

The Human Services Commission approved these minutes on October 2, 2012

CITY OF BELLEVUE
HUMAN SERVICES COMMISSION
MINUTES

September 6, 2012
6:30 p.m.

Bellevue City Hall
City Council Conference Room 1E-120

COMMISSIONERS PRESENT: Chairperson Bruels, Commissioners McEachran, Perelman, Stout, Yantis

COMMISSIONERS ABSENT: Commissioners Beighle, Plaskon

STAFF PRESENT: Emily Leslie, Alex O'Reilly, Joseph Adriano, Department of Parks and Community Services; Franz Loewenherz, Department of Transportation

GUEST SPEAKERS: Lindsay Palmer, King County Sexual Assault Resource Center; Dana Hufford, Department of Corrections; Susan Frazier, Robert O'Neil, Bellevue Probation; Carol Wood, United Way of King County

RECORDING SECRETARY: Gerry Lindsay

1. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 6:31 p.m. by Chair Bruels who presided.

2. ROLL CALL

Upon the call of the roll, all Commissioners were present with the exception of Commissioners Beighle and Plaskon, both of whom were excused.

3. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

A. June 19, 2012

Commissioner Stout called attention to the fourth line from the bottom of page 4 and noted that the year "1984" should in fact read "1994."

A motion to approve the minutes as amended was made by Commissioner Yantis. The motion was seconded was by Commissioner Stout and the motion carried unanimously.

B. June 26, 2012

A motion to approve the minutes as submitted was made by Commissioner McEachran. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Stout and the motion carried unanimously.

C. July 24, 2012

A motion to approve the minutes as submitted was made by Commissioner Stout. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Perelman and the motion carried unanimously.

Commissioner Stout commented that it would have been very helpful to have the June 19, 2012, minutes in hand prior to the Commission making a final decision at the July 24, 2012, meeting.

4. PETITIONS AND COMMUNICATIONS – None

5. STAFF AND COMMISSION REPORTS

Commissioner Stout commented that most of the Commissioners made agency visits since the last meeting. She said she and Commissioner Beighle visited Salvation Army and relayed that the visit helped her feel better about the agency and its programs. She indicated, however, that she still has concerns about the emphasis given by the agency to the Christian message given the diversity of the community.

Commissioner Stout said she also visited three of the Sophia Way facilities and was very impressed, including the main office and the transitional house. She remarked that the number of women the agency has been able to place in permanent housing over the last three and a half years is very impressive.

Commissioner McEachran said he had occasion to visit the World Impact Network's Renewal Foodbank with Commissioners Beighle and Perelman. He said he has harbored some reluctance about their collaborative work in feeding the hungry but found the program is remarkable in the services provided. He said he walked away from the visit better educated and pleased with what he saw.

Commissioner Perelman added that from her perspective the operation is well run. The clients are all treated with dignity.

Commissioner McEachran said he also visited Francis Village with Commissioner Plaskon. He noted that while his congregation helped to found Imagine Housing, every time he visits the site he is impressed with the collaborative intent of their outreach to human services, including many services supported by the city. The veterans connection in particular is stunning.

Grant Coordinator Joseph Adriano said it was necessary to cancel a couple of visits, including one to the Chinese Information and Service Center's Cultural Navigator Program due to the fact that only one Commissioner was able to attend on the chosen date, and the visit to the Congregations for the Homeless night program.

Commissioner McEachran said he spent some time with Human Services Planner Alex O'Reilly in going over the questionnaire to the faith communities regarding their support of human services.

Ms. O'Reilly provided the Commissioners with copies of a flyer regarding the legislative forum sponsored by Aging and Disability Services on October 1 that will focus on older adult issues. She also invited the Commissioners to attend an event called "Honoring Your Elders" slated for September 11 at Crossroads Park; the event will involve a breakfast with firefighters, police officers and Microsoft employees.

6. DISCUSSION

A. King County Sexual Assault Resource Center (KCSARC) Presentation "Sex Offenders in the Community and Community Safety"

Human Services Manager Emily Leslie noted that Susan Frazier and Robert O'Neil from Bellevue Probation were in the audience to hear the presentation. She introduced Lindsay Palmer from KCSARC, and Dana Hufford with the Department of Corrections.

