

BELLEVUE NETWORK ON AGING  
REGULAR MEETING  
MINUTES

October 10, 2008  
8:30 a.m.

Bellevue City Hall  
Room 1E -120

MEMBERS PRESENT: Lynne Robinson, Jim Messner, Stephen Lam, Berta Seltzer, Dwayne Dilley, Diana Thompson, Howard Katz, Gary Dickerman

MEMBERS ABSENT: Catherine Brallier, Christina Coulter, Eve Stern, Marjorie Todd, Eileen Rasnack

STAFF PRESENT: Cathy VonWald, Department of Parks and Community Services

OTHERS PRESENT: Kevin Henry, Parks  
Chris Grant, Carriage Home Healthcare  
Jeff Christopher, citizen

RECORDING SECRETARY: Gerry Lindsay

WELCOME AND ROLL CALL

The meeting was called to order at 8:38 a.m. by Chair Robinson who presided. All committee members were present with the exception of Howard Katz, who arrived at 9:14 a.m., and Catherine Brallier, Christina Coulter, Eve Stern, Marjorie Todd and Eileen Rasnack, all of whom were excused.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

A. September 4, 2008

**Motion to approve the agenda was made by Mr. Dickerman. Second was by Ms. Seltzer and the motion carried unanimously.**

CULTURAL DIVERSITY PROGRAM

Kevin Henry, who heads up the city's Cultural Diversity Program, made available to the Network a task force report on cultural diversity that was done in 1992. He noted that at the time the demographics in the city were beginning to change with a big influx of immigrants and an increase in the number of languages spoken in the schools. The report included recommendations for an action plan in terms of working with the immigrants, helping them with employment, uniting and educating the community, and working with the school system to form connections between teachers and parents whose first language was not English.

Mr. Henry said one part of the mission of the Cultural Diversity Program is to build a stronger and more unified community on a social and economic level. One way to do that is to address the needs of the underserved to the benefit of the entire community.

The affirmative action controversy was coming to an end by the mid-90s, and there was resistance all over King County to programs that tended to force people into situations which

might not be all that comfortable for them. Words like “tolerance” were being widely used, even though the connotation often is something one does not like but puts up with. Mr. Henry said he went about trying to emphasize the value inherent in diversity, stressing that diversity enhances communities by introducing new dimensions, new layers and new textures. Diversity exposes people to other ways of life and culture. Diversity is inclusive of everyone and is entirely about what everyone brings to the table.

Bellevue in the past has won several awards because of its proactive approach to nurturing and promoting diversity. Bellevue is often held up as a role model by other cities around the nation that are facing the same changing demographics issue.

Mr. Henry said people can be liberal and open, but they are creatures of habit in that they visit the same stores and hang out with the same people all the time. There is a certain comfort in that. The Cultural Diversity Program seeks in part to create situations in which people are brought together who left to themselves likely would not make those connections. Recently Police Chief Linda Pillo spoke to a group of about 75 people at the North Bellevue Community Center. She brought along five of her officers. Open and free discussions were held at about five individual tables on the topic of the perception of police in general and in Bellevue specifically. The thinking was that people sitting down eye-to-eye could learn to appreciate each other’s viewpoints. The event was videotaped by BTV and is available for viewing online.

Other departments are focused to some degree on the issue of diversity as well. The fire department has done a series of videos in different languages about emergency preparedness. The police department is heavily involved in outreach, as is Service First, the ADA Committee, Neighborhood Outreach, and the Economic Development Program. The latter is a major sponsor of the Bellevue Entrepreneur Center, which focuses on small and minority-owned businesses and aims to help them succeed. In the end, the city as a whole benefits.

Mr. Henry said the mini City Hall in the Crossroads Shopping Center is a very popular place for diverse citizens. There they find volunteer translators and interpreters who can help them with all kinds of issues. The Crossroads community is the most diverse area of the city.

The Cultural Diversity Program ferrets out situations where common bonds can be found, such as parenting seminars, cultural arts and dancing, in which people can be brought together. Community festivals are always popular and they bring people together. Arts events are made as interactive as possible.

About once a year media experts and reporters are brought together to talk about how to get messages out to the masses. Most non-profit organizations do not have the budget it takes to pay for advertising, but if they can get articles published in a major paper they can gain needed exposure.

The Voices of Diversity radio program is done in collaboration with KCBS-FM, the radio station at Bellevue Community College. The program airs once a week and focuses on social and cultural issues that affect the city and the region.

Mr. Henry said the purpose of the Cultural Diversity Program is to open doors and to keep opening them. He said it is an ongoing process that is entirely based on building relationships.

