

CITY OF BELLEVUE  
HUMAN SERVICES COMMISSION  
MINUTES

July 2, 2019  
6:00 p.m.

Bellevue City Hall  
City Council Conference Room 1E-113

COMMISSIONERS PRESENT: Chairperson Mercer, Commissioners Amirfaiz, Jain, Kline, Ma, Mansfield, Piper

COMMISSIONERS ABSENT: None

STAFF PRESENT: Alex O'Reilly, Dee Dee Catalano, Christy Stangland, Toni Esparza, Yuriana Garcia Tellez, Department of Parks and Community Services

GUEST SPEAKERS: Jacquee Kurdas, Beto Yarce, Erin Williamson, Ventures Business Development & Microlending Program

RECORDING SECRETARY: Gerry Lindsay

1. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 6:01 p.m. by Chair Mercer who presided.

2. ROLL CALL

Upon the call of the roll, all Commissioners were present with the exception of Commissioner Kline who participated via telephone.

3. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

A. June 4, 2019

A motion to approve the minutes as submitted was made by Commissioner Ma. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Piper and the motion carried without dissent; Commissioners Amirfaiz and Mansfield abstained from voting.

4. ORAL AND WRITTEN COMMUNICATIONS – None

5. COMMUNICATIONS FROM CITY COUNCIL, COMMUNITY COUNCIL, BOARDS AND COMMISSIONS – None

## 6. STAFF AND COMMISSIONER REPORTS

Human Services Manager Alex O'Reilly welcomed Commissioners Amirfaiz and Mansfield to their first meeting of the Commission.

Commissioner Mansfield said he is a realtor in Bellevue and prior to that worked with the community college system in basic education. He said he went through the Bellevue Essentials program in 2018 and wanted to get involved with the city.

Commissioner Amirfaiz said she originally was from Iran and has been working with non-profit organizations for more than 20 years. She said she has been a resident of Bellevue for the past 24 years.

Commissioner Amirfaiz reported that she attended the cross cultural program presentation at Crossroads Community Center and came back with a better perspective on Bellevue and the data that has been collected regarding diversity.

Commissioner Piper said he had been interested to see that the Seattle City Council recently passed legislation making it easier for homeowners to build accessory dwelling units on their properties. He said the decision could have unintended consequences but it is an interesting approach to addressing affordable housing.

Commissioner Kline mentioned that she attended the Council meeting at which the mayor and deputy mayor made a presentation recognizing the contributions of former Commissioner Jim McEachran.

## 7. INFORMATION FOR THE COMMISSION

### A. Diversity Advantage Initiative Program Update

Diversity Outreach and Engagement Administrator Yuriana Garcia Tellez said the Diversity Advantage Initiative began with the Council putting forward a vision statement and establishing a commitment to serving diverse communities in Bellevue. The Diversity Advantage Initiative was adopted in 2014 with seven main areas: cultural competence in the government; cultural competence in the community; human services; public safety; education; civic engagement; and economic development. She said the diversity advantage team is made up of Elaine Acacio, diversity and inclusion administrator; Blayne Amson, ADA/Title VI civil rights administrator; and herself as diversity outreach and engagement administrator.

Over the last ten years the demographics of Bellevue have shifted drastically. Data from the 2017 American Community Survey showed that Bellevue had become a minority majority city. In fact, the survey showed that 39 percent of Bellevue residents were born outside of the United States. There are also a fair number of persons living with disabilities in the city. The Diversity Advantage Initiative considers them to be an asset for the city. About 38 percent of them are older adults. Household income in

Bellevue also enjoys a broad distribution. Most have incomes of between \$75,000 and \$99,000, though some 20 percent are living below the poverty line. Bellevue's workforce is quite young; 18 percent are between the ages of 18 and 44. About 14 percent of the population is made up of older adults, while about 20 percent are under the age of 18. Currently there are 99 languages spoken in the Bellevue School District, and 60 percent of the students in Bellevue schools are students of color.

Ms. Tellez said the cross-cultural outreach study was called out by the Diversity Advantage Initiative. The challenge was to continue learning about and celebrating cultural diversity in the city as the demographics continue to shift. The strategies employed included leveraging resources within the city to do outreach to diverse communities; piloting a community cultural liaison program; one-on-one public outreach; convening community gatherings; and using a mixed-mode of strategies to reach traditionally underserved populations.

The consultant hired to focus on the outreach study tapped the already existing Bellevue Diversity Advisory Network (BDAN) to provide counsel and guidance for how to reach diverse communities. There were at the time 19 members on the BDAN; currently there are 26 members. The group identified over 120 different existing community organizations, including social service agencies, cultural awareness organizations, multicultural arts organizations, faith-based communities, city of Bellevue community centers; libraries and museums; and community based language schools. The location of each organization was noted on a map as part of the process, and the map can be found on the city's arts and culture website.

The project included piloting a cultural liaisons program. It was built on the methodology of hiring community members do support outreach. The cultural liaisons spoke various languages, including Mandarin, Cantonese, Russian, Spanish and Hindi. The communities they represented included LGBTQIA, disabilities, immigrant and Muslim communities. The program sponsored one-on-one focus groups, conducted direct outreach to community members, and community listening sessions.

A statistically valid community survey was conducted for Bellevue demographics information. Translated into the top five languages, namely English, Chinese, Spanish, Russian and Hindi, the surveys were completed by 443 Bellevue residents. The majority of respondents had an Asian background. The survey highlighted a variety of different ethnicities.

A community public forum was conducted and it saw 125 persons attend. The event brought people from different ethnicity groups together at tables to gather qualitative data about what the community was saying about what is needed to increase cross cultural programming and outreach. The findings focused on the values, concerns and aspirations of the community, which is of importance to how the various city departments implement programs. When asked what they wanted others to understand and learn about their identity and their culture, the respondents

highlighted personal values and customs, arts and culture, history and heritage, community concerns and recreation.

The survey highlighted while Bellevue has a lot of resources, they are not being fully utilized for various reasons. The list of barriers to participation included fear due to the current immigration issues; time of day; location and/or transportation; language and culture issues; cost; the need for child care; not feeling welcomed; safety; and difficulty in accessing spaces by the disabled. Many of the respondents mentioned a desire to see cross cultural programming aligned with social services. They indicated social services are not always offered in their language and are not always culturally competent. They also asked for affordable, centrally located and culturally symbolic multigenerational spaces in the community in which social services could be available along with a common kitchen, recreational opportunities and access to technology.