Ms. Palmer took a moment to thank the Commission for the work done to fund important programs. She said as a resident and property owner in Bellevue she is very proud of how the city has made decisions in regard to social services.

Ms. Palmer said KCSARC received a federal grant for a program aimed at monitoring, apprehending, registering and tracking sex offenders. The specific focus was on how various disciplines are working together to manage sex offenders. The disciplines in the mix include victim advocacy, which is what KCSARC offers; the work done by the Department of Corrections relative to supervision and incarceration; law enforcement, sex offender treatment providers; the courts; probation; and programs for juvenile sex offenders.

Continuing, Ms. Palmer said KCSARC looked at different ways in which a collaborative team could be the most effective. One area looked at was offering community presentations aimed at giving citizens information and resources. Another area was developing a short video to go along with the presentations. Power Points of the presentations have been created that can be used statewide and nationally. Working with the faith communities was another component, particularly in regard to addressing safety and holding sex offenders accountable, as was working with housing providers and giving them the information they need.

Ms. Palmer shared with the Commission a short video offering background about the issue.

In making presentations in the community KCSARC stressed the need for everyone to work together. One of the things that makes a difference for community members is being able to see the real face of a probation officer, a corrections officer, or a police officer, thus representatives from those disciplines participate in the presentations. Those who attend are told that 97 percent of the sex offenders currently serving time for their offences will return to a community, and that the law alone will not be able to solve the problem.

Ms. Hufford said too often people get the Department of Corrections confused with law enforcement. Corrections officers are not the police, though they do collaborate in sharing information. There are some 21,000 sex offenders registered in Washington state, and as such there are very few neighborhoods that do not have a registered sex offender living in them. Law enforcement is responsible for determining the level of sex offenders. Level 1 offenders are deemed the least likely to reoffend within the general population, and Level 3 is the most likely. About 90 percent of all sex offenders are categorized as Level 1 and their names are not included on sex offenders lists for the public to view. All Level 2 and Level 3 offenders are trackable by the public. Law enforcement officers visit all Level 3 offenders quarterly, all Level 2 offenders twice each year, and all Level 1 offenders annually. The visits are required to verify that the offenders are living where they say they are living, and each visit requires face-to-face contact. There are no laws in place saying where offenders can and cannot live.

Mr. O'Neil noted that the courts require sex offenders to abstain from congregating with children. Ms. Hufford said that often it is a condition set by the court, but monitoring is conducted by the Department of Corrections and not local law enforcement. The registration process for sex offenders is completely different from the supervision of sex offenders.

Ms. Hufford stressed that there is no way to know a sex offender by looking at them. Community corrections officers have a number of tasks that no other jurisdiction addresses. They become a part of the lives of the offenders under their watch, especially if a high level of supervision is determined to be necessary. The community corrections officer makes sure that all of the court's orders are followed, but where they determine that other issues need to be addressed, such as alcohol or drug addiction, they can intervene and require it. They make sure that all interpersonal relationships are appropriate, and they monitor contacts with potential victims. Community corrections officers ideally would like to know what the offenders under the charge are doing every minute of every day.

Ms. Hufford said the Department of Corrections keeps a close eye on what is going on legislatively and does what it can to contribute. Where appropriate letters have

been written and personal visits have been made in support of the program, particularly when the legislature considered cutting the program out entirely.

Ms. Palmer said being aware and educated is the most important thing the public can do. That includes knowing who to call when something odd is witnessed, or when additional information is needed. Parents need to talk daily with their kids about what is happening in their lives; that alone can help parents keep their children from being victimized. Most sex offenders are groomers rather than grabbers; they groom their victims over time to gain their trust.

Ms. Leslie said in her meetings with homeless shelter providers she learned that if a Level 1 sex offender does not have an address they are automatically considered to be Level 2 offenders. That creates an automatic barrier to their getting into a lot of housing. Ms. Palmer said one thing KCSARC is doing with housing providers is giving them more education with regard to the system, including what the various levels mean. Things have become somewhat more lenient, making it easier for sex offenders to be housed in shelters, though a paper trail is required to be created by local jurisdictions for offenders known to be homeless.

Commissioner Perelman asked what the education requirements are for community corrections officers. Ms. Hufford said they must hold a bachelor's degree. They are given specific training by the Department of Corrections and by their individual units. Many have criminal justice degrees or degrees in social work or psychology.

