

CITY OF BELLEVUE
CITY COUNCIL

Summary Minutes of Regular Meeting

March 10, 2026
6:00 p.m.

Council Chambers
Bellevue, Washington

PRESENT: Mayor Malakoutian, Deputy Mayor Hamilton and Councilmembers Bhargava, Briar, Nieuwenhuis, Robinson¹ and Sumadiwirya²

ABSENT: None.

1. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 6:02 p.m., with Mayor Malakoutian presiding.

2. Roll Call; Flag Salute

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

(a) Day of Nowruz Proclamation

Councilmember Briar read the proclamation declaring March 20, 2026, as Day of Nowruz in Bellevue. She encouraged everyone to recognize and celebrate Nowruz by attending events and learning about the diverse cultures that enrich our community.

Afshin Bidari, President of the Alefba Group, accepted and thanked the Council for the proclamation. He said Nowruz celebrates renewal, nature, community and hope for the year ahead.

(b) 25th Anniversary Year of the International Ballet Theatre and Academy Proclamation

Councilmember Nieuwenhuis read the proclamation recognizing the 25th anniversary year of the International Ballet Theatre and Academy in Bellevue. He encouraged everyone to join in celebrating their remarkable contributions to the arts, our youth and the cultural vitality of our community.

¹ Councilmember Robinson arrived at 6:58 p.m.

² Councilmember Sumadiwirya participated remotely and left the meeting at 7:25 p.m.

Vera Altunina, Artistic Director of International Ballet Theatre, thanked the City for its support of the theatre. She thanked Councilmember Nieuwenhuis for his ongoing support of the arts and their power to strengthen the community. Ms. Altunina recalled that she founded the organization on September 11, 2001 and the community's support reinforced that art is a necessity, especially in times of hardship.

3. Approval of Agenda

→ Deputy Mayor Hamilton moved to approve the agenda, and Councilmember Nieuwenhuis seconded the motion.

→ The motion carried by a vote of 6-0.

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. Individuals 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. Each speaker is allowed up to three minutes to speak and a maximum of three speakers are allowed to speak to any one side of a particular topic. In compliance with Washington state campaign laws regarding the use of public facilities, no speaker may support or oppose a ballot measure or candidate.

- (a) Norm Hansen, representing the Bridle Trails Community Club, commented regarding the Evans Plaza Comprehensive Plan Amendment (CPA) application, which could result in buildings up to 85 feet. He said residents disagree that the application meets the threshold for significantly changed conditions. He said the surrounding properties have not changed in many years and nearby development is limited to two or three stories. He said higher density development should be focused on the BelRed area.
- (b) Jessie Clawson spoke in support of moving the Evans Plaza CPA application forward for further consideration. She said the updated Comprehensive Plan encourages mixed-use development in neighborhood centers, especially those located near transit services. She said the application is limited to one property and not the entire area. She said the site provides a good opportunity for future housing.
- (c) Tim Motts, representing the Boys and Girls Clubs of Bellevue, commented on the 75-year history of the organization. Beginning next year, the club will expand to every preschool and elementary school in the Bellevue School District. Mr. Motts said the organization provided more than \$2 million in scholarships this past year.
- (d) Noriko Fujita expressed concerns regarding safety and privacy related to the Safe Parking program. She said she lives next door to the church parking lot and has experienced numerous unpleasant incidents including littering and strangers trespassing on her

property. She said one resident used water from the church on one occasion and left it running, resulting in a \$4,500 water bill for the church. She said the plan to allow 20 families to live on the site is incompatible with neighborhood safety.

- (e) David Spanier, a resident adjacent to the Newport Presbyterian Church, expressed concern about the planned expansion of the Safe Parking program. He said the neighborhood has only one street for entrance and exit, and parking during church services overflows onto adjacent streets. He said there is limited pedestrian infrastructure in the area, and there is no buffering between the proposed Safe Parking program and residential yards. He said there are other locations that would better serve the program residents and community.
- (f) Charles Huang, a resident near Newport Presbyterian Church, said he and his neighbors share the goal of helping families in need. He said the community was informed on February 25 by City staff that the permit was nearly finalized, before any meaningful communication with residents had occurred. He said residents later learned that the land use permits are still under review. He asked whether the suitability of the site has been fully evaluated. He asked the Council to delay the project for additional study and review.
- (g) Tim Hay expressed concern about the use of the word “stakeholders” by City staff, which seems to refer only to property owners, developers and professionals. He encouraged the City to expand that to include members of neighborhood associations. He expressed concern regarding the influence of developers and community groups from Seattle.
- (h) Maria Hudson requested a meeting with the city manager and the mayor regarding a criminal investigation related to her daughter. She believes the Bellevue Police Department concealed evidence from the prosecutor’s office.
- (i) Nicole Myers opined that the threshold of significantly changed conditions is not met in the Evans Plaza CPA application. She expressed concern regarding the potential zoning impacts on surrounding properties. She expressed concern regarding the Housing Opportunities in Mixed-Use Areas (HOMA) Land Use Code Amendment (LUCA) and the potential future loss of grocery stores and existing small businesses.

