

CITY OF BELLEVUE
CITY COUNCIL

Summary Minutes of Regular Meeting

March 18, 2025
6:00 p.m.

Council Chambers
Bellevue, Washington

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

ABSENT: Councilmember Zahn

1. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 6:03 p.m., with Mayor Robinson presiding.

2. Roll Call; Flag Salute

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

3. Approval of Agenda

→ Deputy Mayor Malakoutian moved to approve the agenda, amended to add Agenda Item 16(b), Discussion and Potential Appointment of City Councilmember. Councilmember Stokes seconded the motion.

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

4. Oral Communications

Mayor Robinson noted that candidates for the Council position were in the audience. For anyone interested in commenting on the appointment, she asked that they comment on the process and not on individual candidates.

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) Johnny Lu, a Newport Hills resident and member of the Planning Commission, commented that it is important for a Councilmember to have the technical ability to understand the issues facing Bellevue, especially in the middle of unprecedented growth. Other desired traits include a collaborative nature, ability to work well with colleagues and a commitment to fair leadership.
- (b) Bill Finkbeiner complimented the Planning Commission, noting that the members take their role very seriously and work well together even when there are disagreements.
- (c) Anthony Mackay thanked Councilmembers for all they do for the community. He said it is important that the new Councilmember have a deep understanding of how the City operates. He encouraged Councilmembers to select an individual who will increase the diversity of the Council and work to make Bellevue better for everyone. He said all five individuals under consideration are strong candidates.
- (d) Steve Fantle, founder of Bellevue Green and Clean, said the group sponsors litter cleanups and participates in the City's Adopt-A-Street program and the Washington State Department of Transportation's Adopt-A-Highway program. Referring to the City's Keep Bellevue Beautiful program, Mr. Fantle suggested that the abandoned shopping cart and retrieval initiative needs to be more efficient and cost effective. He stated his understanding that three weeks can elapse between the time an abandoned cart is reported using the MyBellevue app until the vendor retrieves the cart. He noted that while 58 individuals or groups have adopted streets in Bellevue, approximately 80 percent of the bags of litter collected came from four individuals or groups. He encouraged the Keep Bellevue Beautiful program to partner with the Parks and Community Services Department and the Transportation Department to pick up bags of litter upon request so people do not have to take them home. He suggested opportunities for partnership and expansion of the program.
- (e) Sue Johnson said we need to start now to make wise decisions for the health of our planet. She said the populations of butterflies and all pollinators are decreasing and she encouraged the preservation of open space to support pollinators. She said Airfield Park is a wildlife corridor linking Robinswood Park and Weowna Park. She said the property, which includes the former site of a landfill, is a strong example of nature's ability to heal. She encouraged the City to preserve the meadow and wildlife habitat at Airfield Park.
- (f) Paul Rood recalled that 20 years ago, he felt the City was disassociated from the average citizen. Since then, he has come to understand that Bellevue Councilmembers are elected at large. He said he would prefer to have more direct representation. He said he spoke to the Council on September 10, 2024 regarding the Noise Code and was never contacted by the City after his comments. He said he has reached out to a number of City staff and departments. Mr. Rood requested a meeting with all Councilmembers to petition in person to obtain redress for his grievance.

Mayor Robinson asked the City Clerk to help Mr. Rood schedule individual meetings with Councilmembers.

(g) Warren Halverson thanked the Council for considering the proposal to reduce public disorder crimes in Bellevue. He said the Council directed staff to conduct additional research and to return in six months after the Community Court begins operating this summer. He said it is important to obtain additional data from Marysville and other cities. He wondered how many individuals committing public disorder crimes in Bellevue are Bellevue residents. He suggested that the City attempt to determine how many unreported thefts occur in Bellevue. He encouraged transparency in the City's process and suggested that six months is too long to wait to reconsider the proposal. He expressed concern regarding shoplifting and the impact it has on prices. He complimented the Bellevue Police Department for their efforts and encouraged adoption of mandatory minimum sentences for public disorder crimes.

