

The Human Services Commission approved these minutes on June 1, 2021

CITY OF BELLEVUE
HUMAN SERVICES COMMISSION
MINUTES

May 4, 2021
6:00 p.m.

Bellevue City Hall
Virtual Meeting

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

COMMISSIONERS ABSENT: Commissioner Mercer

STAFF PRESENT: Alex O'Reilly, Christy Stangland, Toni Esparza, Elaine Acacio, Sade Britt, Yuriana Garcia Department of Parks and Community Services; Major Mark Tarantino, Police

GUEST SPEAKERS: None

RECORDING SECRETARY: Gerry Lindsay

1. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 6:01 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 was excused.

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 – None
4. ORAL AND WRITTEN COMMUNICATIONS – None
5. COMMUNICATIONS FROM CITY COUNCIL, COMMUNITY COUNCIL, BOARDS AND COMMISSIONS – None
6. STAFF AND COMMISSIONER REPORTS

Assistant Director of the Department of Parks and Community Services Toni Esparza reported that members of the 1590 work group presented an update to the City Council regarding the outreach that has been occurring. She reminded the Commissioners that HB-1590 presented the opportunity to impose a 0.01 percent sales tax, which the Council adopted in December. Between 60 percent and 100 percent of the proceeds from the tax are to be directed to affordable housing. Since its adoption by the legislation, some definitions have changed, making the potential uses for the dollars broader. The funds can now be used for land

acquisition, property development and building acquisition for affordable housing or mental health facilities. Additionally, the definition of affordable housing was changed to include emergency, transitional and permanent housing. Everyone served by the tax proceeds must be at 60 percent of area median income or lower. All homeless persons qualify to be served.

Continuing, Ms. Esparza said one option within the bill allows for spending between zero percent and 40 percent of the proceeds on behavioral health services or assessments, or housing-related services or assessments. The work team discussed with the Council the outreach that has occurred to date to faith-based organizations and agencies in the community that have cultural expertise or which respond with specially designed services to various cultures in the community.

The Council approved issuing an RFP for \$1.8 million to cover services and staffing. The areas approved to be covered by the RFP are mental health services, supportive services, and rental assistance, each with specific criteria. Each section identifies specific items for which applications will be sought. The priorities for behavioral health include same-day assessment and treatment for behavioral health and substance use disorder; medically assisted treatments; therapeutic case management; and specifically designed culturally responsive services for historically underserved communities. Under supportive services, the list includes broader case management toward housing stability; and employment services for things like resume development, job skills, training or interviewing skills. The rental assistance category includes crisis rental assistance and move-in cost assistance for those exiting homelessness and entering stable housing.

Human Services Manager Alex O'Reilly said following approval of the RFP by the Council, staff began the work to put together a form to be sent out to a broad range of currently funded and other agencies. The intent is to have the RFP go out no later than May 14. Agencies will have three weeks to complete the form and submit it by June 4. Following that, the Commission will be engaged in determining which applications should be approved and funded. It is the desire of the Council that the funds be distributed quickly in the community, so a quick turnaround is expected, with the Commission's first discussion occurring at the June 15 meeting. An additional meeting will be needed on June 29 to finalize the recommendations ahead of the required Council approval in July. The expertise of the Commission in analyzing applications and making good recommendations was recognized by the Council.

Ms. O'Reilly said the financial criteria for agencies that was just approved by the Commission will be used. The criteria will be spelled out in the RFP because of the very specific nature of how the funds must be used according to the legislating authority.

7. INFORMATION FOR THE COMMISSION

A. Update on the Diversity Advantage Initiative

Ms. Elaine Acacio, Diversity and Inclusion Administrator began with an acknowledgement that the city is on the Indigenous Land of Coast Salish peoples who have reserved treaty rights to the land, including the Duwamish (dx^wdəwʔabš), Suquamish Tribe, (dx^wəq^wabš), Muckleshoot Indian Tribe (bəqəlšuʔ) and Snoqualmie Indian Tribe (sduk^walbix^w). She said the city thanks the caretakers of the land who have lived, and continue to live, since time immemorial. She said the land acknowledgement involves ongoing conversations with the city, in part to honor the original caretakers and in part to recognize that the indigenous brothers and sisters continue to be in the city contributing to everyday life.

Ms. Acacio said the Council adopted the Diversity Advantage Initiative in 2014 with the

tagline “Bellevue welcomes the world. Our diversity is our strength. We embrace the future while respecting our past.” The six-year anniversary of Diversity Advantage Initiative was celebrated in January 2021 at the Diversity Summit. A series of panelists were brought in to talk about different issues.

The city recently learned it was named a finalist with All American Cities through the National Civic League. The Diversity Advantage Initiative in addition to work done by Jubilee REACH and the Inspiration Playground were all part of the packet that was submitted by the city.

