

The Human Services Commission approved these minutes on May 18, 2021

CITY OF BELLEVUE
HUMAN SERVICES COMMISSION
MINUTES

April 6, 2021
6:00 p.m.

Bellevue City Hall
City Council Conference Room 1E-113

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

COMMISSIONERS ABSENT: None

STAFF PRESENT: Alex O'Reilly, Dee Dee Catalano, Christy Stangland, Toni Esparza, Department of Parks and Community Services; Kate Nesse, Department of Community Development

GUEST SPEAKERS: None

RECORDING SECRETARY: Gerry Lindsay

1. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 6:03 p.m. by Chair Kline who presided.

2. ROLL CALL

Upon the call of the roll, all Commissioners were present with the exception of Commissioner Mercer, who arrived at 6:07 p.m.

Chair Kline 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, the Commission's by-laws regarding remote participation and the order of business were suspended until such time as meetings were no longer being held remotely.

3. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

A. March 2, 2021

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

4. ORAL AND WRITTEN COMMUNICATIONS – None

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

6. STAFF AND COMMISSIONER REPORTS

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Commissioner Ma shared that Redmond recently opened a new affordable mixed-use housing

complex. He said ARCH was involved with the project. There are some market-rate units in the mix.

7. INFORMATION FOR THE COMMISSION

A. Overview of Recent Bellevue Demographic Data

Human Services Manager Alex O'Reilly noted that the Human Services Needs Update includes a chapter on demographics. She said city demographer Kate Nesse with the Department of Community Development will be helping to draft that chapter.

Ms. Nesse noted that in 1990 Bellevue had a reputation for being a rich, white suburb, and the demographics proved that. By 2000 Bellevue was seeing increasing diversity, a trend that has continued to where the city is now about 50 percent non-white. Many households now identify as being multiracial. At the same time, many areas of Bellevue have become more densely populated. In 1990 there were almost no residents in the Downtown; now it has many residents. Crossroads has grown in density, as has the Cougar Mountain area.

Ms. Nesse said those under the age of 18 are majority non-white, while those over age 65 are majority white. Ten years ago the percentage of those over 65 and white was higher; that percentage has shrunk over time. The same is true of the age group 45 to 64 years. There is a lot of in-migration occurring in the 18 to 44 category so it can be expected that diversity in the upper age groups will continue to become more racially diverse. Many who are migrating into the city were born outside the United States, and the majority of those born abroad were born in Asia.

As of April 1, 2020, Bellevue's population was 148,100, making Bellevue the fifth most populous city in the state of Washington. Between 2019 and 2020 Bellevue's population grew by 1.9 percent. The rate of population growth in the city between 2010 and 2020 was 21 percent.

Cultural diversity continues to grow in the city. Forty-four percent of the residents speak a language other than English at home, and 41 percent were born outside the United States. The tech industry has played a big role in that outcome. There were 1240 H-1B new visa applications accepted from companies headquartered in Bellevue in 2020, with the prime movers being Amazon, Microsoft, Expedia and T-Mobile.

Not everyone works in the tech industry and income inequality is also growing in Bellevue. In 2019 the median income was \$127,402. The difference between the highest earners and the lowest earners, however, has increased over time and continues to do so. The degree of income inequality between the top 20 percent and the bottom 20 percent of households has increased by 28 percent. Adjusted for inflation, income in the lowest quintile has largely remained steady.

Ms. Ness noted that in 2019 there were 160,020 jobs in the city. She said that number represents 4.8 percent growth over 2018. About a quarter of those who work in Bellevue also live in Bellevue. The target for jobs in 2035 is 185,100. There are 58,175 jobs in the Downtown alone, and almost all of Bellevue's jobs are located in the major employment centers.

The percentage of households that do not have a car continues to increase. The most recent statistic is ten percent, and most of those households are younger. The number of bike lane miles continues to increase in Bellevue. The average commute is 25 minutes for Bellevue residents and 38 minutes for non-Bellevue residents. The percentage of people who drive

alone continues to drop, particularly for those who live in Bellevue.

