

CITY OF BELLEVUE  
CITY COUNCIL

Summary Minutes of Regular Meeting

January 2, 2024  
6:00 p.m.

Council Chambers  
Bellevue, Washington

PRESENT: Mayor Robinson, Deputy Mayor Malakoutian and Councilmembers Hamilton, Lee, Nieuwenhuis, Stokes and Zahn

ABSENT: None.

1. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 6:01 p.m., with Councilmember Robinson presiding. She welcomed new Councilmembers Dave Hamilton and Mo Malakoutian.

2. Roll Call; Flag Salute

City Clerk Charmaine Arredondo called the roll and all Councilmembers were present. Councilmember Zahn led the flag salute.

(a) Election of Mayor and Deputy Mayor

City Clerk Charmaine Arredondo recalled that Councilmember Robinson was selected to serve as the temporary chair tonight to lead the election of Mayor. Ms. Arredondo said that under Bellevue's Council-Manager form of government, the Mayor and Deputy Mayor are elected at the first business meeting of each even-numbered year. The Mayor acts as the Council's presiding officer, represents the City at a number of forums and performs ceremonial roles. Ms. Arredondo said the Council previously approved simultaneous voting on all nominees using a written ballot process. Nominations do not require a second and a simple majority is required to elect the Mayor and Deputy Mayor.

Councilmember Nieuwenhuis nominated Councilmember Robinson to serve as Mayor. There were no further nominations.

City Clerk Arredondo tallied the ballots and announced the results, with all Councilmembers voting to select Councilmember Robinson as Mayor.

Mayor Robinson invited nominations for Deputy Mayor.

Councilmember Hamilton nominated Councilmember Malakoutian to serve as Deputy Mayor.

City Clerk Arredondo tallied the votes and reported unanimous support for Mo Malakoutian to serve as Deputy Mayor.

Mayor Robinson congratulated Deputy Mayor Malakoutian and thanked Councilmember Nieuwenhuis for his leadership over the past four years.

At 6:09 p.m., Mayor Robinson declared a short recess. The meeting resumed at 6:30 p.m.

3. Approval of Agenda

→ Councilmember Nieuwenhuis moved to approve the agenda, and Councilmember Lee seconded the motion.

→ The motion carried by a vote of 7-0.

4. Oral Communications

City Clerk Arredondo said the total time for oral communications is for a period not to exceed 30 minutes and topics must relate to City of Bellevue government. Persons speaking to items on the agenda will be called first and if time remains, others will be called. The presiding officer is authorized to give preference to individuals who have not spoken to the Council within the past 60 days or who are speaking to items that will come before the Council in the upcoming 60 days.

- (a) Craig Spiegle congratulated Mayor Robinson and Deputy Mayor Malakoutian. Mr. Spiegle said he was speaking to follow up on his comments submitted on December 4 and July 23 regarding oral communications and community engagement. He met with Acting City Manager Diane Carlson in December and was pleased to learn that the City will begin providing video recordings of all Board and Commission meetings. He encouraged an independent review of community outreach strategies and the appointment of a panel with a City staff member, business community representative and neighborhood leader to review and approve outreach plans. He encouraged the Council to engage neighborhood associations as key stakeholders and to allow ample time for public comment throughout planning processes.
- (b) Sally Lawrence, representing Save Coal Creek, said the group provided a document to the Council regarding the public benefits of purchasing the Swanson property in the Lakemont area that is currently owned by a housing developer. She urged the City to add the open space to the Coal Creek Natural Area, noting the environmental and historical assets of the site. She encouraged the City to save the remaining structures if possible. She said the City invested approximately \$25 million in infrastructure improvements in the creek, which have improved stream conditions and resulted in an increase in salmon returning to Coal Creek.

- (c) Alex Tsimerman commented regarding the Council and made accusations about antisemitism.

Mayor Robinson instructed Mr. Tsimerman that he must follow the Council Rules for oral communications about speaking to issues involving City business.

At 6:43 p.m., Mayor Robinson declared a short break. The meeting resumed at 6:45 p.m.

- (d) Steve Williams, a member of Save Coal Creek, concurred with Ms. Lawrence's earlier comments. He invited the public to a hike on February 18 and a two-hour program on February 25 at Lewis Creek Park regarding coal mining history. He recalled that there was a community in 1883 of approximately 1,000 residents along the railroad grade that connected Bellevue to Seattle and that for fifty years supplied coal to the West Coast. He said the Swanson property is one of the few agricultural sites with one of the last surviving barns in King County. He encouraged interpretive signage and the use of the barn for educational purposes. He recalled that hard-working immigrants established the community providing the foundation for today's Bellevue.
- (e) Joe Kunzler congratulated Mayor Robinson and Deputy Mayor Malakoutian. He said Alex Tsimerman should be banned from Council meetings for one year. Mr. Kunzler said Mr. Tsimerman disrupted the Seattle City Council meeting earlier in the day and they are working to ban him from future meetings.