Ms. Tellez said from the study flowed five different recommendations: conduct an assessment of existing programs offered by the city relative to access and inclusion; strengthen the marketing and communications regarding the city's cross cultural programming; explore and form community centered program models that work in conjunction with existing organizations to provide services; strengthen the use of the city's community liaison program; and implement a second phase feasibility study to analyze the effectiveness of spaces providing services.

Commissioner Amirfaiz noted that there has been an influx of Iraqi and other Arabic-speaking populations moving into Bellevue. She asked how that language and ethnicity group is being captured. Ms. Tellez said under the Title VI regulations, anyone requesting the interpretation of written materials or during a meeting, the city must provide it. Currently data is being gathered regarding the languages spoken in each neighborhood in order to provide linguistically appropriate materials. By city policy, all materials are translated into the top five languages. The 2020 census is expected to return more demographics data within the city.

Commissioner Jain asked how the schools are coping with the large number of languages spoken and the need to communicate with those who do not speak English very well. Ms. Tellez said the school district is a separate entity from the city. They have their own interpreters and resources to address the increasing language needs. There are wraparound services embedded in some of the schools in the district, and they are offered in different languages.

Answering a question asked by Chair Mercer, Ms. Tellez said some of the recommendations are already being implemented, including conducting an assessment how different programs are offering events or services that are accessible. The work includes a focus on collecting data that shows which communities are being served and which communities are being underserved. That data is needed to help to remove barriers to participation. With regard to the cultural liaisons program, one thing that will be looked at is the allocation of budget dollars to the program. Models being used by the city and others will be researched to see what

will work best. Marketing and communication is being improved by constantly being in touch with department PIOs. Additional outreach strategies are being investigated to determine which work best in making connections with communities that do not necessarily have a touch point to services.

Chair Mercer said the next piece she would like to have a better sense of what the goals are in regard to having the additional information, and how success will be judged. Additionally, she said she would like to know what guidance would be given to the Commission. Ms. Tellez said some of the recommendations and next steps will be implemented citywide by different departments. For example, the identified barriers to access will be taken into account for each program offered. During the month of July presentations will be given to community and city staff members to outline some of the findings.

Commissioner Amirfaiz asked how the Bellevue community liaisons are selected. Ms. Tellez said the program will soon undergo a research phase aimed at determining the most effective cultural liaison models. After the research is concluded and after a budget allocation has been made, there will be an application process initiated. She noted that the liaisons are community paid. Commissioner Amirfaiz noted that since money is always tight, the city should engage in community capacity building to form a body composed of volunteers from different ethnic communities. Ms. Tellez said the community liaison models in play include paying the liaisons. There is an existing volunteer model that works with the Latino community, but generally volunteer programs have not been shown to work because of the extensive efforts that are required in doing community outreach.

Human Services Planner Christy Stangland asked Ms. Tellez to briefly explain BDAN. Ms. Tellez said BDAN is made up of community leader volunteers who each give between two and four hours per month advising the city on how to connect with diverse communities. The information shared with the Network gets disseminated among the various community groups.

Commissioner Amirfaiz said she would like to see the city be more intentional about including communities that are not within the top five language groups. Ms. Tellez agreed that focusing just on the top five languages would leave out some groups. The focus on the top five languages is done as a result of federal, state and city policy. Anyone from any background can apply to be part of BDAN without limitation to the five languages.

Ms. O'Reilly added that the process of updating the Needs Update will include findings from the survey.

## 8. INFORMATION FOR THE COMMISSION

### A. Final Review of 2020 CDBG Applications

Addressing the fact that Kindering Center application was not an eligible CDBG activity, Commissioner Kline commented that during the time the Commission was dealing with the Bellevue Boys & Girls Club and working with the percentage issue to make sure they served a sufficient percentage of low-income clients, the determination of the Commission was that they were able to take the percentage of the people that reported income and disregard the percentage that did not report. She asked how that argument worked then but not now for Kindering Center. Ms. Catalano said the HUD representative made it clear that because the project would have benefited the whole building rather than just a program, at least 51% of all clients receiving services in the building must be low- or moderate-income. While there may be some wiggle room, the fact is that Kindering did not have data for 38 percent of their people. Of the 61 percent of clients on which they did have information, just over half met the requirement. When averaged out, only 33 percent met the low- to moderate-income threshold. She added that she would be conducting a monitoring visit to the Bellevue Boys & Girls Club in August specifically to check on their income verification processes to make sure everything is above board.

Ms. Esparza clarified that an agency could report only on the portion of their clients who voluntarily report their income information. If a significant enough number of the total clients chose to report, and if a significant enough number of those reporting indicated a low- or moderate-income status, it could still demonstrate that overall more than 51 percent of the total number of clients meet the threshold requirement. It is not that there must be documentation for every client, rather there must be a demonstration that over 51 percent of the client base meets the threshold. As it relates to Kindering, the number of clients who reported, and the number of reporting clients who indicated a low- or moderate-income status, did not demonstrate that over 51 percent met the threshold.

Ms. Catalano noted that the Commission reviewed the CDBG applications and asked questions about each at the meeting on June 4. One application is for a program not previously funded by the city, Ventures business development and microlending program for low-income entrepreneurs. She indicated that Ventures receives CDBG dollars from the city of Seattle for the same program, which only serves clients who are verified to be low or moderate income.

Ms. Jacquee Kurdas, Development Director for Ventures, provided the Commissioners with printouts explaining the program model of helping low-income entrepreneurs to start small businesses as a way to climb out of poverty. Clients begin in an eight-week business basics course. The course teaches marketing, sales, operations and finance and the graduates must complete a feasibility plan. After graduation the clients have access to all of the services offered by Ventures, including advanced courses, incubation opportunities at the Ventures Marketplace at

Pike Place Market, ongoing business coaching, and capital through microloans of \$35,000 or less. The application submitted for Bellevue CDBG dollars is to fund two business basics courses in partnership with Hopelink. The courses will be offered in English and Spanish. The course includes information about the peer loan program and the opportunity to apply for loans of up to \$2500 to start their businesses.

