

CITY OF BELLEVUE
HUMAN SERVICES COMMISSION
MINUTES

December 1, 2009
6:30 p.m.

Bellevue City Hall
City Council Conference Room 1E-113

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

COMMISSIONERS ABSENT: None

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 6:33 p.m. by Chair Stout who presided.

2. ROLL CALL

Upon the call of the roll, all Commissioners were present.

3. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

A. November 3, 2009

Commissioner Hoople referred to the last paragraph on page 4 of the minutes and suggested that the phrase "...plans were approved agencies carried out the specific activities that were selected..." should read "...plans were approved agencies carried out the specific activities that were selected through an RFP process...." He also referred to the second paragraph on page 5 and noted that "...National Guard Reserves and their families..." should read "...National Guard, Reserves and their families...."

Commissioner Bruels called attention to the second paragraph on page 1 and noted that it should refer to obtaining a Masters in Social Work in the summers of 2008 and 2009.

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

4. PETITIONS AND COMMUNICATIONS. None

5. STAFF AND COMMISSION REPORTS

Commissioner Hoople reported that he attended the recent Human Services Levy Oversight Board and the Veterans Levy Oversight Board meetings.

Commissioner Beighle said she completed the walk around for the One Night Count in Issaquah with Meghan Altimore from Hopelink, Paul Wintersteen from the Issaquah Human Services Commission, and Steve Roberts of Congregations for the Homeless. She said since Issaquah has enacted a no camp ordinance, it was decided that it will not be feasible to conduct a count in Issaquah; most of that city's homeless have moved on to other areas. A report is being produced.

Commissioner Bruels reported that he attended the most recent Mental Illness and Drug Dependency Oversight Committee meeting. He said the committee is focused on Strategy 10B which will suspend 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.

Human Services Manager Emily Leslie commented that the Season of Sharing tree was up in City Hall. She noted that most of the tags on the tree will benefit clients of agencies funded by the city.

Ms. Leslie reported that the location for the Eastside Human Services Forum annual meeting has been changed; it will be at Microsoft on December 3, 2009, from 3:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m. It will be announced at that meeting that the Work Group leadership will change. The new chair will be Colleen Kelly from City of Redmond and the new vice chair will be Human Services Planner Alex O'Reilly.

6. DISCUSSION

A. Presentation on Accessing Civil Legal Services

Heidi Fischer from the Northwest Justice Project informed the Commission about the centralized system for civil legal referrals in King County, which is the 2-1-1 system. She noted that the system has been up since January 2008. In the past there was no centralized point of entry; persons wanting help had to call an agency offering legal services and ask if they handled the specific services being sought. Now all one must do is call 2-1-1 to get all of the latest updated information about what each

provider offers; that information is continually being updated. In most instances, clients only have to make the one phone call to get connected to civil legal services.

Ms. Fischer said 2-1-1 is only one channel by which clients can obtain civil legal services. Many providers continue to receive calls and referrals through their regular channels. Some people are concerned that by calling 2-1-1 they are calling the government, so Northwest Justice Project has a direct local number to call. 2-1-1 has Spanish-speaking staff and has access to the Language Line. They can provide referrals for social service needs along with referrals for civil legal services. The service is available weekdays from 8:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m., but it is not available on Saturdays or Sundays.

When a call is placed to 2-1-1, the operator will determine the need and either fax a referral or give out numbers to call. The 2-1-1 staff are not attorneys and cannot offer legal advice. They can give general information about process, however. Ms. Fischer briefly reviewed with the Commission the list of providers offering civil legal services in the areas of family law, housing law, public benefits law, immigration law, consumer law, disabilities law, employment law, and youth law.

The legal services provided by non-profit organizations are generally limited to people at or below 200 percent of the federal poverty level. The King County Bar clinics, however, can help anyone regardless of their income.

All of the information provided to 2-1-1 is confidential. In cases involving domestic violence, referrals are made without gathering information beyond what is needed to make the referral. Income eligibility screening is conducted by 2-1-1.

Commissioner Huenefeld-Gese noted that some of the free appointments with attorneys are for only 30 minutes and she asked if clients are coached in any way ahead of time on how to make the most of that time. Ms. Fischer said for most referrals made to the King County Bar Association attorneys the screener will direct callers to a specialized legal clinic if they can. If they cannot do so, they will direct the caller to a general legal clinic. The screeners will stress the need to have all documents in hand and brought with them to the appointment and will be very specific in telling the client what information they will need to have with them.

Joan Eads from Eastside Legal Assistance Program said the intake process includes having the clients call back the day before their appointment to confirm they will be there. The volunteer attorneys know, however, that people need to tell their stories so are not too worried if a session runs over the 30 minute mark.

Commissioner Hoople asked who is funding the 2-1-1 system now that the funding from King County has been lost. Ms. Fischer said Northwest Justice Project is the keeper of the contract with 2-1-1. She allowed, however, that she did not know where all of the funding is coming from.