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

6. Report of the City Manager

(a) Keep Bellevue Beautiful Update

City Manager Diane Carlson recalled that the Keep Bellevue Beautiful program was created as part of the Safe, Clean and Vibrant City initiative with the adoption of the 2023-2024 budget. She thanked everyone in the community who participated in the program. She noted that Councilmember Nieuwenhuis was an early advocate for creating the program, and he and his family have adopted a street segment.

Mark Heilman, Neighborhood Outreach Manager, Community Development Department, said the program was launched in 2023 to focus on three key areas: 1) litter cleanup events, 2) Adopt-A-Street program, and 3) vendor retrieval of shopping carts. Since August 2023, the Keep Bellevue Beautiful program has held 13 cleanup events, which averaged 36 participants and involved more than 100 youth.

Sarina Miller, Keep Bellevue Beautiful Coordinator, said a number of businesses and community groups have supported the program. Amazon hosted a cleanup event with 102 employee volunteers. Ms. Miller said the City is seeing increased interest from companies that want to host Earth Day cleanup events. She said a partnership with the probation program began in 2024 and allows probation participants to complete supervised litter cleanups approximately twice per month on 35 designated routes. In 2024, the program removed 39 bags of litter.

Ms. Miller said the Adopt-A-Street program was launched in July 2024 and 60 individuals, families, businesses and organizations have joined the program. She said the City provides supplies and support for volunteer engagement efforts, and the participants are involved in at least four litter cleanup events per year. The adopted streets total 48.56 miles in 16 neighborhood areas. This does not include the 35 routes covered by the probation partnership. The individuals and groups have filled 381 bags of litter since last summer. Ms. Miller thanked all of the volunteers for their extensive efforts.

Ms. Miller said the abandoned shopping cart retrieval program has removed and returned 5,788 carts since it began in April 2023. In 2024, 2,838 carts were retrieved through reports submitted on the MyBellevue app and through contractor sweeps. She said there will be additional pickups each week by the contractor beginning in May.

Ms. Miller highlighted upcoming events: Earthfest event at Bellevue Botanical Garden on April 19, Earth Day Adopt-A-Street focus events on April 22-26 and signature street cleanups on May 17 and September 13.

Mr. Heilman said the Keep Bellevue Beautiful program continues to grow and is making a tangible difference in the community. He thanked the Council, the community and staff for their work to support the program.

7. Council Business and New Initiatives

(a) Candidate Interviews for City Council Position 5

Mayor Robinson introduced discussion regarding the candidates for City Council Position 5 and noted that the selected individual will be up for election this fall. She thanked everyone who applied for the position and said five candidates will be interviewed. She said each candidate will be given three minutes to provide an opening statement and an additional 12 minutes to respond to four questions. Following the interviews, the Council will recess to Executive Session to discuss the candidates' qualifications. Mayor Robinson said an agenda item was added at the end of the agenda for the Council to take action if desired.

City Clerk Charmaine Arredondo said she would let the candidates know when they have approximately five minutes of their time remaining. She invited Vishal Bhargava to the table and noted that the other four candidates would move to the waiting room.

Vishal Bhargava thanked the Council for selecting him for an interview. He said he has dedicated his career to urban planning, technology and community services and he believes his experience and vision align with the needs of the community. He said Bellevue is a diverse city and it must ensure prosperity reaches all residents. He said his vision is a Bellevue that embraces innovation, prioritizes affordability, fosters economic opportunity and enhances the quality of life for all residents. He said Bellevue must balance growth with community well-being. He said we should strive for a future where everyone is welcomed. As an immigrant, Mr. Bhargava said he has experienced the opportunities offered in Bellevue. He noted his background in technology, innovation and using data-driven approaches to solve problems.

Mr. Bhargava said his experience includes serving on the Planning Commission for the past five years. The role deepened his understanding of housing policy, economic development and infrastructure investments and he has gained an appreciation of public engagement and the value of diverse perspectives. He said that losing a close friend to mental health challenges has strengthened his resolve to advocate for greater support and awareness of this critical issue. As co-founder of the Beautiful Minds Foundation, he has worked to advance mental health education and advocacy. Mr. Bhargava said he is dedicated to ensuring that local government

upholds the values of equity and inclusion by fostering a sense of belonging and engagement for all residents.

