

The Human Services Commission approved these minutes on November 7, 2017

CITY OF BELLEVUE
HUMAN SERVICES COMMISSION
MINUTES

October 17, 2017
6:00 p.m.

Bellevue City Hall
City Council Conference Room 1E-113

COMMISSIONERS PRESENT: Chairperson Villar, Commissioners Kline, Ma, McEachran, Mercer, Oxrieder, Perelman

COMMISSIONERS ABSENT: None

STAFF PRESENT: Alex O'Reilly, Dee Dee Catalano, Christy Stangland, Cynthia Moreno, Department of Parks and Community Services; Councilmember Lynne Robinson

GUEST SPEAKERS: Sara Levin, United Way; Meghan Altimore, Malory Gustave, Stephanie Paget, Hopelink

RECORDING SECRETARY: Gerry Lindsay

1. CALL TO ORDER

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

2. ROLL CALL

Upon the call of the roll, all Commissioners were present with the exception of Commissioner Perelman who arrived at 6:19 p.m.

3. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

A. September 19, 2017

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

4. PETITIONS AND COMMUNICATIONS – None

5. STAFF AND COMMISSION REPORTS

Commissioner Oxrieder said she attended the recent Congregations for the

Homeless luncheon.

Commissioner McEachran noted that he had also attended the Congregations for the Homeless function. He said Sophia Way was fun and Hopelink \$1.2 million later is probably feeling pretty good. The presentations were excellent. He added that earlier in the day he had lunch with three executive directors during which the faith community's commitment to increase participation with Congregations for the Homeless and Sophia Way and by 50 percent in dollar value in the new year was reaffirmed.

Commissioner Ma reported that several weeks ago he attended a fundraiser for Kin On, a social center for culturally relevant Asian seniors located in Crossroads.

Chair Villar said her husband recently donated a piece of durable medical equipment to Bridge Ministries. She said she recently visited the agency and witnessed them assisting a disabled person in completing their paperwork. They were very patient and caring and were able to get the person what was needed.

Human Services Manager Alex O'Reilly took a moment to honor Chair Villar, noting that it was her last Commission meeting before moving to Canada. She thanked Chair Villar for her service and leadership, for her contributions, and for her wonderful insights.

Councilmember Robinson said Bellevue's boards and commissions attract a certain kind of person, namely those who really care about the community. That is particularly true of those serving on the Human Services Commission. She said Chair Villar has shown a commitment to the community through leadership and contributions. She said the city and the City Council appreciates the work that has been done.

Chair Villar said she has over the years volunteered in many different places and in many different capacities. She said her work as part of the Commission has been the most fulfilling. She said she will miss attending the meetings, the Commissioners and staff, and being part of the great work done by the Commission on behalf of the city.

Commissioner McEachran said the amazing thing about the Human Services Commission is that its members join as strangers and in a very short time become friends and stewards of the city. He said he has been an honor to serve with Chair Villar and beside her.

Commissioner Ma thanked Chair Villar for welcoming him and for being so helpful to him as a newcomer to the Commission. He wished her all the best in her new adventures.

Commissioner Mercer said she would miss going through the various applications in the coming year without Chair Villar and hearing her insights. She said she would

miss having Chair Villar being part of the journey, but wished her all the best in taking on her new challenges.

Chair Villar explained that she would be working in the field of business immigration ensuring that folks get the permissions they need to legally immigrate. She said the work has been more challenging as the administration seeks to make it as difficult as possible for folks to legally immigrate. She said recently she has had a lot of conversations with DACA kids who are trying to figure out their options.

There was a short break to take a group photo and serve cake.

Grant Coordinator Dee Dee Catalano reported that staff have been working to put together a joint commissions meeting for November 7 with a focus on cultural diversity and racial equity and looking at applications through that lens. However, the person asked to make the presentation cannot attend on November 7. January 9 has been reserved instead.