Commissioner Perelman asked if KCSARC gives presentations at schools and Ms. Palmer said the agency does work with parent-teacher organizations. Some work has also been done with schools from the standpoint of juvenile sex offenders who are attending school.

Commissioner McEachran asked if in-service is provided to the affordable housing communities. Ms. Palmer said she has as a victim advocate for KCSARC, but not as a member of the presentation team.

Answering a question asked by Commissioner Stout, Ms. Hufford said the Department of Corrections has a tremendous sex offender treatment program in the prison system; the statistics are so good they are hard to believe. The average offender recidivism rate is 50 percent, while the average sex offender recidivism rate is only 35 percent. The average treated sex offender has a recidivism rate of only 17 percent. Washington State graduates recidivate at only five percent. For most sex offenders, getting caught is enough to make them stop.

Mr. O'Neil said he worked for the Department of Corrections in the sex offenders unit prior to working for the city of Bellevue as a probation officer. He said community corrections officers are in the middle when it comes to the system; they talk to the offenders, the victims, the police, the prosecuting and defense attorneys, and the court. Offenders face a great deal of shame for their crimes, which does serve as a

deterrent for many. In working with offenders, community corrections offers teach them that they must act on their own part to stop their behaviors.

Ms. Hufford said domestic violence offenders and sex offenders are very similar. To some degree, domestic violence recidivism rates are higher because sex crimes are taken far more seriously. Sex offenders are told they must go to sex offender treatment, and there are specific parameters for what that looks like, but the same is not true for domestic violence treatment providers.

7. DISCUSSION

A. Presentation "Building Non-Profit Resiliency"

Carol Wood, Director of Public Policy and Governmental Affairs for United Way of King County, said there are a number of reasons to be concerned about non-profits and their levels of resiliency during the recession. Non-profits provide critical services in communities, foster volunteerism, exhibit leadership in identifying and meeting community needs, and they advocate for change. Non-profits are also businesses and as such they contribute to the local economy. Non-profits also serve diverse and challenging populations. There are 8500 non-profits registered in Washington state, some very large and some very small. They focus on a variety of topics ranging from the arts to human services and employment.

Ms. Wood said former Bellevue intern Megan Farwell in working on her thesis focused on how human service non-profit organizations in King County have responded to funding changes, the characteristics of the organizations experiencing change, and how the changes have impacted client access to services. King County has 30 percent of the overall state population, is racially diverse, has poverty and employment rates that are below the state average, and is home to 36 percent of all non-profits in the state.

Ms. Farwell looked at data from two different sources: Internal Revenue Service 990 forms, and a survey of King County safety net non-profits that filed 990 forms in 2009. Of the 508 safety net non-profits in King County, the ones chosen to participate in the survey met three criteria: 1) they had an email address; 2) they deliver services in King County; and 3) they fall into the category of organizations that provide food, housing, or general purpose human services. A total of 231 organizations were targeted for the survey, and the response rate was 29 percent with a good spread among the three categories.

The conclusion reached was that government funding is an important source of revenue for safety net non-profits. That source, however, is rapidly shrinking. More than half of the organizations surveyed reported government funding decreases of at least 25 percent since the beginning of the recession. The organizations also reported that funding received from philanthropy and individual contributions were significantly reduced over time.

Ms. Wood noted that concurrent with funding reductions, the demand for services increased. The safety net non-profits pretty much shielded the people in need from the effects of the recession; unlike their for-profit counterparts, they did not choose to simply do less because they had less. To meet the increased demand, staff time, benefits and overtime were cut. Most non-profits operate on a shoestring. Nationally the majority of non-profits have budgets of under a million dollars and fewer than ten staff. The cuts that have had to be made by most organizations collectively means that the infrastructure is being eroded.

Questions were asked of the organizations about advocacy at the state and local levels. It was found that between a fifth and a quarter of the organizations conduct no advocacy activities at all, such as meeting with elected officials to let them know what the needs are in the community and how difficult it is to meet those needs.

