of climate change on infrastructure, natural systems and health specific to Bellevue. The overlap with human services is primarily around health concerns associated with climate change, such as more high-heat days, more severe rain storms, and poor air quality from forest fires. The plan calls for performing a climate equity assessment looking at environmental risks such as poor air quality, and access to environmental resources like parks and open spaces, and conducting an environmental equity assessment aimed at better understanding the air quality in Bellevue, in particular around freeways, to determine how that might impact some of the more vulnerable populations, especially as the city looks to add more housing in close proximity to freeways to better

understand current conditions and what might be done by way of code requirements to ensure those living near freeways will benefit from certain mitigation strategies, such as additional tree canopy.

In the energy category, Ms. Ewing said the actions outlined in the plan admittedly need a little more strategizing. She said her main interest is in looking at the programs the city has in place to support energy efficiency and weatherization to both improve the environment and help homeowners stay in their homes. She stressed the need to be fully aware of any programs Puget Sound Energy offers, understand the gaps and barriers people have to accessing those programs, and assisting low-income residents in taking advantage of those programs.

With regard to natural systems, Ms. Ewing said one action is to plant 75,000 trees in the city over the next 30 years with a focus on increasing the tree canopy in the neighborhoods that currently have the lowest tree canopy. Along with property owners, it is hoped that schools and other institutions will plant trees on their properties, and that the city will do the same in its parks, along streets and on public properties. The city could possibly offer free trees to further the goals of the home improvement programs. A goal has been set to have 100 percent of all Bellevue residents living within a third of a mile of a park or open space area.

Staff are in the process of reviewing the public comments received and making final revisions and updates to the draft plan. The draft plan will be brought before the Council on November 16 for review. The goal is to have the plan adopted by the Council by the end of the year.

Chair Ma noted his interest in building a robust bike system in the city. With electric bikes becoming less expensive, they can serve as a cheaper transportation option, and they can also help to decrease roadway congestion and the consumption of oil. With bike systems in place, people could go farther and do more on electric bikes. The bike system should connect to major transit centers as well. Ms. Ewing said there is an action in the plan to support the implementation of the city's Pedestrian/Bicycle Plan, though she said she would have to look to see if e-bikes are specifically addressed.

Commissioner Amirfaiz asked about the trees along 148th Avenue that were cut down by Puget Sound Energy, and what role the city will play to mitigate the impact or even to save trees. Ms. Ewing said that project certainly was complicated. The Puget Sound Energy project involved putting in a new backup line to increase reliability and minimize outages. The project resulted in the removal of some 300 trees. The role of the city was to permit the project and to uphold its requirements around tree replacement. One of the actions in the plan is to review the city's codes and consider how they might be strengthened to prevent any further tree loss and to increase the replacement requirements.

Chair Ma commented that Paris recently installed a number of water fountains where people can refill their water bottles. The intent behind the project was to reduce litter resulting from people using disposable water bottles. He said it would be interesting for Bellevue to consider doing the same. Ms. Ewing said that practice has not been on her radar, though she added it is a priority for city facilities to have water bottle filling stations. The concept could possibly be expanded to include parks facilities.

Ms. O'Reilly asked what an environmental equity assessment might consist of and when it might be implemented in the city. She asked if it might include identifying how far it is for residents to access things like food supermarkets and public spaces where people can have community gardens. Ms. Ewing said the scope of the work has not yet been defined but in general that is the type of thing the assessment will look at. The topic may also be useful to include as part of the Comprehensive Plan update that will be in full swing in 2022.

Ms. O'Reilly voiced particular interest with how the plan intersects with what the Home Repair programs do. She allowed that the program provides access to weatherization of homes, both from Puget Sound Energy and the King County Housing Authority. She said going forward she would be happy to work with Ms. Ewing on that. She added that while the Home Repair programs primarily focus on buildings, there is much that is also done outside. Tying in the issue of planting trees with the Home Repair program is an excellent idea.

Ms. O'Reilly encouraged the Commissioners to share with her any ideas or suggestions to pass along either to Ms. Ewing or Mr. Loewenherz.

C. Calculation Correction to 2021-2022 Human Services General Funds Recommendations

Ms. Catalano called attention to an error in the cell in the general fund recommendations that calculated the COLA increase for the King County Bar Association. The error was unfortunately not caught until after the Commission had voted to approve the recommendations. The error resulted in the overall recommendation being \$896 over budget. In consultation with the Chair and Vice Chair, the determination was made to recommend that the voted award to the King County Bar Association should be corrected to reflect the correct COLA amount, and that the \$896 overage should be subtracted proportionately from the shelters to which additional funding had been given, namely the Congregations for the Homeless enhanced shelter; the Friends of Youth day center outreach and the youth and day shelter; and Sophia Way Helen's Place. Catholic Community Services was not included in the calculation because their entire proportional increase would have the agency over its ask. The new allocations with the reductions made were: Congregations for the Homeless shelter, \$289,977; Friends of Youth day center, \$19,964; Friends of Youth youth and young adult shelter, \$67,476; and Sophia Way Helen's Place, \$113,523.