Councilmember Robinson commented that there has been much said lately about the homeless shelter. She said it was her belief that there is a majority of people in Bellevue who support creating support for the homeless population, even though there is a very loud group that claims to not be against a shelter while being clear about not liking the proposed location. Regardless of where a shelter is ultimately sited, consideration needs to be given to what kind of programming will be offered in conjunction with it, a conversation that will need to involve the public. She said she has visited Imagine Housing, Congregations for the Homeless, Sophia Way and Hopelink. The very mission Bellevue is trying to engage with is consistent with the work being done by those organizations. It would be very helpful if everyone who supports the work of those organizations could come out in support of the shelter.

Councilmember Robinson said while attending a Mental Health and Drug Dependency meeting with Human Services Planner Christy Stangland a couple of weeks ago it became clear to her that the funding that will be needed to support the homeless population is going to be limited unless names and birthdates are collected so they can be signed up for Medicaid. She asked the Commission to look into that for her because the Council needs to be educated in regard to that reality.

The Commission should be thinking about the possibility of having a homeless shelter sited in Bellevue in the next few years. Consideration should be given to what kind of funding it will need and what other resources will need to be dedicated to it, along with the kinds of relationships and partnerships that will need to be developed.

Commissioner McEachran said he took the opportunity while meeting with three executive directors to discuss with them the need to speak together around supportive services as a way to help the process. He said he told them they have been far too quiet about what each can offer in terms of supportive services. The talk should be less on homelessness and more on shelter security and home security,

using the language of affirmation in moving forward. He said he challenged them to put their heads together and put out something about collaborative impact for supportive services, and moving forward in partnership with the city and other municipalities.

Councilmember Robinson said it was clear at the presentation about homeless women at the Sophia Way luncheon raised no eyebrows, and everyone agreed with the need to establish no barriers to serving homeless women. However, as soon as the conversation turns to homeless men, the ball game changes dramatically. She urged the staff to get copies of the presentation made at the luncheon by Representative Nicole Macri and share it with the Commissioners. She also pointed out that there had been unanimous support for siting a permanent homeless shelter for men in Bellevue until the elections became an issue.

6. DISCUSSION

A. United Way of King County Updates

Sara Levin, Vice President of Community Services for United Way of King County, took a moment to thank Ms. O'Reilly, a long-time volunteer with United Way who chairs the Early Learning Impact Council and serves on the Public Policy Council. She observed that the role of United Way is similar to that of the Commission. She said her role is to oversee all of the community impact work, which requires thinking a lot about community needs; the Commission does the same with a focus on the city of Bellevue. United Way must make difficult funding decisions, just as the Commission must. United Way looks at issues through a racial equity lens, which is training the Commission will also have.

Ms. Levin said United Way adopted a new strategic plan in 2015. In putting together the four focus areas, the community indicators taken into consideration included how to describe the value of United Way of King County. The organization has an old-school vision in which communities are built in which people have homes, students graduate and families are financially stable. Every dollar invested, all public funds leveraged and all efforts to influence public policy are focused on that vision.

The strategic plan's four community indicators were chosen in part to align with other community partners who are doing the same kind of work and who are measuring indicators in the same way. With regard to kindergarten readiness, a target was set that by 2020, 80 percent of all kids in King County would be ready for kindergarten. Currently that figure stands at 58 percent, which is up from 37 percent when the target was set. A new initiative has been determined that seeks to connect the 14,000 young people who are not in school and do not have a high school diploma with opportunities to gain a high school equivalency and getting them on a career path. Another goal is to help 50,000 people exit poverty. Regionally, things are going well in that arena, but there is still troubling data around who is still in poverty. United Way put a stake in the ground about wanting to see a 50 percent reduction in the number

of unsheltered people in the One Night Count, but nearly every year since that goal was set the number has actually increased.

United Way achieves community impact in several ways. Ms. Levin said her team is investing about \$29 million from donors and public funds in fiscal 2018 through competitive grants that have an emphasis on racial and geographic equity. Given the size of the portfolio and the reach across the county, the organization has the ability to take things to scale. When entering into a new program or initiative, consideration is given to those who will be served as well as the overall need and how United Way can scale efforts to address the issues completely.

