

BELLEVUE NETWORK ON AGING
REGULAR MEETING
MINUTES

March 4, 2010
8:30 a.m.

Bellevue City Hall
Room 1E -112

MEMBERS PRESENT: Lynne Robinson, Berta Seltzer, Howard Katz, Eileen Rasnack, Jullie Gray, Bob Megargel, Heidi Ressler, Hannah Kimball, Peg English, Richard Englund, Cindy Sharek, Beverly Heyden

MEMBERS ABSENT: Bill Merriman, Diana Thompson

STAFF PRESENT: Cathy VonWald, Alex O'Reilly, Camron Parker, Department of Parks and Community Services; Gwen Rousseau, Department of Planning and Community Development

OTHERS PRESENT: Polly Nelson, Eastside Easy Rider Collaborative; Rich Allen, Kirkland Senior Council; Jeanne Grote, North Bellevue Community Center volunteer

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 Bill Merriman and Diana Thompson.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

A. February 4, 2010

Motion to approve the minutes as printed was made by Ms. Seltzer. Second was by Ms. Thompson and the motion carried unanimously.

BELLEVUE DEMOGRAPHICS UPDATE

Gwen Rousseau, Associate Planner with the Department of Planning and Community Development, explained that the American Community Survey (ACS) has replaced the census long form which was sent out to about one out of every six households. The ACS is a continuous survey that is mailed out monthly to more than 250,000 households across the nation. The new approach makes it possible to get census data more often than every ten years, though the data is less a snapshot than it is an indication of a period of time. She said her presentation would focus on the three-year period between 2006 and 2008.

Only about 2.1 percent of all United States households receive the ACS form annually. Accordingly, there are errors associated with the resulting estimates.

The estimates are released in one-year, three-year and five-year collections. Only cities with populations of 65,000 or more get the one-year or annual estimates; Bellevue is one of those cities. The three-year estimate has a larger sample, so the estimates are slightly more

accurate. There are only 58 cities in Washington state that get the three-year estimates; each has a population of 20,000 or more. The five-year estimates will be released in 2011 and help cities drill down to the census tract level.

Bellevue's population since its incorporation in 1953 has increased substantially. There was a very large increase during the 1960s, and since then it has been steadily increasing. Most of the city's population increase has been due to annexation. With less area yet to be annexed, the population growth rate for Bellevue is expected to slow to just less than one percent per year. It is expected that the current population of 120,600 will increase to 138,500 by 2020, and 148,400 by 2030.

Ms. Rousseau shared with the Network a series of population pyramids comparing the distribution of age and gender for the area. She highlighted the fact that Bellevue has far more children than Seattle, and has a large workforce population aged 20–64. Of Washington's 58 large places, Bellevue ranks eleventh in terms of median age; Bellevue's median age is currently 40 and has been increasing since 1990. Mercer Island ranks highest in terms of median age at 47.

Bellevue is the fifth highest in the state in terms of its percentage of 20-44 year olds at 35 percent. The city's population of older adults stands at 14.4 percent is the highest it has been; it was 10.4 percent in 1990, and 13.4 percent in 2000. It is estimated that nationally the population of citizens over the age of 65 will increase to 20 percent by 2050; worldwide the senior population is expected to hit 17 percent by 2050, and in Europe the senior population will hit 29 percent by 2050. To date, four countries already have senior populations that exceed 20 percent: Japan, Germany, Monaco and Italy.

Bellevue is in the top third of Washington places in terms of having high rates of ethnic diversity. The most diverse cities in the state are Pasco, SeaTac, Renton, Yakima, Federal Way and Kent. Bellevue's diversity picture is primarily predicated on its large Asian population. Fully 65 percent of Bellevue's population is white, but more than 23 percent of the residents are Asian. Nationwide, the larger minority populations are Hispanic and African American. Bellevue ranks first in having the highest proportion of Asian residents. Bellevue's younger population is more diverse than the older population.

Ms. Rousseau said Bellevue has the highest percent of residents who are foreign born of all of Washington's largest places. About 31 percent of Bellevue residents were born in a foreign country, the majority of them from Asian countries, though large percentages of them also come from Europe and Latin America. Of those born in Asian countries, the largest percentage are from China, followed by those born in India. Asian Indians are the fastest growing subgroup of Asians in Bellevue. The age group with the largest percentage of foreign born residents is 25-44, whereas the age group of 65-74 has a much lower percentage.

Bellevue is sixth overall on the list of Bellevue's largest places in terms of having the highest percentage of residents who speak a language other than English in the home. About one-third of Bellevue residents speak a language other than English at home, with Chinese the most frequently spoken followed by Spanish, Korean, Russian, Hindi, Japanese and Vietnamese. Those who speak Korean in the home are most likely to report that they do not speak English very well. In terms of the overall population, it is predominantly the younger folks who speak a language other than English.

