The Human Services Commission approved these minutes on April 17, 2012

CITY OF BELLEVUE
HUMAN SERVICES COMMISSION
MINUTES

March 6, 2012 — Bellevue City Hall
6:30 p.m. — City Council Conference Room 1E-113

COMMISSIONERS PRESENT:	Chairperson Bruels, Commissioners Beighle, Perelman, Plaskon, Stout, Yantis
COMMISSIONERS ABSENT:	Commissioner Habib
STAFF PRESENT:	Emily Leslie, Joseph Adriano, Evita Almassi, Sam Ezadean, Department of Parks and Community Services; Councilmember Wallace, City Council
GUEST SPEAKERS:	David Curtice, King County Housing Authority; Larry Robb, Home Repair Program client
RECORDING SECRETARY:	Gerry Lindsay

1. CALL TO ORDER

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

2. ROLL CALL

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

3. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

A. February 7, 2012

Commissioner Stout called attention to the first sentence of the last paragraph on page 6 and asked that it be reworded to read “Commissioner Stout said she would like to see the document include a statement to the effect that the Commission will accept new applications for things not being offered by existing programs.”

Motion to approve the minutes as amended was made by Commissioner Beighle. Second was by Commissioner Stout and the motion carried unanimously.

4. PETITIONS AND COMMUNICATIONS – None

5. STAFF AND COMMISSION REPORTS

Human Services Manager Emily Leslie reported that staff are focusing on the launch of the new online application process. She noted that the first funders workshop was slated for March 7 in Kirkland, and that the second workshop is scheduled for March 15 in Renton.

Grant Coordinator Joseph Adriano said work on the website was almost finalized in preparation for the March 15 launch date. He said all of the partner cities have stepped up, which is evidence of the partnership progressing. The agencies that volunteered to test the site have provided positive feedback.

Commissioner Stout asked if the Commissioners would be allowed to view the online application. Mr. Adriano agreed the group should talk about whether or the Commission would want to read the applications online. Binders with the printed applications will be made available to the Commissioners.

Several of the Commissioners indicated they would prefer to read the applications online, while others stated they would rather have hard copies to mark up.

Ms. Leslie reported that staff are continuing to keep their eyes on happenings in the legislature. She commented that while there are things on the potential chopping block, including a reduction in the allocation for the Housing Trust Fund, more cuts to Disability Lifeline Services, and healthcare in general, particularly mental healthcare. Until the budget is actually adopted, the impacts on agencies funded by the city will not be known.

Councilmember Wallace stated that he has been appointed by the Council to serve as liaison to the Human Services Commission. He noted that human services is one of his passions and that he previously worked with the Eastside District YMCA. He said he serves as an elder of the First Presbyterian Church which is involved with Jubilee Reach and with the Eastside Academy, an alternative school that is housed in the church. He said as a developer he is interested in affordable housing issues and has a good understanding of what it takes to get housing built, both in the for-profit and non-profit arenas.

At his request, the Commissioners took a moment to introduce themselves to Councilmember Wallace.

6. DISCUSSION

A. Bellevue Home Repair Program Update

Ms. Leslie reminded the Commissioners that the Major Home Repair Program is funded with Community Development Block Grant dollars and is conducted in partnership with the King County Housing Authority.

Home Repair Loan Specialist Sam Ezadean said the program provides interest-free loans of up to $20,000 per year (up to $35,000 total) to qualified low- and moderate-income Bellevue residents to effect major home repairs. The loan program is divided into four areas. The deferred loan program defers the payback of loans until the homeowner sells the house, and the homeowner must qualify as low-income. Leveraged loans are matching loans available to residents with moderate incomes; the homeowner must contribute half the cost of the repair. Emergency grants are available to very low-income residents up to a maximum of $1500. Finally, the weatherization program, provided through King County, provides grants for weatherization-related home repairs.

Commissioner Perelman said it was her understanding that home renters can qualify for repair loans as well. Mr. Ezadean said the loan program is for owner-occupants. Renters in a single family dwelling can be qualified for a matching fund leveraged loan provided they are low-income; the landlord's income level is not considered. The landlord must contribute half the cost of the repair and payback is predicated on the sale or transfer of the home, thus the liability for the loan remains with the landlord.

