

CITY OF BELLEVUE
HUMAN SERVICES COMMISSION
MINUTES

January 2, 2019
6:00 p.m.

Bellevue City Hall
City Council Conference Room 1E-120

COMMISSIONERS PRESENT: Chairperson Mercer, Commissioners Ma, McEachran, Oxrieder, Piper

COMMISSIONERS ABSENT: Commissioner Kline

STAFF PRESENT: Alex O'Reilly, Dee Dee Catalano, Christy Stangland, Kim Indukar, Blayne Amson, 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 was excused.

3. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

A. November 6, 2018

Commissioner Oxrieder noted that she was listed as present for the meeting even though she was absent.

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

B. November 20, 2018

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

4. ORAL AND WRITTEN COMMUNICATIONS – None
5. COMMUNICATIONS FROM CITY COUNCIL, COMMUNITY COUNCIL, BOARDS AND COMMISSIONS - None
6. STAFF AND COMMISSIONER REPORTS

Commissioner McEachran reported that after 36 years on the job as pastor he would resign his post on January 7 to become the regional pastor in residence for all East King County Lutheran churches.

Commissioner Piper provided the Commissioners with copies of an article that ran New Year's Eve in the *Seattle Times* about an Australian program designed to combat youth homelessness. He noted that the program has proved to be very successful in reducing the number of youth entering homelessness. A \$160,000 grant has been approved to study the feasibility of launching the program in Seattle.

7. ELECTION OF OFFICERS

A motion to open nominations for Commission chair was made by Commissioner McEachran. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Oxrieder and the motion carried unanimously.

Commissioner Piper nominated Chair Mercer to serve as chair. The nomination was seconded by Commissioner Ma.

There were no other nominations made.

A motion to close nominations for Commission chair was made by Commissioner Ma. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Piper and the motion carried unanimously.

The nomination of Chair Mercer to serve as Commission chair carried unanimously.

A motion to open nominations for Commission vice-chair was made by Commissioner Oxrieder. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Piper and the motion carried unanimously.

Commissioner McEachran nominated Commissioner Ma to serve as vice-chair. The nomination was seconded by Commissioner Piper.

There were no other nominations made.

A motion to close nominations for Commission vice-chair was made by Commissioner Piper. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Oxrieder and the motion carried unanimously.

The nomination of Commissioner Ma to serve as Commission vice-chair carried unanimously.

7. INFORMATION FOR THE COMMISSION

A. Programs and Services for People with Disabilities at the City of Bellevue

Ms. Kim Indurkar explained that the Choices Plan was created to ensure access and equity for Bellevue residents with disabilities. The program involves the provision of inclusion support for program access and breaking down physical barriers so parks and facilities can be utilized. The program is used as a tool for training staff as well. Adaptive recreation programs came about in the 70s when parents of children with intellectual disabilities came to the city with a plea for a place for their children to recreate. Space was provided and by the 80s the program was overwhelmingly popular. In the 90s additional adaptive recreation sites were established, and by the 2000s the focus shifted to inclusion services in addition to adaptive programs.

Ms. Indurkar said the first Choices Plan was completed in 2006 and was primarily focused on Highland Center, reaching out to persons with disabilities and offering adaptive recreation programs. The plan was updated in 2008 at which time new goals were added. In 2014 the Diversity Advantage Plan was written to include disabilities in the notion of diversity. The plan was more outreach oriented and included training for all city staff on how to provide services. The plan is clearly for persons with disabilities but it is also for parents and guardians; community recreation providers; recreation professionals; and elected officials and boards and commissions.

Development of the plan involved information gathering that included talking with user groups and service providers; researching best practices of other organizations; and adhering to all legal requirements, particularly those outlined in the Americans With Disabilities Act.

The first plan goal is to ensure that people with disabilities have access to facilities, city parks and programs. Several years ago, the city contracted with an organization that had expertise in access to facilities. The city's community centers and City Hall were all evaluated and from that a task list was created. Several items on the list were ticked off immediately, but the list also included planning for and accommodating annual maintenance closures and larger renovation plans.