Mr. Beto Yarce, Ventures Executive Director, said he has been part of the organization for about 11 years. He said he moved to Seattle from Mexico and started his own jewelry business with only \$250. In only five years, he was able to grow his business to a half million dollar operation. He said he joined up with Ventures as a way of giving back to the community and became executive director five years ago. Ventures will celebrate its 25th anniversary in 2020 and the program has been proven successful in moving people out of poverty. The program offers its clients everything they need for the long term.

Ms. Erin Williamson, Loan Specialist for Ventures, said she oversees the capital and loan program, including the peer loan program, a unique program across the microlending industry. The programs brings entrepreneurs together in small cohorts, all of whom are facing similar challenges in starting and growing their businesses, to approve the disbursement of the loan funds that Ventures provides. The cohort groups dive deeply into the financials, business and marketing plans in deciding what kinds of funding is needed. The loan requests are presented before a panel of peers which then acts as the approving body. The experience is powerful, both for the client receiving the funds and the peer approvers.

Mr. Yarce pointed out that Ventures is also a Small Business Administration (SBA) lender. Having diversified its lending programs, Ventures can lend to communities that do not qualify for government funds by using private funds. Ventures is a designated Community Development Financial Institution (CDFI), a designation from the US Treasury that gives credence to the way the organization lends funds. Ventures is the only CDFI in Washington state that is focused on low-income clients.

Chair Mercer asked if Ventures runs into any problems funding undocumented immigrants with HUD funds. Mr. Yarce said the program includes lending private funds, which allows for approving loans from undocumented immigrants. Federal SBA dollars are not loaned to undocumented persons.

Ms. Catalano clarified that none of the requested CDBG funds would be going for peer loans, only for the business basics program.

Commissioner Piper asked for examples of the types of businesses that receive loans. Ms. Kurdas said the program served 659 individuals in 2018, 72 percent of which were women, 65 percent of which were people of color, 30 percent of which were immigrants or refugees, and 30 percent of which were Spanish speakers. The businesses range from service-related businesses such as landscaping and massage therapy to food businesses, including food trucks and catering. Product businesses

that sell in retail stores are also in the mix. Mr. Yarce added that there are currently some 80 businesses selling in the Ventures Marketplace with total sales of about \$300,000 annually, half of which goes to the clients.

Ms. Kurdas said Ventures collects short- and long-term data which shows that within two years of graduating the business basics course there is a 93 percent business survival rate, which exceeds the national average of 80 percent. Additionally, two-thirds of the clients increase the household incomes and move out of poverty within two years. One in five businesses, also within two years, hires an additional two employees.

Commissioner Jain asked how the funds loaned to clients is monitored. Ms. Williamson said Ventures has a diverse portfolio with funds from the SBA and from private sources. A back end monitoring system is in place to mitigate risk. All servicing is done internally and monthly connections are made with all borrowers. She noted that 62 loans were made during 2018, with about ten percent of the businesses served receiving capital. Mr. Yarce added that 98 percent of all loans since 2017 have been repaid even though they are all high risk and are to persons without collateral and usually with poor credit ratings. Ventures focuses on making people bankable and moving them out of poverty. The loans are made at competitive interest rates, but the Ventures model is not geared toward making money in the way other financial institutions do.

Chair Mercer asked if Ventures has in the past or is currently serving clients in Bellevue. Ms. Kurdas said Ventures has offered the business basics program in Bellevue in the past, and the requested funds will allow for offering two additional courses through a partnership with Hopelink. She added that there is a high demand for the services offered in Seattle from clients who do not live in Seattle.

Ms. Catalano asked what the level of interest and need is in Bellevue for the Ventures services. Ms. Kurdas said there is a demand across the Puget Sound region and particularly across the Eastside. The course starts with a get ready for business orientation that is free to the public and consistently about 100 people attend each orientation regardless of where they are held. When the orientation was offered in Bellevue, 125 people registered for the 25 to 30 slots. People are clearly seeking business basics courses and Ventures is the only program available at a free or affordable rate that yields access to full services after graduation. Mr. Yarce added that the Latino community is a particular sweet spot for the program.

Chair Mercer asked how many of those who attend an orientation actually qualify for the business basics course. Ms. Kurdas said the orientation runs for about three hours and includes some reflection exercises around personal income and business ideas. Individuals then are offered the opportunity to apply and interview for the course. During the interview the focus is on looking for clear and concise business ideas, any experience in the field, and how the applicant would benefit from the Ventures community. Client selection also includes adherence to strict income



guidelines. At the six-week mark of the course, the peer loan program is introduced and a post-graduation orientation is offered for anyone wanting to learn more about the program. At graduation, the graduates have the opportunity to make their pitch and to meet with the on-staff Ventures coaches. There are advanced courses offered on a sliding scale for income. Mr. Yarce said for instance the commercial kitchen, clients are charged \$15 per hour even though the cost of the kitchen is more than a hundred dollars per hour.

Commissioner Amirfaiz asked how the requested funds would specifically be used in Bellevue. Ms. Kurdas said the orientation runs for one week and the classes run for eight weeks. Each session is three hours long from 6:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m. for a total of 24 hours of training. Mr. Yarce said Ventures partners with a lot of organizations, including Hopelink, to market the program to qualified persons. The peer loan process follows the class work and graduation. Not every person who participates in the program will become an entrepreneur. About 50 percent of the graduates actually start a business, and more than 90 percent of them ultimately succeed. The Ventures strategy is not aimed at making everyone an entrepreneur. The course is geared to be as beneficial as possible for anyone wanting to increase their knowledge in financial management and personal finance, things that are important when walking into a job interview. Ventures works closely with WorkForce and referral agencies such as El Centro de la Raza.

Mr. Yarce added that entrepreneurship is not for everyone, but for those for whom it is a good option, it is a good way out of poverty and to break the cycle of generational poverty. Those who succeed build their own wealth and wealth for the community.