Mr. Ezadean said major repairs include replacing roofs, electrical system upgrades, furnace and water heater replacement, removal of dangerous trees, and replacing or repairing cracked driveways to improve safety. Photos of home repairs accomplished under the program were shown to the Commissioners.

The program has grown since 1990 when it was started. On average about 40 clients are served each year, but there has been a drop in that number over the past two years owing to a lack of funding available to make the loans. Clients are kept on a waiting list and are addressed on a first-come first-served basis. Some funds are held back for emergency repairs, especially during the winter months to address requests for heating system and emergency repairs.

Commissioner Stout asked if roof repairs actually end up being more extensive than first thought given unseen water damage. Mr. Curtice, King County Housing Authority, explained that a thorough inspection is carried out before the jobs are undertaken, so those kinds of surprises do not occur. The jobs are sent out to bid and the contractors receive a detailed scope of work based on the inspection. The homeowner makes the final selection as to which contractor should do the job.

Mr. Ezadean noted that fund revenues resulting from loan paybacks are folded back into the program. The loans become due upon the sale of the house by the property owner, or upon the death of the property owner and subsequent sale of the home. When a property owner elects to refinance, the city is often asked to subordinate its loan; that is allowed where the original property owner will be remaining in the home, provided they continue to qualify as low- or moderate-income.

Mr. Larry Robb said he became a client of the Home Repair Program after receiving a phone call from the city calling attention to the amount of water he was using; their suggestion was that a broken water line probably was the culprit. While that problem was being checked out, the sewer line plugged up and a new line was determined to be needed between the house and the street. The lowest bid for the combined work was a little over $7000. Shortly after making contact with Mr. Ezadean about obtaining a loan to effect the repairs, the roof started to leak and also had to be replaced at a cost of another $7000. He said it was wonderful to obtain the funds and get the necessary repairs made to the home in which he has lived for some 43 years. Without the program, it would have been necessary to tap IRA funds and suffer a large penalty.

Mr. Ezadean said in years past the program was actively advertised in *It's Your City* and through direct mailings. With the city's budget cuts, however, those efforts have been curtailed and most clients find out about the program through word of mouth.

Ms. Leslie asked if clients have come forward from any of the areas recently annexed by the city. Mr. Ezadean said there have been some. Requests that come in from areas not in the city are referred to King County.

Asked to explain how the King County Housing Authority works with the program, Mr. Curtice said clients make their applications with the city and Mr. Ezadean does the qualifying work. He said he and Mr. Ezadean then make a site visit to determine what problems need to be addressed and how they should be prioritized. The King County Housing Authority assists in finding contractors, writing the bid documents, and seeking bids from contractors. Once the bids are in they are reviewed with the homeowners who make their selection. He said while the work is being done he makes site visits to inspect the work, and then when the project is completed he makes another inspection and determines the work done is satisfactory to the homeowner; only after everyone is satisfied does the contractor get paid.

Mr. Robb said Mr. Curtice was always on top of things while the work was being done on his home.

Mr. Curtice added that when the city brings a client to the King County Housing Authority that qualifies for weatherization, the client automatically moves to the head of the line instead of being placed on the weatherization waiting list, and the work is started as soon as the construction phase is done.

Answering a question asked by Commissioner Yantis, Mr. Curtice clarified that the King County Housing Authority is a private nonprofit organization and is not a part of King County government. The home repair dollars come from the city of Bellevue, and the weatherization dollars come from the Department of Commerce, Puget Sound Energy, and from other sources. Only low-income individuals qualify for the weatherization program.

7. DISCUSSION

A. 2013-2014 Application Rating Tool

Mr. Adriano pointed out that in the 2008 application process some 90 applications were submitted; during the 2010 process the number of applications increased to 110. The implied ease of applying online could be the reason for the uptick. Some of the applications were from agencies in the south county area that serve only a few Bellevue residents, but regardless every application submitted must be reviewed. The staff updated the previously used application rating tool as a means of providing the Commission a way to screen out applications that obviously are not worthy of Bellevue funding. Where the tool was formerly rather open ended, the updated version provides more focus and structure. Rating tools are used by Renton, Issaquah and Kent as well, copies of which were included in the Commission memo.