Answering a question asked by Commissioner Bruels, Ms. Eads said the general law clinic held monthly in Bellevue does on occasion receive inquiries about personal injury or tort law cases. For the most part, those cases are handled by the private practices.

Chair Stout asked if the free clinics are able to get attorneys willing to make their time available in numbers adequate to addressing the need. Ms. Eads said she is always amazed at how many are willing to donate their time. Currently there are 135 attorneys on the ELAP panel, at least half of which have been faithfully volunteering their time for at least ten years. The King County Bar Association encourages lawyers to do pro bono work, and there are quite a few young attorneys who are not finding work that would like to get their feet wet by doing something meaningful. A number of Microsoft attorneys are also volunteering their time.

Ms. Eads stated that the Bellevue staff are wonderful to work with and thanked the Commission for supporting ELAP over the years. She said the difficult times are triggering even more calls to the organization, so the need is higher than ever. A relatively small percentage of those who need legal aid actually receive it, so the organization continues to have volunteer recruitment as a top priority so that more people can be helped.

7. DISCUSSION

A. Preparation for the City Council Presentation on the Draft 2009-2010 Human Services Needs Update

Chair Stout said the presentation to the City Council will occur at the January 4, 2010, Council meeting.

Ms. Leslie provided the Commissioners with copies of the summary of what King County adopted in its 2010 budget. She said the good news is that things could have been a lot worse. The budget proposed by King County Executive Kurt Triplett had reductions totaling \$1.5 million. The King County Council restored a number of the funds, particularly in the areas of domestic violence, sexual assault and legal services. The biggest hits were taken by regional information and referral and the youth homeless shelter. ELAP had its funding restored, but Eastside Baby Corner lost \$25,000. Both Hopelink and YWCA lost money as well.

Ms. Leslie explained that King County operates on an annual budget cycle, which means the discussions will start all over again next year. Most of the restored funding came from one-time dollars found from somewhere else, so it cannot be anticipated what will happen during the next budget cycle.

Ms. Leslie briefly outlined the city's two-year funding cycle. She said the first step is to identify the needs. That is followed by the application process conducted jointly

with 18 cities in north, east and south King County; the deadline, which traditionally has been in early June, will be moved up to the end of April to accommodate some of the cities. The Commission then goes through a preliminary review of the applications received aimed at generating specific questions; that is followed by staff reviews of the applications and a second round of reviews by the Commission. The Commission ultimately develops a funding recommendation which is carried forward to the Council for review and approval as part of the budget process. Once Council approval is received, staff begins work on the contracting process.

In the past the Commission has taken various routes relative to reviewing the applications. In some cycles, the individual Commissioners reviewed each application, while in other years the applications were divided up and reviewed by designated teams of Commissioners. Ms. Leslie asked the Commissioners to begin thinking about how the process should evolve for the next review process.

Ms. Leslie suggested that with two new Councilmembers, the January 4 meeting will serve as a good opportunity to educate the Council about the needs in the community. To that end Ms. O'Reilly will conduct a high flyover of the major needs identified in the Needs Update. The meeting will be a good time for the Commission chair to share a general glimpse into how the Commission intends to use the data in the Needs Update during the 2011-2012 funding process.

Answering a question asked by Commissioner Hoople, Ms. Leslie said by the time the RFP is published in March, the Commission should make a decision as to whether or not it will have specific areas of focus for the allocation process.

Chair Stout suggested the Commission will need to think long and hard about the city's financial situation, work to match that with what are known to be the escalating needs in the community, and do some hard thinking about how to go about allocating what could conceivably be a reduced amount of money, a flat budget, or in the unlikely event a possible increase. The Commission will need to have a firm grasp on the big picture before thinking about focus areas.

Commissioner Huenefeld Gese suggested the Commission would need to make a choice sooner rather than later about whether or not it will be accepting any new applications. If the answer is no new applications, that word will need to be out on the street. Chair Stout said if the Commission chooses to go in that direction, it will also need to think about how that might impact a new agency or organization with a new program that is focused entirely on an identified critical emerging need.

Commissioner Hoople commented that organizations that were given one-time money will likely come back seeking continued funding for their programs.

Ms. Leslie pointed out that during the last funding cycle the Commission did not have a restriction on new applications and as it turned out there were some agencies that

did not reapply for funding, leaving the Commission more money to allocate than expected.

Commissioner Yantis proposed the Commission might have to answer to the Council if the word is put out that no new applications will be accepted; the Council will want to know if the Commission has looked at all of the fresh needs in the community and sought out new ways to solve the problems instead of just rubber stamping all of the existing programs. Commissioner Hoople concurred and pointed out that in a previous funding cycle the Council allocated additional dollars precisely because the Commission was able to show that there were new and emerging issues to be addressed.