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

6. Report of the City Manager: None.

7. Council Business and New Initiatives: None.

8. Consent Calendar

City Manager Diane Carlson highlighted Resolution No. 10590, which is anticipated to produce approximately 127 housing units, including 40 percent as family-sized units, in the Wilburton area.

- Deputy Mayor Hamilton moved to approve the Consent Calendar, and Councilmember Nieuwenhuis seconded the motion.
- The motion to approve the Consent Calendar carried by a vote of 6-0, and the following items were approved:
 - (a) Motion to award Bid No. 26015, 2024 Bellevue Fiber Infill (CIP Plan Nos. PW-R-199, W-91 & W-115), to Always Active Services, LLC. as the lowest responsible and responsive bidder in the amount of \$447,084.80, plus all applicable taxes.
 - (b) Resolution No. 10590 authorizing execution of a Predevelopment Agreement and future Ground Lease with Bellwether Housing for the redevelopment of the city-owned Wilburton TOD parcel for affordable housing.

9. Public Hearing

- (a) Public Hearing and action on Resolution No. 10591 authorizing the execution of documents necessary to release an existing utility easement located in the Plat of Maryhill Addition that has been declared surplus to the City's needs and is no longer required for providing utility service.

City Manager Carlson introduced the public hearing regarding Resolution No. 10591 authorizing the release of an existing utility easement in the Maryhill Addition.

Jamie Robinson, Assistant Director, Finance and Asset Management Department, said the easement is located at 11040 Main Street between 110th Avenue and 112th Avenue. She said the property owner is redeveloping the site to build 350 residential units with a mix of market-rate and affordable housing.

- Deputy Mayor Hamilton moved to open the public hearing, and Councilmember Nieuwenhuis seconded the motion.
- The motion carried by a vote of 6-0.

No one came forward to comment.

- Deputy Mayor Hamilton moved to close the public hearing, and Councilmember Nieuwenhuis seconded the motion.
- The motion carried by a vote of 6-0.
- Deputy Mayor Hamilton moved to approve Resolution No. 10591, and Councilmember Nieuwenhuis seconded the motion.
- The motion carried by a vote of 6-0.

10. Study Session Items

(a) 2026 Annual Comprehensive Plan Amendment (CPA) Work Program

City Manager Carlson introduced discussion regarding the 2026 annual Comprehensive Plan Amendment (CPA) work program.

Thara Johnson, Assistant Director, Community Development Department, said staff is seeking direction to add two items to the CPA work program: 1) Transportation Conformance CPA (City-initiated), and 2) Evans Plaza CPA (privately initiated). She described the CPA process in which privately initiated CPA applications are considered for threshold review before potentially moving forward to final review. The City Council may initiate a CPA at any time for final review and the state Growth Management Act (GMA) limits CPAs to once per year.

Ms. Johnson said staff is requesting Council direction about whether to advance the Evans Plaza CPA application to threshold review. The merits of the application are not evaluated at this time. If an application is moved forward, the Planning Commission evaluates it based on the decision criteria in the Land Use Code and makes a recommendation to the Council.

Kate Nesse, Comprehensive Planning Manager, Community Development Department, said the Transportation Conformance CPA provides updates to the Mobility Implementation Plan and the Transportation Facilities Plan. She said the Pedestrian and Bike Plan has been incorporated into the Mobility Implementation Plan and the proposed CPA would eliminate references to the previous Pedestrian and Bike Plan. She said there are no policy amendments to the plan.

Ms. Johnson said staff is requesting direction to add the Transportation Conformance CPA to the annual CPA work program.

→ Deputy Mayor Hamilton moved to direct staff to add the Transportation Conformance CPA to the 2026 annual CPA work program, and Councilmember Briar seconded the motion.

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

Ms. Johnson said the Evans Plaza CPA application is a site-specific request to change the Future Land Use Map and the Comprehensive Plan.

Dr. Nesse said Land Use Code 20.30I.140 provides the threshold review criteria for privately initiated CPAs. She said the Planning Commission determined that the Evans Plaza proposal meets the criteria. The property owner proposes changing the land use map designation from General Commercial (GC) to Lowrise 2 Mixed-Use on a 10-acre site. That change would not automatically trigger a zoning change, which the property owner would need to apply for at a later date.

