

The Human Services Commission approved these minutes on March 15, 2011

CITY OF BELLEVUE
HUMAN SERVICES COMMISSION
MINUTES

February 15, 2011
6:30 p.m.

Bellevue City Hall
City Council Conference Room 1E-113

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

COMMISSIONERS ABSENT: None

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

GUEST SPEAKERS: Kathleen Morris, Washington Anti-Trafficking Response Network; Melinda Giovengo, Youth Care; Lt. Jim Hershey, Bellevue Police Department; Councilmember Chelminiak

RECORDING SECRETARY: Gerry Lindsay

1. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 6:32 p.m. by Chair Beighle who presided.

2. ROLL CALL

Upon the call of the roll, all Commissioners were present with the exception of Commissioner Plaskon who arrived at 6:33 p.m.

3. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

A. January 20, 2011

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

4. PETITIONS AND COMMUNICATIONS

Mr. Andrew Kranseler, 6005 140th Avenue SE, said he is a member of the Youth Link board and is a senior at Newport High School. He thanked the Commission for its support of the Youth Link program. He provided assurance that Youth Link will

continue on its course of shaping young leaders within the community.

Mr. Ryley Martin, 4615 137th Avenue NE, said he also is a member of the Youth Link board and is a freshman at Sammamish High School. He said Youth Link has set a number of goals for the current budget cycle, including conducting an evaluation process and researching different models of youth leadership. The annual Community Leadership Awards will be handed out in May. He invited the Commissioners to attend Gumbo Night on March 11, noting that invitations would be sent out soon.

5. STAFF AND COMMISSION REPORTS

Commissioner Stout said she met with a local church that is currently going through a process to decide their future direction in the community. She said she presented them with four or five pressing needs in the community, including the need for a permanent winter shelter.

Commissioner Hoople said he has been attending Levy Oversight Committee meetings, and has been conducting outreach to various groups. He noted that earlier in the day he had attended the King County Alliance of Human Services meeting on Mercer Island.

Commissioner Bruels said he also attended that meeting where an excellent overview of the levy was presented along with some strategizing for how to support the upcoming vote. He said he would be participating with a subcommittee of the Alliance strategizing outreach opportunities in the community to get the word out about the levy. He said the stakes could not be higher.

Commissioner Bruels said the Alliance conducted a roundtable discussion about some of the pain being felt as a result of human services cuts. Hopelink has lost its interpretive services, and that loss will certainly be felt. The King County Mobility Coalition funds appear to be lost as well, which includes the Eastside Easy Rider program. YWCA management are having to take furlough days, and they have had to make cuts to internal support programs. Sound Mental Health is making cuts across the board, especially for non-Medicaid services. Food Lifeline has seen a 30 percent increase in requests for assistance.

Commissioner Stout commented that one of the cuts in the House Republicans budget at the federal level is funding for community health centers nationwide. Those centers provide services to 11 million annually who are either uninsured or underinsured. Human Services Manager Emily Leslie noted that the budget just released by President Obama includes a 7.5 percent reduction in CDBG funds, which is far less than the 25 percent reduction that was anticipated. A national effort is underway to get cities and jurisdictions to make contact with their Congressional delegations to talk about projects funded with CDBG dollars.

Chair Beighle reported that she attended the Eastside Heritage fundraiser dinner. She said it is always interesting to hear the stories of people who have been in the area for so long.

Chair Beighle said she and Human Services Planner Alex O'Reilly held a community conversation at the Family Connections Center. She said she learned that they have about 130 students in the McKinney-Vento program, which is a federal program that deals with homeless children.

6. DISCUSSION

A. Panel Presentation on Human Trafficking and Teen Prostitution

Ms. Kathleen Morris, program manager for the Washington Anti-Trafficking Response Network (WARN), explained that the program is an element of the International Rescue Committee (IRC), an organization that has been around for 78 years providing human rights services to refugees and other displaced people. The organization began doing anti-trafficking work in 2003; the Seattle office of the IRC is one of only three in the United States with an anti-trafficking program. The program partners with the Asian and Pacific Islander Women and Family Safety Center, Refugee Women's Alliance, Youth Care, and two partner organizations in central and eastern Washington. The program receives federal funding through the Department of Justice, and because of funding restrictions the program serves foreign national victims of trafficking. Domestic victims are for the most part referred to Youth Care.