Influence is important, which is why the organization has a public policy agenda that addresses both the state and local levels. United Way works with a contract lobbyist and mobilizes volunteers to get their voices heard. The organization is also increasingly looking at local advocacy and has taken a position recently on several levies.

United Way understands that it cannot go it alone. Donor dollars are leveraged with public and other dollars, and the work of thousands of volunteers each year is also leveraged. About 200 AmeriCorps members come through the doors annually and are put to work either providing direct services or working with non-profits on capacity building.

Commissioner Perelman noted that United Way defunded a large group of citizens with the new plan a couple of years ago. She asked if the agency has tracked who picked up services to those populations. Ms. Levin said United Way makes difficult decisions all the time because the dollars it has are limited. The decision to not invest in some of the older adult services was made in light of the understanding that many of the remaining investments in homelessness, food and hunger and ending poverty would be serving older adults, and that data is being tracked. United Way was also excited about and advocated for the Veterans and Human Services Levy to include significant services for seniors.

With regard to giving every child a chance to succeed, Ms. Levin said the Parent Child Home program is a signature effort of United Way. The home visiting program is based on a national model. It has been expanded in King County from serving 160 families to serving 1200 families in 2016. The goal was to raise donor dollars and garner awareness of the success of the program and then identify public resources for ongoing support. It is very fortunate that Best Starts for Kids has kicked in as a big investor. The two main Eastside partners are Kinderling Center and Encompass. Child care is also provided for homeless families, and a racial equity innovation fund was started in 2016 to look at emerging strategies for positively impacting child care services for Native American and African American communities.

Ms. Levin said the work of United Way with regard to financial stability has an emphasis on ending childhood hunger and building economic stability. Free tax

preparation for low-income folks is a great way to leverage volunteer time and also a way to bring some \$30 million back into the community through earned income tax credits and other benefits. There is an initiative around childhood hunger called Fuel Your Future, and some anti-poverty work is being tested on community college campuses that focuses on connecting college students living in poverty with benefits and providing financial coaching.

Ending homelessness is a concern for United Way as it is for many organizations. Ms. Levin said she co-chairs the All Home coordinating board, a regional collective impact work aimed at making homelessness brief and one time. A great deal of thought is being put into systems changes and how to effectively leverage and bring together various funding sources. Streets to Home is a United Way program in which Congregations for the Homeless is a successful partner. Under the program, outreach workers have access to flexible funds so that when they meet someone on the street they can quickly identify what the person needs and very quickly get them what they need to get off the street and housed.

Ms. Levin said the youth initiatives look at how to connect young people who do not have a high school diploma with programs that can help them get the credentials they need to move forward in fulfilling their dreams. State funding has been tapped to fund a good portion of the program, and a fundraising campaign is well under way. To date, about 5600 of the 14,000 young people in King County with a high school diploma have been reached.

One of the big challenges for entities like United Way that rely on donor dollars is the changing donor landscape. Many who for many years have been supporting United Way are getting older. The organization is thinking about how to bring in Millennials and younger persons, first as volunteers and then as donors. Other challenges include the federal landscape, housing affordability and homelessness. The data shows that even as progress is being made in some of the indicators, there remains a racial disproportionality in terms of who is making progress. The organization's brand and vision, while always evolving, remains strong.

Commissioner Perelman asked what percentage of United Way's donors are individuals versus companies. Ms. Levin said individuals still outnumber companies in terms of dollars. Donations by companies represent about a quarter of the funding brought in. The donor landscape continues to change, however, and the organization has far less access to work places.

With regard to the comment about United Way helping 50,000 people exit poverty, Chair Villar asked how the organization measures poverty. Ms. Levin said it is measured using the federal poverty level. That indicator was selected several years ago and if looked at with fresh eyes it might be viewed somewhat differently. Chair Villar pointed out that no one who rises just above the federal poverty level will be able to afford to live in Bellevue.