Ms. Indurkar noted that currently there are four options being voted on related to the Crossroads playground, which is being partly redone. Staff met with the contractor to discuss equity and access issues, thus the four options on the table all are great and

will provide much better access to the playground. The next park to be addressed will be Ardmore and the same approach will be used there.

Expanding recreation choice opportunities is the second goal in the plan. Ms. Indurkar noted that people with disabilities wanting adaptive recreation options should not have to drive to Highland Center, they should be able to have them at their home community center. Accordingly, there is a focus on making sure there are options at all of the community centers and other recreation sites, and on making sure there are inclusion opportunities as well. The creation of skill-based programs is integral to the program and to accommodating all in the community who want to participate.

The third program goal is focused on improving the knowledge and awareness of Parks and Community Services staff toward serving residents with disabilities. Rather than being reactive, the approach is proactive. Training is provided to improve the ability of staff to work with persons that have disabilities and the training ranges from the inclusion of persons with service animals to the role of parks staff working in a park. Every employee has some responsibility in making sure the city is assuring equity and providing access for all.

The development and implementation of strategies that expand awareness and knowledge of program and service opportunities for residents with disabilities is the fourth goal in the plan. Ms. Indurkar said the city has a number of great programs, but people do not necessarily know that. To address that, improvements are being made to the website to make it easier for people to search for programs and services, and to request modifications. All of the written materials have been drafted to be welcoming and clear, though admittedly there is still work to be done in that area.

Ms. Indurkar said the fifth plan goal seeks to expand programming to better serve individuals with a variety of disabilities. She said the city offers many programs for youth and adults with intellectual disabilities as well as programs for those with physical disabilities. Even so, some residents have come forward saying the programs do not work for them for various reasons. To address those concerns, the city is partnering with organizations that serve veterans and with mental health organizations that serve individuals. The hope is that the exercise equipment at Highland Center will be expanded to better accommodate veterans with disabilities.

Chair Mercer asked how the city measures or tracks how well the partner organizations are doing all that the city wants them to do relative to inclusion and the like. Ms. Indurkar said historically the city has worked together on programming with partner organizations. The intent going forward is that that will continue as groups come in to run programs. Additionally, contractors providing services are informed up front what their specific responsibilities are, and indeed they are written into the contracts. They all must follow all applicable state and federal laws, including the ADA.

Ms. Indurkar said the adaptive recreation program continues to be a first choice for persons with disabilities. The programs help to build the skills needed to transition to an inclusive program, and it allows individuals to participate in activities with others of similar ability. It also provides an introductory choice for learning new recreation activities. The list of adaptive recreation sites includes Highland Community Center, Northwest Arts Center, the tennis center, the aquatic center, and Bellevue Youth Theatre. The Bellevue Youth Theatre has for many years offered a fully integrated program, and more recently a program focused on theater possibilities was started to include younger kids and those who have never before participated in a theater program.

Inclusion is the ultimate goal in that it provides for the greatest number of choices relative to recreation activities and experiences. Inclusion supports the full and active participation of individuals with disabilities in the same community activities offered to those without disabilities. Most importantly, inclusion develops community support and encourages attitudinal changes to reflect the right of all people to dignity, self respect and community involvement. Inclusion happens in three ways: independent participation; through requesting modification or accommodation; and through program staff requesting support to successfully provide a program to a customer, an approach that involves working with the parents of disabled individuals as part of the information gathering process.

Chair Mercer asked in what ways the Commission could partner with or advocate for the Choices Plan. Ms. Indurkar said the best thing the Commission could do would be to put the word out about what the equity and inclusion standards are, particularly to all organizations seeking funding from the city.

Ms. O'Reilly said several years ago Mark Manuel, former Diversity Outreach and Engagement Administrator for the city, put together an inclusivity training for all providers. The intention all along has been to also provide training to providers on working with people of disabilities, but the diversity staff's workload meant that was put on the back burner for a time. Now with Blayne Amson having come on board, the focus is once again turning in that direction.

Mr. Amson said the federal government requires all cities with populations of greater than 100,000 to designate an ADA coordinator. He explained that he now carries that title along with Title VI administrator.