Evans Plaza is located in the PineView Neighborhood Center, which is meant to be a mixed-use center for housing and neighborhood services. Current development on the site is primarily single-story retail uses. The Planning Commission recommended including the corner parcel, which is currently a gas station. There is an entrance to the SR 520 bike trail at the southwest corner of the Evans Plaza site. The undeveloped site to the west is owned by Puget Sound Energy (PSE) and the other adjacent properties are commercial parcels.

Dr. Nesse said that if the CPA is moved forward through threshold review, the City will engage in public outreach to the surrounding community. She said anyone who comments on the Evans Plaza proposal is considered a party of record and there will be additional study sessions and a public hearing if the CPA moves to final review.

Jonny Lu, Vice Chair, Planning Commission, said the commission's discussion focused on the geographic scope of the CPA proposal and the threshold review decision criteria. He said the Planning Commission concluded that the proposal meets the criteria and recommended moving it forward for final review.

Ms. Johnson requested Council direction to add the Evans Plaza CPA to the 2026 CPA work program.

Mayor Malakoutian thanked staff for the presentation.

Responding to Councilmember Nieuwenhuis, Vice Chair Lu said the commission voted 5-2 in favor of the recommendation. Mr. Lu acknowledged there was discussion regarding the threshold for significantly changed conditions. He said a majority of the commission ultimately determined it would be worthwhile to move the proposal forward to be evaluated on its merits.

Ms. Johnson noted there was discussion by the commission regarding the geographic scope of the CPA proposal.

Responding to Mr. Nieuwenhuis regarding changed conditions, Dr. Nesse said the 2024 Comprehensive Plan update established neighborhood centers as areas to focus mixed-use development. She said the Bridle Trails Neighborhood Plan is not on the City's current work plan although it will be updated within the next 10 years. She acknowledged there is currently a conflict between the Comprehensive Plan and map designation.

In further response to Councilmember Nieuwenhuis, Ms. Johnson said residents and the Bridle Trails Community Club were notified about the CPA proposal.

Responding to Councilmember Robinson, Dr. Nesse said Evans Plaza is a well-used shopping center without any vacancies. Dr. Nesse said an incentive related to affordable commercial space is included in the HOMA regulations. Ms. Johnson said the City's Economic Development Strategic Plan includes actions to address small business displacement. Councilmember Robinson commented on the importance of retaining existing small businesses.

Councilmember Bhargava asked whether a broader geographic scope for the Evans Plaza CPA proposal was considered. Vice Chair Lu said the commission discussed expanding the scope to the east of the property. In further response to Mr. Bhargava, Dr. Nesse said the CPA process is one way to consider proposals to address a property owner's concerns. She said similar proposals can also be considered through the Neighborhood Area Plan update process. However, the Bridle Trails neighborhood plan is not in the current work program.

Councilmember Briar thanked staff and the Planning Commission for their thorough work. She concurred with Councilmember Robinson's interest in retaining small businesses. Ms. Briar noted that some residents are opposed to the Evans Plaza CPA proposal. She spoke in favor of moving the proposal forward for further review and study of the impacts.

Councilmember Sumadiwirya concurred about the importance of retaining small businesses. She noted traffic congestion on NE 24th Street and asked whether final review would address infrastructure impacts. Ms. Johnson said an environmental review would be conducted to assess transportation and other impacts. Ms. Sumadiwirya spoke in favor of moving the Evans Plaza CPA proposal forward for final review.

Deputy Mayor Hamilton thanked staff and Vice Chair Lu for the presentation and expressed support for moving the Evans Plaza CPA forward for final review.

Mayor Malakoutian thanked everyone for their work and expressed support for moving forward for further study and community input.

→ Deputy Mayor Hamilton moved to direct staff to add the Evans Plaza CPA application to the 2026 annual CPA work program. Councilmember Robinson seconded the motion.

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

At 7:26 p.m., Mayor Malakoutian declared a short break. The meeting resumed at 7:40 p.m.

(b) City Council Priority to Simplify the Permitting Process for Detached Accessory Dwelling Units and Cottage Housing by offering Pre-approved Plans

City Manager Carlson introduced discussion regarding the permitting process and pre-approved plans for detached accessory dwelling units (DADUs) and cottage housing.

Nick Whipple, Code and Policy Director, Development Services Department, said this effort responds to the Council priority to simplify the permitting process for DADUs and cottage housing by providing pre-approved plans to encourage housing development and improve predictability in permitting. The 2024 Comprehensive Plan update reflects policies to support middle housing and DADUs and, in June 2025, the Council adopted middle housing code changes. DADUs and cottage housing are legal on all lots unless limited by private restrictions.

Jake Hesselgesser, Business Services Director, introduced the three-phase program to build momentum for the initiative and to engage the community. Phase 1 includes plans for a

hackathon-style event with Govstream.ai and subject matter experts to focus on GIS and zoning tools for site feasibility and permitting guidance to applicants. Community input will be pursued regarding architectural compatibility, homeowner usability and preferences, and sustainability features.

