

CITY OF BELLEVUE
HUMAN SERVICES COMMISSION
MINUTES

September 4, 2019
6:00 p.m.

Bellevue City Hall
City Council Conference Room 1E-120

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

COMMISSIONERS ABSENT: None

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

GUEST SPEAKERS: Alisa Chatinsky, Dietra Clayton, Sophia Way; Alaina Emde, Sound Generations; Kymberly Poetter, King County Housing Authority; Cynthia Zappone, Priscilla Castro, Home Repair Program;

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.

3. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

A. July 2, 2019

A motion to approve both sets of minutes as submitted was made by Commissioner Piper. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Kline and the motion carried unanimously.

B. July 16, 2019

A motion to approve both sets of minutes as submitted was made by Commissioner Piper. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Kline 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 Ma reported that he volunteered at the annual Chinese Information and Service Center service day event held at the North Bellevue Community Center.

Human Services Manager Alex O'Reilly noted that a press release had been sent out regarding the potential opening of the men's shelter operated by Congregations for the Homeless. What is being called a bridge shelter will be located at the old Congregational Church in the downtown, which remains vacant pending redevelopment of the site. Work on the Lincoln Center shelter is ongoing and will result in that shelter being open year round. The hope is it will be open in November. The city pulled together over \$500,000 to operate the shelter fulltime ahead of the next funding cycle.

7. DISCUSSION

A. Sophia Way Update

Alisa Chatinsky, Sophia Way Interim Director, thanked the Commission for its support of the organization. She said she has served as Interim Director since March and noted that she had initiated some changes to strengthen the finances and programs of the agency. All hands have been on deck working to improve services for women experiencing homelessness. She noted that former co-director Dietra Clayton has been made Director of Client Services, a move that has eliminated the siloing of programs. The women's winter shelter has in the past moved from church to church. Funding from Symetra enabled keeping the shelter open year round, but space became a problem. St. Peter's United Methodist Church offered space and the city of Bellevue worked rapidly to issue the necessary permits, allowing the new shelter location to open on August 20. The shelter program will remain at St. Peter's until mid-October and will then move to Lakeside Christian Church in Kirkland. A permanent shelter facility is being built in partnership with Catholic Community Services. It will have ten rooms large enough to accommodate families of six, and a space large enough to accommodate 50 women. The day center will be moved to the new facility as well, turning the operation into a 24/7/365 shelter. While in the past the women have had to line up and enter by a side door, they will now be welcomed through the front door. The women are sleeping on mats on the floor which are set out by staff for the clients.

Ms. Clayton added that new information is being gathered through the Homeless Information Management System (HIMS). King County wants to have client data to facilitate referrals and so forth. She said a number of best practices are being

implemented, including trauma-informed care, which involves making sure the environment is not only safe but collaborative. The approach, along with the application of other technical skills, has meant that at Sophia Place there have been no behavioral exits. Clients have come to the shelter from the emergency center with high acuity, usually from one or two disabilities. By changing the best practices and teaching the staff about trauma-informed care and emotional intelligence, it has been possible to stabilize clients. That has led to an increase in people getting housed to 68 percent, up from last year's 50 percent level. The goal is to have all staff at the emergency center meet the clients where they are at. Trauma-informed care centers on safety, collaboration, trustworthiness and empowerment.

Commissioner Kline asked what steps are being taken to put in place a permanent director. Ms. Chatinsky said a job description is being drafted and the organization is working with an agency to conduct a candidate search. It is hoped the position will be filled by early in 2020.

Commissioner Jain asked if Sophia Way takes donations. Ms. Clayton said donations are accepted. She provided the Commissioners with copies of pamphlets about the organization that can be handed out to homeless women. She also invited the Commissioners to attend the upcoming fundraising luncheon and shared with them copies of the organization's wish list.

Ms. Chatinsky said Sophia Way is funded by the city, King County and private donations. About 38 percent of all funding comes from government, 31 percent from individuals, and 12 percent from corporations and foundations. New sources of funding are always being sought.