Councilmember Stokes asked Mr. Bhargava to comment on the role of a City Councilmember and what it takes to perform the role well.

Mr. Bhargava said a Councilmember serves a critical role in shaping Bellevue's future and ensuring that policies and services benefit all residents while maintaining a strong economic and community foundation. He said it requires a commitment to listening, problem solving and leading with integrity. The responsibilities of the Council include passing laws, setting budget priorities and developing policies that impact housing, transportation, economic development and other opportunities. Mr. Bhargava said Councilmembers are champions for the community who make informed decisions that drive meaningful progress. He said they must also represent Bellevue in county, regional and state forums. He said Councilmembers must understand the Comprehensive Plan, zoning laws and financial priorities while also being approachable and available to residents and businesses. He said Councilmembers should prioritize pragmatic solutions and act with integrity and transparency. He said his experience, including serving on the Planning Commission, provides the skills needed to navigate complex policy issues.

Councilmember Nieuwenhuis asked about the top priorities facing Bellevue and how Mr. Bhargava would address them.

Mr. Bhargava said Bellevue is at a pivotal moment and decisions today will shape the future. The most pressing issues are affordability and sustainable growth, public safety, economic development and innovation, and homelessness. He said addressing these challenges requires a comprehensive and integrated strategy. Bellevue's growth has made it increasingly difficult for many people to afford to live here. He said it is important to focus on housing production, increased density near transit hubs, and streamlined permitting to encourage housing development. He encouraged efforts to prevent homelessness by addressing affordability and employment programs as part of the solution. He commented on the importance of public safety, addressing climate-related challenges, disaster preparedness and enhancing infrastructure. He said Bellevue must remain a hub for innovation and economic opportunity.

Councilmember Hamilton asked Mr. Bhargava to comment on a time when he navigated a complex decision-making process involving conflicting viewpoints, interests or competing priorities.

Mr. Bhargava said one example was his work on the Planning Commission on the Wilburton Land Use Code Amendment (LUCA). He said developing policy recommendations required balancing perspectives from various stakeholders including developers, affordable housing advocates, businesses and residents. For the Wilburton recommendations to be successful, they needed to strike a balance between advancing housing goals, fostering residential and commercial development, and establishing a framework to support a vibrant neighborhood for decades to come.

Mr. Bhargava said there were disagreements on key policy issues. One major debate involved the right-of-way and rules for different street sections. Developers and affordable housing groups advocated for narrower sidewalks and amenity zones to maximize the buildable space and encourage near-term development. Mr. Bhargava said City staff recommended wider rights-of-way to enhance the public realm, maintain consistency across Bellevue and improve environmental outcomes. He said both approaches had long-term benefits and financial tradeoffs to consider in making a complex decision. He focused on using data to develop an objective lens, collaborating with his fellow commissioners to develop a decision-making framework and ensuring that the recommendations aligned with the long-term vision for Bellevue and the Wilburton area. He noted the importance of balancing safety, enhancing connectivity, supporting the public realm and maintaining development flexibility.

Councilmember Lee asked how Mr. Bhargava would actively support and advance the Council's vision.

Mr. Bhargava said the Council has articulated a strong vision for a diverse, welcoming and innovative community. He said he is committed to advancing that vision through strategic action, public engagement and data-driven policies. A key element of the Council's vision is to maintain safe, friendly and welcoming neighborhoods and to encourage a range of housing choices. Mr. Bhargava said he would advocate for equitable growth policies and robust housing policies. He said another aspect of the Council's vision is fostering cross-cultural connections and a sense of belonging. He said he would advocate for the establishment of a Civic Ambassador program to train community members from underrepresented groups to serve as liaisons to the City. He said economic resilience is another pillar of the Council's vision and he would support enhancing workforce development programs, encouraging open data policies to foster innovation and supporting small businesses. He suggested establishing a civic challenge to engage the business community in civic issues through open data policies and strengthening public-private partnerships. Mr. Bhargava said he would ensure that Bellevue continues its commitment to fiscal responsibility, transparency and accountability.

