

The Human Services Commission approved these minutes as amended on January 21, 2010

CITY OF BELLEVUE
HUMAN SERVICES COMMISSION
MINUTES

January 5, 2010
6:30 p.m.

Bellevue City Hall
City Council Conference Room 1E-113

COMMISSIONERS PRESENT: Chairperson Stout, Commissioners Beighle, Bruels, Hoople, Huenefeld Gese, Plaskon

COMMISSIONERS ABSENT: Commissioner Yantis

STAFF PRESENT: Emily Leslie, Alex O'Reilly, Joseph Adriano, Cynthia Sessoms, Department of Parks and Community Services

GUEST SPEAKERS: None

RECORDING SECRETARY: Gerry Lindsay

1. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 6:34 p.m. by Chair Stout who presided.

2. ROLL CALL

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

3. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

A. November 17, 2009

Motion to approve the minutes as submitted was made by Commissioner Hoople. Second was by Commissioner Bruels and the motion carried unanimously.

B. December 1, 2009

Commissioner Beighle referred to the second paragraph under Staff and Commission reports and noted that "Paul Wintersteen" should be correctly spelled "Paul Winterstein."

Commissioner Bruels called attention to the second paragraph on page 2 and asked

that beginning with the second sentence it be revised to read “He said the committee is focused on Strategy 10B, the crisis diversion facility program. The proposals received through the RFP did not meet the criteria the county wanted. The respite program that is attached to the crisis program will be awarded to the Downtown Emergency Service Center, though that will not be done until the crisis diversion facility is awarded.”

Motion to approve the minutes as amended was made by Commissioner Hoople. Second was by Commissioner Huenefeld Gese and the motion carried unanimously.

4. PETITIONS AND COMMUNICATIONS – None

5. ELECTION OF OFFICERS

Chair Stout took a moment to say it had been a real pleasure to serve as chair of the Commission. She said she has never worked with a team of staff and commissioners of such high quality.

Motion to open nominations for Commission chair was made by Commissioner Beighle. Second was by Commissioner Hoople and the motion carried unanimously.

Motion to nominate Commissioner Huenefeld Gese to serve as chair was made by Commissioner Beighle. Second was by Commissioner Hoople and the motion carried unanimously.

Motion to close the nominations was made by Commissioner Beighle. Second was by Commissioner Hoople and the motion carried unanimously.

The motion to elect Commissioner Huenefeld Gese to serve as chair carried unanimously.

Motion to open nominations for Commission vice-chair was made by Commissioner Hoople. Second was by Commissioner Bruels and the motion carried unanimously.

Motion to nominate Commissioner Beighle to serve as vice-chair was made by Commissioner Hoople. Second was by Commissioner Bruels and the motion carried unanimously.

Motion to close nominations was made by Commissioner Hoople. Second was by Commissioner Bruels and the motion carried unanimously.

The motion to elect Commissioner Beighle to serve as vice-chair carried unanimously.

Chair Stout passed the gavel to Commissioner Huenefeld Gese.

6. STAFF AND COMMISSION REPORTS

Commissioner Hoople reported that he attended the new Redmond Human Services Commission meeting with Alex O'Reilly. He said the Levy Oversight Boards provided reports, and that he participated in a roundtable discussion regarding human services commissions in the area and what they do.

Commissioner Hoople said he also attended the open house for McDermott House in Seattle, which is for low-income residents, including veterans. The facility includes a food bank.

Commissioner Bruels said he participated in the visit to the Jubilee Reach Center. He said he learned a great deal from being there and seeing firsthand the program that serves low-income children and families that do not have activities before and after school.

Human Services Manager Emily Leslie said she along with Grant Coordinator Joseph Adriano and Human Services Planner Alex O'Reilly would for the next two weeks be going to all of the shift briefings for the Bellevue Police Department to give them the heads up about the One Night Count set to occur at the end of January. She said in the briefings given so far most of the officers indicated an awareness of the annual event. The officers were asked to indicate on a map where they have seen homeless persons spending their nights.

Commissioner Beighle cautioned against showing the map to anyone without first checking with Meghan Altimore who is the point person for the Eastside One Night Count.

Chair Huenefeld Gese pointed out that consistency is key to the One Night Count. The count should be done in all of the usual places, but those numbers should be kept separate from the numbers derived from new places.

Commissioner Stout allowed that the real estate geography of Bellevue has changed dramatically over the last five years. There could be formerly vacant sites where counts were made that are now fully developed. It is absolutely necessary to include new places in the count. Commissioner Hoople concurred. He pointed out that the entire I-90 corridor has dramatically changed.

Ms. Leslie said it has been frustrating that the Eastside numbers have not previously been broken down by city.

Ms. O'Reilly reported that in just the last few weeks she has been contacted by a couple of agencies that have not in the past applied for funding from Bellevue. She said she has added both of them to the list of agencies that will receive funding applications.

Commissioner Stout said she recently received a communication from Hero House in which it was noted that the agency is having serious financial difficulties and may be forced to close.