Almost half of the housing in Bellevue is made up of multifamily units. Almost all new housing units are multifamily. The degree to which Bellevue's housing is diverse is striking. All housing in the Downtown and in BelRed is multifamily. In Somerset all the units are single family. Across most of Bellevue, however, there is a mix of single family and multifamily with nearly an equal split. The number of zero and one-bedroom units being built in the city is steadily increasing as demand for those units as household sizes get smaller. On the other hand, single family housing is getting larger, with an increasing number of very large single family homes. Between 2010 and 2019 there was an 18 percent increase in very large single family homes, a 50 percent increase in very small single family homes, and only a one percent increase in two- and three-bedroom single family homes.

Ms. Nesse said the information and more can be found on the city's community data website. She said the visioning process for updating the city's Comprehensive Plan will kick off early in 2022, and the new target year will be 2044.

Commissioner Ma commented that the gap between the number of housing units available to those in the lower-income categories should be highlighted in the Needs Update. Ms. Nesse said that is always a challenge to make clear, but she agreed it is an important element.

Chair Kline said she was aware that the information was recently presented to the Bellevue Network on Aging and she asked what interests and areas of focus were. Ms. Nesse said they were of course interested in older adults, but they were particularly interested in identifying older adults that have particular needs so those needs can be addressed. The particular needs they identified were older adults living alone and those who rely on Social Security and other income support. Many in the older adult group have lower incomes but a lot more wealth, something that is very difficult to quantify. The data collection process does not really focus on the wealth of people, so it is harder to track. The problem with wealth is that only the IRS asks about it, and then only in terms of what they can tax. Data from the IRS is very generalized due to privacy concerns. For most people, the bulk of their wealth is in their house, and that is one way to draw some conclusions regarding wealth.

Commissioner Ma voiced his interest in seeing data about the number of children in childcare centers in Bellevue and any identified gaps. Ms. Nesse said she could gather more information about children for the Commission.

Chair Kline suggested it would be helpful to ask people if they are having to supplement their incomes by drawing on their savings or the principle of their investments. Ms. Nesse said the census bureau has for the past year been conducting surveys in the 50 largest metro areas to determine the impacts of the pandemic, and they have been seeking specific information about who is working, when they are working, and who is having to use some of their savings to get by. She agreed that information would be helpful to include.

Ms. Nesse clarified that 2020 census data will not be available for the Needs Update. It usually takes two years for data from the decennial census to become available. Most data in the Needs Update is drawn from the American Community Survey which is released between September and January annually.

Ms. O'Reilly asked if certain characteristics can be shown by neighborhood. Ms. Nesse said she creates a neighborhood profile table annually and releases it in June.

Commissioner Piper asked if information is captured relative to sexual orientation or gender identity. Ms. Nesse said the census bureau does not ask about sexual orientation but it does

collect statistics on same-sex households.

B. HUD CDBG-CV2 Funding Application Process and Review of Current Needs

Grant Coordinator Dee Dee Catalano reminded the Commissioners that the CARES Act passed in March 2020 had \$5 billion in CDBG-CV funding. CV1 was \$2 billion and it went directly to the entitlement cities, from which Bellevue received \$489,623. CV3 was \$3 billion and it also went directly to the entitlement cities based on the impacts of the Coronavirus, and Bellevue received \$897,287. CV2 was \$1 billion distributed directly to the states, which have the option of awarding funds to both entitlement and non-entitlement cities. The Washington Department of Commerce decided to allocate \$10 million of its CV2 funds to the direct entitlement cities, which includes Bellevue. The formula for distribution is based on low- and moderate-income populations, by which Bellevue will receive \$173,748. Entitlement cities must apply for the funds, but the process is not competitive. The application period runs from April 1 to April 30. CV2 funding is to be used to extend or enhance current CV1 and CV3 projects, although projects addressing new needs are allowed provided they go through the CDBG public process that includes public notice and a public hearing.