Mr. Amson said most people are familiar with the ADA in terms of curb cuts, sidewalks, ramps and physical access in general. However, the ADA requirements stretch far beyond just those issues and covers the gamut of physical, intellectual, developmental and psychological issues. Even chemical sensitivities can fall under the ADA. The ADA is the broadest civil rights law in the world as it relates to persons with disabilities. It covers employment under Title I; public accommodation under Title II; governmental services under Title III; public transportation under Title IV; and telecommunications under Title V. The city of Bellevue has chosen to go above and

beyond the requirements of the ADA. As it relates to the letter of the law, however, disability and the ADA touches on absolutely every single city department and team.

Title VI of the Civil Rights Act addresses race, sex, national origin, language and other protected statuses. It too impacts every service the city provides, but it is less well known. With regard to language, there are specific rules dictating how the city puts out information. Information that is deemed essential must adhere to certain thresholds relative to the languages in which the information must be disseminated. As a minority majority city in which there are close to a hundred languages spoken, Bellevue knows it needs to do a better job when it comes to language access. Additionally, the state of Washington has established requirements, such as protecting gender identity and sexual orientation, something that is not required by the federal government.

Mr. Amson said at the core of what he does is compliance with all applicable regulations. He said he works to ensure that every program, service and facility in the city follows the letter of the law relative to the ADA and Title VI. He said his position is part of and housed within the Diversity Advantage Initiative. The diversity and inclusion administrator position is responsible for ensuring that the 60 recommendations are met as they relate to internal staff, and the ways in which boards and commissions function in terms of access and equity. The outreach and engagement administrator is responsible for doing the work out in the community. He said his position as it relates to people with disabilities and Title VI compliance involves working both internally and with the public through outreach and engagement. He informed the Commissioners that one of the things he recently rolled out is a training program that focuses on changing mindsets and hearts in order to create a world that is inviting and accessible to those with disabilities rather than looking at disability in terms of compliance. The need for reasonable accommodation under the disability justice model should not exist as every space is made inclusive and available to all.

The attention of the Commissioners was called to a pamphlet designed by Mr. Amson called *Universal Design for Accessible Meetings, Trainings and Events*. He explained that the brochure outlines a number of concrete things that can be done to be inclusive and accessible without having to provide a reasonable accommodation. He said the document has taken off and has given the staff an opportunity to engage in supporting people in the way they want to be supported. The training through human services, public safety, education, economic development, civic engagement and cultural competency touches on all aspects of the 60 recommendations. It also touches on aspects of the ADA, thus by being equitable, the city is being compliance, and by being compliance, the city is moving toward equity.

Commissioner McEachran commented that the three legs the city standards on are economic development, infrastructure and human services. He asked how each of those are impacted by ADA and Title VI. Mr. Amson said many of the 60 recommendations touch on things that relate to economic development, such as

people living in poverty. He said his work with the community and city staff is focused on improving the ability of people with disabilities to gain the advantages they need to do things like get a job, thus increasing their economic viability. Persons with disabilities make up roughly 20 percent of the population of the United States, just over 12 percent in the state of Washington, and just above eight percent in the city of Bellevue. That begs the question of why persons with disabilities are not living in Bellevue. The answer in most cases is that they cannot afford to. Whatever can be done to increase the economic ability of persons with disabilities in Bellevue should be done. That can be accomplished through the creation of affordable housing opportunities and job opportunities.

Mr. Amson said the Self-Evaluation and Transition Plan is required by the federal government. Every city must have one. It is largely a dry read and it must be more detailed for cities with more than 100,000 residents. The self-evaluation portion of the plan involves taking a close look at all programs, services and facilities and determining where each lies in terms of compliance with the ADA. The transition portion of the plan outlines what needs to be done to bring into compliance those areas that are not fully compliant. Development of the plan represented a huge undertaking on the part of the entire city and it is due to go before the Council on January 14. It was important to the city that feedback from people with disabilities be sought and incorporated into the document. To that end three different focus groups were held, one at Highland Community Center, one at North Bellevue Community Center and one at City Hall. In all, 29 persons attended and participated. Some unique barriers were encountered in getting folks to participate, but in the end their feedback was substantial and was incorporated into the plan where appropriate. Additionally, a very simple feedback form was made available at all of the community centers and in all places where the public engages with the city, and it was posted online. The number of responses was overwhelming.