Ms. VonWald said during her tenure with the city she has seen a huge change in the makeup of the people served. She said her job has changed over time as a result. The need to adapt is paramount. She asked Mr. Henry to explain a little about what the city offers by way of

multilingual resources. Mr. Henry said the city has web pages in different languages. There is also a voicemail system in which messages can be left in nearly any language and within 24 hours someone will call them back with answers. The city works to translate a lot of materials into languages other than English, especially brochures and events calendars. Every attempt is made to make it easier to improve communication between the city and its citizens.

Mr. Dickerman said he has interaction with many in the community who are not native English speakers. He said he has found that many who engage in ESL classes go home and speak their native languages instead of seeking to put into practice what they have learned in the classes. That makes it difficult for English-only speakers to engage and interact well with them. Mr. Henry suggested that the decision by immigrants to speak their native tongue in the home is a personal choice, often made based on their desire to retain their culture and heritage. ESL programs needed to assist people in learning how to live in their adopted country, but they also need to encourage them to use their new English skills often and widely.

Chair Robinson said she commonly hears from her clients that when immigrants choose not to learn English, in part because an attempt is made to reach out to them in their native language and make it as easy as possible for them, it becomes very difficult for them to give back to the local community.

Ms. Seltzer pointed out that children learn the language and ways of their new society very quickly and easily, and that can create a barrier between them and their parents who chose not to learn English and use it proficiently.

Mr. Henry agreed that the issue is one that needs to be addressed head on, possibly in a focus group or forum setting. He allowed that it is not a finger-pointing matter, but it is an issue which if addressed could result in a win for everyone. He said he would like to see a situation created in which the issue can be discussed openly and honestly; if nothing else, that approach could yield more information about the issues.

Mr. Messner said he would like to see a much higher percentage of the Network membership reflect the diversity of the community. An attempt was made to realize that when the Network was formed, but there was a decided lack of volunteers. He asked Mr. Henry if he had any suggestions for a course correction now that several of the initial member terms are ending. Mr. Henry said that issue is pervasive all over the city. He said he has found that sending out emails and flyers will help to get the word out, but nothing is more efficient than establishing personal relationships.

Mr. Lam said he and his wife speak Chinese at home and with friends, and if it is not necessary to speak English he does not. He said he reads the Chinese newspaper and watches Chinese television programs. For many, especially the elderly, the need to be able to use English proficiently is simply not seen. A number of the elderly have lived in the area for 30 years but have spent their whole lives working in Chinatown and have never had to use English.

Mr. Dilley asked why Bellevue has become a center for multicultural seniors. Mr. Henry said he has heard a variety of reasons over the years but has not fully explored the issue in detail. He said Bellevue has a good reputation for being safe and having good schools, but one of the driving factors is family.

There was agreement on the part of the Network members to see the issue further explored, possibly starting with a forum.

## NOMINATING COMMITTEE REPORT

Ms. VonWald reported that a total of seven applicants were received for the seven vacancies. The deadline for accepting applications was October 3. According to the by-laws, the Network is to have between nine and fifteen members. The nominating committee has determined that all of the applicants should be interviewed; those interviews will take place on the afternoon of October 29 and the morning of November 4.

Ms. VonWald reported that Network members Eve Stern and Catherine Brallier have both resigned, leaving more vacancies than originally considered.

Mr. Katz floated the notion of having members in training with full participation rights but without a voting privilege. That would give the Network a pool of persons to choose from when members resign for one reason or another.

Ms. VonWald said the Network by-laws do not currently allow for that but could be amended. She added that the meetings are always open to the public.

It was agreed to raise the issue during the annual retreat in January.

## 2008 WORK PLAN REVIEW

This agenda item was tabled to later in the meeting.

## STAFF REPORT

Ms. VonWald reported that on September 9 the Bellevue Neighborhood Mediation Program invited her to be part of an elder mediation panel, a new direction for the program.

The Network agreed that receiving an update regarding the issue would be helpful.

Ms. VonWald said she was before the City Council on September 15 as part of Fall Prevention Week. She said the opportunity was taken to tell the Council and the community about how to prevent falls and fires.

The Human Services Commission has requested and will receive an update regarding the Network on Aging on November 18. It was agreed that Mr. Dickerman would attend along with Ms. VonWald.

Ms. VonWald said the Kelsey Creek Farm Fair event will be October 11 and 12. She said there will be a city table there that will include Network materials.

The Network was informed about the senior lobby conference scheduled for October 17.