Claire Sumadiwirya said she appreciated being chosen to be interviewed with four highly qualified candidates. She described herself as a business owner, nonprofit leader and mother who is passionately in love with Bellevue. She would like to serve on the Council to champion a vision of Bellevue as a global city with a local heart. She noted her commitment to collaborative leadership and ensuring that growth benefits the diversity of communities and neighborhoods in Bellevue. She said that as a small business owner of a social enterprise that gives back to the community, she works with marginalized communities on a daily basis. She said Bellevue's future depends on innovative workforce development and affordable housing for workers. As the single mother of three children, Ms. Sumadiwirya said public safety, education and quality of life are top priorities.

Councilmember Stokes asked Ms. Sumadiwirya to comment on the role of a City Councilmember and what it takes to perform the role well.

Ms. Sumadiwirya said the role of a Councilmember is to serve as both a visionary leader and a practical bridge builder who connects Bellevue's diverse community with local governance. She

said Councilmembers must balance economic development with community well-being to craft policy that enhances global competitiveness while preserving local character. Ms. Sumadiwirya said a Councilmember is a steward of the public trust committed to the future while building on the firm foundation that makes Bellevue special. She said performing the role effectively requires: 1) collaborative leadership that brings diverse stakeholders to the table, 2) deep community connections across diverse communities, and 3) reflective decision-making that incorporates cost-benefit assessments. Ms. Sumadiwirya noted her involvement with the King County Immigrant and Refugee Commission, Bellevue Schools Foundation and Porchlight shelter.

Councilmember Nieuwenhuis asked about the top priorities facing Bellevue and how Ms. Sumadiwirya would address them.

Ms. Sumadiwirya said the top priorities of housing affordability and balanced development present one of the most significant challenges. She expressed an interest in fostering Council consensus on a community centered development process that incorporates diverse resident input, including from those who are most vulnerable to displacement. She said she will champion incentives to encourage developers to exceed affordability requirements while implementing strategies to prevent displacement. She said the Eastgate Housing Roundtable provides an excellent model. She said she would build on the work of the Wilburton Citizens Advisory Committee (CAC) and the Affordable Housing Strategy to develop solutions for essential workers, senior adults and families. She said economic inclusion during rapid growth requires intentional policies. Ms. Sumadiwirya said she would work to create connections between global corporations and local small businesses while establishing incubator spaces for immigrant and minority entrepreneurs. She said her experience has taught her how economic development can benefit the entire community. Ms. Sumadiwirya said community health and safety will continue to be an important foundation for Bellevue's success. She commented on Bellevue's role as a City in a Park with community gathering spaces and accessible open space. She noted the importance of the effective delivery of human services. She said robust community engagement is critical to address all priorities.

Councilmember Hamilton asked Ms. Sumadiwirya to comment on a time when she navigated a complex decision-making process involving conflicting viewpoints, interests or competing priorities.

Ms. Sumadiwirya said that when she established the Bellden Café as Bellevue's first mission-focused social enterprise, she encountered conflicting priorities between the traditional business metrics and community impact goals. Small business advisors emphasized maximizing profit margins while nonprofit partners advocated for allocating more resources toward community programs. Meanwhile, customers were interested in high-quality products at accessible prices. She approached this complexity by creating a structured decision framework that quantified both the financial stability and community impact, which allowed her to evaluate tradeoffs more objectively. Ms. Sumadiwirya said she learned it is possible to be both empathetic and strategic at the same time. She said that understanding different perspectives helps reach better solutions. She facilitated dialogue between stakeholders (i.e., business owners, nonprofit leaders and community members) to better understand their perspectives. She said this approach reflects

what she admires most about Bellevue's government, which incorporates public input to provide clarity and direction. Ms. Sumadiwirya said that through the stakeholder discussions, they were able to identify innovative solutions that were not initially apparent. She said she implemented a transparent communication approach to proactively and clearly articulate how business decisions support the broader community mission. She said the process built trust across the stakeholder groups and created a shared understanding of priorities. She said the key to Bellevue's growth is open communication with the community based on common values and goals.

