

The Human Services Commission approved these minutes on September 8, 2021

CITY OF BELLEVUE
HUMAN SERVICES COMMISSION
MINUTES

July 7, 2021
6:00 p.m.

Bellevue City Hall
Virtual Meeting

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

COMMISSIONERS ABSENT: Commissioners Amirfaiz, McClure, Mercer

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

GUEST SPEAKERS: None

RECORDING SECRETARY: Gerry Lindsay

1. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 6:09 p.m. by Chair Kline who presided.

2. ROLL CALL

Upon the call of the roll, all Commissioners were present with the exception of Commissioners Amirfaiz, McClure and Mercer, all of whom were 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

A motion to amend the agenda to include approval of the June 1, 2021, meeting minutes was made by Commissioner Piper. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Mansfield and the motion carried unanimously.

A. June 1, 2021

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

B. June 15, 2021

There was agreement to move approval of the June 15, 2021, meeting minutes until the next Commission meeting.

4. ORAL AND WRITTEN COMMUNICATIONS – None

5. COMMUNICATIONS FROM CITY COUNCIL, COMMUNITY COUNCIL, BOARDS AND COMMISSIONS – None
6. STAFF AND COMMISSIONER REPORTS
7. INFORMATION FOR THE COMMISSION
 - A. Distribution of the Amazon Donation to the Bellevue Human Services Fund

Chair Kline noted that the Commission had previously discussed the Amazon donation on June 1 and had requested additional information before taking a vote.

Assistant Director of the Department of Parks and Community Services Toni Esparza reminded the Commissioners that in 2020 Amazon pledged one million dollars to the Human Services Fund, split evenly between the 2021-2022 and the 2023-2024 budget allocations. The Commission's recommendation to the City Council for the 2021-2022 human services funding included \$500,000 from Amazon, and for the 2023-2024 budget will include the remaining \$500,000. Both prior to making the pledge and subsequent to making the pledge, Amazon representatives met with city staff to understand the needs of the community as identified by staff, providers and the Commission. They frequently read the Commission's meeting minutes and come to meetings prepared with questions, and they were provided with the spreadsheet of allocations approved by the Commission and the Communities Rise evaluation report.

Continuing, Ms. Esparza stated that on May 13, 2021, City Manager Brad Miyake accepted another donation from Amazon in the amount of \$1,439,000, and accepted Amazon's designation for its use. Of the total, one million is for the Human Services Fund and is to be designated for funding programs that were not funded during the 2021-2022 General Fund grant cycle but which were marked by the Commission for funding if additional dollars were made available; a pilot capacity building cohort model to support small and/or minority led community organizations; and the balance to be added to the Human Services Fund budget for the 2023-2024 funding cycle. The Commission's recommendations for programs to be funded with additional dollars included shelters, and to Families of Color, Parent Groups for Families of Color, and Kinderling Families in Transition programs. The new dollars will be contracted in 2022. For the funding designated for the 2023-2024 funding cycle, the new dollars will be added to the total dollar amount. The Commission will receive applications for the funds and will ultimately determine allocation recommendations.

For the pilot capacity building cohort model to support small and/or minority led community organizations, the Commission's input could include the proposal from Communities Rise to provide the service. The Commission previously raised some questions and staff has received responses to those questions. The Commission could also direct staff to seek other proposals for the specific purpose designated by Amazon. Ms. Esparza indicated, however, that staff are unaware of any other organization that offers capacity building services to non-profits. She clarified that the opportunity for capacity building is not intended to be the only capacity building or technical assistance program recommended by the Commission.

Commissioner Piper asked what the total amount was from the 2021-2022 allocation for unfunded requests. Grant Coordinator Dee Dee Catalano said it was \$239,702 for each year. Ms. Esparza added that for some agencies, the funds will be received through a contract amendment, while for others there will need to be new contracts.

Ms. O'Reilly reminded the Commissioners that usually early on in a funding cycle year

information is received from the budget office indicating the projected amounts for the upcoming biennium. She said staff has reviewed with the finance department the issue of whether or not there is any prohibition against the Commission potentially setting aside some funds from the allocation for 2023-2024 for the specific purpose of providing technical assistance. The budget office concluded that there are no policies restricting human services funds from being used for capacity building. Staff will be checking with the legal department as well to make sure there are no barriers. If in the final analysis there are no concerns raised, the Commission may early in 2022 want to think about identifying some amount of money for other technical assistance for those agencies that were not able to participate in a cohort model.

Ms. O'Reilly added that the Eastside human service funder cities are all very interested in providing capacity building and technical assistance to non-profit agencies. To that end the group has been having discussions about the possibility of the cities putting money into a pool to use for technical assistance. Two years ago, prior to the pandemic, the city had a contract with Communities Rise to provide assistance in writing and reviewing grants. Only four agencies asked for the assistance, though that was just about the time the pandemic began and everything shut down.

The recommendation was made by Commissioner Amirfaiz at the June 1 meeting to reach out to non-profit agencies to find out what they could use by way of technical assistance or other support. That effort actually is ongoing as a project with the other Eastside cities. To date, 50 of 100 agencies have responded. Of the agencies that responded, 18 percent said how the cities can support their work is capacity building, and that validates the impression of the Commission and the staff.

