

**Bainbridge Island Health, Housing and Human Services Council
2002 Human Services Needs Assessment
Interview Summary
March 10, 2003**

The following is based on interviews with five City Council members (Lois Curtis, Christine Nasser, Deborah Vann, Norm Wooldridge and Bill Knobloch) and Mayor Kordonowy. Telephone interviews were conducted between February 6 and March 7, 2003. Interview questions are at the end of this document.

Were Perceptions of need as expected?

The findings on areas of need were generally consistent with the Council members understanding of the needs on the Island. There was confidence expressed in HHHS's role in providing support for human services needs and a feeling that services are quite well organized. Many expressed that HHHS is best suited within the community to identify the human services needs of the Island.

A couple of points to note are:

A belief that the amount of need does not change over time but the specific needs might change. This was accompanied by a belief that the overall need may stay at a higher amount than most people recognize on the island. "We need to look at the whole range of needs as a group and think strategically about how to address them."

Surprise was expressed that low income housing wasn't on the list, with a reference to the Serenity House project and the housing it provides for seniors.

Also noted was a feeling that there are poverty issues that most islanders aren't aware of - and a concern that the changing affordability of living on the island will price out a segment of the current population and exclude future residents of lesser means - to the detriment of the diversity of the island.

Compared to Other Major Priorities

All felt there is a legitimate responsibility for City support of human services needs. The volunteer services that help fill the financing gap were noted by several as an important element in meeting the need. Several noted that the efforts to educate the Council to the needs by HHHS have been very successful and as a result, HHHS has risen tremendously when it comes to budget time and allocation of priorities.

Some statements were "Taking care of basic human welfare is a top priority of government", "They should be a higher priority then we currently make them" and "The ability of this government to assist HHHS to meet the needs has been a priority" to "It ranks up high with other priorities but there are many other needs with which we need to balance - we can't do this one to the exclusion of others".

How to Educate the Community

A point identified by several Council members and more carefully articulated by those closest to the change in City government is viewed as a critical point for HHHS to consider in their future plans. A fundamental change in the way City Council

approaches the budget process and much of its work is taking affect this year. The budget development will begin in April with an interest in more fully identifying and developing responses to needs and issues, so that the adopted budget for the following year will have the benefit of careful, thoughtful development. The Council has formulated a work plan for all issues and is trying to have a lot of the work done at a committee level. The City Council is developing a community outreach program through the Community Relations Committee. The Community Relations Committee is also where HHHS would go to work with the Council. "Being sure that HHHS understands the new budget process and participates and therefore gets its fair share is essential."

Most mentioned many of the existing methods of educating the community such as newspapers, Bainbridge Island Broadcasting, Interfaith Council, the City's Newsletter, and the "Community Connections for Youth" Newsletter.

Several mentioned using individual stories, pilot programs or special needs stories as a means of engaging the audience. They did not see general information about needs as engaging people in the problem or solution.

One Council member mentioned that they are planning to do short TV spots in the near future that would be shown amid other programming of City Council meetings (i.e. "All About BYB") and suggested it would be a possibility for HHHS to highlight a special program or need. Another member suggested a HHHS round table live that would talk about the organization's identified strategy and programs. It was mentioned that many even long time islanders have only a general sense of what HHHS does and that the role is an important one for people to understand. (Council member Knobloch also mentioned that he was the City Council liaison with BIB and that there is a desire to keep the community aware of issues through BIB coverage).

Another recommendation was "To somehow begin to measure how the needs change over the years – both overall and specific needs so the best way to educate the community is to show that the needs have always been part of this community and could possibly always be part of the community."

A final note on education, one Council member suggested providing to the full community what has been done for them which is "explaining the need of preserving the character and quality of the island and giving back to our community while keeping our money at home and using it to meet our needs."

City's Role in Human Service Needs and Other Important Partners

Members generally felt that the current relationship between HHHS and the City in meeting human service needs was successful. "City government should be a partner financially but it is more effective if non profits run the programs." Another point that was made was that "the mechanics that identify the relationships between City, City Council and HHHS have been established organizationally, monetarily and through the Comprehensive plan. Some of the other key players are the other departments and other organizations that serve the City – the Planning Commission, the non-motorized transportation plan – there is a link there that we have not fully explored. Non-motorized will play a role in health and well being – moving people from place to place so that they aren't isolated. What I see is a broader connectedness – but how do we build the awareness about the opportunities to improve health and well-being through the other activities that the City undertakes?"