## LETTER TO GOVERNOR GREGOIRE

Ms. Thompson said she attended a legislative conference that was focused on how to lobby and what seniors should lobby for. The last speaker was Peter Greenfield of Columbia Legal Services. He pointed out that in many states people are eligible for Medicaid if their income is below the threshold poverty line, which is \$867 per month for a single person. In Washington state, however, for a single person to receive Medicaid their income must be below \$637 per month. In 2007, the Governor signed into law a bill under which the Categorically Needy Income Level (CNIL) for adults 65 and over is to be 80 percent of the SLP starting in July 2009; currently the figure is 73 percent of the federal poverty level. Even

though the legislation has been approved, the increased funding needed was not approved. What is truly needed is an increase in the CNIL and the Medically Needed Income Level (MNIL). The legislation raises the CNIL but not the MNIL. Under the new law, the Medicaid qualifying income level in the state will be \$694 per month or less. Anyone making more than that must incur a certain amount of medical expenses in order to become eligible.

Continuing, Ms. Thompson said generally speaking people with low incomes avoid incurring medical expenses, unless they find it necessary to go to the emergency room. Those who fall into the gap between \$637 and \$694 are going to have problems getting medical coverage.

A letter from the Network has been drafted which encourages Governor Gregoire to include in the state 2009 budget funding to at least 80 percent of the CNIL, and to raise the MNIL.

Motion to approve the letter and to have Chair Robinson sign it on behalf of the Network was made by Ms. Thompson. Second was by Mr. Katz and the motion carried unanimously.

#### BNOA/KIRKLAND SENIOR COUNCIL JOINT COMMITTEE REPORT

Mr. Lam distributed the minutes of the meeting, which he noted he attended. He noted that the video produced by Kirkland has received awards and recognition.

Motion to continue sending Network representatives to the Kirkland Senior Council meetings for the remainder of 2008 was made by Ms. Thompson. The motion died for lack of a second.

#### EAST KING COUNTY AGING PROVIDERS COALITION REPORT

Ms. VonWald said the East King County Aging Providers Coalition is a group that is just getting started. The first meeting will be on November 5 from 2:00 p.m. to 3:30 p.m. at City Hall in 1E-108.

#### AGING SERVICES COALITION REPORT

Ms. VonWald said the Aging Services Coalition is a group of countywide human service providers. The group has been working hard to advocate for continued funding from King County, which is looking to drastically cut its human services budget.

#### COMMITTEE REPORTS

##### *Transportation*

Mr. Dickerman said the subcommittee has been working with the Easy Rider project on obtaining grant funding. The primary energy has been focused on recruiting a mobility manager and an Eastside subregional mobility coordinator for the Dial-A-Ride, Bus Buddy and Travel Ambassador programs. The part-time position has been funded for two years and will be under the auspices of Hopelink.

Mr. Dickerman said a marketing piece has been developed to be used in meeting with decision makers and interest groups.

Mr. Dickerman said he also has completed a Power Point presentation on identity theft to be shared with the elderly and those at risk. It was agreed it should be shared with the Network at its next meeting.

Mr. Dickerman said he attended the legislative seminar as well and gained insights into how to approach legislators.

The subcommittee is keeping its collective ear to the ground to know what all of the various entities focused on transportation are doing. That includes groups that are supporting light rail.

### *Housing*

Mr. Lam reported that the subcommittee met to discuss the press release talking about changes to the housing market. Once the draft letter to the editor is completed, it will be brought before the full Network for approval.

### *Support Services*

Ms. Thompson reported that the subcommittee last met on September 25. The committee is trying to find groups to give the Power Point presentation to. A presentation will be given to the Wilburton Neighborhood Association on November 12. A number of other neighborhood associations have been contacted and may soon schedule presentations.

Ms. Thompson said the Home Sweet Home Fair is slated for November 8. Debbie Anderson, former head of senior care at Overlake Hospital, who has in the past been the heart and soul of the event, is no longer with Overlake Hospital. Other people are working on it, but it will be a challenge for them. Flyers are being distributed widely, including at Group Health and the library. A press release is also being readied.

It was suggested that the groups that walk in the malls should be contacted and invited to attend the fair as well.

NEW BUSINESS – None

PUBLIC COMMENTS/QUESTIONS – None

### UPCOMING AGENDA ITEMS

The Network reviewed the list of upcoming agenda items.

Ms. VonWald reported that on October 8 KOMO television called the North Bellevue Community Center regarding a story they were doing on the financial crisis. They wanted to get a perspective from older adults and how they are feeling about their retirement accounts and the like. A reporter came to the center and interviewed a number of seniors in a fully non-staged manner. When the story aired, it was very well done.

Mr. Katz suggested it might be in order for the Network to put together a seminar advising older adults on steps they can take during the financial crisis. Mr. Dilley agreed and suggested he should be allowed a table at the Home Sweet Home Fair to answer general financial questions.

### 2008 WORK PLAN

Chair Robinson asked the subcommittees to carefully review their goals for 2008 and make a determination of how close they are to reaching the goals. She said she would ask for a report from each committee at the next meeting.

ADJOURN

Chair Robinson adjourned the meeting at 10:26 a.m.