Ms. Morris said the Trafficking Victims Protection Act (TVPA) is a federal law that was passed in 2000 to address human trafficking. A new name and a new law was needed because few believed that slavery, which human trafficking is, still existed in the United States. Under the TVPA, there are different definitions for labor and sex trafficking. Both involve force, fraud and coercion, though for victims under the age of 18 those elements are not required for the person to be a victim of trafficking. Washington state was the first state to pass a state anti-trafficking law; that was done in 2003 and has been improved since.

Most of the cases involving the Eastside have been sex trafficking cases. Foreign national sex trafficking occurs most often in a house or apartment; the women are held against their will and forced to serve between 10 and 20 men a day. The residences look no different from any other in any average neighborhood. The majority of labor cases involving human trafficking involve domestic servitude; housekeepers and nannies are brought to the area from another country on the promise of good jobs and pay, only to find that they are literally enslaved, not able to leave, and threatened with deportation. Cases are also seen in small businesses, such as restaurants, nail salons and dry cleaners, as well as in agricultural work. Servile marriages, if entered into for the purpose of service, can be considered human trafficking as well. Language and cultural barriers often serve to keep victims

from leaving their situations, as does the control of immigration documents by the traffickers.

Ms. Morris said the IRC is very concerned with the safety of victims. The organization assists victims in obtaining housing and is able to provide food, clothing and basic necessities. Clients are put in contact with organizations that can provide them with physical and mental health treatment. While it is rare for victims to want to be repatriated because of the dangers involved, IRC provides assistance for those that do want to go home.

As part of the local response, a multidisciplinary team is in place. The task force includes victim service providers, the office of the United States Attorney, local prosecutors offices, and the Seattle Police Department. Every step is taken to protect the victims.

The TVPA provides for immigration relief for victims of trafficking. Those victims who meet certain criteria are able to apply for temporary status in the United States, which can lead to long-term immigration status.

Commissioner Plaskon asked what the Washington State law covers that the federal law does not. Ms. Morris said to a large degree the laws are the same, but there are times when federal law cannot be applied, particularly where a federal nexus to the crime can be identified. In those instances, it is good to have the state law to fall back on.

Commissioner Stout asked if the majority of girls are brought into the country with documentation. Ms. Morris allowed that most come in with documentation, but said they then overstay and become undocumented. Some do cross the border illegally and become involved in a trafficking situation.

Ms. Melinda Giovengo said Youth Care operates two programs for trafficking. One is called Casa de los Amigos, an Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) program for minors who have been trafficked across the border undocumented. The program has 20 beds for minors who meet the threshold.

Ms. Giovengo said in 1988 Youth Care had a federal demonstration project called Threshold. The community based program was dedicated to helping young women exit street life and prostitution. The results were tremendous. The problem was nobody was listening and nobody noticed. The community now recognizes that there are horrific things that happen and that the children are not perpetrators of criminal activity but rather victims. That shift is significant. Calling someone a prostitute predisposes a belief in an intention of behavior. The fact is that there are preconditions that make staying in untenable situations a viable choice. Young people leave their homes for mainly two reasons: either they are being exploited and used at home, or they age out of foster care. In either case, they become vulnerable to exploitation. Sometimes young people make bad decisions, but what happens to

them on the streets is a crime and they are the victims. Communities need safety nets in place to capture young people before they get too far down the line.

Commissioner Bruels pointed out that there are young boys in addition to young girls who are being exploited. Often the element of abuse and exploitation that occurs in their homes has to do with the LGBTQ population. Ms. Giovengo said about 40 percent of homeless youth identify as LGBTQ. The use of young boys and transgendered young people as prostitutes is on the rise in the community. Within 72 hours of being out of a safe housing situation, young persons are highly likely to be assaulted, raped or victimized. They often find they have nothing but their bodies to trade for what they need to survive.

Under the federal guidelines, trafficking involving minors includes legal or United States permanent residents who have not yet turned 18 and who are found to be engaged in a commercial sexual act. The word "commercial" means an exchange in return for sex occurred; the word does not necessarily mean money.