Ms. Catalano said there are other CDBG-funded programs that are similar, though some are for more established businesses and require that a certain number of jobs be created. The Ventures microlending program does not take that tack in giving clients the opportunity to learn about how to launch and operate a small business. Ms. O'Reilly added that Bellevue's economic development division sponsors some programs, but they are for folks who do not fall into the microenterprise realm. The Ventures program addresses a gap.

Commissioner Ma commented that while Ventures is seeking to provide classes in Bellevue, the bulk of the available resources the organization offers are in Seattle. He asked if there is the potential to grow the program in Bellevue. Ms. Kurdas said the intention of Ventures is to serve clients where they are. The focus is on allocating resources to make sure the organization can work with clients where they require services. Coaching services in particular can be provided remotely. In terms of advance courses, Ventures has experimented with e-learning and going to other places but no specific growth is targeted currently in any other locations. Mr. Yarce confirmed that that is not part of Venture's sustainability plan. In order to expand to Bellevue and other markets, it would be necessary to double or triple the project budget.

Chair Mercer encouraged the organization in making plans for 2020 and beyond to consider Bellevue College as a potential partner.

Ms. Catalano said the estimated funding for 2020 is expected to be \$764,000. In addition, there will be an estimated \$250,000 in program income for a total of \$1,014,000. The public services requests were allocated during the 2019-2020 general fund process at which time the Commission chose to allocate \$143,871 to Jewish Family Service. Additionally, there are the applications for planning and administration, Ventures, the Major Home Repair Program, and the Sound Generations Minor Home Repair Program. She said the request before the Commission was to approve preliminary 2020 CDBG funding recommendations. The public hearing on those recommendations is scheduled for July 16 at which time the Commission will take testimony, engage in additional discussion, and vote on the final recommendations.

Ms. Catalano allowed that the applications total some \$97,000 less than the projected CDBG allocation to the city. However, the planning and administration request of \$143,877 is less than the estimated 20 percent cap of \$202,000. Under the adopted citizen participation plan, any of the allocations can be changed by up to 50 percent without having to go through the amendment process, so adding to the planning and administration allocation up to the cap amount would not be difficult. It is also possible that the amount of projected program income will be less than expected, which would narrow the gap. There are, however, unexpended prior year funds totaling about \$600,000 that need to be allocated and an additional RFP for applications may be sent out in the coming months.

Commissioner Piper asked if there is any idea of what the worst case scenario could be in terms of funding. Ms. Catalano said the contingency plan the Commission will vote on at its next meeting will outline the steps to be taken should there be fewer funds to allocate than expected. The plan typically reduces the allocations proportionally. Program income is always difficult to predict, but the allocations are revised in line with what actually comes in. She said a good rule of thumb is to have no more than 1.5 times the entitlement amount in hand at the time the entitlement funds allocation is made.

Chair Mercer asked if CDBG funds could be used to facilitate the building of accessory dwelling units in Bellevue. Ms. O'Reilly pointed out that Bellevue allows accessory dwelling units as attached units but not as detached units. Ms. Catalano added that construction of an attached accessory dwelling unit would probably be considered a home remodel and therefore not eligible for CDBG funding.

Ms. Esparza asked if even as an addition the architectural costs could be covered with CDBG funds. Ms. Catalano explained that while single family homes are exempt, which allows the home repair programs to be funded with CDBG dollars, there are rules about the kinds of things that can be paid for, which primarily fall into the health and safety category.

Ms. Catalano added that if a demand for the Ventures services becomes evident beyond just two classes per year, the funds could be used to add classes.

Commissioner Piper said he was very impressed by the presentation made by Ventures and about the program itself. He said he likes the approach and the success rate touted.

Commissioner Ma concurred and pointed out the program fills a gap for people who do not otherwise have the opportunity to gain the knowledge. The Ventures team was very well organized and responsive to all of the Commission's questions.

Commissioner Jain agreed and voiced her favorable view of the program. Even those who go through the class but choose not to start a business are better poised to find employment.

Commissioner Amirfaiz said her concern with the program rested on the issue of whether or not eight weeks is a sufficient amount of time to learn all the needs to be learned.

Commissioner Mansfield said his community college background in adult education had taught him that the gap filled by the Ventures program is something many are looking to fill. He agreed that entrepreneurship is not for everyone and the classes help to make that evident, but the knowledge shared is beneficial in many ways.

Commissioner Amirfaiz said food truck businesses are one thing that have come out of the Ventures program. Food trucks often feature foods from communities of culture, for which there is a market, particularly in Bellevue given its diversity.

Commissioner Ma said the Ventures program offers a perfect way to uplift several potential entrepreneurs to where they can create their own income. The potential benefits to the program can be exponential.

Commissioner Kline said she viewed the Ventures program as very promising. She said it was exciting to have something totally new to look at. Moving the application forward would be the right thing to do.

A motion to approve the preliminary CDBG funding recommendations was made by Commissioner Ma. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Piper and the motion carried unanimously.

## 9. INFORMATION FOR THE COMMISSION

### A. 2019 CDBG Annual Action Plan Amendment

This item was obviated by the withdrawal of the Kinderling Center request.

10. OLD BUSINESS – None

11. NEW BUSINESS

Commissioner Amirfaiz shared that Bellevue Essentials would be having a picnic at Crossroads Community Park.

Chair Mercer noted that she may be out of town the week of July 15 and asked for a vote to be allowed to participate remotely in the July 16 Commission meeting.

A motion to approve allowing Chair Mercer to participate remotely in the July 16 meeting was made by Commissioner Piper. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Ma and the motion carried unanimously.

Ms. O'Reilly reported that the Council would be holding a farewell for retiring board and commission members and a welcome for new board and commission members on July 8 from 5:30 p.m. to 6:00 p.m. She noted that former Commissioners Oxrieder and McEachran both would be participating in the event along with Commissioner Jain.

12. CONTINUED ORAL COMMUNICATIONS – None

13. ADJOURNMENT

A motion to adjourn was made by Commissioner Ma. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Piper and the motion carried unanimously.

Chair Mercer adjourned the meeting at 7:58 p.m.

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Secretary to the Human Services Commission

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Date

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Chairperson of the Human Services Commission

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Date

CITY OF BELLEVUE  
HUMAN SERVICES COMMISSION  
MINUTES

July 16, 2019  
6:00 p.m.