Chair Mercer noted that during the last funding cycle the Commission provided additional funding for an Outreach Coordinator. Ms. Clayton said the Vehicle Outreach person has housed five or six persons, and the Outreach Navigator has housed about four people and has helped six or seven people find employment. The outreach staff also focus on follow-up and stability plans by way of case management.

Commissioner Jain asked if women with children are served by Sophia Way. Ms. Clayton said women with children do come into the day center to eat, but the services provided by the agency are for single adult women. Mary's Place serves women with children.

8. DISCUSSION

A. City of Bellevue Home Repair Program Update

Sam Ezadean said the city's Home Repair Program started in 1986 and over the years has supported many citizens who otherwise would not have the means to maintain their homes. The program is divided into three categories: moderate

income, low income and very low income. Each year the Department of Housing and Urban Development publishes the income guidelines that are used to determine the category into which clients fall. Clients in the very low income category have annual incomes of less than \$23,250 and they are eligible for grants to make emergency repairs instead of loans that must be paid back. Clients in the low income category have incomes of between \$23,250 and \$38,750. The majority of the clients, about 95 percent, fall into that range. Less than four percent are in the moderate income category having incomes greater than \$38,750.

Mr. Ezadean said in order to be eligible, clients must meet the income guidelines. Once an application is received, it is reviewed to be sure all pertinent financial information is included. Once client income is verified and loans are approved by the city, a site visit is made to verify the needed repairs. The actual repair work is done by qualified contractors who are managed by the King County Housing Authority. When the work is done, a final inspection is made before paying the contractor.

The list of eligible home repairs include roof repairs, plumbing, electrical work that includes heating, driveways, and any health and safety related repairs such as mold removal. In about 80 percent of the cases, the repairs involve roof repairs. That is followed by driveway repairs, water heaters and furnaces. Insulation and window replacement are also eligible repairs.

Chair Mercer asked if jobs like adding accessibility ramps and remodeling bathrooms to accommodate someone with a disability are eligible. Mr. Ezadean allowed that accessibility repairs are made for clients who are disabled. Ramps and the like are addressed through grants rather than loans where the client qualifies for a grant, but loans are not given for them as the cost of adding them is relatively small and it does not make sense to impose a lien on the property in those amounts.

Mr. Ezadean shared with the Commissioners a map showing the location of repair work done since the program started. He noted that between 30 and 35 homes are addressed each year. He also showed the Commissioners photos of some typical repairs. The loans are secured by placing a lien against the property. When a home is sold, the loan must be repaid, at which time the funds flow back into the program. To date in 2019, about \$170,000 in loan paybacks have been received.

Clients in the low income category are eligible to receive the full amount for the cost of the necessary repair work. If a given roof repair will cost \$10,000, they can receive the full \$10,000 at no interest, payable upon sale of the house. Those in the moderate income category, with incomes above \$38,750 up to \$200,000, are eligible for leveraged loans. Such clients must contribute 50 percent of the total project cost, so where a roof repair will cost \$10,000, they must contribute \$5000. Only one or two such repairs are made annually. Clients with incomes below \$23,000 annually qualify for emergency grants that do not have to be paid back. Weatherization grants are subsidized by the King County Housing Authority for work costing up to \$12,000.

Mr. Ezadean introduced Pricilla Castro and Cynthia Zappone, both of whom participated as clients in the Home Repair Program.

Ms. Castro said she has lived in her Bellevue home for 34 years. She said the house has many things in need of repair and noted that she first heard about the program in 2007 when she faced a need to upgrade the plumbing in the house. Since then loans have been received through the program to install new gutters, to replace the water heater, to make electrical upgrades, and to make roof repairs.

Mr. Ezadean noted that the maximum a client can receive through the program is \$50,000. So long as clients have not met that threshold, they can come seeking to have additional repair work done.

Ms. Zappone said she unwittingly purchased her home in Bellevue that required a lot of work. She said she lost both her water heater and her furnace during a storm. The repairs were effected through the program, along with a new roof. She said her experience with the program has been very positive and stressed how available both Mr. Ezadean and Ms. Poetter are.

Mr. Ezadean confirmed for Commissioner Kline that the home repair loans often are in second position behind a first mortgage on the house. He said in the situation where a homeowner passes away and there are children who inherit it, the transfer of the title triggers the requirement to repay the loan, unless they also qualify to maintain the loan. It has never been necessary to go into any type of collection process.