One of the problems often encountered in dealing with youth prostitution is the complexity of their status in criminal justice. The dichotomy is that if a male school coach were to have sex with a 14-year-old female student, he could be convicted of child sex abuse; if the same coach were to go out and pay a 14-year-old female for sex, the female could be arrested and charged while the man would face no legal consequences. In both cases consideration should be given to the fact that the child was raped. Washington state has passed stringent regulations and sentences for people who have sex with children; it is now a felony to buy sex from children, and the sentence increases exponentially depending on the age of the child involved. There is even more rigid sentencing for people who sell children for sex.

Ms. Giovengo said Youth Care has developed a model of care that is based on Maslow's hierarchy of needs. The service deliveries are targeted to meeting the child's basic needs and gradually moving them up the developmental model. The difficulty is the kids being worked with are often physically 16 years old, are developmentally 13 years old, but are walking the fine line with being 35 years old. The kids are incredibly difficult to engage and provide with services because they have zero trust in adults, zero confidence that any adult will do what they say, and no belief that that they can be safe in any environment.

Youth Care has two community advocates, one of whom came on board in May 2010 and has already identified 50 new unduplicated girls and a couple of young men as having been trafficked for sex. The other advocate works out of detention and contacting every young person with a prostitution charge or who has a history of those charges; she has a caseload of 110. The clients are provided with safety, protection, food and clothing in a nonjudgmental environment of mutual respect and acceptance. Youth Care has two emergency shelter beds; others can be used if they are open. The clients are allowed to stay for 30 days during which a great deal of assessment work is done. All of the staff are trained on trauma-informed therapy and

cognitive behavioral therapy. The approach is similar to the one used with rape victims except it is more long-term and repetitive in terms of the kinds of assaults they victims have undergone. Clients can stay in the bridge program until they are 18 years old, following which the goal is reintegration into the community.

The Youth Care outreach center called Orion is located in downtown Seattle. In 2008 the center served 2300 young people; in 2010 the center served 4500 unduplicated kids.

Reacting to the statement made by Ms. Giovengo that Youth Care anticipates serving only nine children in 2011, Commissioner Yantis said he was struck by the disparity given the large number of children living on the streets who are known by name. Ms. Giovengo reminded the Commission that the pilot program expected to be serving more. She stressed, however, that only a subset of the large number of identified kids on the street are in need of the kind of intensive services Youth Care offers. There needs to be a rethinking of what is being done in terms of a continuum model to end homelessness for youth and young adults. More emergency shelter beds are needed first and foremost. More outreach workers are also needed to go to the places where the children are known to be and give them resources and referrals. Efforts are under way with the Office of Crime Victims in Olympia to conduct training statewide on the identification and recognition of commercially sexually exploited young persons. Hubs are needed where the most intensive cases can be referred for safety and long-term treatment.

Commissioner Bruels asked how many emergency beds are needed in King County. Ms. Giovengo said there are actually 12 beds currently, four of which are being used by detention, and four are being used by the state, leaving only four for emergency beds. The beds at Casa de los Amigos are all filled. The new privately funded James W. Ray Center has 15 emergency beds for 18-22 year olds. Every night staff must play the shell game to find beds. Another 15 to 20 new beds are needed just as a safety net.

Lt. Jim Hershey said the police department is currently in the process of revising its programs with regard to vice. The King County prosecutor's office works closely with the federal prosecutor's office with an eye on how to get defendants the most jail time based on their charges. Prior to passage of a new law that became effective about three months ago, if a subject indicated the person they had sex with had told them they were 18 years old, it was very difficult to prosecute them. Under the new law, that argument does not hold water; a person must have some form of official identification confirming their age.

Lt. Hershey told the Commissioners that a few years ago a group of 12- or 15-year-old girls were trafficking each other out of a local store; they were selling sex acts for three to five dollars in order to have money to buy clothes and the latest trendy things. In another case, an 18-year old female went to apply for a job with a friend who claimed to have a friend in the hotel industry who was interested in a girl to work

as a concierge. She was introduced to three young men ages 17 to 19 who took her to a local lingerie shop and had her make several selections; they then began to train her to traffic in sex acts. The young woman had the courage to escape and came to the police department. An investigation was undertaken because she had been raped; the female friend was arrested and determined to be 16 years old, and two of the young men were arrested as well.

Similar cases are investigated every day. Adults are being trafficked after being assaulted and kidnapped, even from hotels on the Eastside. Patrol officers routinely knock on hotel doors and it is not uncommon for them to find underage persons. The sex trade is lucrative. One of the difficulties for the police and prosecutors is finding persons willing to testify.