Several mentioned the importance of the relationship with other programs that can supplement the funding need. Helpline, Bainbridge Youth Services, the Interfaith Council and the schools were all viewed as partners. In addition, the programs through the Parks District and its extensive programming, Bainbridge Performing Arts, along with State and Federal government were mentioned.

What Is the Best Way to Work with the Council

Several noted the importance of the Mayor as a key player suggesting "it is her priority – getting her actively involved in working towards that goal is essential" and that the Mayor "has the civic conduit to access the rest of the City government"

All interviewees noted the interest in hearing about specific proposed programs, facilities and needs over general information. They wanted specific requests with likely costs both short and long term.

One Council member said that the current Council does not like to use the full Council meetings for briefings but prefer the time to be devoted to policy discussions (they also noted that this will likely change with future elections – but it is the preference of the current members).

Approaching the Council through Committee was mentioned by most (and also noted that HHHS has successfully done that). Through quarterly briefings to the Community Relations Committee, information will then be communicated to the other committees. The pre budget meeting is an important one.

"One tool is the budget process and that seems to work well from the City's point of view. I've been impressed by how the City Council manages that process with the organizations. There are two points of entry for the human services to be engaged in the goal setting and setting objectives for the coming year- from the Council to the City and as HHHS Council develops its yearly work plan".

Inviting the Mayor and key Council Members to HHHS's planning retreats was suggested as an ideal way to engage them in an understanding of the program needs, work plan and goals. "Once we've set objectives, work plan and goals – then we should be able to identify tasks and find the responsible party within the City that the Council can go to who can take a role in meeting the need."

The Council is now starting its budget development process earlier in the year – around April. It will be important to identify new programs for identified needs early and submit them to the Community Relations Committee so they can be part of the consideration during the budget development process. "The Council doesn't like surprises".

What works best - "active, lobbied on a constant basis, having specific programs and ideas, being organized about it. That kind of approach works best – coming with specific proposals".

There is also an interest from the Mayor's perspective in having a better connection between HHHS and the City staff. Regular check ins with the Mayor and staff were desired. Mentioned were briefings of City department heads and management staff - for example land use and police - to invite City players and increase their knowledge

and interaction and pursue opportunities for City staff to help in policy development. "Will take advocates within the City and will require some good "staff work" on the part of the HHHS Council to make that happen. To identify the City staff and the tasks that they could take on – now it needs to permeate the City structure."

Interview Questions

Introduction: The results that have been shared with you up to this point are preliminary. We are conducting these interviews with City Council members because we want your input and ideas to be part of the final needs assessment report.

First, a few questions about human service needs on BI:

1. What is your perception of human service needs on the Island?
2. As you may recall, the needs assessment has identified service gaps in 6 areas (Affordable assisted living for seniors, Affordable medical and dental care, Affordable housing options, Drug abuse among youths, Child care for special needs children, Adult day care). Do these findings surprise you? Are the gaps different from what you thought might be identified?
3. How do human service needs compare with other major community priorities?

Next, a couple of questions about how to use the needs assessment information:

4. One of the purposes of the needs assessment is to increase Islanders' awareness of human services needs in our community. Do you have any suggestions for the process that should be used to educate -community members about these needs (Would you be interested in being part of the process?)
5. Another purpose of the needs assessment is to begin to develop strategies for meeting these needs. What do you see as the City's role in meeting the Island's human service needs? Who do you view as other key players (public agencies, schools, organizations, other) in meeting the Islands' human service needs?

Finally, a couple of questions about continued engagement of Council/Mayor:

6. Some of the strategies for meeting human service needs may involve City policy changes as well as changes in the delivery of human services. What is the best way to engage the City in these discussions? What role can the Council or Mayor play in moving these discussions forward?
7. In order for you to play this role, what kind of additional information or other support do you need? (What sort of timeframe would work for you?)