

The Human Services Commission approved these minutes on January 22, 2009

CITY OF BELLEVUE
HUMAN SERVICES COMMISSION
MINUTES

December 29, 2008
10:00 a.m.

Bellevue City Hall
City Council Conference Room 1E-113

COMMISSIONERS PRESENT: Commissioners Beighle, Hoople, Huenefeld-Gese, Seltzer, Stout

COMMISSIONERS ABSENT: Chair Yantis

STAFF PRESENT: Alex O'Reilly, Joseph Adriano, Shelley Brittingham, Jerry Nissley, Department of Parks and Community Services

GUEST SPEAKERS: None

RECORDING SECRETARY: Gerry Lindsay

1. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 10:00 a.m. by Commissioner Stout who presided.

2. ROLL CALL

Upon the call of the roll, all Commissioners were present with the exception of Chair Yantis who was excused.

3. PETITIONS AND COMMUNICATIONS – None

4. STAFF AND COMMISSION REPORTS – None

5. DISCUSSION

A. Severe Weather Shelter

Grant Coordinator Joseph Adriano said discussions regarding the need for a severe weather shelter began some time ago. He said such a shelter would be activated based on certain criteria during the winter months. Seattle has a severe weather shelter that is activated based on temperature and snow accumulation. The current cold snap triggered a renewed interest in getting a shelter operational in Bellevue.

An RFP seeking proposals from agencies to operate a severe weather shelter on behalf of the city was sent out. The shelter that is currently operating with city staff, Congregations for the Homeless and community volunteers is a separate entity. The proposal is to have a contractor operate the shelter without the help of city staff. City parks facilities would be used to house the shelter, most likely Crossroads Community Center. Consideration was given to using the Lake Hills Club House, but it is not sprinklered and may not be large enough to accommodate as many people who might need the shelter. From that perspective, the Crossroads Community Center is a better choice.

In the first few days of operation there were as many as half a dozen using the facility. Since then, as many as 18 have been sheltered. The facility has not received much media attention; its presence has been made known by the agencies.

The due date for the RFP was December 22 by which time there was one joint response from Catholic Community Services and Congregations for the Homeless. Mr. Adriano stressed the importance of having both male and female staff for the facility. The proposal is for the agencies to work together; Congregations for the Homeless has extensive experience working with males and is willing to provide male staff, and Catholic Community Services has agreed to supply female staff.

Commissioner Beighle asked if the public transit buses have been able to get to the Crossroads site with the heavy snows. Parks facilities manager Jerry Nissley said the King County Metro buses have been following their regular routes. He said many have been able to ride the buses to get to and from the shelter.

Commissioner Seltzer asked if the plows have cleared the road from the main street back to the Crossroads Community Center. Mr. Nissley said plowing has been a challenge, but the snowplows have worked their way into the parking lot.

Commissioner Beighle asked how long the shelter contract would run. Mr. Adriano allowed that nothing has yet been set in stone. He said one option would be to draft a contract aimed at having the shelter only during the cold months between October and March. A second option would be to draft a contract that would run through the end of 2009.

Commissioner Hoople asked if the police are spreading the word about the shelter as well. Ms. O'Reilly said hourly checks are made at the shelter and a record is kept of who is there. The notes indicate that the police have brought at least two people to the shelter. It takes a while for the information to filter out, but the police certainly understand the benefit of having the shelter.

Ms. O'Reilly explained that participants are encouraged to contact the shelter before going there. The shelter criteria may not apply as the weather gets warmer; the shelter is not intended to be operational year round. There are no counseling sessions offered, though information about other shelter options will be made

available; some have been referred to the Congregations for the Homeless shelter. The residents must leave by 6:30 a.m.

Commissioner Hoople asked what will happen when the capacity at Crossroads Community Shelter is reached. Mr. Nissley said the capacity is 50, which is sizable. If the need becomes so great that the capacity is reached, other options will need to be considered. There is ongoing programming at all of the city's community centers; the calendar has been temporarily cleared at Crossroads to allow for operation of the shelter. The anticipation is that the capacity will not be reached.

Answering a question asked by Commissioner Huenefeld-Gese, Mr. Nissley said the men have been put up in the gymnasium, while families have been housed in another room. Women are housed in yet another room.

Answering a question asked by Commissioner Seltzer, Ms. O'Reilly explained that Sophia Way is currently the fiscal sponsor for the Eastside Interfaith Social Concerns Council. Commissioner Seltzer said she could see them ultimately taking over the severe weather shelter given that they are already established on the Eastside and work with the Eastside homeless. Mr. Adriano said in the opinion of staff, Sophia Way did not submit a proposal because they are too new an organization. They may be in a better position once they get their feet solidly on the ground.

Commissioner Huenefeld-Gese asked at what client number would additional staff for the shelter be required. Mr. David Johns Bowling, Congregations for the Homeless, said if the cold weather continues and it is necessary to keep the shelter open for a prolonged period, having additional staff would be a very good idea. More staff may also be required if the population grows to more than 30 people.

Mr. Adriano noted that King County shelters operate with a minimum of two staff for about 40 beds. The staffing being considered for the Bellevue shelter envisions three staff for up to 50 beds, two from Catholic Community Services and one from Congregations for the Homeless. At that rate, the cost would be \$735 per night.

Mr. Nissley said the shelter is being operated by the city under its responsibilities for emergency management. No one is turned away unless there are substance abuse problems. It is not just the homeless who are being accepted.

Mr. Nissley explained that all five of the city's community centers have backup generators that run during power outages. If the power fails, the generators come online immediately. In the event of a widespread power outage, the facilities can accommodate many. In addition, the emergency operations center is activated during large events. The city works closely with the Red Cross in opening and operating shelters around the city. The proposal on the table is one piece of the city's overall emergency management plan.

Ms. O'Reilly noted that all city of Bellevue employees are required to provide

assistance during major disasters. That includes operating shelters. Accordingly, during major events the staffing load is shifted away from agencies. A number of city staff have been helping out at the shelter in addition to paid staff from Congregations for the Homeless.

Commissioner Hoople asked how much money is in the emergency fund that could be used for the shelter. Mr. Adriano said there is perhaps somewhere between \$10,000 and \$15,000 available. Clearly the contract will need to have a cap placed on it. Funding from other cities will be sought given that non-Bellevue residents are served by the facility.

Commissioner Huenefeld-Gese voiced concern over the proposed language that has the shelter open only when the temperature is below freezing. Additionally, there should be someone on site after the shelter has been closed just to inform people of other options available to them. Mr. Nissley said Crossroads is open six days a week with regular programmed events. During the past couple of days the clients have been informed that with the coming warming trend the facility could be closed, giving them time to consider other options.

Motion to contract with Catholic Community Services and the Congregations for the Homeless to run the severe weather shelter as a pilot program through March 31, 2009, was made by Commissioner Beighle. Second was by Commissioner Hoople and the motion carried unanimously.

Commissioner Stout said she would like to see the language regarding who can be served to specifically mention families and children, and to redraft the conditions section to replace “and” with “and/or” to avoid being too limiting. The other Commissioners concurred.

6. OLD BUSINESS – None

7. NEW BUSINESS

Ms. O’Reilly reminded the Commissioners that the second meeting in January would occur on Thursday, January 22, rather than on Tuesday, January 20.

8. PETITIONS AND COMMUNICATIONS – None

9. ADJOURNMENT

Commissioner Stout adjourned the meeting at 10:56 a.m.

Secretary to the Human Services Commission

Date

Chairperson of the Human Services Commission

Date