

The Human Services Commission approved these minutes on January 4, 2022.

CITY OF BELLEVUE
HUMAN SERVICES COMMISSION
MINUTES

November 2, 2021
6:00 p.m.

Bellevue City Hall
Virtual Meeting

COMMISSIONERS PRESENT: Chair Kline, Commissioners Ma, Mansfield, McClure, Piper, Mercer

COMMISSIONERS ABSENT: Commissioners Amirfaiz, Mercer

STAFF PRESENT: Dee Dee Catalano, Christy Stangland, Toni Esparza, Department of Parks and Community Services; Major Mark Tarantino

GUEST SPEAKERS: None

RECORDING SECRETARY: Gerry Lindsay

1. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 6:01 p.m. by Vice Chair Piper who presided.

2. ROLL CALL

Upon the call of the roll, all Commissioners were present with the exception of Chair Kline and Commissioners Amirfaiz 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. October 5, 2021

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

4. ORAL AND WRITTEN COMMUNICATIONS – None

Chair Kline joined the meeting and presided the remainder of the meeting.

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

6. STAFF AND COMMISSIONER REPORTS

Commissioner Ma reported having recently watched a spot by John Oliver on the topic of homelessness. He said he highly recommended watching it. It talked in part about shelters and how putting money into them is not necessarily helpful in bringing people out of homelessness, even though it is an important aspect of the continuum.

7. INFORMATION FOR THE COMMISSION

A. Issues and Trends for Immigrants and Refugees

Human Services Planner Christy Stangland welcomed Lalita Uppala from Indian American Community Services and Zam Cingh from Refugee Women's Alliance (ReWA).

Ms. Uppala, executive director for Indian American Community Services, noted that the organization has been serving the Asian and Indian community for the last 30-plus years. Over the last five years, the organization has re-strategized what it needs to provide in terms of the basic, urgent, and emerging needs in the community. The name India Association of Western Washington was changed to Indian American Community Services to better identify the work done by the agency for families in the community, both in terms of new families coming to the area and the youth who consider themselves born American with an Indian heritage. The services provided range from early developmental screening to parent/child relationships, therapy support services, and providing a safe space for parents and caregivers in which they can connect. Also provided is a year-round youth leadership program that transitioned from a summer camp program. There are currently 35 youth in the youth program that are meeting regularly with 35 youth from the African American coalition to build bridges and connections between the communities. For seniors, the agency provides wellness and caregiver services to make sure that despite Covid seniors can stay connected online. Clients can also reach out for legal or caregiver services, and for citizenship workshops. In terms of crisis services for small businesses, Covid has created a dire need for technical assistance in applying for relief funds. Volunteer mentors offer both in-person and online assistance for small businesses.

Ms. Uppala said there has been a huge increase in the need for legal assistance since 2020. In 2019 there was only one legal clinic per month offering help in family and immigration legal matters. In 2020 the one legal clinic per month jumped to two or three legal clinics per week. Collective impacts can be achieved only where there are healthy collaborative partnerships. The agency is very grateful for the partners it works with in Bellevue and the larger East King County area, including Eastside Legal Assistance Program, Jewish Family Service, Overlake Hospital, and International Community Health Services.

The level of services provided by Indian American Community Services increased sharply in 2020 and are continuing to be high in 2021 in terms of developmental screening, youth seeking crisis support, women's crisis support, senior mental health support, legal clinics, small business support, microaggression reporting, and hate crime info. sessions.

The Indian American community is the largest immigrant community in Bellevue and the needs of the community are growing. All of the services come as a direct result of the kind of funding the city has provided, but they also amplify the need for increased support. Agency staffing is low while the needs are high. Many volunteers are involved, but volunteering is not a sustainable model. There is a clear need for capacity building within the organization. The low-bono [sic] legal clinic model pioneered by the agency has now been used by ELAP to start its own low-bono [sic] clinic. The agency has taken its rent assistance program funded in part by Bellevue and is mentoring 4Tomorrow to start its own rent assistance work. The

collaboration has increased the collective impact.

Ms. Uppala said Indian American Community Services has met with a number of successes during 2020-2021. Fully 90 percent of the Asian Indian community in Bellevue is vaccinated, in part due to the 17 pop-up vaccination clinics offered by the agency. The agency has provided technical assistance to more than 200 small businesses. The agency started the anti-hate work with quarterly information sessions in 2015 at the North Bellevue Community Center. With the rise of Covid in 2020, the agency anticipated a rise in microaggression, the subtle forms of verbal assaults that happen in grocery stores, parking lots, work sites and public spaces. There is a clear need to increase the capacity of the agency to work in that arena.

Ms. Uppala said there is a clear need to build the capacity of the agency to provide legal services. The agency is holding three to five legal clinics per week, and 75 percent of the clients need assistance in the areas of domestic violence, family law, immigration, small business legal support, probate, and custodial issues for seniors. The agency is paying the participating attorneys up to \$150 per hour and there is a need for a legal services coordinator.