Councilmember Lee asked how Ms. Sumadiwirya would actively support and advance the Council's vision.

Ms. Sumadiwirya said she would advance the Council's vision by serving as an authentic bridge builder balancing Bellevue's aspiration as a global city and the priorities of our diverse communities. Her approach would focus on three strategies. The first would be to strengthen collaborative governance by partnering with the city manager and staff to ensure policies reflect both economic vitality and community well-being. She said she would work with the Bellevue Downtown Association (BDA), Bellevue Chamber of Commerce, Visit Bellevue and other community partners to build consensus on initiatives that support Bellevue's economic success while preserving neighborhood character. This includes fostering dialogue between business leaders and community advocates to develop balanced solutions. The second strategy is to enhance inclusive community engagement and accessibility for marginalized communities to participate in civic processes. The third strategy is to champion environmental stewardship that balances global standards with local values. She said her leadership with the King County Open Space Equity Cabinet has prepared her to advocate for sustainability initiatives that incorporate international best practices while honoring the community's connection to the future. She commented on the importance of parks in preserving the environment and providing community gathering spaces. Ms. Sumadiwirya said she is committed to bringing a balanced perspective to the Council.

Diala Ezzeddine said she has experienced first-hand the sense of belonging that Bellevue fosters in the Crossroads area, Bellevue Square and across the community. She said she wants to ensure that all businesses, residents, workers, visitors, organizations and communities feel welcomed, valued and heard. She noted her experience as an educator, data scientist and public manager involved in problem-solving, innovation and collaboration. She said good leadership begins with listening and engaging diverse perspectives before making data-driven decisions consistent with our values.

Ms. Ezzeddine expressed support for the City Council's vision statement that "Bellevue welcomes the world; Our diversity is our strength." She said her own family is diverse. If appointed to the Council, Ms. Ezzeddine said she would work on fostering more ways for inclusion and supporting smart growth that works for everyone. She acknowledged her roles as a mother, educator, data scientist, friend, neighbor and partner. She noted her deep caring for everything and everyone that she engages with. She said she was excited about the possibility to serve on the Council.

Councilmember Stokes asked Ms. Ezzeddine to comment on the role of a City Councilmember and what it takes to perform the role well.

Ms. Ezzeddine said she sees the role of Councilmember as someone with a deep commitment to public service and the responsibility of representing the voices of everyone in Bellevue. She said it would be an honor to serve the community and to contribute to its well being. She said the role requires the ability to actively listen to residents to understand their needs and to engage with diverse perspectives. She said a Councilmember must stay well informed about City policies, projects and initiatives. She said she will always consider the long-term impact of every decision. She noted the importance of being flexible, open, guided by principles and vision, and mindful of who Councilmembers are serving.

Councilmember Nieuwenhuis asked about the top priorities facing Bellevue and how Ms. Ezzeddine would address them.

Ms. Ezzeddine said the top issues are public safety, housing, transportation, access to services and overall quality of life. She noted her interest in working with neighboring communities to address common challenges. She said addressing challenges requires a thoughtful, long-term approach and partnership with everyone. She said there is no single solution that fits all aspects of an issue. However, she would prioritize city planning that actively incorporates community feedback and future-oriented thinking. When considering new development, Ms. Ezzeddine said it is important to consider traffic, parking capacity, transportation options, pedestrian and bike amenities, affordable housing and access to parks and natural areas. She said it is important to ensure that small businesses have the opportunity to thrive. She noted the benefit of collaborating with all stakeholders. Ms. Ezzeddine said her goal is to help shape Bellevue for future generations.

Councilmember Hamilton asked Ms. Ezzeddine to comment on a time when she navigated a complex decision-making process involving conflicting viewpoints, interests or competing priorities.