Commissioner McEachran wanted to know if Mr. Amson had had any interaction with Bellevue College. Mr. Amson said he had not had any relating to the transition plan. He noted, however, that Bellevue College has a professor who teaches disability studies seated as a member of the Bellevue Diversity Advisory Network. He added that once the self-evaluation and transition plan work is put to bed he will be freer to more fully engage with many entities within the city and strengthening the relationships, including with Bellevue College.

Chair Mercer said the topic should be given attention when discussing the Needs Update, and during the process of formulating the application process for the next allocation cycle. Mr. Amson said he would need to better understand the role and function of the Commission before being able to fully engage. He pointed out that the application process for joining the Bellevue Diversity Advisory Network has involved writing an essay. The approach values intellectual prowess and precludes those with intellectual disabilities from being able to apply. He said he and the Network is committed to changing the way the diversity team recruits for positions.

Ms. O'Reilly said she would make the universal design booklets available to the Commissioners.

Commissioner Oxrieder asked how the different city departments have made adjustments based on what they have learned through the training. Mr. Amson said one example stands out. He said quite a few human resources personnel attended the first training session, one of whom went about the very next day moving things around in her office to make it accessible to someone in a wheelchair. It is those kinds of concrete things that send strong messages to the disabled community.

9. OLD BUSINESS

The Commission took a few minutes to thank Commissioner Perelman for her eight years on the Commission and provided her with a document acknowledging the same signed by Councilmembers.

Commissioner McEachran noted that Commissioner Perelman and former Commissioner Jan Stout taught him everything about human services and the funding cycle process. He thanked her for being there for him and for the Commission.

Chair Mercer said she could not believe she would have to go through the next funding cycle without the insights of Commissioner Perelman.

Commissioner Oxrieder commented that Commissioner Perelman served as a strong leader and played a very important role with the Commission.

Commissioner Perelman said she learned a lot about the community during her time on the Commission. She said it had been a fun journey and that she would miss being a part of the Commission. She added that she would be looking to serve on the board of some other organization.

Refreshments were served and a group photo was taken.

Following the break, Ms. O'Reilly said she and Human Services Planner Christy Stangland recently met with Yuriana Garcia Tellez, the city's new Diversity Outreach and Engagement Administrator. She said she would invite Ms. Garcia Tellez to visit with the Commission in the near future. Ms. Garcia Tellez is enthusiastic about offering more training for providers and collaborating in the outreach work behind updating the Needs Update.

Grant Coordinator Dee Dee Catalano commented that the government is shut down, including HUD. Until the agency is reopened and the budget is approved, the amount of the 2019 CDBG allocation will not be known. With the citizen participation for the 2019 annual action plan completed, planning for 2019 can get under way, but it is

anyone's guess when the CDBG allocation will actually be released and how much it will be.

Ms. Stangland informed the Commissioners that the first Commission meeting in February would include a panel discussion around emergency financial assistance. She commented that many agencies offer emergency financial assistance, and suggested inviting only representatives from the agencies funded by the city, which is Solid Ground, Hopelink, Salvation Army, LifeWire and Catholic Community Services.

Commissioner Ma said Solid Ground and Hopelink were his first choices. Chair Mercer agreed.

Commissioner McEachran said he would like to hear from the agencies that have the most effective practices.

Chair Mercer said it would be good to have representatives from each of the funded agencies present, even if only two or three of them make presentations. Ms. Stangland said she could easily invite all to attend.

Commissioner Ma pointed out that Salvation Army does all of its fundraising internally and has a more flexible way of spending the funds. It would be helpful to have someone on the panel that has a different approach to allocating funds.

Chair Mercer said she would lean toward Lifewire given that they focus on a different population.

Commissioner Oxrieder said she would welcome having each of the agencies make presentations, provided they provide specific data ahead of time and focus on answering just a few questions. Ms. Stangland pointed out that including the agencies that are not funded by the city, that could mean a panel with 12 presenters. She said the agencies could all be asked to provide a brief summary of their programs.