Chair Mercer asked about the capacity of the program and whether or not increased funding could be used to do more projects each year. Mr. Ezadean said there was a time when people were placed on a waiting list because the demand was greater than the available funding. Currently there is no waiting list. Human Services Planner Christy Stangland added that in making application for CDBG funding careful attention is paid to the previous year's program capacity, the amount of money that came in through loan paybacks, and whether or not there was an increase in the number of requests. It is always difficult to predict just what the need will be.

Grant Coordinator Dee Dee Catalano said part of the issue is how quickly contractors can be hired and how quickly projects can be completed. Ms. Poetter concurred. She said a lot of roofing projects are done by the solid core of competitive roofing companies that can do the jobs very quickly. For projects that are less than routine, finding the right contractor can slow down the process considerably.

Mr. Ezadean added that one challenge for the program is finding contractors who are willing to do small jobs. The requirements placed on contractors both by HUD and the King County Housing Authority relative to bonding, licensing and insurance also present challenges.

Ms. O'Reilly pointed out that the program is marketed through flyers at community centers, libraries and targeted mailings. The program is also highlighted in publications like *It's Your City* and at community events. She added that similar home repair programs offered by cities around the country generally charge interest on their loans. Bellevue has chosen not to take that approach, and HUD does not require the practice.

9. DISCUSSION

A. Sound Generations Minor Home Repair Program

Ms. Catalano stated that the Minor Home Repair Program addresses maintenance projects which, under the HUD requirements, are different from repair projects and do not require an extensive environmental review. The program has been funded by Bellevue with CDBG funds for many years.

Alaina Emde with Sound Generations said the Minor Home Repair Program has a director, three office staff and a team of technicians which is made up of one plumber, one electrician, two plumbing apprentices and one carpenter. There were roughly 40 Bellevue households served in 2018 with about 100 tasks. The program is offered through contracts with the cities of Bellevue, Shoreline and Seattle. There is a service maximum of \$5000 over three years. There are no loans and no payments, all of the work is done by donation. In order to qualify, clients must be low income, own their own homes and live in them. A suggested donation of \$10 per hour for labor is requested from the homeowner. Clients are also asked to donate toward the cost of materials used.

Ms. Emde said Sound Generations began working with Bellevue on the Minor Home Repair Program in 2003. On average, 30 to 40 Bellevue households are served annually. The typical Bellevue client is a woman over the age of 65 who lives alone and has an income of 30 percent of area median income or less. The repairs done range from replacing plumbing fixtures to replacing doors and/or locks, minor electrical work, and accessibility ramps and grab bars. The program also covers replacing water heaters, but not any repairs that involve opening a wall, getting up onto a roof or into a crawl space. Projects that cannot be completed in half a day are probably too large for the program.

Where there are complicated requirements associated with the Major Home Repair Program, the application process for the Minor Home Repair Program is much easier to complete. The application is a single page that includes income amount and supporting documentation. Clients must show that they own their homes and occupy them. If needed, program staff will travel to the clients' homes to help them work through the application and the supporting documentation. Clients are informed that the program is not an emergency service, rather it is aimed at helping make repairs before things get out of hand.

Noting that it often takes two weeks for a repair to be made after an application has been completed, Commissioner Piper asked if there is a way homeowners could preemptively register with the program so that where there is an emergency they could get quicker service. Ms. Emde explained that clients who become certified remain certified for three calendar years. Some people use the service once and never again, while others find something to call in about on almost a monthly basis. The repair technicians will not, however, drop everything to respond to an emergency call, though every attempt is left to leave gaps in the schedule to allow for responding more quickly to high priority calls.

Commissioner Jain asked if the list of allowed repairs includes appliances. Ms. Emde said the program does not include appliances under the HUD guidelines, except for maintaining connections to existing appliances, things like vacuuming out a dryer vent or reconnecting a water supply line to a dishwasher. Calls received regarding appliances are referred to a specialist. The program also does not include yard work.

Ms. O'Reilly pointed out that there is a lot of cross referral between the Major and Minor Home Repair Programs.