Many families are multigenerational in that they include seniors, and when both wage earners in the household are out of the house, there is a need for senior caregivers. The agency is working on a program named for the Hindi word for friend that will use volunteers to visit with seniors in their homes, particularly for families that cannot afford full-time senior care services. The program will provide training for women in crisis services to become paid caregivers.

Ms. Uppala reminded the Commissioners that Indian American Community Services is passionate about serving the needs in the community. Even so, only so much can be done without financial support from the city.

Ms. Cingh said she came from Burma and in 2004 began working with Refugee Women's Alliance (ReWA). She said the agency provides services to women, men, and children from more than 70 countries around the world. The agency's 130 staff members speak more than 50 languages and dialects. The challenges faced include limited English language skills; lack of formal education; unemployment or under-employment due to lack of work history or transferrable skills; increased risk of homelessness due to low wages, lack of rental history, language barriers and high rents; and stress and trauma associated with the refugee experience.

The list of services offered by the agency address family empowerment; domestic violence and sexual assault; early learning centers; ESL classes; employment and vocational training; housing and homelessness prevention; licensed behavioral health; naturalization and legal services; and senior and youth programs. Specific to domestic violence and sexual assault, the agency focuses on the needs of the clients by helping them navigate the legal system in obtaining protection orders, custody, and divorce. Advocacy based counseling is provided by a mental health counselor every other week. Referrals are made for immigration services when a partner becomes abusive, leaving the survivor in the country without a work visa. Where necessary, the victims are provided with a stay at a motel or hotel and then moved into shelter or transitional housing. They are provided with rental assistance as needed, and if available they are assisted in obtaining Section 8 low-income housing. Emergency assistance in the form of gift cards and the like is provided. General social services are also provided as needed. Legal services are provided by the agency's in-house attorney and through referrals to other legal service providers.

Domestic violence survivors need advocacy-based counseling. Clients are offered 30 minutes

of counseling when they need it from an agency affiliated and qualified counselors. The social services offered include meeting with a landlord; making calls to utility companies; making doctor appointments; and interpretation services.

In terms of housing, agency staff help clients by calling for motel/hotel availability and pricing. A payment request is then submitted to the housing supervisor and once obtained the motel/hotel is paid. For shelter, a call must be made to find out who has an opening. Those who are in shelters are given priority for transitional housing, but the advocate must submit the application.

Ms. Cingh shared with the Commissioners a couple of success stories.

Ms. Stangland asked what services are provided by the agency in Bellevue and asked the percentage of clients who access services outside of King County from ReWA. Ms. Cingh said one of ReWA's social workers works with the Russian community and offers a support group. The main agency office is in Seattle and there are offices in SeaTac and Kent. The domestic violence support group is located in Bellevue.

B. 2022 Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Contingency Plan

Grant Coordinator Dee Dee Catalano commented that the Commission approved the 2022 CDBG funding allocations on October 5. The contingency plan, however, was not approved at the same time. She reminded the Commissioners that a contingency plan is adopted because it is not known what the upcoming year's grant entitlement amount from HUD will be until Congress approves the federal budget. Currently there is a continuing resolution in place until December 7. The contingency outlines the steps to be taken if the funding received is higher or lower than what was estimated. The contingency plan is submitted to HUD as part of the Annual Action Plan and obviates the need to solicit public comment to address funding changes before submitting the plan.

Ms. Catalano explained that as drafted, should there be an increase in the entitlement and program income, additional funds will be allocated to the planning and administration budget up to the cap amount, and any remaining funds will be allocated to the King County Housing Authority Major Home Repair Program. Should there be a decrease in the entitlement amount, causing the amount allocated to planning and administration to exceed the cap, the allocation to that fund will be reduced accordingly. Additionally, if the entitlement reduction causes the amount allocated to public service activities to exceed the cap, the allocation to that category will be reduced accordingly. Any additional reductions needed would first be accommodated by reducing the Major Home Repair Program budget by an amount not to exceed \$50,000, and lastly by reducing the allocation to the Seattle Business and Education HUB program by the remaining amount.

A motion to approve the contingency plan as presented was made by Commissioner Piper. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Ma and the motion carried unanimously.

Ms. Catalano noted that the Commission would be asked to approve the Annual Action Plan at its next meeting.

8. OLD BUSINESS – None

9. NEW BUSINESS

Assistant Director of the Department of Parks and Community Services Toni Esparza reminded the Commission that during the month of December there traditionally has been a

joint meeting with the Parks and Community Services Board and the Human Services Commission. Due to Covid restrictions, the 2020 in-person joint meeting was canceled, and a short virtual meeting was held instead. A virtual joint meeting will not be held in 2021, instead the city's communication team is working with the Council liaison and Parks Director Shiosaki to record a message highlighting the achievements of the two bodies. The Commission will not otherwise be meeting in December.

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 6:58 p.m.