Mr. Whipple said phase 2 will involve the community and a volunteer review panel in selecting the top plan designs using community-defined criteria.

Gregg Schrader, Building Official, said phase 3 reflects Development Services Department approval of up to 10 DADU and cottage housing plans for purchase. He noted that the upcoming Washington State Building Code update in May 2027 will be considered in developing those plans.

Mr. Whipple said Phase 1 will occur throughout 2026 and Phase 2 is scheduled for late 2026 through mid-2027. Phase 3 is anticipated to be completed in the fall of 2027.

Mayor Malakoutian thanked staff for the update.

Councilmember Bhargava expressed support for the initiative, which he hopes will lower housing costs. He encouraged the consideration of live-work units. Noting that he is an architect, he suggested guided charrettes with the community and design experts.

Councilmember Robinson expressed strong support for providing pre-approved plans for DADUs and cottage housing. She encouraged robust community involvement and suggested a design competition. Mr. Whipple confirmed that the community will be involved in narrowing the design options. Ms. Robinson encouraged an emphasis on sustainability and lowering housing costs.

Councilmember Nieuwenhuis expressed concern about the ability to reach a community or neighborhood consensus on the design options. Mr. Whipple acknowledged that could be a challenging process. He said the City of Seattle received approximately 150 proposed designs, which they narrowed to approximately 16 pre-approved plans. Mr. Whipple said staff anticipates selecting up to 10 designs.

Councilmember Briar thanked staff for their work and noted the efficiency gains reflected in the proposed approach.

Deputy Mayor Hamilton expressed support for moving forward. He encouraged designs that provide privacy given the close proximity of the housing.

Mayor Malakoutian concurred with his colleagues' support for moving forward. He noted an interest in understanding the associated infrastructure impacts and needs.

- (c) Square Footage Tax Simplification Efforts: Proposed annual business license renewal, and business outreach plans.

John Resha, Director, Finance and Asset Management Department, introduced discussion regarding business license renewal and simplification of the Business and Occupation (B&O) square footage tax.

Troy Lucas, Tax Division Manager, said B&O taxes in Bellevue have two components: 1) gross receipts tax, and 2) square footage tax. Only a handful of Washington cities administer the square footage tax and Bellevue's calculation is unique and complicated. The goals related to simplifying the square footage tax are to make it easy to understand and calculate, be consistent within the region, minimize the impact on city revenues and to reduce the tax and compliance burden on small businesses. Mr. Lucas said no changes are proposed to the current gross receipts tax rate.

Michael Chandler, Controller, said all businesses operating in Bellevue are required to obtain a tax license. The cost of the license is the same for all businesses and no renewal is required. Mr. Lucas said issues related to business licensing include inconsistent communication with businesses and the need for accurate business information.

Mr. Lucas said staff recommends moving to an annual license renewal process with a streamlined electronic application and renewal process using a tiered fee structure based on gross receipts and a standard calculation for rates.

Mr. Chandler said staff has started to engage with businesses and other stakeholders to review square footage and business license proposals and to solicit feedback. Staff will begin working with the Bellevue Chamber of Commerce and Bellevue Downtown Association in April and anticipate returning in June to update the Council.

Mayor Malakoutian expressed support for simplifying the business licensing and tax process.

Councilmember Robinson expressed support for reviewing the square footage tax code with one goal being to reduce the tax burden on small businesses. She asked whether there will be an annual fee to renew a business license. Mr. Chandler said that topic will be discussed. Ms. Robinson expressed concern about increasing costs for small businesses.

Councilmember Nieuwenhuis expressed support for the proposed plan. However, he noted that many small businesses are not members of the Bellevue Chamber of Commerce or Bellevue Downtown Association. He said he shares Councilmember Robinson's concern about possibly increasing business license costs with the annual renewal requirement.

Councilmember Bhargava suggested creating a simple, straightforward process that will hopefully increase compliance with business licensing and tax regulations. He noted he shares the concern regarding the cost and burden of an annual licensing renewal requirement.

Councilmember Briar thanked staff for their work.

Deputy Mayor Hamilton said he anticipates that a simplified process will increase compliance with licensing and tax requirements.

Mayor Malakoutian said he would like to avoid increased costs for businesses. However, he understands the value of annual business license renewal to allow the City to maintain accurate records.

11. Land Use Reports: None.
12. Other Ordinances, Resolutions and Motions: None.
13. Written Reports
 - (a) Intergovernmental Affairs Monthly Update as of February 28, 2026
14. Unfinished Business: None.
15. New Business: None.
16. Executive Session: None.
17. Adjournment

At 8:30 p.m., Mayor Malakoutian declared the meeting adjourned.

Charmaine Arredondo, CMC
City Clerk

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