10. DISCUSSION

A. 2020 CDBG Contingency Plan

Ms. Catalano reviewed the changes made to the draft contingency plan as directed by the Commission on July 16. She said the contingency plan allows for making revisions to the submitted Annual Action Plan provided they are in line with the outlined scenarios without having to conduct another public process.

Commissioner Kline asked if Ventures Microenterprise was contacted to see if they could in fact offer another class should there be an additional \$25,000 received. Ms. Catalano said she did not, but pointed out that the organization would have the option of declining.

Noting that the contingency plan specifically allows amending the contract with the King County Housing Authority Major Home Repair Program to increase funding if necessary to assure compliance with HUD timeliness requirements, Commissioner Kline asked what scenario would trigger that action. Ms. Catalano said one scenario would be if the program had the capacity to quickly spend more money beyond its initial allotment, and if the city needed to spend down funds in order to meet the timeliness requirements. Commissioner Kline suggested it was not clear in the contingency plan that the timeliness requirements apply to the city and not to the Major Home Repair Program. Ms. Catalano agreed to revise the last sentence of the contingency plan to read "...to ensure the City of Bellevue's compliance with HUD timeliness requirements."

A motion to approve the 2020 CDBG contingency plan as amended was made by Commissioner Kline. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Piper and the motion carried unanimously.

11. OLD BUSINESS

Ms. Catalano reported that the city is within \$12,000 spending of meeting its HUD timeliness requirements. The draw down must occur by November 1 and will certainly be accomplished before that date.

Ms. Catalano also reported that HUD would be monitoring the city beginning September 23. They will be checking the different activities from 2018 for eligibility and meeting the national objectives. They will also check the housing repair administration and review the financial administration activities. She said she would report the results to the Commission in October.

Ms. O'Reilly reminded the Commissioners that the meeting on September 17 would be a joint commissions meeting. A committee of human services staff is working on the agenda. She noted that at the last joint commission meeting the group indicated a desire to be more proactive in reducing barriers to the smaller agencies in the communities. To that end, the group will be provided with an overview of what has been done to address some of those questions.

Commissioner Kline suggested the group could benefit from having an update regarding the Coordinated Entry System. Ms. Stangland pointed out that the system is currently undergoing a lot of change. She said she serves on the Coordinated Entry Assessment Policy Advisory Council. The vulnerability assessment tool implemented three or four years ago was reviewed and it was found to have a significant racial disparity. Persons of color are disproportionately represented in the homelessness system, but that is not showing up in process. Accordingly, consideration is being given to applying a more equitable lens. One approach might be to have different assessment tools for each population group instead of one tool to fit everyone from homeless youth to single adults with families. For single adults they have begun using an assessment tool that is more trauma informed and which improves outcomes for people of color. They would love to have a list by name with everyone on the list connected with a provider. Currently they only look at those who are deemed to be the most vulnerable. There is still a lot of work to be done.

Ms. O'Reilly said the county had a huge list of people who had been or were on a list to be assessed for housing. The decision was made to assess people in a short-form way and provide them with funds to divert them away from homelessness and the approach has worked to reduce the queue. It is not known if those provided with diversion funds ultimately make their way back into the queue.

Commissioner Kline said she recently heard a radio report about the city of Seattle having its FEMA funding for homelessness eliminated because of their low

unemployment rate. She said it was her understanding the funds were flowing through United Way and she asked if the Eastside will also be impacted. Ms. O'Reilly said FEMA funds are often distributed through United Way. She said she did not know if Eastside funding would be impacted.

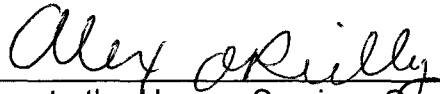
12. NEW BUSINESS

Commissioner Jain asked if a tour of Sophia Way could be arranged, particularly for the new Commissioners. Ms. Stangland said staff could arrange for that along with a tour of Friends of Youth.

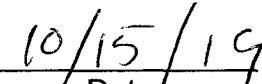
13. CONTINUED ORAL COMMUNICATIONS – None

14. ADJOURNMENT

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



Secretary to the Human Services Commission



Date



Chairperson of the Human Services Commission



Date