Chair Mercer said the better approach might be to ask the agency representatives to come just to answer specific questions from the Commissioners rather than to make presentations about their programs.

Commissioner McEachran said he would prefer to have only three representatives outline their effective practices, and to have all of the other agencies asked to send representatives to be present and hear the common narrative. That would allow them the opportunity to talk with each other after the meeting as well.

Ms. O'Reilly said the panel discussion will be the only agenda item for that meeting. She allowed that each speaker could be limited by using the timer.

Commissioner Ma agreed but suggested that even if only three or four are seated on the panel, all who attend should be given the opportunity to introduce themselves. Ms. Stangland said one option would be to have the organizations offer comments during oral and written communications, which is time limited.

Commissioner Oxrieder said she would like specific data shared with the Commission about how many people seek emergency financial assistance, and how many of them come to the agency having exhausted their options elsewhere. She said she also would like to know how far the funds given to clients go, what the ultimate impact is, and how the agencies coordinate with each other.

Chair Mercer agreed, noting that some programs set limits, including on what the funds can be used for. She said she would like to know how the agencies track the outcomes, including how many clients come with a request multiple times to multiple agencies. It would also be good to hear the agency's perspectives on diversity.

Ms. O'Reilly allowed that if needed, two meetings could be devoted to addressing the issues.

Chair Mercer said what the Commission really needs is a solid understanding of how the system works so it can do the best job possible of funneling funds to where it will do the most good. Ms. O'Reilly suggested one way to do that would be to make that point clear ahead of time to all of the agencies, and then asking them to identify two spokespersons to specifically address the issues. By having all of the agencies represented, they could all add their comments as appropriate.

Commissioner Ma voiced support for taking that approach in light of the fact that the goal of the Commission is to see the agencies collaborating with each other to address the need in the community in the most efficient way possible. Ms. Stangland said one of the challenges could lie in the fact that the agency people who collaborate with other agencies on the front line staff, and those are not necessarily the ones who would come in and present to the Commission.

Commissioner Oxrieder proposed sending to each agency a list of two or three questions for which the Commission wants short answers as a starting point, and then having the representatives meet in small groups to talk about their answers and the issues. Ms. O'Reilly suggested that approach could take quite a lot of time. She agreed that it would be helpful for the agencies to meet together to discuss the issues, but that could be done outside of a Commission meeting.

Commissioner Oxrieder said it would be interesting to tell the agencies that the Commission will have X dollars to spend on emergency financial assistance in 2019 and ask them to indicate how they would allocate it among themselves. Chair Mercer said that approach could yield some very interesting information.

Commissioner Ma stressed the need to move beyond simply asking the agencies how the system works. He said he would like to know how effective the programs are in terms of addressing the need in the community, and whether the best approach will be to continue funding the distinct programs, or consolidating or merging them.

Chair Mercer stressed that those who are invited know up front that the Commission wants to see a collaborative discussion among the funded and not funded program representatives. They should know the discussion is not intended to decide who to fund during the next funding cycle, rather it will serve as an informative session regarding the emergency financial assistance issue.

Ms. O'Reilly agreed that the model will be good for the Commission to try out. She said there are other service areas the Commission may want to focus on using the format in determining how the overall system can be made to work more effectively.

Chair Mercer suggested the discussion might be beneficial for other area human services boards and commissions. Ms. O'Reilly said an effort could be made to invite them to attend.

Chair Mercer said her preference for the meeting format was for the agency representatives to make their presentations first and to follow that up with questions from the Commissioners.

10. NEW BUSINESS

Chair Mercer announced that she would not be able to attend the Commission meeting on January 15, but noted that she would be able to participate electronically.

A motion to allow Chair Mercer to participate in the January 15 electronically was made by Commissioner McEachran. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Piper and the motion carried unanimously.

11. CONTINUED ORAL COMMUNICATIONS – None

12. ADJOURNMENT

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

Chair Mercer adjourned the meeting at 8:07 p.m.

Alexandra O'Reilly
Secretary to the Human Services Commission

2-20-19
Date

Judith A. Mercer
Chairperson of the Human Services Commission

2/20/19
Date