Bellevue City Hall  
City Council Conference Room 1E-113

COMMISSIONERS PRESENT: Chairperson Mercer, Commissioners Amirfaiz, Jain, Kline, Ma, Mansfield, Piper

COMMISSIONERS ABSENT: None

STAFF PRESENT: Alex O'Reilly, Dee Dee Catalano, Christy Stangland, Betsy Anderson, Department of Parks and Community Services

GUEST SPEAKERS: None

RECORDING SECRETARY: Gerry Lindsay

1. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 6:00 p.m. by Chair Mercer who presided.

2. ROLL CALL

Upon the call of the roll, all Commissioners were present with the exception of Commissioner Kline who arrived at 6:04 p.m.

3. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

A. June 18, 2019

A motion to approve the minutes as submitted was made by Commissioner Piper. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Ma and the motion carried without dissent; Chair Mercer abstained from voting.

4. ORAL AND WRITTEN COMMUNICATIONS – None

5. COMMUNICATIONS FROM CITY COUNCIL, COMMUNITY COUNCIL, BOARDS AND COMMISSIONS – None

## 6. STAFF AND COMMISSIONER REPORTS

Commissioner Jain reported that following the Commission's July 2 meeting she went online and read the stories of businesses helped by Ventures Business Development. She said the research confirmed her support for the organization.

Human Services Manager Alex O'Reilly highlighted the human services brochure and noted that it is a helpful document for explaining the work of the Commission and includes a list of all funded agencies for 2019. She made the brochures available to the Commissioners for handing out.

Human Services Planner Christy Stangland said City Manager's Office Assistant Director Nancy LaCombe, who serves as the city's homelessness program, has charge of the index cards with homelessness information. She noted that the city is currently seeking someone to serve as homelessness coordinator and said once that person is onboard the index cards will be updated and ready for distribution.

Grant Coordinator Dee Dee Catalano reported that the city received its 2019 funding agreement from HUD on July 15. Once signed by the City Manager's Office, it will be sent back to HUD, after which the 2019 allocation to the city will be released.

## 7. PUBLIC HEARING

### A. 2020 Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Funding Recommendations

Chair Mercer briefly reviewed the public hearing process and invited staff to provide an overview of the funding process.

Ms. Catalano explained that five applications for funding had been received. One was found to be ineligible by virtue of the agency not being able to document the low- and moderate-income requirements. The applications were reviewed by the Commission on June 2, and the Commission made its preliminary funding recommendations on July 2. She said the Commission would vote on its final recommendations following the public hearing and the recommendation will be forwarded to the City Council for review and action on November 4. An estimated \$764,000 in entitlement funds will be available for allocation along with an estimated \$250,000 in program income.

A motion to open the public hearing was made by Commissioner Ma. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Piper and the motion carried unanimously.

There was no one present to address the Commission during the public hearing.

A motion to close the public hearing was made by Commissioner Kline. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Piper and the motion carried unanimously.

## 8. DISCUSSION

### A. Final Review of the 2020 CDBG Applications

Ms. Catalano noted that the Commission's preliminary funding recommendations were included in the packet materials along with a draft of the contingency plan. She explained that the city's Annual Action Plan, also required by HUD, cannot be submitted until the exact entitlement amount is known. The contingency plan outline what steps will be taken in the event the city receives less than anticipated or more than anticipated. Both the planning and administration and public services categories come with caps, which for the former is 20 percent of the entitlement and for the latter is 15 percent. Accordingly, the contingency plan adjusts those categories up or down as necessary. As proposed, if the allocation is significantly higher or lower than projected, the individual capital projects allocations will be increased or decreased by the percentage of the increase or decrease in the entitlement allocation.

Chair Mercer observed that the projections made by the staff foresee less program income and asked if the Commission should look to accommodate that reduction with entitlement funds. Ms. Catalano clarified that program income was down in the previous year and said the projection is for it to remain lower by about the same for 2020. She said the city has received about \$150,000 in program income this year, which puts the program income on track to be about \$300,000 for the year.

### B. 2020 CDBG Contingency Plan

Chair Mercer asked if the contingency plan should be written to give the major home repair program more flexibility in terms of allocations given that it can fluctuate dramatically in terms of program income. Ms. Catalano pointed out that under HUD rules, program income must be spent first on all projects, not just the major home repair program. The request of \$494,914 submitted by that program represents what the agency believes can be spent during the year. She noted that the contingency plan as drafted does allow for amending the major home repair program contract to increase funding as needed and as allowed under the city's contract amendment approval policies.

Ms. O'Reilly added that the agency would need to demonstrate that it could use any extra funds.

Commissioner Kline said she was confused by the fact that the preliminary recommendation does not allocate all of the funds that are available. She asked why more funds are not being earmarked for projects if projects could use more money. Ms. Catalano said the answer lies in the fact that program income estimates are not exact. The prudent approach is not to allocate too much up front. The calculations are difficult to make given the large number of unknowns. Sound Generations has requested \$84,000, and the agency has indicated it does not believe it could do a lot

more than that. The new program Ventures Business Development has requested \$50,000, which is an amount it believes it can comfortably spent. The preliminary funding recommendation funds the applications at their full requests. Funds are not necessarily being held back.

Chair Mercer commented that the difference between the preliminary funding recommendations and the projected CDBG allocation is about \$100,000. She asked where things have landed in previous application processes. Ms. Catalano noted that several years ago fewer requests than expected were submitted. On paper, 2019 looks good but the Lifewire project to purchase housing for domestic violence survivors has not yet gone forward, and there is some question as to whether or not it will. It was hoped that the Kindering project would work because it would take up \$100,000. In the coming months it likely will be necessary to do another RFP for additional funds. She reiterated, however, that the preliminary funding recommendations cannot be called conservative in that all of the applications are proposed to be fully funded. She added that the city is on track to meet its timeliness tests, but it is likely that additional projects will be needed. If the Ventures Business Development program is successful and if there is a demand, the allocation to it could be increased by up to 50 percent under the citizen participation plan without amending the plan. The allocation for planning and administration could also be increased up to the cap.