About eight percent of Bellevue's households are considered to be linguistically isolated as defined by having no one in the household over the age of 14 that speaks English very well.

Ms. Rousseau said the breakdown of household types in Bellevue is typical of most of Washington's large places. One change is that single-person households now exceeds the number of households made up of married couples without children. The upward trend of single-person households is expected to continue.

Bellevue has always been known for its good schools so it is not surprising that Bellevue is number six in the state for the percentage of residents that have a bachelor's degree or higher. Related to that, 58 percent of Bellevue residents work in management, professional and related occupations. Nationally, 34 percent, and statewide, 37 percent, fall into that category.

Ms. Rousseau stressed that the data she was sharing was collected prior to the recession. She noted that based on the collected data, the unemployment rate had fluctuated over the years and landed below its peak of 7.4 by 2008. At the same time, however, the number of Bellevue residents in the labor force had decreased.

There are a quite a few older adults who remain working in the labor force. About 37 percent of men and 27 percent of women aged 65 and older continue to work. The unemployment numbers indicate that the largest percentage are in the 16 and under age group, though there are some 65 and older who reported being unemployed.

Thirty percent of Bellevue's workforce residents commute to work via a means other than driving alone. That percentage is up since 2000. There is an increasing trend toward people working at home; most of those are in management, professional and related occupations. The use of public transit increased by two percent since 2000. The percentage of Bellevue residents who carpool, however, is low compared to other places.

About 45 percent of Bellevue households have two vehicles, while 25 percent have three or more, and another 25 percent have only one. In the households that do not have a vehicle, older adults make up the higher percentage.

The median household income was just over \$80,000. Over 54 percent of Bellevue's households had annual incomes of more than \$75,000. Nationally, the median income of households with residents 65 and older was \$29,744; Bellevue households with residents over the age of 65 had median incomes of less than 58 percent of the overall average. Asians earn more than whites, but Hispanics and African Americans earn significantly less.

About 6.9 percent of the Bellevue population lives at or below the poverty level as determined by the federal government. The percentage of residents 65 and older in Bellevue who are living at or below the poverty is higher than that.

Ms. Rousseau said about 59 percent of Bellevue's occupied housing units are owner occupied. The rental vacancy rate is about twice the homeowner vacancy rate. A higher percentage of residents age 65 and older own their own homes. Just over half of the structures in Bellevue are single family detached units; nearly as many of the units are in multifamily structures. Bellevue is third in the state for having 20 percent or more of the total number of housing units in structures with 20 or more units. Bellevue has the fifth highest median housing value of Washington's large places. Correspondingly, Bellevue has high housing costs. For residents who own their homes and have a mortgage, the median monthly housing cost was \$2400. For those who own their homes but do not have a mortgage, the median monthly housing cost was \$662. About 31 percent of Bellevue's older adults pay more than 30 percent of their incomes for housing. Bellevue's median monthly rent is \$1200, and about 30 percent of Bellevue's rental households have monthly housing costs of more than 35 percent of their income.

Ms. Rousseau said the number of notice of trustee sales serves as an indicator of the level of stress in a community. She noted that the number of notices peaked in the second quarter of 2009, and while the figure has dropped since, it is still much higher than it was a year ago. The projection is that it will remain at a very high level for some time.

Ms. Rousseau said the federal census will be taken in March. The questionnaires will be mailed out March 15 through 17 to all homes in the nation. The data collected will be used to determine everything from the number of Congressional seats to the distribution of federal dollars. The 2010 form has only ten questions on it. A short video on the census count was screened for the Network.

BREAK

BELLEVUE PARK PLAN UPDATE

Senior Planner Camron Parker reminded the Network that the city's parks and open space system plan includes long-range capital project recommendations for the long term. He shared the list of capital recommendations grouped by category. While the plan covers a 20-year time frame, it is updated every six years; completed projects are removed from this list, and new projects are added to the list.

Mr. Parker noted that he provided the Network with an update on the process in October 2009 near the beginning of the public participation process. In September, the city commissioned a representative sample survey of Bellevue residents asking how they use the park system currently and what the priorities for future development of the system should be. A total of 3000 surveys went out, 700 of which were completed and returned.