7. DISCUSSION

A. 2010 Human Services Commission Work Plan

Ms. Leslie reviewed with the Commissioners a draft outline of the work plan for 2010, which included conducting a public hearing on human service needs for block grant funding; reviewing applications and making recommendations for funding; and reviewing CDBG applications and conducting a public hearing. Because 2010 is a funding year, a large share of the Commission's work will be focused on reviewing applications. The city's budget process is changing, so the Commission will need to complete its work on the applications process earlier than normal; some extra meetings may be required in order to accomplish the goal within the set timeframe.

Ms. Leslie stressed that the schedule will allow for addressing other topics throughout the year, including Bellevue's changing demographics.

Commissioner Bruels said he would like the Commission to receive updates from the B-Glad organization, from the Veterans and Human Services Levy, collaborations with Parks and Community Services relative to aging and wraparound services, and the Eastside Refugee and Immigrant Coalition. He said he would also welcome additional site visits.

Ms. Leslie suggested the Commission could benefit from having the city's Volunteer Coordinator come and talk about the program.

Commissioner Plaskon said the Commission should be kept informed with regard to housing needs and availability in the community. Ms. Leslie said she has already talked with ARCH staff about getting an update early in the year.

Commissioner Hoople commented that ending homelessness for veterans is a priority at the federal level. Governor Gregoire wants to make sure the state gets its fair share, especially so because the veterans population in the state is growing, unlike most other states. A state panel is going to be put together to discuss the issue. He also noted that the current Veterans and Human Services Levy runs through 2011 and if it is to be continued there will need to be a public vote that year. A significant increase in the levy rate may not go over well with the voters and could in fact be voted down, which would be disconcerting. The Commission should remain informed as things move along.

Commissioner Stout suggested that the issue of best practices should be on the Commission's plate. She added that it is likely the Council will be directing the Commission to be aware of options beyond just local government funding to keep

local agencies afloat, so that is something the Commission will need to be up to speed on.

Chair Huenefeld Gese asked if there is a single source the Commission can go to in order to assess the needs of refugee and immigrant groups. Ms. O'Reilly said a great deal of input is received from providers, such as Chinese Information and Referral and Asian Counseling and Referral Service (ACRS), and from the community conversations. The Eastside Refugee and Immigrant Coalition is another excellent source of information; that group has just begun to relook at access issues for their clients. Chair Huenefeld Gese said her main concern is identifying the gaps. She said currently it is not even known if persons fail to seek services simply because they do not speak the right language.

Commissioner Stout thought it would be helpful for the Commission to take a close look at the state's latest version of its early learning plan. Reaching kids early on will pay big dividends down the road. Ms. O'Reilly said the plan has been presented to the Governor. The Eastside Human Services Forum has a subcommittee focused on the topic and will analyze the recommendation. FACES East will also be looking at the subject.

Commissioner Beighle stressed the need to be on top of partnerships and potential future collaborations. She said the Commission should also be regularly updated with regard to legislative issues. Ms. O'Reilly said there are email alerts available by topic area, and she offered to put together a list. She added that United Way of King County has a good one that tracks their issues, which primarily are housing and early learning.

Commissioner Hoople highlighted the issue of diversity as something that is very important to the Commission. Ms. Leslie said the city's Cultural Diversity Program continues to be active in the community under the direction of Kevin Henry.

Commissioner Plaskon allowed that while cultural diversity is important, there should be no distinctions made in the delivery of human services. It should not be necessary for the Commission to set aside time at a meeting to have someone come and talk about the fact that the community is culturally diverse given that that is common knowledge.

Commissioner Hoople said what the Commission needs is a clearer understanding of the diverse populations so each can be fully engaged.

Commissioner Bruels suggested that where the matter of diversity intersects with human services is in the issue of inequality. Studies done have showed how refugees and immigrants, and those who have differences in income and relative wealth, suffer all manner of inequalities in terms of healthcare and job opportunities.

Chair Huenefeld Gese proposed that the best way for the Commission to address the issues of diversity and inequality will be to continue asking direct questions of each group that comes before the Commission in order to better understand their approaches. Commissioner Stout agreed and added that it would be helpful to have specific questions ready for each agency representative in an attempt to elicit specific answers.

8. DISCUSSION

A. 2011-2012 Funding Strategies

Ms. Leslie shared with the Commissioners a summary of the funding priorities from past years. She noted that the Commission has taken a variety of approaches with regard to developing emphasis and focus areas in the past, but the one thing that has remained consistent is the Commission's support for the continuum of services. That has been particularly important as major funders have shifted dollars away from those areas.

Ms. Leslie allowed that there will always be more requests than money to cover them. That necessitates making choices with regard to how to allocate the limited dollars. The Needs Update document is helpful for pointing out gap areas and justifying funding strategies. She noted that the Commission had previously identified the topics of potential gap areas, agencies and programs that have been affected by funding reductions, preserving infrastructure, and addressing the economic impacts of the recession.

Commissioner Stout said she would like the Commission to keep a focus on homelessness and early learning/school readiness.

Ms. O'Reilly said there are emerging needs that have been identified, some of which overlap with some of the other categories. She said one area in particular is the aging population which may face issues resulting from the shrinking state budget, especially in the area of home services.

