

**CITY OF BELLEVUE
ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES COMMISSION
MEETING MINUTES**

Thursday
October 5, 2023

City Hall & Remote
6:30 p.m.

1. CALL TO ORDER:

The meeting was called to order by Vice Chair Wan at 6:30 p.m.

ROLL CALL

COMMISSIONERS PRESENT: Ken Wan (Vice Chair), Andy Dupertuis, Gabby Lacson, Kurt Lutterman

COMMISSIONER ATTENDING REMOTELY: Michael Margolis

COMMISSIONERS ABSENT: Vanja Knezevic (Chair) (excused), Ann Hajnosz (absent)

COUNCIL LIAISON: Conrad Lee

OTHERS PRESENT: Lucy Liu, Director; Joe Harbour, Deputy Director, Cheri Brignon, Senior Administrative Assistant; Jon Gire, Solid Waste Program Manager, Michaelene Fowler, Public Information Officer (PIO), and Laurie Hugdahl, Minutes Taker

2. APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA

Motion made by Commissioner Lutterman, seconded by Commissioner Lacson, to approve the agenda. The agenda was approved unanimously.

3. ORAL AND WRITTEN COMMUNICATION

Alex Tsimerman, 14150 NE 20th Street, Bellevue, referred to item 8, Utilities Communications Strategy and Workplan. He wondered why they don't give a discount to senior citizens and disabled residents. He thinks the discount should be 50%.

4. COMMUNICATION FROM CITY COUNCIL, COMMUNITY COUNCIL, BOARDS AND COMMISSIONS

Councilmember Lee noted that Vice Chair Wan spoke to City Council to present the ESC's recommendation related to the Emergency Water Supply Master Plan on behalf of the staff. The City Council complimented the great work they have done. He also noted there has been a smooth transition with the change in leadership to Lucy Liu as Director and Joe Harbour as Deputy Director. It is great to have a full commission now that there are four new commissioners. He thanked everyone for their service.

5. STAFF REPORTS

Deputy Director Harbour echoed Councilmember Lee. The Emergency Water Supply Master Plan went to Council on September 18 with Vice Chair Wan making the recommendation to the City Council on behalf of the Commission. It was a very good presentation. Thanks to the Commission for their work.

He explained that they are in a voluntary stage of water curtailment and noted that until the fall rains return the City will curtail use. Thanks to PIO Michaelene Fowler for all the work she has been doing to get the message out.

Commissioner Dupertuis said it looks like they are still several billion gallons lower this year than last year. He referred to the top ways to reduce water use listed on the website. If everyone does all those things, what difference will it make? Deputy Director Harbour explained it would help but acknowledged it would be a very small impact.

Commissioner Dupertuis asked what other things they can do. Deputy Director Harbour mentioned things individuals can do such as: stopping watering lawns; turning off water fountains and decorative water features; delaying car washing or using a car wash that recycles water; delaying non-essential pressure washing; and delaying filling pools and hot tubs. Commissioner Dupertuis asked about commercial customers. Deputy Director Harbour said they are doing similar things. A restaurant might not put water automatically on the table, limit washing vehicles, limit pressure washing, etc. The City is encouraging businesses to do things similar to what the City is doing. At this point it is still voluntary and every little bit helps until the fall rains come. Commissioner Dupertuis wondered if they need to consider infrastructure improvements to be able to store more water.

Commissioner Lutterman commented that as a commercial customer he received communication from the City about ways to minimize his business's water use.

6. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

A) September 7, 2023 Minutes

Motion made by Commissioner Lutterman, seconded by Commissioner Lacson, to approve the 9/7/23 minutes as presented. Upon a roll call vote, the motion passed unanimously.

7. UNFINISHED BUSINESS

None

8. NEW BUSINESS

a) Utilities Communication Strategy and Workplan

Michaelene Fowler, Public Information Officer

Public Information Officer Michaelene Fowler discussed her role in the City. She reviewed the communication strategy, areas of focus, communications priorities, and how they measure effectiveness. She explained one priority is making sure that communications are accessible to many languages that make up the population of Bellevue. They communicate information about projects, emergency and urgent communications, social media awareness campaigns, and community events. She reviewed locations where they communicate. The main place is on the City of Bellevue website. From there it is shared to social media, on the customer newsletter, neighborhood newsletter, news releases, emails, and community signs and flyers. Areas of focus are guiding the communications planning process; supporting communication needs for department divisions; reaching and engaging the public; managing the look, feel, and accessibility of communications; and delivering emergency and urgent communications.

Communications priorities are to develop communications strategic plans; create opportunities for effective participation and collaboration; provide open and timely communications; reinforce brand identity; ensure a well-informed staff; and provide measurements of progress and success. She reviewed how they measure engagement and effectiveness and use that information to refine future plans.

Comments/Questions:

Commissioner Lacson asked about the hours that the translation services are available. Ms. Fowler explained that is tied to the Service First desk so it is available during Service First hours. Commissioner Lacson asked if they are able to see if the people who take the polls and surveys are the same people. Ms. Fowler replied that they can see who is taking the surveys and who is a unique visitor to the platform. Commissioner Lacson asked if the videos have impacted staff time and resources. Ms. Fowler replied that the cost is less and staff time is less.