In general, the results were similar to past survey results. With regard to the question focused on the elements of the park system that are most often used by people, the top answer was trails, followed by open, unstructured areas such as fields and plazas, beach and waterfront parks, playgrounds, and outdoor sports fields. About 50 percent of the respondents reported using trails and open areas either occasionally or frequently. The answers from respondents between the ages of 50 and 64 lined up fairly closely with the general answers for the total population, except that playgrounds did not make the list of top facilities used and display gardens did. The frequency of use reported by respondents aged 50 to 64 mirrored the general population, but was less for respondents aged 65 and older.

Mr. Parker said a major theme of the parks and open space plan has traditionally been access, particularly walkable access, to parks. The survey asked people to indicate if they have a park within a ten-minute walk from their homes. The survey data, coupled with mapping work, is important in determining where new park facilities should be located. Often all that is needed is better connections from within neighborhoods. Eighty-six percent of the survey respondents indicated they have a park facility within a ten-minute walk, and 93 percent reported they have safe access to park facilities. For respondents aged 50 to 65, the reported percentages were nearly the same as for the general population.

The survey asked people to rank the priorities the city should focus on. The respondents indicated that the types of facilities most frequently used are the facilities that have the highest priority. The general population in ranked order of importance trails, beach and waterfront access, open and unstructured areas, fields or plazas, and playgrounds. The answers given by older adults were largely the same, except that they placed a higher importance on the more passive park uses. The 65 and over respondents listed community centers quite a bit stronger than the population in general.

Ms. English said she recently attended a presentation at the University of Washington regarding a study focusing on transportation and activities for older adults in Switzerland. She said it was made clear that Switzerland has an extensive system of trails that are widely used. What makes them stand out is that they are all well marked, with signage clearly indicating how long it will take to get to various places and what can be expected to be found at the end of each trail segment, including connections to other trails. Mr. Parker agreed that signage is important and a priority item for the department. A new trail guidebook has been published and is ready for general distribution.

Ms. Ressler said she loves gardening, something that keeps her outside for hours on end. She suggested that as she ages she will want to have green places with picnic tables or benches within walking distance, a place to meet with friends and have quiet conversations. She proposed that many use the open and unstructured areas for that same purpose.

Answering a question asked by Mr. Katz, Mr. Parker said the city has a master plan in place for the Surrey Downs park.

Mr. Parker said the North Bellevue Community Center addition is a project that was in the last plan and that will be continued into the 2010 plan. The project envisions adding a gym space to the community center. The project is not funded.

Ms. Ressler suggested it would be a good idea to form walking groups through the parks department where people who want to walk but who do not have anyone to walk with could join a group. Ms. VonWald said attempts have been made in the past to start outdoor walking groups as part of the community center, but none of the efforts have met with success. The biking group has been more successful and meets regularly.

Mr. Katz asked if the proposed trail along the Burlington Northern/Santa Fe right-of-way will be pulled from the project list if the Council succeeds in having the light rail alignment use that corridor. Mr. Parker said the average right-of-way width is 100 feet, so in most places there is room for both trail and rail.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

A. Housing

Ms. Kimball said the committee met on February 22 to continue working to develop a comprehensive list of senior-friendly housing options, including affordable options. In a conversation with ARCH director Arthur Sullivan the suggestion was made to include a senior section on the ARCH website. It was agreed that would be the more efficient route to take.

Ms. VonWald said she spoke with Aging and Disability Services about enlisting their help with the project.

Ms. Kimball said the committee will meet again on March 15 to continue working on the project.

Ms. Kimball said the committee also talked about getting familiar with innovative types of housing so the group can advocate properly before the City Council. Mr. Sullivan made the suggestion that the group should concentrate its efforts on innovative partnerships and types of housing. The committee is working with Mr. Sullivan to set up a tour of innovative housing types.

B. Outreach

Ms. Ressler said the committee also met on February 22. Kevin Henry with the city's diversity program attended and made a presentation. Mr. Henry hosts a weekly radio program and a once-a-month television program and said he would welcome from the group suggestions for topics that can be handled in an hour.

Mr. Englund reported that he gave a presentation to a men's group. That group highlighted the need for persons in adult care facilities visited on a regular basis. Chair Robinson pointed out that in all instances where people are charged with taking care of others, having family or a close friend present increases the level of accountability. Ms. VonWald said she has spoken with the long-term care ombudsman program about having them make a presentation to the full Network at a future meeting.

Ms. Ressler said the committee has been made aware that the *Bellevue Reporter* is moving to a once-a-week publication schedule and that the move could impact the outreach work of the committee. Alternatives are being considered.

C. Advocacy

Ms. Rasnack said the committee drafted, signed and sent out a letter to the *Seattle Times* thanking them for their article on adult family homes.