Answering a question asked by Commissioner Stout regarding the Network on Aging, Ms. O'Reilly said she attends all of their meetings. She explained that the Network typically selects two or three issues to focus on each year, not all of which are necessarily human services related. She said the group uses the Needs Update and other information from the human services division in selecting its projects. The group is staffed by Parks and Community Services but its perspective is citywide, extending far beyond just parks issues.

Commissioner Beighle stressed the need for the Commission to put more focus on partnerships and collaborations. Ms. Leslie allowed that the issue of seeking efficiencies came up at the Council meeting on January 4. She suggested the Commission may want to pay more attention in the upcoming funding cycle to what

social workers call service delivery systems and how they work. One major improvement that came about recently is that emergency financial assistance agencies have been meeting jointly. Having obtained a United Way New Solutions grant, the group is continuing the process of improving accessibility for clients, primarily through reducing the number of stops clients must make to get everything they need. One thing the group has been working on is a common intake form.

Commissioner Hoople said engaging volunteers should also be stressed with the agencies as a way to get more work done in the community without having to pay more for it. Ms. O'Reilly agreed that the question should be asked in the RFP process to gain more information about what percentage of any given agency's work is being done by volunteers, and the kind of work they are doing.

Commissioner Plaskon highlighted the Eastside Legal Assistance Program as a standout in the use of volunteers. Commissioner Hoople pointed out that Microsoft has a practice of making donations to agencies at which their employees donate time; there may be other companies that take a similar approach and agencies should be encouraged to seek them out when looking for volunteers.

Commissioner Stout said as a general rule she would caution against agencies employing non-professionals to provide professional services. ELAP is certainly an exception to that rule given that their volunteers are in fact attorneys offering pro bono services. In every case where volunteers are employed, proper and adequate training is critical.

Commissioner Bruels suggested that if the worst happens and the amount of funding is drastically reduced, the Commission should focus on survival services and protecting vulnerable populations. Ms. Leslie pointed out that the Commission likely will not know until late spring or early summer just what the funding level will be. That will mean the Commission will have to move ahead with determining priorities without having that information in hand. She added that the rules allow for earmarking a percentage of the CDBG allocation for services, so one option would be to talk about what could be funded with those dollars.

9. OLD BUSINESS

A. Severe Weather Shelter

Ms. Leslie reminded the Commissioners that the contract to staff and operate the severe weather shelter is shared equally between Catholic Community Services and Congregations for the Homeless. The contract runs through March. The shelter was activated twice in December because of inclement weather conditions.

Grant Coordinator Joseph Adriano, who is charged with coordinating the severe weather shelter for the city, said a call for activation was put out on December 2 for the following Saturday, but on the morning of December 3 the temperature dropped

to below freezing, triggering a need to open the shelter earlier than planned. The shelter was open for eleven nights from December 3 to December 13. He noted that there is a press release from the city whenever there is an activation; it was picked up by the newspapers and radio stations, and by the public information network. After December 13 the temperature rose above the freezing mark so the shelter was closed. The temperature, however, was only at 35 degrees and some providers suggested that consideration should be given to how cold the ground is that the homeless are sleeping on when determining if the shelter should be open or not. A call has been put in to the National Weather Service for input on how they regard air temperature versus ground temperature.

Mr. Adriano said there were 316 bednights recorded by the shelter, with an average of 18 bednights per night; the highest single night count was 30. A total of 59 unduplicated individuals were served, with 95 percent of them male. The average age was 41; three persons reported their age as 18 and one person indicated he was 66 years old. Forty-seven percent of the clients indicated Bellevue as their last permanent address, though the contractors thought some marked Bellevue on the form on the misunderstanding that they had to be Bellevue residents in order to use the shelter. Clients also listed Redmond and Seattle as their place of residence.

Mr. Adriano said the projected budget for the pilot period is close to \$25,000. Of that, \$22,000 has been allocated from Bellevue, Redmond has contributed \$2500, and Kirkland has agreed to spend \$300 for emergency blankets. The contractors are paid \$735 per night for three staff for ten hours. To date, a little more than \$16,000 has been expended for the shelter.

Commissioner Stout asked if there is any way the public announcement of the shelter openings could be tied to television weather reports. Mr. Adriano said he would have the department's public information officer check into that. Commissioner Stout said posting notices in stores that might be frequented by the homeless would also be a good idea; that would include the libraries.

Mr. Adriano said some feedback has been gathered from the contractors, but a full feedback gathering process will kick off in April.

Commissioner Bruels asked if a Council liaison to the Commission had been appointed yet. Ms. Leslie allowed that it had not. She said the mayor makes those appointments and it should be happening soon. In addition to a liaison to the Commission, Bellevue Councilmembers need to be appointed to the Eastside Human Services Forum Board, the Mental Illness Drug Dependency (MIDD) Oversight Committee, and the Governing Board for the Committee to End Homelessness.

10. NEW BUSINESS – None

11. PETITIONS AND COMMUNICATIONS – None

12. ADJOURNMENT

Chair Huenefeld Gese adjourned the meeting at 8:27 p.m.

Secretary to the Human Services Commission

Date

Chairperson of the Human Services Commission

Date