Commissioner Kline said it felt to her as if there were more moving parts than in past years and a higher likelihood of another project coming in. She questioned whether the Commission should have a contingency plan that locks in doing specific things. She asked if funds could simply be held for another project that might come in, or direct it all to the micro loan program. Ms. Catalano said the 2019 contingency plan established a hierarchy for allocating additional funds or reducing allocations if necessary. There were Commissioners, however, who felt funds should simply be divided equally among all the applications. She stressed, however, that the Commission was free to word the contingency plan as it wished. The contingency plan is a required HUD component and it must be predicated on the amount expected to be received.

Commissioner Kline asked what process would be necessary should the Lifewire project not go forward. Ms. Catalano said the process would be to recapture the funds for allocation to another project. That likely would mean putting out another RFP and amending the plan to add a new project, which would require a new public hearing. Unallocated prior year funds can be comingled with current year allocations.

Commissioner Amirfaiz said she would not be concerned where the funding involved is minimal. Where it is significant, however, there should be a plan in place for dealing with it. Ms. Catalano said the contingency plan could be written with specific percentages, such as if there is an increase of up to five percent, the increase will flow into the unexpended funds category for reallocation to a different project.



Chair Mercer said she did not favor having the contingency plan written to take funds from or add funds to all projects equally in the event of receiving more or less than expected. She suggested the Commission should have a little more control over funding revisions where the dollars involved are quite large. She said she would favor having a threshold percentage beyond which another project would be sought.

Commissioner Kline asked how locked in the city will be once the contingency plan is approved. Ms. Catalano said the contingency plan is part of the Annual Action Plan, which must be followed. Commissioner Kline asked if revising the plan is allowed. Ms. Catalano said changes are allowed to be made to the plan. If minor, a public comment period or public hearing would not be required.

Commissioner Kline said she favored drafting the contingency plan to direct extra funds to the Ventures Business Development program up to a certain threshold, and to reassess things above that threshold. Chair Mercer pointed out that the Ventures application stated that each class costs \$25,000, so any allocation to the program would need to be in increments of that amount.

Ms. Catalano commented that five percent of the estimated \$764,000 is \$38,200, which would be sufficient to cover one additional Ventures business class. Chair Mercer suggested the balance beyond \$25,000 could be earmarked either for the minor home repair program or spread evenly among the minor home repair and major home repair programs. Ms. Catalano added that the major home repair program could easily absorb another \$15,000.

Commissioner Amirfaiz asked if any allocation to the Ventures Business Development program would be done prior to the Commission seeing any outcome data from the two funded classes. She suggested that it should first be demonstrated that the program is actually making an impact before being allocated additional funds.

Chair Mercer pointed out that as drafted, any additional funds would be spread evenly across all of the programs, beginning with administration and followed by services and capital projects.

Commissioner Piper said he was inclined to allocate the first \$25,000 of excess funds to the Venture Business Development program and then to distribute the balance evenly between the two home repair programs. He said it did not sound overly onerous to make changes to the contingency plan in the event that the outcomes from Ventures fall short of expectations. Ms. Catalano pointed out that even if the Commission were to earmark an additional \$25,000 for the Ventures program, the funds would not go to the organization up front. They will have to offer their classes and report on their outcomes, and if they fall short, no additional funds would flow to the program. Commissioner Piper said in that event his preference would be to see the \$25,000 allocated evenly between the two home repair programs.

Commissioner Mansfield concurred that the first \$25,000 should go to the Ventures program and the balance should be split between the home repair programs.

Commissioner Ma said that mirrored his inclination as well. If the Ventures outcomes are not good, the contingency plan could be amended.

Commissioner Kline asked if Ventures Business Development has the capacity to offer a third class within the CDBG timeframe. Ms. Catalano said they would if they had additional dollars and if the demand was there, adding that they intend to offer the two classes in the first half of the year, leaving plenty of time to offer a third class. Chair Mercer pointed out that the organization's representatives did indicate they want to go slow and not to overdo it out of the gate because they also offer wraparound services in addition to the classes.

Ms. Catalano noted that \$25,000 is roughly 3.25 percent of the estimated entitlement amount and said it would be reasonable to expect an increase of that amount. She said the question is what should happen in the event the increase is less than \$25,000.

Commissioner Kline said the math would get difficult if there were a desire to allocate a percentage of any increase first to planning and administration before anything else. That could mean there would not be enough for Ventures to offer a third class. Ms. Catalano said the option exists not to increase the planning and administration or public service allocations.

Commissioner Ma proposed earmarking any additional funding of \$25,000 to Ventures Business Development. If the extra funds are less than \$25,000, they should be spent equally between the home repair programs.

Chair Mercer suggested Ventures could be asked if they could use additional funds in any amount for their follow-up services. She said her preference would be to see a third class offered provided the first two classes prove to have good outcomes. She backed off of the notion of dividing funds equally among all of the programs.

Commissioner Kline pointed out that the only third party proposal in the mix is the Ventures application. While Jewish Family Service technically fits that category, it was funded through the general allocation process. Any additional amounts allocated to Jewish Family Service through the contingency plan would be a windfall and could impact the general allocations in that they would suddenly have a higher base allocation. Ms. Catalano pointed out that the Jewish Family Service allocation is close to the 15 percent public services cap. She added the general fund allocation has remained fairly steady aside from an annual COLA increase.

Chair Mercer commented that during the next regular allocation process the Commission could choose to not give a COLA increase to Jewish Family Service to offset any increase in their CDBG allocation.

Ms. Stangland indicated that the home repair programs have seen an uptick in the number of clients and as such has been able to spend their allocations in a more timely manner. Ms. Catalano added that their 2018 contracts were spent down as of the end of June. They could accommodate more funding.

Commissioner Kline said she was excited about the microloan program, pointing out that it has been a long time since the Commission has had the opportunity to fund something new and innovative.

Commissioner Jain said her mind remained open in regard to the Ventures program. She said there is a clear need in terms of the home repair programs.

Commissioner Kline said she would first fund Jewish Family Service to the maximum with funds above or less than \$25,000 and split the balance between the two home repair programs. Commissioner Ma concurred.

Ms. Catalano reiterated that the projected CDBG allocation was \$764,000, and that the projected program income would total \$250,000. Given that, the public services cap would be \$152,100. Jewish Family Service is currently funded at \$143,877.