5. Reports of Community Councils, Boards, and Commissions: None.

6. Report of the City Manager

- (a) Bellevue Fire 2023 Wildland Season and Program

Responding to Acting City Manager Diane Carlson, Fire Chief Jay Hagen introduced Deputy Chief Dave Beste to provide an update on the Fire Department's 2023 wildland program and season.

Deputy Chief Dave Beste said the Bellevue Fire Department has had a wildland program for decades and the prevalence of wildfires west of the Cascade Mountains has increased significantly in recent years. The wildland program was enhanced in 2023 with the addition of special apparatus in July. The purchase of the equipment was made possible by private donations and the assistance of the Bellevue Fire Foundation.

Deputy Chief Beste said 22 members of the wildland team were deployed to eight mobilizations in 2023. The program provides personnel with developmental opportunities, critical real-world experience, knowledge to better protect the community and opportunities to help other jurisdictions both locally and across the Pacific Northwest.

In 2023, the Bellevue Fire Department responded to more than 320 incidents coded as natural vegetation fires. Deputy Chief Beste recalled that 2015 was the worst wildfire season in history with the most square miles burned throughout the state. The second worst season was 2020 and the third worst season was 2021. As of December 12, 2023, the most recent fire season was rated second highest for the number of fire starts in the state. Deputy Chief Beste said approximately 40 personnel have trained for the wildland team and wildland certifications involving training beyond regular firefighting and emergency medical services (EMS) skills.

Deputy Chief Beste noted wildland partnerships with the Washington State Department of Natural Resources, Redmond Fire Department, Eastside Fire and Rescue, King County, Bellevue Fire Foundation, Amazon and City departments. He said the 2023-2024 offseason wildland program includes continuing to manage mobilization processes and on-boarding additional leads and assistant leads within the wildland team through the first quarter of 2024. During the second quarter of the year, the program will launch annual wildland refresher training in preparation for the start of the wildland fire season in mid-May.

7. Council Business and New Initiatives: None.

8. Consent Calendar

→ Councilmember Stokes moved to approve the Consent Calendar, and Councilmember Nieuwenhuis seconded the motion.

→ The motion to approve the Consent Calendar carried by a vote of 7-0, and the following items were approved:

(a) Council Minutes

*December 4, 2023 Regular Meeting*

(b) Resolution No. 10332 authorizing execution of a modified Professional Services Contract with the Bellevue Convention Center Authority, doing business as Visit Bellevue, in an amount not to exceed \$3,726,160.00, which shall include all applicable taxes, for the administration and operation of the Bellevue Zone of the Bellevue-Redmond Tourism Promotion Area as authorized under RCW 35.101.130 and BCC 4.60.110.

(c) Resolution No. 10333 authorizing execution of a modified Professional Services Contract with OneRedmond, in an amount not to exceed \$1,106,807.00, which shall include all applicable taxes, for the administration and operation of the Redmond Zone of the Bellevue-Redmond Tourism Promotion Area as authorized under RCW 35.101.130 and BCC 4.60.110.

9. Public Hearing: None.

10. Study Session

(a) 2024 State Legislative Session Kick-Off

Acting City Manager Carlson introduced staff's preview of the 2024 state legislative session.

Genesee Adkins, Chief of External Affairs, said the 60-day short session begins on January 8 and Democrats continue to be the majority in both the House and Senate. The alternate year short sessions typically focus on supplements to the operating, capital and transportation budgets based on revenue reviews held on November 20 and February 20. Additional key topics for the 2024 session will be the Climate Commitment Act, transit-oriented development, transportation funding needs, organized retail theft and HB 1110 implementation. Ms. Adkins said the Climate Commitment Act is bringing in far more revenue than anticipated and is projected to generate more than \$1 billion over the current biennial budget. She said six related initiatives have been submitted to the state legislature, including one to repeal the Climate Commitment Act.

Ms. Adkins said that legislation related to transit-oriented development did not move out of the House last session. She said work is underway to draft legislation focused more on incentives than mandates.

Ms. Adkins said challenges for the transportation budget include labor and supply chain shortages. She said that bids on statewide projects in the Move Ahead Washington package are exceeding the engineer's estimates, sometimes doubling the estimated costs. She said the state legislature is expected to lay the foundation this year for a transportation package in 2025.