Ms. Acacio said the diversity advantage organization continues to move forward with training, hiring, procurement, language access, department workplans, and employee resource groups. The online training sessions address cultural competence foundations; ableism, allyship and disability justice; procurement and contracting for equity; and Title VI Civil Rights Act. The data is being reviewed to determine what kind of impacts have come about as a result of the new processes and recommendations.

Ms. Acacio allowed that employee resource groups are primarily inward facing, but noted that a lot has been done in terms of looking at mental wellness, networking, and showing up for one another. One of the groups held drop-in meetings hosted for BIPOC staff and allies to talk about pertinent issues relative to race-based violence and bias.

The organization has expanded its staff through the hiring of an equity coordinator, and has advertised for chief diversity, equity and inclusion coordinator. She said Sade Britt was hired to serve as the equity coordinator and to among other things, make sure the Diversity Advantage Initiative story is being told, and to conduct data and metrics tracking to better target the work.

Ms. Britt said she was excited because her job is both internal and external facing. She said her external work will include outreach in the community and to collaborate with folks across the city to make sure Bellevue is a place where everyone can thrive.

Ms. Acacio said the landscape has changed. Within the Covid-19 pandemic, the organization focused on mobilizing to provide support and services to the most vulnerable populations. The diversity team was in a good position to serve as conduits, connecting people with subject matter experts. Equity was given a seat for the first time in the Emergency Operations Center. On the back end, a spreadsheet of resources was developed to highlight community resources, and the vulnerable and marginalized communities were centered in the work being done by the diversity team. Given the civil unrest and the ongoing national conversations, there have been many challenges. The team has done an excellent job collaborating some of the harder conversations, both internally and externally.

Yuriana Garcia Tellez, Outreach and Engagement Administrator, said she has been with the city for two and a half years. She noted that human services has been a great partner to the diversity team, particularly because the work of both is intertwined in serving the community. Often the community is asked to respond to surveys or provide feedback as part of a focus group. The collected information is used in creating programs and initiatives, but sometimes the city fails to share with the community how their information was used.

Ms. Garcia Tellez noted that the city has moved forward with ways to increase dialog and awareness of issues. The cross-cultural feasibility study is a Council-directed initiative and is one of the six-year recommendations as part of the Diversity Advantage Initiative with the mission to educate, celebrate, challenge and inspire Bellevue to become a welcoming and inclusive community that embraces diversity. In 2018 the public outreach study collected

feedback from over 450 community members through surveys and a community gathering. The focus was on what folks want to understand and learn about each other's identity and culture. Through the process, folks highlighted personal values, customs, arts and culture, history, heritage and community concerns. Bellevue residents who are engaged in cross-cultural activities find value in the programs and spaces provided by the city. There were some barriers identified through the cross-cultural study, including transportation, the time of day programming is offered, cost, location, accessibility, safety concerns, and lack of trust of government. Also identified was an increasing demand for cross-cultural gathering spaces.

Ms. Garcia Yellen Tellez said the findings were to conduct an assessment of existing city programs, to strengthen the Community Liaisons program, and to implement Phase II of the Council approach looking at the effectiveness and adequacy of places where cross-cultural programming and gatherings take place.

The second phase of the study included an extensive look at all current public and private spaces. More than 40 interviews were conducted with community members, community partners and city stakeholders. The study looked at community centers to determine how often they are used, what times they are being used, what is working well and what is not working well. The private venues reviewed included Meydenbauer Center, Kids Quest, the King County Library System spaces, Bellevue College and the Bellevue School District. It was found that there is a strong interest in the community to have a place where people can belong, to interact with each other, and to learn from each other's culture. There were many different visions for what such a gathering space would look like, and what the cross-cultural activities in them would look like. There were also folks wanting to embed culturally relevant social services within a cross-cultural space. The final findings and recommendations included cultivating project champions, consider organizing a small group of leaders, with representatives from the city, community stakeholders and the corporate sector; integrating the work into existing community and economic development efforts that will help illuminate the economic viability and market potential for a cross-cultural facility; and conducting additional demand analyses to confirm and refine desired physical program spaces, completing additional detailed potential sites evaluation, prioritizing and applying the evaluation criteria. It was also determined that shared marketing and collaboration resources should be developed for existing programs.

Ms. Garcia Yellen Tellez explained that the Bellevue Centers Communities of Color Initiative is a new initiative that explores a new form of engagement. Traditional methods of engagement often are transactional and there is a need to move away from that to an inclusive engagement model, one that takes into account that the community is expert in its own experiences and can bring forward critical information for incorporation in the design process. Inclusive engagement acknowledges that historical systems were often not intended to serve all people. The initiative was included in the Council's budget and was adopted in January. The community-led effort is centered on advancing racial equity and building trust with the city's diverse population through dialog, building racial literacy and skills through education and training, and partnering with the city and other institutions to co-create recommendations for actions that will advance racial equity in the community.