Ms. Catalano said the need areas addressed with the CV1 and CV3 funds were shelter services, rent assistance, childcare and legal services. She said the recommendation of staff for allocating the CV2 funds was to select a single need area if possible. If one of the current needs is recommended for CV2, and there are existing funded activities or applications have been received, they can be funded without an RFP. But if an application for a specific activity is not received, an RFP will be required. Once an area is recommended for funding, after applying to the Department of Commerce and being notified that the funding has been approved, the city will need to contract with the Department of Commerce. The contract will have to have a scope of work outlining which agencies will be receiving the money. The anticipation is that the contracting process will occur in June, and the City Council must approve the contract.

Ms. O'Reilly reminded the Commissioners that a similar exercise was undertaken when looking at needs that could be funded with CV1 dollars. She stressed that CV funds must be directly related to the impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic. She briefly reviewed a few areas that already have been funded, plus a couple of new areas that might qualify for CV2 funds.

Adult behavioral health is a continuing issue. The Commission allocated more than \$70,000 in CV3 funds to the application from the men's shelter to have an onsite mental health specialist. From a variety of sources, including national and local data, it is evident that the pandemic has created a huge adverse mental health impact. Using national statistics, NAMI reported that 40 percent of the community is experiencing mental health conditions, which in Bellevue could be as many as 52,700 residents. She said from her work on how the sales tax revenues from HB-1590 might be spent, it is clear some dollars should be allocated to behavioral health. Mental health providers across the board have reporting an increased number of requests for adult counseling due to stress and anxiety.

With regard to youth behavioral health, Ms. O'Reilly said there are some striking statistics. There was a recent front-page headline in the *Seattle Times* regarding the impact on kids up to high school age and beyond. The article looked at the increase in stress and anxiety and suicidal ideation among the youth which has been made worse by the pandemic. David Downing, a youth mental health expert, was quoted as saying youth have said to counselors they believe suicide is the solution for their mental health issues. In March Governor Inslee declared youth mental health to be a crisis. Experts are saying that even once kids start going back to school, there will be no reversal of the effects of a year in isolation.

Ms. O'Reilly said there have also been an increase in the number of calls to 211 seeking legal assistance. Some of the requests have related to tenant/landlord financial issues, and some have related to domestic violence issues. There will be a clear need for assistance relative to evictions once the eviction moratorium is lifted. Governor Inslee recently extended the moratorium to the end of June. Preventing evictions is and will continue to be an issue. Also of concern is the fact that evictions stay on one's credit rating and make it difficult to get future housing.

Emergency food assistance was funded using CV3 dollars. Providers have reported that people trying to keep their rents paid are skimping on their food budgets and thus are making more visits to the food bank and other meal programs. According to King County's Covid-19 dashboard, 11.7 percent of Bellevue households in zip code 98007 received SNAP program benefits in January 2021, which was a 19.2 percent increase over the same month in 2019 and a 2.1 percent increase over January 2020. The Ismaili I-CERV community food drive at the end of March brought in 12,560 pounds of food in only four hours, and the beneficiaries included the Bellevue School District Family Connection Center, the Lake Washington School District and the Boys & Girls Club in Bellevue and Kirkland.

Ms. O'Reilly said emergency financial assistance continues to be a need. While unemployment rates are dropping in some areas, many are far in arrears on their rent payments. Agencies continue to report a steady stream of people requesting assistance and many have found it necessary to limit rent assistance to only a few months. A tsunami of evictions is what people are dreading after the eviction moratoriums end. One of the agencies that was awarded funding for 2021 spent its entire grant in only the first quarter because the need is so great.

Shelters continue to be full and some of the overflow has been accommodated via hotel vouchers using funding from King County, particularly for the more vulnerable populations. It is not known how long the county will continue to fund those vouchers. There was no One Night Count in 2021 because of the pandemic, though there was a count of those in shelters on a particular night. There have been more calls from Bellevue residents to the homeless outreach coordinator to check in on people they have observed as being homeless in the city.