City staff has been working with other cities and the Washington State Department of Commerce regarding the implementation of HB 1110. She said the original sponsor of the bill plans to come back this session with a trailer bill proposing a number of technical adjustments.

Ms. Adkins said the top two priority areas for Bellevue are affordable housing and land use (e.g., affordable housing, transit-oriented development and flexible local funding options) and infrastructure for a growing community (e.g., electric fire engine, Mountains to Sound Greenway Trail funding shift and I-405 funding gap).

Ms. Adkins highlighted the City's work with the Association of Washington Cities (AWC), whose top four legislative priorities are recruiting and retaining police officers, revising the arbitrary property tax cap, continuing to invest in infrastructure and providing behavioral health resources. She noted that City Action Days are scheduled for February 7-8 in Lacey.

City staff has met with elected officials from the 41<sup>st</sup> and 48<sup>th</sup> Districts to brief them on Bellevue's legislative priorities. Discussions with AWC, cities and other stakeholders are ongoing regarding key emerging issues. Ms. Adkins said staff will identify key dates during the legislative session for Councilmembers and staff to travel to Olympia.

Councilmember Stokes thanked Ms. Adkins for the update. Responding to Mr. Stokes, Ms. Adkins said staff receives legislative schedules on Thursdays for the following week, which helps to identify opportunities for Councilmembers to contact legislators about certain issues and potential legislation.

Councilmember Lee thanked Ms. Adkins and staff for their detailed work to move forward with Bellevue's legislative agenda. He suggested continuing to advocate for transportation technologies and innovations, including electric vehicle infrastructure. He concurred with Councilmember Stokes' interest in how the Council can assist in lobbying efforts. Ms. Adkins said more funding for electric vehicle infrastructure will likely be available through Climate Commitment Act revenues. She said staff will contact Councilmembers when opportunities arise for talking to legislators and providing public testimony during hearings.

Councilmember Zahn thanked Ms. Adkins for providing an update before the legislative session begins. Ms. Zahn encouraged advocating to ensure that funding generated by the Climate Commitment Act is available for Bellevue's priorities. Ms. Zahn said she would like to meet with Ms. Adkins to better understand affordable housing funding options under consideration by the legislature. She encouraged lobbying this session for I-405 funding for preliminary engineering and planning work as that might provide opportunities to pursue federal grants.

Councilmember Nieuwenhuis thanked Ms. Adkins and Lacey Jane Wolfe for their work with the legislature. Responding to Mr. Nieuwenhuis regarding the retail theft task force created by the Attorney General, Ms. Adkins said the group has been meeting. However, she did not think they have a work product ready to take to the legislature. Ms. Adkins said she would follow up with more information.

Mr. Nieuwenhuis observed that Bellevue does not have an AWC representative. Ms. Adkins said a former Councilmember served on the AWC large city advisory committee. She acknowledged that Mr. Nieuwenhuis serves on the federal legislative committee. She said there has been discussion at times about whether to advance a Bellevue City Councilmember for the AWC Board of Directors.

In further response to Mr. Nieuwenhuis, Ms. Adkins said there have been a number of drafts of the transit-oriented development bill. She noted the City's concerns about a lot splitting bill introduced during the last legislative session, which has the potential to double the impact of HB 1110.

Councilmember Hamilton said he appreciated the presentation and well-organized plan. He offered his support as needed with the legislature.

Deputy Mayor Malakoutian said he shared his colleagues' interest in assisting staff with advocacy efforts. Responding to Mr. Malakoutian, Ms. Adkins confirmed that the Comprehensive Plan update underway could be affected by state legislation related to transit-oriented development. She said she would follow up with more information.

Mayor Robinson asked whether the legislature is studying how neighborhood covenants might affect the implementation of HB 1110. She asked about the transit-oriented development bill that was narrowly defeated during the last session. She noted that the Bellevue Downtown Association's annual event is scheduled for February 8 during City Action Days. Ms. Adkins said she would follow up with more information regarding HB 1110 and TOD legislation.

Councilmember Lee expressed an interest in increasing Bellevue's representation with organizations such as AWC, Sound Cities Association (SCA) and the National League of Cities.

11. Land Use: None.
12. Other Ordinances, Resolutions, and Motions: None.
13. Written Reports: None.
14. Unfinished Business: None.
15. New Business: None.
16. Executive Session: None.
17. Adjournment

At 7:47 p.m., Mayor Robinson declared the meeting adjourned.

Charmaine Arredondo, CMC  
City Clerk

/kaw