A motion to approve the funding recommendations as corrected was made by Commissioner Piper. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Mansfield and the motion carried unanimously.

8. OLD BUSINESS

Ms. Catalano reported that Chair Ma would be presenting the funding recommendations to the City Council on November 2.

Ms. Catalano informed the Commission that there would be no Commission meeting on November 3. The next meeting was announced for November 17.

Ms. Stangland indicated that she was going on maternity leave and would not be with the Commission again until February.

Commissioner Kline asked for a quick logic check on the MCRC allocation for their shelter. She allowed that one of the criteria the Commission that prevented a grant to the program was that it serves a low number of Bellevue residents, and that there was an overlap in services with some of the other shelters. She stressed that in making allocations to the various shelters, there was a sufficient difference in the MCRC proposal to cause the Commission not to include it with the other shelter programs.

Chair Ma agreed that the MCRC shelter is the only one providing culturally appropriate shelter for women, particularly those who are victims of domestic violence.

Commissioner Amirfaiz pointed out that the MCRC during public communications made the

indication that their shelter program is open to and serves everyone. She said she was not clear about whether the program is culturally focused, and for which groups, or if it is in fact open to all and serves all.

Ms. O'Reilly allowed that because the MCRC shelter program has not previously been funded by the city, the staff do not have a personal knowledge of the shelter beyond the information that was included in the application. She pointed out that a lot of additional funding had been requested by all three shelters, the men's, the family and the women's shelters, due to their moves to 24/7 operations. The Commission struggled with the large amounts of funding going to the other shelters and still not fully meeting the need, but chose to put the available funds into those programs. The Commission never concluded the MCRC programs were unfundable, but it did choose to go in another direction when allocating the dollars.

Commissioner Kline commented that the Commission never really looped the MCRC shelter into the overall discussion of the shelter programs. There was a rationale for doing that; it was not an oversight. The rationale was that the MCRC shelter served very few Bellevue residents, and that it was being carried out in conjunction with at least one of the other programs, leaving the Commission with the impression that there was a place for those women.

Ms. Catalano observed from the MCRC shelter application that some of their units are leased to Sophia Way to house their clients when they are unable to find a safe place for women in their program. The application went on to state the MCRC shelter currently had 15 available beds and would likely to lease three additional units on the Eastside to provide case management to an additional ten women. The shelters are comprised of four apartments, two in Bellevue and one in Seattle. Though the program is open to any and all single women at risk of homelessness, MCRC is uniquely able to offer culturally appropriate shelter to women of the Islamic faith.

Ms. Stangland added that the application specifically classifies the MCRC units as transitional housing, and that is why the Commission did not lump it into the shelter component. She added that during the previous funding cycle, the program served only four Bellevue residents.

Commissioner Kline pointed out that the MCRC shelter program had applied only once previously and was not funded because it did not meet the minimum criteria from the financial records standpoint.

9. NEW BUSINESS

Ms. O'Reilly reminded the Commissioners that she had previously forwarded to each of them an email to let them know the City Council was going to consider a resolution that would allocate over a million dollars from federal CARES Act funds to human services. She reported that in fact the Council supported the action. The additional funding is available to help agencies pay for Covid-19 related expenses extending back to March 2020 when the pandemic began. The funds will need to be allocated by the end of November.

Deputy Mayor Nieuwenhuis said the funds will be added to the human services fund for allocation specifically to agencies to reimburse them for Covid-19 related expenses. The agencies will be expected to show receipts for their expenses in order to receive the funds.

Ms. O'Reilly added that staff were in the process of working with all of the funded agencies seeking to know about their Covid-19 related expenses. The expenses cannot be programmatic, rather they must be expenses related to keeping the agencies themselves afloat. She said she would have a fuller report in a week or so. The process is being expedited to

meet the federal requirements for spending the funds. She added that the intent is to not leave any money on the table.

10. CONTINUED ORAL COMMUNICATIONS – None

11. ADJOURNMENT

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

Chair Ma adjourned the meeting at 7:34 p.m.

Secretary to the Human Services Commission

Date

Chairperson of the Human Services Commission

Date