Ms. O'Reilly said there has been a lot of press about the number of people in King County who are looking to get vaccinated. Beginning on April 15, everyone over the age of 16 in the state will be eligible for the vaccine, but the focus will be on the vulnerable communities, including those in the BIPOC community, older adults, persons with disabilities, and persons at very high risk of contracting Covid-19 but lack access to the vaccine for various reasons. The Bellevue Fire department has sent out mobile teams over the last two months and has vaccinated over 1100 people in long-term care facilities. The teams are now turning their focus to shelters and day centers. There is a need for funding for organizations that work with BIPOC communities to help them get people vaccinated.

Domestic violence continues to be an issue due to the pandemic. Statewide domestic violence offences were lower in March 2021 than they were in March 2020. LifeWire reports a huge need for financial assistance for advocacy services. Local Police Department data shows that between January and March 2021, there were 192 domestic violence-related cases, which is four percent below the average over the last five years.

There is a continued need for low-cost medical services. Even though children under the age of 18 are able to receive AppleCare through the state's Medicaid services, for some populations and some ages of people the picture is not always positive about access to medical services. A focus group conducted via Zoom for the Needs Update and the work on HB-1590 involved some Latinx parents who have students in the Bellevue School District. Several of

the participants talked about being turned away at local clinics if they did not have health insurance. Many were told to go to an emergency room.

Ms. O'Reilly raised the issue of additional navigation services. She said in a focus group of Latinx parents they mentioned they did not know where to find services and information about resources in their language.

Commissioner Ma said the real issue is basic needs. Much of the mental health and domestic violence issue stem from socio-economic anxiety and basic needs anxiety.

Commissioner Piper concurred. He said it is challenging when presented with all of the areas of need and asked to choose from among them. He said behavioral health is a critical issue, particularly youth behavioral health.

Commissioner Amirfaiz commented on the fact that the amount of money available is not very large. She said she would like to see it targeted at rental assistance for families with children.

Chair Kline noted that CDBG-CV1 funds were allocated for childcare. Ms. Catalano said Child Care Resources and the Bellevue School District each received \$75,000 in that allocation to be used for scholarships and for some staff assistance. Chair Kline said childcare is a good vehicle for assisting families, in addition to rental assistance.

Commissioner Mercer noted her support for using the funds for rental assistance.

Commissioner McClure said she favored using the funds for behavioral health assistance. She agreed that rental assistance is also a great option. She asked if youth behavioral health would be considered a new funding aspect. Ms. Catalano confirmed that. She added that even though India Association of Western Washington had some behavioral health services in its application, it is only a small program that is unlikely to accommodate more money for their service. The other behavioral health program funded was for PTSD assistance in the shelter. Commissioner McClure said she could easily make a case for all of the issues highlighted by the staff.

Chair Kline asked staff what they saw as the best use of the funds from an impact point of view. Ms. Catalano said from a procedural standpoint the simplest approach would be to fund an agency for something that is currently funded. The next step up would be something like youth behavioral health, which would require an RFP but which could be done relatively quickly. The most time-consuming approach would be a new program, such as vaccination outreach, which would require an RFP, noticing and a public hearing.

Chair Kline asked if any of the agencies already funded have additional capacity that would have been funded if more money had been available. Ms. Catalano shared with the Commissioners a chart showing total requests and total amounts funded in the area of rental assistance. She noted that Centro Cultural Mexicano had \$100,000 not funded, and YMCA had \$149,713. The capacity for the agencies to offer additional services is still there. In the food category, YMCA had just over \$100,000 and the other agencies had no remaining requests. There were agencies that just did not have the capacity and were not recommended for funding. Hopelink and India Association of Western Washington were the two agencies that received allocations for rental assistance in CV1, and India Association of Western Washington received rental assistance for CV3 as well. There is a clear ongoing need for child care, but CV1 money for legal services is still being spent.

Ms. O'Reilly added that specific agencies do not have to be specified in the Department of

Commerce application for CV2 funds. It is necessary, however, to identify a service area.

Commissioner Ma reiterated the need to focus on basic needs, such as food and emergency financial assistance. He said he would put childcare into the top tier as well.