Commissioner Margolis referred to metrics and asked how they can measure engagement, understanding, and awareness and also which channels are most effective. Ms. Fowler said they find that email is the most effective right now because they get quite a good response from that. They use Hootsuite to measure engagement, reach, awareness, and sentiment. Commissioner Margolis asked if there is a way to poll the overall community for general awareness and understanding. Ms. Fowler said they are looking at demographics based off the channels where they are communicating. For general reach and awareness, they look at how many people are showing up, how many people are taking surveys, and how they heard about it. Commissioner Margolis thought it would be interesting to look into ways to assess which channels are the most effective at driving the metrics of engagement and understanding. Ms. Fowler agreed and said they would also like to go deeper into demographics for each channel.

Vice Chair Wan asked how Bellevue residents can learn about all the ways to communicate with the City. Ms. Fowler commented that she would include an article in the customer newsletter to all residents and businesses about the City communication channels.

b) Solid Waste Annual Performance Report

Jon Gire, Solid Waste Program Manager

Kaylie Wallin, Sustainability Ambassador from Republic Services

Solid Waste Program Manager Jon Gire shared results of the annual customer survey. He reviewed background, survey results (customer satisfaction and customer awareness) and next steps. Customer satisfaction areas surveyed included overall satisfaction, collection crew, customer service – telephone courtesy, response time following request for a new container, and response time following a missed collection. Most areas were at or above the minimum satisfaction levels (80%). “Response time following a missed collection” was low with both single-family and multifamily customers as it has been for nine straight years.

Commissioner Margolis requested a copy of the survey questions.

The survey showed that the preferred information source was the website (RepublicBellevue.com). Also mentioned as valuable were information guides and posters available to multifamily customers.

Regarding customer awareness, single-family customers were familiar with their pick-up day but less familiar with special pick-ups and recycling hazardous waste. About 50% of customers were aware of Republic’s drop-off center. Multi-family/commercial customers are familiar with recycling services and less familiar with compost services.

Staff will be collaborating with Republic to discuss next steps. Republic Services has a contractual \$50,000 service fee if they are low in any of the customer satisfaction areas. There is also a requirement to develop an action plan to improve areas that were under the 80% satisfaction level. Mr. Gire pointed out that two areas have improved since last year's plan. The action plan for this year will continue to address response time following a missed collection.

Next steps for customer practices and awareness:

- Continue to develop preferred information modes.
- Further promote convenient options for recycling unusual items.
- New promotions of compost service.

Comments/Questions:

Commissioner Margolis asked how Bellevue compares to other cities. Mr. Gire explained that not all cities do solid waste surveys but of the ones that do, coming in at 80% is on par. The one area regarding missed collections is a common pain point. Commissioner Margolis asked if there is a difference in neighborhoods or areas for missed collections. Mr. Gire explained that it is mainly Friday customers because Republic doesn't offer missed collection pickups on Saturdays. They are looking at a lot of extra checks on Fridays to remedy this. Ms. Wallin noted that the operations team has daily calls regarding missed collections and they review what happened and how it can be prevented in the future.

Commissioner Dupertuis commented that one of the challenges is that there is no real financial incentive to overcome that 43% rating. If the City has chosen to accept it, they should just adjust the fee of the contract by \$50,000 and not call it a penalty. If it's been going on for nine years it is not something they are aspiring to overcome. If, on the other hand, they want to create a financial incentive to overcome that 43% rating, it is clear that the number needs to be much higher than \$50,000. Mr. Gire said that could go into future contract discussions.

Commissioner Lutterman pointed out that two of three issues from last year have improved.

Vice Chair Wan noted this has been going on for nine years. It would be great to see a new action plan with a new strategy for 2024. What is going to happen differently for 2024 that didn't happen last year? If the majority of the missed pickups are happening on Friday, are they all being picked up on Monday? He would like to see that data on the next quarterly update. Finally, he is curious to know how Republic is doing on recycling drop-off and the breadth of items that are accepted there compared to neighboring cities. For example, he noted that other jurisdictions accept Styrofoam. Bellevue just accepts Styrofoam blocks but not smaller items like the trays that meat comes on.

Ms. Wallin agreed that they need to increase the breadth of recycling. She pointed out that Bellevue is the only city that has a contractual requirement to have a drop-off center. They send the recycling to a place in Kent where they have partners who will recycle the material for them. She invited commissioners to come visit their recycling education center in South Seattle to learn about where recyclables go and the processes. Vice Chair Wan and other commissioners thought a field trip to the recycling education center would be a good idea.

Vice Chair Wan added that informing customers about what is recyclable is still something that can be improved on. Pictures are good but he would like to be able to type in specific items and see if it is recyclable.

9. ORAL AND WRITTEN COMMUNICATIONS

None

10. REVIEW OF COMMISSION & COUNCIL CALENDARS

Deputy Director Harbour reviewed the ESC and Council calendars as contained in the packet.

11. ADJOURNMENT

Motion made by Commissioner Lutterman, seconded by Commissioner Lacson, to adjourn the meeting. Upon a roll call vote, the motion passed unanimously (7-0).

The meeting was adjourned at 8:03 p.m.