Chair Mercer said she would prefer to split any amount over or less than \$25,000 between Jewish Family Service and the two home repair programs.

Chair Mercer asked if, in the event of a windfall increase in the CDBG allocation from HUD, the Commission would prefer to put out an RFP for additional programs to fund. Ms. Catalano allowed that the proposal on the table from Congress represents a slight increase over the current funding level. The odds of the city receiving more than a three percent increase are very slim. In the unlikely event of a 25 percent increase, the planning and administration and public services cap amounts would increase accordingly. It is not likely the Commission would want to fund Jewish Family Service all the way up to the new cap.

Chair Mercer she was hearing consensus in favor of drafting the contingency plan to allow for giving up to \$25,000 to the Ventures program to fund one additional class, to allocate any amounts beyond \$25,000 to planning and administration and public services, and to distribute any additional funds evenly between the two home repair programs.

Commissioner Ma said in the event of a decrease in the CDBG allocation he would want to keep the Ventures program fully funded to facilitate two classes, decreasing instead the Jewish Family Service application and the two home repair programs.

There was consensus to direct staff to wordsmith the contingency plan accordingly before voting to approve it.

A motion to approve the funding recommendations as proposed was made by Commissioner Piper. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Ma and the motion carried unanimously.

## 9. DISCUSSION

### A. Minor Amendment to 2019 CDBG Annual Action Plan

Ms. Catalano stated that an amendment was needed to the 2019 Annual Action Plan to show the exact amount of prior year resources along with the estimated program income.

A motion to approve the minor amendment to the 2019 CDBG Annual Action Plan changing the amounts of estimated program income and prior year funds in the Expected Resources table was made by Commissioner Jain. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Piper and the motion carried unanimously.

## 10. DISCUSSION

### A. Parks Strategic Plan Update

Parks and Community Services Senior Planner Betsy Anderson said the Parks and Community Services strategic plan establishes a shared understanding of the vision, mission and guiding principles of the department, and prioritizes the key areas of focus for the next five years. The document translates policy level guidance from city and department level plans into actionable goals and strategies, and it meets the departmental accreditation requirements. Given that human services is part of the parks department, the document is the Commission's strategic plan.

Ms. Anderson said the strategic plan is a part of the city's Comprehensive Plan. The strategic plan is informed by the human services needs update, the parks and open space system plan, and the recreation program plan.

The components of both the current plan and the updated plan includes the vision, which is a future-oriented declaration of the organization's purpose and aspirations. The vision is the north star guiding point and in a perfect world is what the department would like to see happen. The next component is the mission which is much more tangible and is the organization's reason for being. The values component, also called the guiding principles, are the fundamental beliefs and guiding standards of the organization. The vision, mission and values are remarkably static and do not change much over time. The goals and strategies elements of the plan are much more dynamic and are changed according to community and department contexts. The goals are the what and the strategies are the how. The tactics and the action plans are where the staff take the content from the plan and move it into their specific program and division work plans.

Ms. Anderson said the first strategic plan was created in the early 2000s and the current plan was adopted in 2015. She said the mission for the department is to build a healthy community through an integrated system of exceptional parks, open space, recreation, cultural arts and human services. Supporting that mission are a set of six guiding principles.

The goals are: 1) advance the mission of building a healthy community; 2) assess the relevancy and effectiveness of programs and partnerships; 3) leverage the value of assets, resources, technology, external funding and partnerships; 4) integrate Parks and Community Services into local and regional economic development strategies; 5) support policy outcomes that advance the mission; and 6) align organizational development activities with department guiding principles. The work of the Commission is addressed particularly under the first three goals.

The update process kicked off in earnest in late 2018 with a management team retreat workshop. The focus was on content of the current plan and areas that should be built on over the next five years. A plan update scope has since been identified by a multidisciplinary core planning team. It includes a draft series of core components. A draft plan will be available in the fall of 2019. Traditionally the strategic plan has been endorsed by the Parks and Community Services Board but it will also be reviewed with all boards and commissions that have a connection with the department.

The first of the draft core components is a vision statement for the department as a whole developed by the core team. The new statement reads “In Bellevue everyone can connect to nature and to each other through experiences and programs that help them to live, grow, and thrive.” The updated mission statement is close to the existing statement. It reads “We build a healthy community through an integrated system of exceptional parks, recreation, natural areas, arts and culture, and community services.”

The staff workshop in 2018 uncovered an interest in aligning the work of the department with the citywide Diversity Advantage Initiative and the department’s diversity plan through the creation of an equity statement. As drafted, it reads “Equity acknowledges and removes disparities in opportunities, power, and resources so that everyone can reach their full potential to thrive. Bellevue Parks & Community Services practices equity, which is the responsibility of every individual in the department. Equitable access is a right, not a privilege, and is fundamental to our mission of serving all people. Through the practice of equity, we cultivate ties that connect people to the fabric of our community.”

The draft update retains the guiding principles, the foundation for a healthy community, and the philosophy of a continuum of services. The full suite of elements will round out the core elements section of the document. Attention will be given next to the goals and the five-year priorities.

Commissioner Jain referred to the guiding principle around actively managing organization health and asked what process would be used to accomplish that. Ms. Anderson said the principle could be applied in different ways. As drafted, the focus is on ensuring an environment for the staff in which they can succeed and thrive. The principles are inspired from the citywide One City principles.

Commissioner Ma said the ability of the department to maintain parks, green spaces and natural areas is a big draw for many. It is a visible outcome community members can see. It speaks to environmental sustainability.

Commissioner Piper said the continuum of services is a key strength and is what brought him to the Commission. It is both an interesting and helpful framework. He stressed the need for the Commission to be cognizant of all parts of the continuum spectrum.

Chair Mercer said she did not see the human services strategies popping out in the strategic plan. The things the Commission believes in strongly, such as food to eat and a roof overhead, clearly fall under the umbrella of the plan, but that is not evident in the draft.

Commissioner Kline said she is always finding new pockets of human services that are going on within the city. It does not seem that it is all pulled together in one place. There are programs under the fire and police departments, and different pots of city dollars go to fund the various programs. It is difficult for the Commission to internally capture all of those components and far more so for the public. Ms. Anderson allowed that the staff team talked about that and agreed it would be a benefit to have a single place where people could go to find all of the resources.