Ms. Wood said organizational resiliency is important for a number of reasons. Non-profits are important in every community; funds are raised and given to the organizations for the specific purpose of making an impact in the community. If the organizations do not survive, it will be difficult to raise money. Government gives money to non-profits to deliver non-government services, and clients expect those services to be available. If the non-profit structure erodes, everyone in the community will be affected. Between 2007 and 2009, 57 safety net organizations did not re-file their IRS forms, meaning that about ten percent of the safety net organizations no longer existed. As organizations close their doors, clients will no longer be able to obtain the services they need. With an eroded infrastructure, maintaining or expanding service levels may not be possible, and the quality of the services provided could be reduced. For their part, funders are inclined to fund specific outcomes, not the general operations of organizations, even though the latter is what organizations need most often.

Ms. Wood said it is highly unlikely that things will return to the way they were before the recession any time soon. In that light it is important to understand what it means to maintain a health infrastructure. More than half of the organizations that responded to the survey reported that they had reduced their staff levels, leaving the remaining staff to take on more and more responsibilities. Because such an approach cannot be maintained, many say the time is right for organizations to merge. Where mergers are contemplated, consideration must be given to whether or not the new entity will in fact reach the at-risk populations.

The focus in the past has been on individual non-profits. United Way does a lot of training and capacity building around individual non-profits, and there are a lot of funders focusing on how to increase the capacity of individual non-profits. The truth is it is time to look beyond individual non-profits and focus on the entire sector; if the sector fails, communities will have real problems in meeting the identified needs.

Commissioner Yantis agreed that the focus should be on the overall sector, but stressed that the sector is made up of organizations operating individually. Ms. Wood said a large part of it will be in just getting the conversation going. Many organizations are trying so hard to meet needs that they are not reaching out to other organizations to discuss sharing and combining resources. Those running the individual organizations need to recognize the need to take some time to reach out, and should understand that there are folks out there to help them think about the most strategic ways to meet the needs of people in the community. That could be a role United Way could play.

Ms. Leslie said the Alliance of Eastside Agencies a couple of years back conducted some training focused on how non-profits were coping during the recession.

Chair Bruels commented that from a business perspective, when an agency is struggling, incurring debt and laying people off, a stronger agency may not see the situation as a positive opportunity to effect a merger.

Commissioner McEachran said he found the quest for some degree of accountability in the community around public monies, as well as private donation monies, is fascinating. Many agencies have not decreased their staffing and have found ways to increase services, sometimes through collaborative efforts. The Commission has done a good job of promoting collaboration.

Ms. Wood said agencies are desperate for money. They apply to funders for a certain amount, but the funders decide to allocate less than the amount requested. The agencies thus take less money while making promises to meet the needs. Agencies are increasingly focused on outcomes, but all of that comes at a cost. What is being seen is a downward spiral where funders give less but want more by way of reporting and accountability. Funders should have conversations about working together in ways that will not require ten different applications for similar services.

8. DISCUSSION

A. Transit Master Plan Briefing

Ms. Leslie informed the Commissioners that a process is under way to update Bellevue's Transit Master Plan. A forum is planned for September 18 to provide information and get feedback from five of the city's boards and commissions as well as the public.

Senior Transportation Planner Franz Loewenherz explained that transit in the context of the project is predicated on fixed-route bus service for the most part. The plan will, however, look at interfacing with the light rail system in the off years of the plan time horizon, which is 2030, and will include consideration of alternative service delivery methods for lower density areas.

Mr. Loewenherz said the current Transit Master Plan was adopted by Council resolution in 2003. The city found the plan to be useful in working with the transit partners and informing them of the city's transit service priorities. The current plan is nearly ten years old, much has changed in the city and the region since, and an update is needed.

Among the numerous changes that have occurred are significant capital investments, particularly those made in Bellevue. Hundreds of millions of dollars have been invested in transit facilities in the city. There have also been significant service improvements effected locally, and cross-lake service improvements. The investments have yielded an increase in ridership; between 2003 and 2011, Bellevue ridership has increased by 84 percent. The greatest percentage increase occurred in the Eastgate corridor with the expansion of the park and ride, but increases have occurred in all activity centers.

The transit system has had to face revenue shortfalls. In 2011 the King County Council approved a temporary \$20 vehicle license fee to help fund transit services for a two-year period. Without the additional fee, the system would have faced having to make service cuts totaling some 600,000 service hours. Difficult decisions are yet to be made to identify a reliable funding stream to kick in once the temporary fees age out. The plan that will be prepared through the update will respond to different timelines, including the near-, mid- and long-terms, and will also consider revenue reduction, status quo and aspirational visions.