Mr. Adriano said the updated version includes the focus areas and other considerations. It also includes items from the old rating sheet. The new tool specifically calls out the funding criteria and relates them to a number. He asked the Commission if the rating tool should be changed as proposed, or if the open-ended tool should continue to be used instead.

Answering a question asked by Chair Bruels, Mr. Adriano said while he has not sat in on the processes used by other jurisdictions, he has gained the sense that the process used by Bellevue is far more deliberative. Some jurisdictions work through their applications at a very rapid rate, which is in part why they need and rely on scoring tools; one city holds a one-day retreat and works through every application without any interaction with the agencies. The fact is the agencies appreciate the thoughtful deliberation that occurs in Bellevue; certainly the Council appreciates it.

Commissioner Stout noted her approval of the updated version of the tool but pointed out the need to include a place for the Commissioners to add their own notes and comments.

Commissioner Plaskon said he liked the tool but felt there were some redundancies that could be removed to make the tool even better. He suggested that the elements in 4 and 11 essentially were saying the same thing. He further commented that number 12 was not necessary and that a separate category was not needed to determine reasonableness. Items 8, 9 and 10 could be condensed or nested into the first seven.

Commissioner Stout said she was a bit confused by the wording of number 3 and would be better is worded something like “Does the program demonstrate cost-effectiveness?”

Commissioner Yantis pointed out that even when being conscientious for each item, in the past the scores have not always reflected the nuances or importance of

individual applications and the value of the programs in the community. The Commission should avoid getting into the number analysis and confining the ability to express individual biases and preferences. He said he liked the rating tool from the city of Renton, particularly the first page by itself; it allows for making subjective judgments. Commissioner Plaskon suggested the point of having a rating tool is to be able to standardize the process. Ms. Leslie added that because so many applications are received, the tool can facilitate eliminating some from consideration. Individual biases and interests are allowed to come out during the process, which is one reason each application is reviewed twice. A low score can be outweighed by other factors. The tool is intended to facilitate discussion; it is not intended to determine funding.

Commissioner Stout commented that both the Redmond and Renton tools have phrases that help to define need, and ask questions the Commission has found itself challenged with in the past.

Commissioner Beighle said she does not favor the number rating system at all and traditionally has not used it in reaching decisions about applications.

Commissioner Plaskon said he could work with the criteria as drafted, though he suggested that along with high, medium and low “incomplete” should be added. Commissioner Stout concurred but pointed out that the Redmond and Renton documents include the questions that highlight what an application is lacking that makes it incomplete.

Commissioner Yantis said a particular application may be rated high by four Commissioners, medium by two Commissioners and low by one Commissioner. Commissioner Plaskon said in that even the full Commission would discuss the application and come to a consensus. If the applications are rated by number, the tendency will be to work toward an average, which would take away from the discussion. With a high, medium and low ranking the Commission will be forced to justify the findings in seeking a conclusion.

Answering a question asked by Commissioner Yantis, Ms. Leslie said during the first round of reviews the Commission gives each application an overall rating. It is during the second sound that allocation numbers are worked into the mix, and where there is no consensus on a particular number the Commission has traditionally indicated a plus, a minus or flat funding. Commissioner Yantis proposed ranking each application high, medium or low and including a preliminary personal opinion regarding funding using pluses and minuses. Mr. Adriano said that certainly has been the approach used during the second round of reviews.

Commissioner Stout noted that there will be applications submitted for programs that the Commission will not want to fund for any variety of reasons. Those applications should be weeded out as soon as possible to avoid having to spend time discussing them later on in the process.

The conclusion reached was that the Commission did not need a rating tool so much as a sheet referring to the defined criteria and statements regarding what would fulfill the criteria.

8. OLD BUSINESS - None

9. NEW BUSINESS

Ms. Leslie reiterated that the next meeting would be held jointly with the human services commissions and advisory committees from Redmond, Kirkland and Issaquah. A United Way representative will attend to provide an overview of the State of Human Services Report. Each commission or advisory committee will be asked to share information about their application processes.

10. PETITIONS AND COMMUNICATIONS

11. ADJOURNMENT

Chair Bruels adjourned the meeting at 8:09 p.m.

_____ _____
Secretary to the Human Services Commission Date

_____ _____
Chairperson of the Human Services Commission Date