

The Human Services Commission approved these minutes on January 5, 2021

CITY OF BELLEVUE
HUMAN SERVICES COMMISSION
PARKS AND COMMUNITY SERVICES BOARD
JOINT MEETING
MINUTES

December 1, 2020
6:00 p.m.

Virtual Meeting

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

HUMAN SERVICES
COMMISSIONERS ABSENT: Commissioner Mercer

PARKS AND COMMUNITY
SERVICES BOARD
MEMBERS PRESENT: Heather Trescases, David Hamilton, Paul Clark, Debra
Kumar

PARKS AND COMMUNITY
SERVICES BOARD
MEMBERS ABSENT: Stuart Heath, Eric Synn, Pamela Unger

STAFF PRESENT: Alex O'Reilly, Dee Dee Catalano, Toni Esparza, Camron
Parker, Michael Shiosaki, Shelley McVein, Shelley
Brittingham, Department of Parks and Community
Services; Deputy Mayor Nieuwenhuis, Councilmember
Zahn

GUEST SPEAKERS: None

RECORDING SECRETARY: Gerry Lindsay

1. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 6:00 p.m. by Human Services Commission who presided.

2. ROLL CALL

Upon the call of the roll, all Human Services Commissioners were present with the exception of Commissioner Mercer, who was excused. All Parks and Community Services Board members were present with the exception of Stewart Heath, Eric Synn and Pamela Unger

3. TEMPORARY SUSPENSION OF BYLAWS

Human Services Commission stated that because in-person meetings are prohibited by the Governor's emergency order concerning the Open Public Meetings Act, the Parks and Community Services Board and the Human Services Commission were holding meetings

remotely for an unknown period of time. He said the bylaws of the Parks and Community Services Board and the Human Services Commission regarding remote participation and the order of business would be suspended until such time as meetings are no longer held remotely.

6. REMARKS FROM THE CITY COUNCIL LIAISONS

Deputy Mayor Nieuwenhuis said it was an honor to serve as Council liaison to the Human Services Commission. He said he is extremely proud of the work the Commission does in diligently discussing all applications for funding and working to develop funding recommendations for non-profit agencies. He said he was especially pleased to note the equity lens the Commission incorporates to make sure all the needs of the entire diverse community that is Bellevue, including those with disabilities, immigrants and older adults. There was nothing rushed about the process and each application was deeply considered and aligned with community needs. In light of the pandemic, the Commission deftly and successfully pivoted to focus on the most crucial needs based on great intel and data from the staff. Each Commissioner is fully committed to building a healthy community for all residents. He thanked the Commissioners as well as the Board members for their dedicated service to the city and to adjusting to meeting via Zoom.

Councilmember Zahn said one of the challenges the Park Board had to overcome was the fact that many parks facilities had to be closed due to the pandemic. The Board spent time focused on how to leverage facilities to continue serving the communities while the community centers are closed. There was a focus on understanding the needs of the staff to support the community, and questions were asked about what could be done for the community even with community centers closed. One of the biggest projects worked on was the new park in Newport Hills. The Board engaged in a lot of thoughtful consideration into the issue of naming the park based on feedback from the community. The work of the Board to update a variety of parks plans was put on hold temporarily during the pandemic; hopefully they will be taken up again in 2021.

4. REMARKS FROM THE PARKS AND COMMUNITY SERVICES DEPARTMENT DIRECTOR

Parks and Community Services Department Director Michael Shiosaki commented that the last ten months has seen the pandemic reshape how everyone lives, works and plays. More than ever, it has shown the importance of the city's parks and open spaces, and the city's commitment to helping those in need. He suggested the operative words for 2020 are flexibility and nimbleness. He thanked the Board and Commission members for their diligent work and their commitment to volunteering their time. Both Deputy Mayor Nieuwenhuis and Councilmember Zahn are new to the role of liaison to the Commission and the Board respectively, but their support and commitment to the work of the parks department and the city are to be commended along with the strategic guidance and insights they provided that have helped to shape programs and services. The Commission has responded to the need by holding extra meetings to develop recommendations for how to distribute the additional \$3 million received since the start of the pandemic. The Board spent much of its time and effort working on the department's strategic plan that serves as the guidebook for the future. The plan helped the city retain its perfect score in its reaccreditation efforts.

Mr. Shiosaki thanked the members of the Commission and the Board along with the Councilmembers and the staff for their hard work aimed at improving the quality of people's lives in Bellevue. He said as a small token of appreciation each Board and Commission member would be receiving a holiday amaryllis.