Chair Mercer asked if accessibility and affordability could be raised into the guiding principles. Ms. Anderson said the suggestion is an interesting idea, noting that there has been much talk about those two concepts in regard to individual programs.

Chair Mercer also noted the reference to the fourth goal and said she would like to see that expanded to call out Bellevue as a regional leader in all of the areas.

Ms. O'Reilly pointed out that the document uses both "human services" and "community services." She asked if there could be a clearer definition included in the plan. Ms. Anderson said there was some interest on the part of the staff in thinking about human services as being part of community services and viewing the two more holistically as a way of serving up a more comprehensive understanding.

Commissioner Ma suggested that people in the know understand what is meant by the term human services. He allowed that the term community services is broader and more encompassing and could make human services more visible to the community. Ms. Anderson agreed a definition should be embedded to ensure

transparency. She also agreed that everyone should be able to pick up the strategic plan, read it, and understand the role of the department and what it does.

Ms. O'Reilly said that approach would go a long way toward addressing the fact that other departments offer services that can widely be called human services. She said she did not know how the strategic plans of the various city departments are inter-coordinated, though she allowed that the diversity strategic plans are being coordinated by the diversity initiative staff. Taking the holistic view would not change how the programs of city departments are operationalized, but it would help to make things clearer.

Commissioner Kline pointed out that many of the programs offered by other departments actually provide human services, while the primary function of the human services division is to contract with agencies to provide human services. Ms. O'Reilly noted that the 1985 ordinance that created the human services division and the Commission specifically outlines that role.

Commissioner Jain asked if the department has data about which parks in the system get used the most and who the users are. Ms. Anderson said park and trail usage is somewhat difficult to determine. Parks are very porous in the way they can be accessed. The marketing lead and the facilities manager have, however, been working on developing ways to track park usage. Tracking usage at community centers and the programs they offer is much less complicated.

Commissioner Ma said he would like to see the fourth goal and strategies drafted to be specific about encompassing more diversity by serving people at all economic levels. He allowed that affordability is a major issue for the Commission. Ms. Anderson said the staff have given attention to the language relative to a vibrant economy and have made attempts to conflate a vibrant economy with a high quality of life. The opportunity exists to do a better job of emphasizes affordability and accessibility.

With regard to accessibility, Chair Mercer stressed that transportation is a key component. She suggested there should be some reference made to the ability for people to get to where they need to be. Ms. Anderson said transportation has been a crosscutting issue, particularly in regard to the recreation plan. She said she did not have a good handle yet on a path forward but agreed more needs to be done in terms of removing barriers. Chair Mercer pointed out that the Commission had done a lot of research in concert with King County Metro that has not been moved forward yet.

Commissioner Amirfaiz asked if there are plans for acquiring any more green space. Ms. Anderson said there are plans in place. The parks and open space system plan looks forward many years and analyzes geographic levels of service based on neighborhoods being within a third of a mile of parks and trails. There is more work to be done by way of study which will be addressed in the next update of that plan in

2022. There has also been a lot of talk about the term “walkable access” in terms of sidewalk conditions, the curb cuts, and the slope of the topography. The data, while relatively easy to collect, can be expensive to address on the ground. The parks and open space plan is used to guide acquisition decisions. Habitat conditions and watershed health are also consideration factors. Data regarding population density is still used for siting community centers. The data is also a contributing factor to determining where additional park facilities are needed. Open space creation can be incentivized in new development.

Ms. O'Reilly informed the Commission that the intern who will be starting with the department in September, Devin Konick-Seese, is currently working with Ms. Anderson on the Recreation Plan. That will provide for a good carryover.

## 11. OLD BUSINESS

Ms. O'Reilly noted that she had forwarded to the Commission an email received from a person who serves on the board of an agency that the Commission chose not to fund in the current biennium. The email simply asks the Commission to consider funding them during the next allocation cycle.

Commissioner Jain asked why the Commission had elected not to fund the application. Commissioner Piper said the primary issues were with the number of Bellevue residents served and the breadth of the program.

Chair Mercer added that the Commission had generally struggled during the funding cycle with the number of different organizations that were seeking funds for financial assistance. The Commission's evaluation of the various programs in terms of impact led to the conclusion to fund the programs that were ultimately funded.

Commissioner Kline said the Commission dove into the area of emergency financial assistance at the top of the funding cycle. It was realized that the system could use some improvements along the lines of the coordinated entry system for housing. A number of different methods are used to fund the various aspects of emergency financial assistance and clients in need of assistance end up having to go from program to program to get what they need. The Commission convened a panel of agencies that provide emergency financial assistance and the turnout was very good, including representation from Attain Housing. It was discovered that there are large variations between agencies in terms of restrictions from their funding sources or from their boards around what each can and will fund, as well as their funding levels. The Commission reached the conclusion that there are valid reasons for having so many different agencies involved in emergency financial assistance. The population served by Attain Housing was deemed to be very similar to the population served by Hopelink, so from the standpoint of economy of scale the decision was made to fund Hopelink rather than Attain Housing. The Commission did not rule out funding Attain Housing in the future.



Continuing, Commissioner Kline stated that after the funding process was finished, Deputy Mayor Robinson came to the Commission with a question about what areas would be funded if more money was available. That kicked off another process during which Attain Housing came up. The feedback given to Deputy Mayor Robinson was that if more money were made available, the Commission would allocate it to emergency financial assistance, including Attain Housing.

Assistant Director of the Department of Parks and Community Services Toni Esparza pointed out that the applications received totaled some \$5.5 million, yet the Commission was only had \$3.6 million to allocate. The discussion around emergency financial assistance is just one example of the conversations the Commission engaged in deciding how to split up the available dollars.

12. NEW BUSINESS – None

13. CONTINUED ORAL COMMUNICATIONS – None

14. ADJOURNMENT

A motion to adjourn was made by Commissioner Kline. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Ma and the motion carried unanimously.

Chair Mercer adjourned the meeting at 8:03 p.m.

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Secretary to the Human Services Commission

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Date

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Chairperson of the Human Services Commission

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Date