7. DISCUSSION

A. Hopelink Housing and Prevention Updates

Meghan Altimore, Vice President of Community Services for Hopelink, said Hopelink Place is a 20-unit facility in the Meydenbauer Bay neighborhood, the doors of which were opened in 2000 exclusively to serve homeless families. Over the years, the homeless system has gone through a number of transitions. Hopelink did a lot of research around what it wanted to do with its homeless units. It was discovered that nationally transitional housing is creating artificial moves for families. People who live in rental housing tend to move, often to accommodate jobs, schools or family needs rather than because of an arbitrary timeline. That evidence-based best practice resonated with Hopelink. The agency saw through the community case management program there was a very different set of outcomes when compared to the transitional housing outcomes. Beginning in 2009 with the Duvall Place housing, stays were not time limited. The units are not considered permanent for a lot of reasons, primarily that Hopelink wants the residents to become self sufficient and independent, and because the agency wants to be able to serve the next families that come along in need of housing. The non time-limited units have escalating rents, beginning at 30 percent of the residents' income. At six months they are recertified, and then at 18 months and again at 30 months the rent increases to a maximum of just under \$1000 per month at the 30-month mark. Within that time there is comprehensive case management and employment services, along with education services and financial coaching. There is a focus on making sure the children have the services they need relative to child care and social, emotional and educational assistance, all with an eye on making it possible for the parents to increase their incomes. The program was implemented at Hopelink Place, so that program is in the transition phase.

Ms. Altimore said that as the whole system has shifted to serving literally homeless families, the result has been serving families with higher barriers and families who have less natural support. In going through the work with the Coordinated Entry for All system, it was found that very few families with ties to north and east King County were being served. It was also found that the families were not connected to the community. Hopelink undertook a set of changes the primary result of which what is best for the families served and best for the community Hopelink Place is in. The timeframe was removed and escalating rents were implemented. The option of remaining in the transitional housing program or moving into the permanent housing program was offered, but only to the families in good standing. Currently, 15 of the 20 units are considered non time-limited, and the last transitional family will complete its two-years in June 2018. In the last year, nine families have exited the program into permanent housing, and there have been three negative exits or evictions from the program. Seven families have reached the first rent increase stage, and two families are about to reach their second rent increase. Two of those households have had to seek external support in order to meet the rents, while the others have been able to pay their own way and on time.

Over the last year, the average income at entry was \$580 per month, and the average income at exit was \$1579 per month, an increase of 173 percent. While the increase is impressive, \$1579 a month is not enough for a family to survive and that is why Hopelink seeks to bring to bear all possible assistance so the families will have the skills they need to gain access to living wage jobs.

Commissioner Perelman asked where most of the money is coming from for the individuals in the housing units. Stephanie Page, Hopelink Place manager, said at entry many of the families present with zero incomes beyond something like TANF. There are currently eight families with gainful employment.

Commissioner Perelman asked how the term “family” is interpreted now that Hopelink is no longer part of the Coordinated Entry system. Ms. Altimore said it is complicated and involves having at least one person over the age of 18 and one person under the age of 18 who is in guardianship to the older individual. Every attempt is made to be as flexible as possible to serve the families in need. Beyond that, Hopelink prioritizes referrals from community partners. Hopelink is definitively serving people who are living outside or who are in very unstable housing and have little background support, so there still are incidents of criminal activity at Hopelink Place along with negative tendency issues. The families engaged in criminal activities draw the most attention and are the most challenging for the neighbors around and in Hopelink Place. Currently there are three households at Hopelink Place that are creating a lot of chaos. Hopelink is working with community partners to bring in as many services as possible, and it is using all of the legal tools at its disposal. The agency never wants a family to leave the program in worse shape than they came.

Commissioner Mercer asked if any clients have left the program for financial reasons due to the graduated system. Ms. Page said she was not aware of anyone leaving for that reason. Those who need help paying their rent often seek help from various community partners. Every family at a Hopelink property has the ability to work out a payment plan with their case manager. Ms. Altimore said Hopelink is aware of the challenges faced by the families, many of whom work with unstable hours and wages. The case workers help them through the process by connecting them with available services to help them increase their incomes.