The eleven-person Communities of Color coordinating team members will be selected from diverse populations in the city. They will be appointed by the city manager to guide the process. Staff will serve as conveners and in an advisory capacity. At the end of three years, the hope is to have recommendations ready for the Council. Applications for the coordinating team are currently open and appointments will be made by the end of June.

Ms. Acacio said the initiative is very exciting and is all about what the community experience looks like and having community members come up with solutions to identified problems,

with government and staff serving in support roles.

Ms. Acacio said the Hate Has No Home Here initiative was prompted in the rise in anti-Asian hate. It flowed from conversations at the Council level about what should be done. Community members and staff were invited to share their experiences. The national initiative was customized to fit Bellevue's top languages to ensure a broad response in the city, and to make sure everyone can see what solidarity looks like. More importantly, the initiative is aimed at letting the community know what engagement and participation look like. Under the banner of proclaim, participate and prepare, the program began with signage. A website was set up that serves as a toolkit in terms of the different ways in which people can participate, and information they may need to know. Residents, businesses and local organizations and jurisdictions have joined in a united message of strength and unity against hate. The list of partners includes the Bellevue School District, the Bellevue Chamber of Commerce, the Bellevue Downtown Association, and the King County Coalition Against Hate and Bias in addition to local jurisdictions. The online reporting tool is linked to the police department. The initiative opens the door to having a general community conversation and opportunities for community training to live up to the theme of Hate Has No Home Here. A crowd sourced video featuring many residents ranging from youths to adults, including city staff, around the message of the initiative was recently posted to the website.

With regard to what will happen next, Ms. Acacio said the team will continue to be expanded. She said updates will be made to the Diversity Advantage Plan and work will continue around racial equity and antiracism. The intent is to be responsive and agile in addressing the changing landscape, and to tell Bellevue's story.

B. Bellevue Police Department Community Crisis Assistance Team (CCAT)

Major Tarantino said law enforcement has faced some challenging times lately. One changes around the country has been in trying to figure out new ways of dealing with mental health crises and the mentally ill. He said he has been a police officer for 25 years and most of the people he has dealt with on a regular basis have had some sort of alcohol, drug or mental health problem. Some models around the country have teamed mental health professionals with police officers, while other models involve specific teams set up to deal with people with mental health issues. The main agency that started the new approach is in San Antonio, Texas.

Major Tarantino said about two million people with mental health are booked into jail every year because they did not get the treatment they need. It is challenging, but something to be excited about, to try diverting those people from jail and get them the treatment they need.

With regard to Bellevue statistics, Major Tarantino noted that Covid has impacted them across the board. He noted that between 2016 and 2019 the number of suicide or mental/emotional calls to police steadily increased. The numbers fell somewhat in 2020 but overall they have increased by 56 percent since 2016. The average time an officer spends on a mental health call is about two hours, and the cost to the police department is about \$280,000 annually.

The police department has a history of partnering with organizations in the city and with community stakeholders. Under the CCAT program, partnerships have been formed with mental health advocacy organizations and mental health system providers, including Overlake Hospital, Sound Mental Health, mental health professionals and the CARES program. Officers who are sent on a call must clear the call before moving on to their next call. By dedicating a small team of specially trained officers to deal with mental health, drug and alcohol dependency, they can spend more time getting to know the people and being proactive rather than reactive, and hopefully ultimately divert them from the criminal justice system.

The mission of the CCAT team is to provide a sustainable and coordinated community residential response by law enforcement by aiding citizens in current behavioral crisis from known or suspected mental illness or substance abuse. Many of the calls officers go on cannot be handled solely by mental health professionals because of the danger involved.

Accordingly, a pilot program was formed to determine how various models work in different situations. The CCAT team responds to behavioral crisis calls and seeks to build relationships with stakeholders. The team also seeks to improve processes. All officers receive training in crisis intervention, but the CCAT officers are getting specialized training in dealing with the mentally ill and people with different dependency issues. The focus of the team is on solving problems rather than dealing with the same people over and over again. The CCAT officers can spend the time working with those in crisis as well as their friends and families, community groups and other city departments.

The goals of the CCAT are to improve community/police response to mental health by diverting individuals from the criminal justice system, and to address the underlying issues to improve the quality of life of others and reduce recidivism. The desired outcomes are to reduce arrests and jail costs; increase patrol times to focus on crime; reduce the number of use of force incidents; and to work with community stakeholders. A number of performance metrics have been put to measure the success of the program. The metrics include using less force, getting people the help they need, and reducing the number of calls for service.