Ms. Rasnack said she and Mr. Katz participated in Senior Lobby Day in Olympia. She said they met with the all of the 41st District aides or representatives mandated to be on the floor that day, as well as with Senator Gordon. She noted that Ms. Kimball and Ms. Thompson were present with AARP and visited with the 48th District aides and representatives.

The legislative session is scheduled to wrap up on March 11. The legislature is still looking at budgets and determining revenue options.

Ms. Sharek reported that an amendment has been introduced that would restore adult day health; that amendment is still being considered. There was agreement to draft and send out another letter from the Network supporting the restoration of adult day health funding.

Ms. VonWald reported that Mr. Katz, Ms. Seltzer and Ms. Ressler appeared before the Council recently and reminded them to remember older adults and persons with limited mobility when recommending to Sound Transit where light rail stations should be. She said a Sound Transit representative called to say she appreciated hearing that message from the Network. The representative has agreed to come talk to the Network in April about what Sound Transit is considering. Additionally, Councilmember Balducci has called for convening a group of older adults to talk about light rail in Bellevue, in part because of a conversation she had with Mr. Katz.

Mr. Katz said he has been carefully following the Council meetings and suggested that the presentation made on behalf of the Network did not really have an impact. The Council has not asked anyone from the city to look into any of the issues, and there has been no feedback generally.

Ms. VonWald disagreed. She said the Council is in an information gathering stage, as shown by the call from Councilmember Balducci for seniors to talk about light rail issues.

OTHER BOARDS/COMMISSIONS REPORTS

Ms. Seltzer said the Puget Sound Regional Council has been working on its 2040 plan. The document is long and involved, but a summary should be ready soon.

Ms. Seltzer reported that a new free bus service is set to begin operations between Overlake on 140th Avenue NE and East Lake Sammamish Parkway. It will have 16 stops that have been designed for special needs people, including low-income residents and seniors. The service will run five days a week from 6:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m.

Ms. O'Reilly said the service is called Easy Rider and is funded by a federal grant that the Eastside Easy Rider Collaborative in conjunction with Hopelink was able to obtain. Hopelink has been trying to get the service off the ground for the last four years and it is set to kick off on March 8. Riders must sign up for the service and make a reservation.

Ms. O'Reilly distributed copies of an invitation to a presentation related to all kinds of volunteering. She explained that about a year ago the Eastside Human Services Forum started to look at joint projects on the Eastside as a response to the recession. The upcoming presentation will be focused on the concept of time banking in which every hour one spends doing something for someone in the community earns them time credits that can be redeemed by having someone do something for them, or used to help someone else. A consultant has been hired to help develop a local program and launch it in 2011. On March 11, a training session will be conducted for interested groups.

Ms. Seltzer reported that the Eastside Human Services Forum workgroup would be meeting on March 9. Ms. O'Reilly said she would be attending that meeting.

Ms. O'Reilly said the Forum is in the process of planning an event that used to be called Human Services 101. The presentation is intended to be a primer for human services on the Eastside for anyone who wants to attend, but especially for elected officials.

Chair Robinson said the Park Board recently went through a naming process for the park property in Eastgate. A list of about 25 names was first narrowed down to six. The suggestion was made to name the park after a female pilot from WWII who lives in the Vucrest neighborhood and who has been selected to receive the Congressional Gold Medal. The decision was made to name the site Airfield Park in honor of the woman.

Chair Robinson pointed out that before the site was the home of a Boeing installation, it was the Bellevue airfield. The woman's father owned the site, and her husband ran the operation.

Chair Robinson said a public hearing is slated for March 9 in Council Chambers on the Meydenbauer Bay park plan. She noted that the park is very controversial, especially to the nearby property owners. The proposed plan is an exciting design that includes the notion accessibility for everyone. The Network members were encouraged to attend the public hearing.

STAFF REPORT

Ms. VonWald distributed copies of the proposed changes to the bylaws as recommended by the ad hoc committee. She said 30 days notice is required before making any changes to the bylaws, so no action will be taken until the April meeting.

NEW BUSINESS – None

PUBLIC COMMENTS/QUESTIONS – None

UPCOMING AGENDA ITEMS

Ms. VonWald reviewed the list of upcoming agenda items.

Chair Robinson reminded the members that the city's goals for the Network were to get information out to seniors in the community, recognize the needs and issues facing older adults and addressing them, and letting the city know how it can be more effective to the population of older residents.

Ms. VonWald said May is Older Americans Month, which traditionally has been the month the Network sends its annual report to the City Council, Park Board and Human Services Commission. She said she has begun the task of drafting the document and would have it ready for review at the next meeting. She proposed adding a section listing the key components of what makes for an aging-friendly community.

ADJOURN

Chair Robinson adjourned the meeting at 10:45 a.m.