Mr. Shiosaki thanked the parks department staff for their dedication. He offered a special thank you to Shelly McVein for ably taking on the acting director role for more than a year, and to Shelly Brittingham and Toni Esparza for helping him get up to speed. He thanked Camron Parker and Nancy Harvey for their efforts staffing the Board, and to Alex O'Reilly and Dee Dee Catalano for their work on behalf of the Commission.

5. 2020 ACCOMPLISHMENTS OF THE PARKS AND COMMUNITY SERVICES BOARD AND HUMAN SERVICES COMMISSION

Board Chair Trescases commented that 2020 had been quite a year. The initial impact of the pandemic was that the work the Board was doing was not considered essential and thus the Board was not allowed to meet until June. The pandemic has, however, highlighted how important the park systems are and the degree to which people want and need to be outdoors. The biggest thing worked on by the Board, both prior to and during the shutdown, was reaccreditation of the parks department. Bellevue is one of only a small handful of cities that have accreditation. To have garnered a perfect score is testament to the work of the staff. The Board was tasked with reviewing and approving the 2020 Parks Strategic Plan, the 2020 Parks Recreation Program Plan, the 2020 Marketing and Communications Plan, the Maintenance Management Plan, and the Structural Operations Plan. The Board then spent time focused on the 2021-2027 Parks Capital Investment Program budget and developing recommendations for priorities and areas of funding. The Board received an update on the Bellevue aquatic center feasibility study and the Environmental Stewardship Plan, and in then started down the path of naming the new Newport Hills neighborhood park. The Board also received an update on the Grand Connection Sequence 1 Guidelines and Standards. While the citywide effort is not directly under the purview of the Board, the Grand Connection contains a number of elements of great interest to the Board in the way it will contribute to a sense of place and community.

Human Services Commission Chair Ma agreed that 2020 had been a crazy year. He voiced his appreciation for the support and guidance given to the work of the Commission by Deputy Mayor Nieuwenhuis. The work of the Commission was also guided by the 2019-2020 Human Services Needs Update, the document on which the Commission bases decisions in regard to where to invest resources. Between March and May, during the pandemic, the Commission also shut down and was not able to meet. The pandemic shifted the needs in the community to a large degree. In working through the various applications for funding, the Commission focused on economic need, housing, transportation, cultural responsiveness to Bellevue's diversity, child care, civil legal services, and services for older adults and people with disabilities. Once the Commission began meeting virtually in June, additional meetings were scheduled in order to get the work done. The Commission applied an equity lens in discussing programs to fund. The Commission did undergo explicit bias training to guide in the equitable distribution of the available resources.

Ten new programs were ultimately funded, including programs targeting people of color and those with disabilities. Consideration was also given to helping smaller non-profits. Homelessness was a pressing issue, but the Commission kept an eye on funding the continuum of services. In all the Commission reviewed over a hundred applications. As always, the need was greater than the level of funding available to address the need. In addition to allocating general fund dollars, the Commission also developed a recommendation for distributing the city's Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) dollars. An influx of money was received from Amazon totaling \$250,000 that was used to bolster the general fund dollars in the areas of food and housing. The CARES Act also provided additional funds for distribution; those funds were quickly distributed to food, shelter and financial assistance programs under the guidance of the City Council and human services staff.

Board Member Hamilton said the perfect accreditation score the parks department got was worthy of being highlighted. He said the Board in doing its work comes across a lot of active and engaged citizens. What the accreditation means is that Bellevue's parks system is well managed in every aspect. Bellevue citizens are the customers of Bellevue's parks, and they can at the end of the day rest assured that their tax dollars and everything having to do with the park system is well run.

Councilmember Zahn added that the city made purchases during the year to expand the parks system. One parcel acquired extends the Mercer Slough area to the north, and another yielded a connection between Lake Sammamish and Weowna Park. Land is precious in Bellevue and staff being able to find willing sellers is a good thing.

Human Services Commissioner Kline took the opportunity to thank her fellow Commissioners, the members of the parks Board and all the city staff for all of their hard work during the pandemic. The work done by all is always outstanding, but the way in which everyone has stepped up working from home and keeping everything moving along even in the face of curve balls has been amazing. She said she was looking forward to 2021.

7. ADJOURNMENT

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

Human Services Commission Chair Ma adjourned the meeting at 6:34 p.m.

Secretary to the Human Services Commission

Date

Chairperson of the Human Services Commission

Date