Commissioner Mercer asked if there are other groups with a similar system. Ms. Altimore said she was not aware of any. She said the households being served are in the coordinated entry system. Hopelink’s decision to leave that system means it does not pull clients from that list, rather from local community partners. Hopelink’s families want to live in Bellevue, though they do not have to be from Bellevue. The families are not automatically evicted if they cannot pay the escalated rents; there is a negotiation process in place aimed at making it work for all parties. If there were a household that had done nothing to raise its income or improve its situation, Hopelink would likely move toward eviction. Ms. Page said a recent rent increase for a family at Hopelink Place served as the motivator to get the household out looking for work and participating with the employment program.

Commissioner McEachran noted that both Lifewire and Sophia Way have sustainable housing funds that can be tapped for things like first month's rent, and asked if Hopelink has something similar. He also asked how well the coordinated entry system has worked on the ground. Ms. Altimore said Hopelink has started talking about creating a sustainable housing fund, but she added the organization already offers flexible financial assistance with short-term case management. All Home and the coordinated entry for all system is overwhelmed. King County has done a great job of bringing in the right staff and the right technology to bear, but callers to 2-1-1 can experience being on hold for more than an hour. That is why places like the new Bethlehem Day Center, Sophia Way's day center with Congregations for the Homeless, are so critical. People can go to those places in person to get connected to the services they need. It is the same old-fashioned system that has been in place for years and it is still critical.

Ms. Altimore said the financial resilience program was recently launched by Hopelink, who took two of the best AmeriCorps volunteers to run it. The organization has had the idea for several years of taking the eviction prevention program and adding to it a program with far more flexible dollars. Families face financial shock in more ways than just paying the rent; cars break down, medical issues arise, and family emergencies necessitate the need to purchase a plane ticket. The idea behind the program is to help families cushion financial shocks. Instead of an approach that involves checking boxes to prove eligibility, the program takes the shape of a conversation focused on what the family needs. Recently an individual faced a change in health that has made it necessary to reduce the number of hours worked. The person needed a different work situation and a different living situation as a result. The stability resource specialist is working with the person to identify other living options, move to something more affordable, and will hold financial assistance until the move is made, at which time the funds will address move-in costs, including first month's rent and security deposit. The program is currently being piloted in Bellevue with funding from Hopelink and United Way.

Ms. Altimore said Hopelink recently became an official partner of Washington Connections through the state. Through the program, persons who present with zero income or completely unconnected to benefits can be provided access to the benefits for which they are eligible to help stabilize them. Ultimately they will be brought into the employment and education programs so that they can begin weaning away from those resources as they move toward being self sustaining. Hopelink's food bank system serves 15,000 persons annually, only half of whom are enrolled for Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program benefits even though all of them qualify.

Ms. Altimore said Hopelink used to rely on Bellevue and United Way for its community needs assessment, but as a community action agency the state says that approach cannot continue. Accordingly, Hopelink recently compiled its own community needs assessment. It has some great information that backs up the work done by Ms. O'Reilly and her team in compiling the city's Needs Update.

The federal poverty level for an individual is currently \$12,000. The University of Washington study that was recently published highlighted that it takes far more than that just to make ends meet, so Hopelink is looking at the 200- to 300-percent brackets, which are not currently served by any of Hopelink's programs. Federal assistance is received by the food bank but it caps at 185 percent of the federal poverty level, and Hopelink must use the same cap. People are, however, food insecure almost all the way to 300 percent of the federal poverty level. The local communities are remarkably generous in terms of food support; Hopelink brings in \$5.8 million annually in in-kind food. The question is whether or not that level of support can continue to increase so that those who are food insecure can be served.

Commissioner McEachran remarked that Eastside Pathways produces a needs report, the city produces one, and Hopelink does as well, and suggested that there could be benefit to having all organizations working together to correlate efforts. Ms. O'Reilly said Bellevue has been pushing that notion for 20 years or more with the Eastside cities but without eliciting a positive response. Ms. Altimore agreed that if each organization were conducting their evaluations on the same metrics the result would be very powerful.