Mr. Loewenherz said another development that plays into the need for the planning effort is the fact that the King County Council made a change in policy framework. Prior to 2011 service adds and reductions were apportioned based on a percent allocation deemed to be equitable from a subarea perspective. That resulted in some inefficiencies in service and decision-making. Through a lengthy process, the King County Council adopted a new framework that is driven by three guiding principles: productivity, geographic value, and social equity.

East Link was an unknown in 2003 when the current plan was adopted. The alignment that will come online within the planning time horizon will dramatically influence where service improvements and additional investments in supportive infrastructure are made.

The plan update project is also intended to respond to significant public support for transit in Bellevue. The city conducts a budget survey every other year, and consistently transportation gets high billing; within the transportation category transit specifically receives high marks, most notably relative to the need to work with regional agencies to improve local and regional transportation serving the city. The update will also respond to the reality that businesses have choices about where they locate. In most cases locating decisions are predicated on where the amenities are. Areas that have amenities like transit are compelling to companies seeking a place to

locate. Expedia relocated from the Eastgate area to the downtown largely because of the amenities, in particular transit.

A lot of good work has been done to date relative to refining the city's land use vision, and the update of the transit plan will tie into the fact that transit plays a vital role in supporting the land use vision.

Mr. Loewenherz said the degree of interest in the online questionnaire regarding the Transit Master Plan Update. The questionnaire, which took between 10 and 15 minutes to complete, was live for six weeks and generated 4252 responses. There was a good distribution between Bellevue residents and non-Bellevue residents, between those who are current transit users, former transit users, and non riders, and relative to trip purpose. The data is being used to help inform the city's transit priorities. A total of 1545 respondents indicated they use transit to commute to and from work; 882 of those indicated they have to stand while riding because every seat on the bus is occupied, and 595 indicated that service speed and reliability improvements are needed.

The outreach effort included business and corporate interests. The recurring message from them was that transit is critical to Bellevue's economic vitality and must be considered. A number of institutions provided supportive comments as well, including Friends of Youth, the Bellevue School District, Hopelink, AtWork!, Bellevue College, and Senior Services. Targeted outreach was also done relative to non native-English speakers; more than a hundred comment cards came in from those communities, including those speaking Chinese, Spanish and Russian.

Mr. Loewenherz noted that on July 9 the City Council approved the project principles, the scope of the work, and provided additional direction relative to engaging the city's boards and commissions. The project principles deal with supporting the planned growth and development in Bellevue with a bold transit vision in order to encourage long-term growth; engaging community stakeholders in setting priorities for transit delivery; determining where and how transit investments can deliver the greatest degree of mobility and access for all populations; incorporating other transit-related efforts under way in Bellevue and within the region; identifying partnership opportunities to further extend transit service and infrastructure; and developing measures of effectiveness to evaluate transit investments and to track plan progress. The Council was interested in making sure the update process does not get caught up in near-term economic duress issues.

The forum slated for September 18 will be the first step toward developing the service, capital and policy element components of the plan update. The Transportation Commission will be the body ultimately responsible for forwarding a plan to the Council for adoption, but the Council understands the need for all boards and commissions to be involved given all of the ramifications. For that reason the Council wants to see representatives of the boards and commissions play an active role as the study progresses with the Transportation Commission. The

representatives will have the opportunity to chime in on the discussions and will then report back to their respective groups.

The Commissioners recognized the importance transit plays in the human services arena and praised the Council for understanding the connection.

Chair Bruels urged all of the Commissioners to attend the forum.

9. OLD BUSINESS

Commissioner McEachran asked for an update regarding the concerns voiced by neighbors of the winter shelter at St. Peter's church. Ms. Leslie said there was a meeting with city staff to discuss the issues. Congregations for the Homeless has been involved as well. It is very likely that the winter shelter will again be at St. Peter's for the coming winter, but the city has been asked to help identify a site for the shelter for subsequent years.

10. NEW BUSINESS

Ms. Leslie announced that the United Way Day of Caring is September 21. The selected project will require about a half a day of yard work for Helping Hands for the Disabled.

11. PETITIONS AND COMMUNICATIONS – None

12. ADJOURNMENT

Chair Bruels adjourned the meeting at 8:40 p.m.

Secretary to the Human Services Commission

Date

Chairperson of the Human Services Commission

Date