Commissioner Stout said her concern was that sex trafficking is occurring in Bellevue, but because the residents think everything is pristine and perfect they are in total denial. The question is how to go about making people aware to the point of becoming concerned about and taking action to save the children. Ms. Morris said Bellevue is not alone in that mindset; nearly every city will say such things do not happen there. Lt. Hershey said that thinking plays into the hands of the people who are doing the exploiting.

Chair Beighle asked if there have been any education campaigns undertaken in the public schools. Ms. Morris said the Women's Funding Alliance is very interested in helping kids in middle schools in particular understand the risks, and in helping teachers recognize signs.

Ms. Giovengo said Kathy Lambert has a forum scheduled for March 10 called "Bringing National Safe Place to King County." Safe Place is a program in which local businesses become safe places; those working in the businesses are provided with training and given a single number to call whenever a child comes in saying they need help. It could be Starbucks, Bellevue Square or 7-Eleven.

Commissioner Plaskon said there are foster parents who have had their homes cleared to provide care for at-risk kids within 24 hours of being contacted. He asked why those homes cannot be used as emergency shelters. Ms. Giovengo said there are not all that many foster homes. The nuclear family model such homes offer is often too intimate for the children in need of help, most of whom have been betrayed, sexually abused or violently assaulted by their own families. They must be placed in a situation in which they feel safe first before gradually introducing them to more intimate settings.

6. DISCUSSION

A. Update on Community Conversations for 2011-2012 Human Services Needs Update

Ms. O'Reilly said she met earlier in the day with Councilmember Chelminiak to gain his insights and comments regarding the Needs Update.

Councilmember Chelminiak said two questions he would like to see asked of those who have received services are what services they are not getting, and secondarily how they found the services they have received. He commented that often voter lists are used as outreach tools, but those lists miss a lot of the population, especially those who are not citizens. Ms. O'Reilly clarified that the US postal service lists are used rather than voter lists. Councilmember Chelminiak said he was happy to see that outreach would be conducted in languages other than English.

Ms. O'Reilly said she would be meeting with Parks & Community Services Planner Camron Parker and Kevin Henry with the Cultural Diversity Program on February 17 to talk about the outreach they are considering, particularly to diverse communities.

Ms. O'Reilly said she has been in contact with a person involved with the Polish community, and has been following up on suggestions offered by Commissioner Hoople with regard to the veterans community. Contact will be made with the Muslim community as well. A pediatrician with the Eastgate Public Health Clinic has been contacted about talking about the pressures the public health system is facing.

Councilmember Chelminiak said he would be interested in knowing how the high cost of gasoline is affecting the disadvantaged. Additionally, the survey will be conducted about the time tolling on SR-520 begins and it would be good to know how that impacts low-income individuals. It would also be helpful to know if the falling housing prices are having any affect on housing affordability. Bellevue is both a city in which people reside and a city in which people work; it would be good to know how things stand with those who work in the lower paid service industries, and if they are using the services available in Bellevue.

Ms. O'Reilly said during the community conversation with the family support specialists at the Family Connections Center at the Bellevue School District she asked questions about the increase in homeless children. She said she also met with the McKinney-Vento liaison and viewed a Power Point presentation that was very informative; a short presentation will be made to the Commission in April.

Chair Beighle said at the meeting the issue of immigrants trying to get services came up several times. Communications with and obtaining services for ELL clients also was mentioned often. More and more middle class families are in trouble; the ones who in the past have always helped those in need are now themselves in need of help. One model being investigated is having safe places for people who are

homeless and who stay in their cars to park at night. It was also mentioned during the meeting how helpful it would be to have a computer at each of the schools for parents to use to look up resources. Something as simple as shower vouchers at the Bellevue Aquatic Center for homeless teens would be helpful. It was also mentioned that funding is running out at the end of the current funding cycle for the Wraparound Program and some services will be lost.

7. OLD BUSINESS – None
8. NEW BUSINESS – None
9. PETITIONS AND COMMUNICATIONS – None
10. ADJOURNMENT

Chair Beighle adjourned the meeting at 8:37 p.m.

_____	_____
Secretary to the Human Services Commission	Date

_____	_____
Chairperson of the Human Services Commission	Date