Ms. Altimore thanked the Commissioners for their work. She said the support provided Hopelink by the city, and the leadership provided by the Commission, the Council and the staff is tremendous, and Hopelink is grateful for it.

Answering a question asked by Commissioner Perelman, Ms. Altimore said should the city choose to increase its funding to Hopelink, she would earmark the emergency financial assistance program and the mobile food program, which is aimed at getting fresh healthy food out into the community, particularly to those who have trouble in coming to the food bank. The work being done by the city to address affordable housing, particularly at the lower levels of affordability, is huge.

8. OLD BUSINESS

Ms. O'Reilly noted that staff had received feedback from Commissioners about possible site visits, including Jewish Family Services, which focuses on immigrants and refugees; Easter Seals, which has taken over the running of Elder and Adult Day Services; Eastside Legal Assistance Program, which offers a range of legal services, including civic; Bridge Disability Ministries, which deals in durable medical goods; and the India Association of Western Washington, which is the only new agency funded in the last funding cycle.

Commissioner Mercer commented that last year the Commission chose to volunteer at the men's shelter and she said she would like to do something like that again, either at that facility or at Sophia Way. With sufficient notice, all of the Commissioners could attend and participate. Ms. O'Reilly said the men's shelter will not open until

mid-November, but the Sophia Way ongoing women's shelter has groups sign up to help serve lunch and dinner.

Chair Villar asked if there is an organization the Commission could visit to start getting answers to the questions raised by Councilmember Robinson relative to what happens when someone shows up and does not want to provide personal information. Ms. O'Reilly said the first step would be to have staff look into it before asking someone to come to a Commission meeting. Ms. Stangland said she actually had been confused in regard to the questions around Medicaid because anyone getting connected with Medicaid must provide far more information than just name and birth date. She agreed that staff should conduct some background research.

Ms. O'Reilly informed the Commissioners that Congregations for the Homeless fills out an intake form for everyone coming into their shelter. The information on the form is actually quite comprehensive, though folks can choose not to provide certain information.

Commissioner Mercer said she would like to visit the Chinese Information Service Center cultural navigator program. Commissioner McEachran added the possibility of either visiting SeaMar or inviting a representative to come to a Commission meeting and share information.

Commissioner Mercer said if there are in fact other organizations serving the Latino community it would be good to hear from them as well. Ms. O'Reilly said the Bellevue Diversity Advisory Network is engaged in a community mapping project to determine what cultural groups and services are available in the city. Their focus will be multicultural, not just on the Latino community. She said it would be better to allow that process to play out. Another option would be to pull together a panel of people from the Latino community to tell the Commission what they believe the needs and resources are.

Commissioner Perelman noted that it had been two years since the Commission heard from the Islamic community. She suggested it would be helpful to invite them to provide an update.

Ms. O'Reilly reported that HERO House has opened a new building in Bellevue and always loves to have visitors.

The Commissioners expressed interest in setting up a site visit to Jewish Family Services, the Eastside Legal Assistance Program, the Chinese Information Service Center cultural navigator program, HERO House, and Preparing for Work at Bellevue College.

Ms. O'Reilly briefly discussed with the Commissioners possible agenda topics for the November 7 Commission meeting as well as future Commission meetings. The topics mentioned were affordable housing, the coordinated entry system, and transportation

as it relates to human services. Ms. O'Reilly noted that at the next meeting the Commission would need to elect a new Vice Chair as Commissioner Mercer moves into the Chair position.

Ms. Stangland reported that she and Ms. O'Reilly met with the IT folks to talk about the suggestion made to include infographs in the Needs Update.

9. NEW BUSINESS – None

10. PETITIONS AND COMMUNICATIONS – None

11. ADJOURNMENT

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

Chair Villar adjourned the meeting at 8:04 p.m.

Secretary to the Human Services Commission

Date

Chairperson of the Human Services Commission

Date