Ms. Catalano informed the Commissioners that she ran into an issue when looking at what CV3 applications would be eligible. She said the Hopelink food bank intended to apply, but because of Covid their operations have changed and they no longer take any demographic information except for name and address. Accordingly, the program would not qualify for CDBG funds. The YMCA's food box delivery to the King County Housing Authority complexes meets all CDBG requirements because by definition those who live in a housing authority complex are low-income.

Ms. O'Reilly said the Bellevue School District Family Connections Center ran into that same CDBG barrier and was not able to apply for the CV funds.

Commissioner Amirfaiz asked if agencies can give out food vouchers for families to use in buying their own food. Ms. Catalano that can only be done for families who are income qualified.

Chair Kline pointed out that as the economy starts to open up again, childcare is in many cases the first need in the chain of getting folks back to work and economic stability.

Ms. O'Reilly asked if it would be possible to use the CV2 funds for both emergency financial assistance and childcare. Ms. Catalano said both of those would qualify, and both could be provided by agencies that are already funded.

Chair Kline noted there was consensus in favor of moving forward with emergency financial assistance and childcare. She asked if the city would be obligated to do both if the application to the Department of Commerce lists both, or if later the decision could be made to fund just one of the two. Ms. Catalano said she would have to seek an answer to that question from Commerce.

A motion to split the funds 70 percent for childcare and 30 percent into emergency financial assistance was made by Commissioner Ma. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Mansfield.

Commissioner Amirfaiz said she did not believe 30 percent of \$173,000 would go far in regard to emergency financial assistance. She proposed a 50-50 split of the funds.

A motion to amend the motion to split the funds evenly between childcare and emergency financial assistance was made by Commissioner Amirfaiz. The motion to amend was seconded by Commissioner Mercer.

Commissioner Ma said his primary interest continued to be to put the funds into childcare and food assistance. He said his preference would be to put 70 percent into childcare and 30 percent into food.

A motion to amend the amendment to split the funds 70 percent for childcare and 30 percent for food was made by Commissioner Ma. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Mansfield.

Commissioner Amirfaiz pointed out that there are challenges involved with using the funds for food assistance. Ms. Catalano suggested that funding for food should be done through the

YMCA's food box delivery program to the King County Housing Authority properties.

The motion to amend the amendment carried unanimously.

The main motion, as amended, carried unanimously.

Ms. Catalano clarified that 30 percent of the funds would go to the currently funded YMCA food box delivery program, and said she would check in with the Bellevue School District and Child Care Resources to see which one of them should receive the 70 percent for child care. She said she would fill out the application to Commerce to fund those two areas.

C. Approval of Second Amendment to 2019 Annual Action Plan

Ms. Catalano said the proposed action would add the CDBG-CV3 funding to the Annual Action Plan for submittal to HUD.

A motion to approve the second amendment to the 2019 Annual Action Plan was made by Commissioner Ma. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Piper and the motion carried unanimously.

8. OLD BUSINESS

Ms. O'Reilly informed the Commission that an RFP was issued two weeks ago for \$10,000 for a Latinx cultural navigator program. She said the deadline for receiving proposals was April 9 and noted that a single application had already been received. After all applications are in, staff will produce a staff review ahead of the Commission's April 20 meeting.

Ms. O'Reilly reminded the Commissioners that there had been conversations with both Redmond and Kirkland about potentially pooling funds for the purpose. However, both of those cities decided to go in a different direction.

9. NEW BUSINESS

Ms. O'Reilly reported that both Commissioner Ma and Commissioner McClure had been reappointed to the Commission. She noted that Commissioner Ma was appointed to a second four-year term, and Commissioner McClure was appointed to her first four-year term after having finished the term of former Commissioner Jain.

Chair Kline thanked both Commissioners for being willing to continue as members of the Commission.

Ms. Esparza reported that she would be going to the Council on April 19 to talk about the development of the Human Services Needs Update.

10. CONTINUED ORAL COMMUNICATIONS – None

11. ADJOURNMENT

A motion to adjourn was made by Commissioner Ma. The motion was seconded by Commissioner McClure and the motion carried unanimously.

Chair Kline adjourned the meeting at 7:56 p.m.

Secretary to the Human Services Commission

Date

Chairperson of the Human Services Commission

Date