Chair Stout asked if it would be asking too much of the currently funded agencies to provide a letter of intent to apply for funding. Commissioner Yantis argued against taking that approach. In the event every agency indicated an intent to reapply, the Commission would still have to decide whether or not to accept new applications. Commissioner Hoople suggested the Commission could assume that each agency will be reapplying, but each could be asked to indicate if they will be coming forward with new programs. Of course, the Commission will want to make sure any new applications are tied to data in the Needs Update.

Commissioner Plaskon asked how soon the Commission will receive word on how much funding it will have available to allocate in the next funding cycle. Ms. Leslie said there is a human services funding formula in place based on inflation and population growth, though the Council could elect to change it; there is talk of the Council changing the budget process for the 2011-2012 biennium. Typically, the Commission goes into the process with a good indication of what the dollar amount will be based on the funding formula and other factors.

Chair Stout pointed out that the formula is not cast in concrete and can be changed by the Council, which has two new members.

Commissioner Hoople said two funding cycles ago the Commission went to the Council seeking additional funding. The requested dollars were approved in part because the Commission shared with the Council a chart comparing the number of requests against the amount of funding available for allocation and highlighting the growing gap. He suggested that it would be beneficial for the Council to understand that the gap between the two continues to exist.

Ms. O'Reilly said with the county budget approved it is known where there are gaps in the continuum of programs. The state budget is still an unknown but the prediction is that health and human services programs will face cuts. That information should be made clear to the Council.

Commissioner Yantis commented that spending money on human services actually saves money in other areas. That is certainly true in the areas of homelessness,

juvenile justice and early learning. That argument should be part of the January presentation to the Council.

Commissioner Bruels said he favors the notion of preserving infrastructure. He noted that when programs close, the staff members seek work elsewhere, and office relocate to other places, including outside of Bellevue. It can take years to restore services once they are lost.

Commissioner Yantis expressed his desire to see impressed upon the Council the importance of at a minimum holding the funding line. The human services ship is taking on water and it would not be a good idea to shut down some of the pumps.

Ms. Leslie said staff has been hearing peripherally that the new Council will place a lot of emphasis on effectiveness and outcomes. The Council should be made to understand that the Commission has been doing outcomes since 1996 and makes funding recommendations accordingly.

Commissioner Bruels said that from the conversation it appeared to him that the top priorities were preserving basic needs in terms of food and shelter, protecting vulnerable populations, preserving infrastructure, and addressing gaps in service.

Ms. O'Reilly said Parks and Community Services Director Patrick Foran will likely lead off the discussion with the Council. He probably will reference the conversation with the Council that took place in March at which the focus was on the indicators of need and how the Commission intended to follow up on them. He will clarify that all is not business as usual, either with the development of the Needs Update or with the way the Commission will be making its funding recommendations. She said she will probably follow up with some compelling data points, then Chair Stout will share the viewpoint of the Commission. Time will be factored in to allow for questions and answers.

Ms. Leslie commented that staff was before the Council about a month ago to talk about the Bellevue Cares initiative. Councilmember Creighton said at that meeting the times may necessitate more funding for human services. The unknown, of course, is how the new Council will approach the budget process. There is talk that each department will be asked to justify every line item of their proposed budgets.

Commissioner Bruels pointed out that in many ways money spent on human services works as stimulus money. The dollars help individuals but they also help to pay the salaries of individuals who provide the services.

Ms. Leslie said if the Commission intends to establish focus areas, it would need to do so by the second meeting in February.

Ms. Leslie said it would be helpful to have as many Commissioners as possible in the audience during the presentation to the Council.

8. OLD BUSINESS

Ms. Leslie reminded the Commissioners about the joint Park Board and Human Services Commission holiday get-together potluck scheduled for December 8.

9. NEW BUSINESS

Ms. O'Reilly shared with the Commission that because most of the human service dollars were maintained for the 2010 budget, Healthy Start will benefit. One thing that came through in the budget amendments, however, was a proviso that states by June 1, 2010, staff from the King County Children and Family Commission must put together materials and a paper that justifies why the organization should continue to exist in the future. That potentially could represent a future risk for Healthy Start. The Children and Family Commission may at some point need some help from community members in making their argument.

Commissioner Plaskon said prior to being appointed to the Human Services Commission he expressed an interest in being appointed to the Children and Family Commission. He said a few months ago he spoke with the King County person responsible for putting together the King County commissions who said he had no one for the Children and Family Commission; he said he was actively seeking to fill the vacant seats.

Ms. O'Reilly said staff has received an invitation to attend the newly formed Redmond Human Services Commission meeting on December 14. She said a staff person and a Councilmember will attend.

Commissioner Hoople said he will be present for that meeting as well to present the Veterans and Human Services levy.

10. PETITIONS AND COMMUNICATIONS. None

11. ADJOURNMENT

Chair Stout adjourned the meeting at 8:20 p.m.

Secretary of the Human Services Commission

Date

Chairperson of the Human Services Commission

Date