On the question of how agencies would use a one-time investment of funds for their programs, should they have the opportunity, 44 percent called out capacity building. Ms. O'Reilly stressed that one size will not fit all and said there are many different levels of support needed by individual agencies, which leaves open the possibility of offering an array of various supports.

Commissioner Piper said he appreciated the answers from Communities Rise which were responsive to the questions asked by the Commissioners. He said his only concern was that only the one agency has stepped forward. He said he would prefer to get a proposal from another agency to allow for setting a benchmark.

Chair Kline noted that at the June 1 meeting staff stated that Amazon had picked the Communities Rise organization. She asked if that leaves the Commission with any choice even if another agency can be identified. She also referred to a statement made by staff on June 1 about the qualification for inclusion in the cohort is the city currently providing funding to the agency. Ms. Esparza clarified that currently providing funding to an agency is not a requirement. She also clarified that Amazon did not designate a certain agency to provide the service, they simply highlighted Communities Rise as an example. She reiterated that staff was not aware of any other agency with a similar program.

Chair Kline asked how strongly staff felt that it be a local agency that provides the service. Ms. O'Reilly said the staff believe that a local agency would have a better understanding of local needs, particularly for agencies that are by and for the BIPOC communities.

Chair Kline asked if the operating budget threshold of \$500,000 came from the city or Communities Rise. Ms. O'Reilly said was a threshold suggested by Communities Rise. Over the last year many agencies received one-time funding from government sources, inflating their budgets by quite a bit for some. The Communities Rise representative suggested that

adjustments could be made on a case-by-case basis for agencies that show larger budgets than \$500,000 due to recent cash influxes.

Chair Kline suggested it would be worthwhile to determine which of the smaller agencies the Commission was not able to fund with the available dollars have budgets that fit the \$500,000 threshold and to craft the eligibility requirement description in the RFP accordingly.

Commissioner Ma concurred. He pointed out that the submittal from Communities Rise indicates their cohort approach does not work well unless they have six organizations to work with.

A motion to fund the programs not funded during the 2021-2022 General Fund grant cycle identified by the Commission to be funded if additional dollars were available, to fund the pilot capacity building cohort with Communities Rise, and to allocate the remaining funds to the Human Services Fund budget for the 2023-2024 funding cycle was made by Commissioner Ma. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Piper and the motion carried unanimously.

Chair Kline asked how quickly the contract can be drafted and signed. Ms. Esparza said a budget allocation must be made by the Council before the contracting process can be started. That allocation is expected to occur before the end of August. Ms. Catalano added that in the meantime staff will be working with Communities Rise to iron out details like the budget threshold. The anticipation is that the contract will be completed by the end of the 2022 cycle.

Chair Kline asked if in the discussions about teaming up with other Eastside cities there was talk about helping to spread the word to agencies about the opportunity. Ms. O'Reilly said she the other Eastside cities were very excited to hear Bellevue was considering funding the capacity building project with Communities Rise. They are willing to help with outreach. Kirkland staff are already engaged in going out into their community to meet with new and emerging non-profit agencies. Ms. Esparza said staff has noted the emergence of new agencies since applications were last received. One new agency, the Immigrant Women's Community Center, did apply for funding, though their application was not funded.

Chair Kline pointed out that the eligibility requirements as currently drafted states that agencies must have the ability to describe program accomplishments from a previous year. That would need to be tweaked in order to include new agencies. Ms. O'Reilly said she would bring that to the attention of Communities Rise so as not to discourage anyone from applying for the program.

Chair Kline suggested that some clarity was also needed in regard to the requirement that 50 percent of the staff and the board must represent the target communities served, which could be interpreted to mean only target community specific agencies are eligible, as opposed to serving the general population. Ms. Esparza pointed out that Communities Rise does focus its efforts on those who serve depressed and marginalized communities. That would include those with disabilities, the LGBTQ community, and individuals of color.

Commissioner Piper pointed out that the language used by Amazon was specific to agencies that are small and/or which are minority led community organizations.

8. OLD BUSINESS

Ms. O'Reilly reminded the Commissioners that several months ago staff presented to the Commission information and research done regarding small grants. At that time the Commission requested additional information. She said staff has not forgotten about that

work. Most recently the focus has been on the revised financial eligibility requirements approved by the Commission. Staff intends to bring the topic back in September.

Ms. O'Reilly stated that for the July 20 Commission meeting staff was preparing a panel of individuals to speak about the trends and issues affecting the LGBTQ+ community. She said staff would appreciate input as to the type of content that should be included. She said wants to prioritize issues for adults in the community as well as youth in the community.

Commissioner Piper suggested both behavioral health and the high suicide rate among those in the LGBT community are pertinent issues. He added that the issue of homelessness as it relates to the LGBT community would be of interest.

9. NEW BUSINESS

Ms. O'Reilly informed the Commission that using some of the funds available for staffing through the HB 1590 sales tax revenues, the city was able to hire on a limited term employee basis, covering two years, someone to assist in the important work of doing the contracts and conducting the necessary oversight. Former social work intern Megan Farwell was selected and will begin work with the city on July 16.

10. CONTINUED ORAL COMMUNICATIONS – None

11. ADJOURNMENT

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

Chair Kline adjourned the meeting at 7:05 p.m.