Major Tarantino said the co-responder model being used by Bellevue involves five officers, none of whom are new full-time employees. During the four-month trial period, the first month will be used getting the team's feet wet, and the last three months will focus on utilizing the performance measures and tracking the statistics to determine levels of success. Three models are being tested: embedding an officer with a mental health professional; having two officers together in plain clothes; and a CARES team with two mental health professionals. Over the pilot period, the three models will be tried and then evaluated before recommendations are made at the end of the pilot program.

CCAT officers operate from unmarked vehicles and they are not wearing uniforms. The officers have advanced training and skills, including in crisis intervention; crisis response, youth intervention, dealing with seniors and vulnerable adults, crisis intervention force options, crisis intervention communication skills, and consumer panel discussions. The officers are allowed the time they need to deal with problems using soft skills that involve compassion, bonding and empathy.

Ms. O'Reilly asked if the mental health professionals that are part of the team are legally authorized to involuntarily commit someone if warranted. Major Tarantino said most of them are, though the CARES team interns are not. He said the CCAT team works closely with Overlake Hospital social workers to get MHP professionals out in the field to evaluate people.

Commissioner Ma asked if there are instances where Overlake is at capacity and there is no option other than to leave persons in crisis on the street to be dealt with by their families. Major Tarantino said that has always been a struggle for the general officers and it likely will continue to be a struggle for the CCAT officers. There are, however, success stories, including the homeless woman who was living at NE 24th Street and 120th Avenue NE. In conjunction with the city's homeless outreach coordinator, Stephanie Martinez, officers talked with the woman several times per day. While it took some time, she was eventually moved into some housing. The incident occurred before the CCAT program was launched.

Commissioner Ma asked if subjects are required to consent to whatever solution is presented to them. Major Tarantino said officers can and do force subjects where it is deemed they are a

danger to themselves or others. Under the CCAT program, families and social workers are contacted in an attempt to build a better case for getting people the help they need.

Chair Kline referenced the program in Texas that has been going for about ten years and asked how pervasive the program has become in police departments across the country. Major Tarantino said there are only a few in Washington state. Bellevue's approach takes five officers off the line who otherwise would be responding to 9-1-1 calls. The argument can be made that solving the problems will lessen the call load.

Chair Kline asked if any officers were hired specifically for the CCAT program. Major Tarantino said the officers on the team were handpicked for the skills they possess. Everyone in the police department believes in the program and there were an ample number of officers wanting to be involved with the program. Input on who should be on the team was also sought from the CARES team.

Commissioner McClure commended Major Tarantino for the program. She applauded the compassionate approach and said she looked forward to seeing positive outcomes.

Ms. Stangland referred to the three models and asked how it is determined who will be sent and what the lag time is between a call and a referral. Major Tarantino said he did not know all of the dispatch protocols. He explained that all calls are ranked for Priority 1 to Priority 5, with Priority 1 being very serious and Priority 5 not so serious. The CCAT team by the nature of not being in uniform cannot respond to Priority 1 or Priority 2 calls. The vast majority of calls are Priority 3 or below and CCAT officers will respond to them. A dispatcher will note for the responding officers issues involving the threat of suicide, drug/alcohol issues, and mental health issues, which is what triggers sending out the CCAT team.

Ms. O'Reilly said she was impressed with the way the program uses performance measures to really track what is going on. She asked if the program will only run for four months, commenting that it would be difficult to get sufficient data after only four months. Major Tarantino said on the first day of the program the CCAT team responded to 12 calls. Should that number of calls continue every day, four months would be plenty of time to make informed assessments. The program is new to Bellevue and it has not only been challenging to come up with performance metrics and measures, it has been difficult to determine how to capture the data. The team has a project manager who is helping with those elements, and it also is working with the dispatch center and the crime analysis people on capturing the data.

Ms. O'Reilly told Major Tarantino he should feel free to share with the Commission things the CCAT team sees as ongoing issues in the community, especially in regard to same-day or next-day mental health services, or medically assisted treatment. The grant that will be put out for applications in a week or so will help to bring resources to bear in that arena.

8 . OLD BUSINESS – None

9. NEW BUSINESS

Ms. Stangland informed the Commission that she was slated to give a report to the Parks and Community Services Board on May 11 about the development of the Human Services Needs Update. She noted that Chair Kline had been asked to join staff for the presentation, but stated that under the Commission's bylaws a vote of the Commission to allow a Commissioner to represent the Commission was necessary.

A motion to allow Chair Kline to represent the Commission at the May 11 Parks and Community Services Board meeting was made by Commissioner Ma. The motion was

seconded by Commissioner Piper and the motion carried unanimously.

10. CONTINUED ORAL COMMUNICATIONS – None

11. ADJOURNMENT

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

Chair Kline adjourned the meeting at 7:46 p.m.

Secretary to the Human Services Commission

Date

Chairperson of the Human Services Commission

Date