Ms. Ezzeddine said that throughout her personal and professional life she has navigated many complex situations involving conflicting viewpoints and competing priorities. As an example, she said one time she had to make a decision about a product by working with a partner despite very different viewpoints. She said she focused on customers and they ultimately reached a solution. She noted the value of listening, compromise, care, creativity and patience. She said she would engage with community members to gather data and consider different perspectives. This approach allows her to make the best decisions for everyone involved and affected by the decisions. Ms. Ezzeddine said that conflicts are inevitable and it is important to know how to navigate them.

Councilmember Lee asked how Ms. Ezzeddine would actively support and advance the Council's vision.

Ms. Ezzeddine said the Council's vision is personal to her. It reflects a commitment she can support because that is how she lives her life. If appointed to the Council, she would actively

engage with Bellevue's diverse communities, businesses and residents, listening to their needs and ensuring that their voices are reflected in Council decisions. Ms. Ezzeddine said she would continuously think of ways to incorporate the vision into every policy and initiative. She said her background in data science would be an asset to the Council. She thanked Councilmembers for their consideration.

Jaskaran (Jimmy) Singh Sarao said he really appreciates the Council's work for the community, including keeping it safe and fostering economic development. He said he lived in the United States for 13 years before he received a green card and he became a citizen in December 2023. He currently serves as the chair of the Human Services Commission. He is a scout leader for Troop 662 and a director of a nonprofit organization and enjoys mentoring youth. He noted his involvement in organizing community events and he thanked Councilmembers for attending. He praised human services staff and City Manager Carlson for their help to the commission in making decisions. He expressed support for the Bellevue Police Department. He noted his desire to contribute to and serve his community. He thanked staff for the Bellevue Essentials program, which introduced him to civic engagement and provided the opportunity for him to serve on the commission.

Councilmember Stokes asked Mr. Sarao to comment on the role of a City Councilmember and what it takes to perform the role well

Mr. Sarao said he was fortunate enough over the past year to meet a lot of people and learn about their concerns while he was campaigning. He spoke in favor of enhancing communications through social media. He said many neighborhood associations are not engaged with the City. He commented on long-term residents and expressed a commitment to ensuring they can continue to live well in Bellevue. He said the Bellevue Essentials class taught him how City and national policies affect our everyday lives. Mr. Sarao said the City has a responsibility for public safety. He commented on the need for mental health and substance abuse treatment. He noted his involvement with a shelter for many years. As a Councilmember, he would defend good policies and provide transparency, and his door would always be open. He said he wants to talk to real people about their daily lives and how they could be improved. He expressed concern regarding shoplifting. He noted the opportunities he has had and said it is important to preserve that for future generations.

Councilmember Nieuwenhuis asked about the top priorities facing Bellevue and how Mr. Sarao would address them.

Mr. Sarao said the top issues are public safety, housing and community engagement. He expressed concern that some people are coming from outside of Bellevue to commit crimes here. He commented on the lack of affordability to live in Bellevue. He commented on the importance of acting responsibly and paying taxes.

Councilmember Hamilton asked Mr. Sarao to comment on a time when he navigated a complex decision-making process involving conflicting viewpoints, interests or competing priorities.

Mr. Sarao said he was involved in a situation involving a community pool that needed to be expanded. He reached out to the Council and staff and both were very helpful. However, it was a long process to trade the land with the Parks and Community Services Department. He said many neighbors no longer had an interest in using the pool. He said two neighborhood associations worked together to unify the community and reach a solution.

Councilmember Lee asked how Mr. Sarao would actively support and advance the Council's vision.

Mr. Sarao said he would defend the good work and policies of the Council. He expressed an interest in using social media to engage the public.

Eric Drever said that he, his parents and his in-laws all live in Bellevue and love the community. He has worked as a public servant for the past 32 years and dedicated his life to ensuring an inclusive community. He said he works as the Chief of Police for the City of Tukwila. However, it would be rewarding to be able to serve his own community in Bellevue. He said he is familiar with working with the Comprehensive Plan. He noted that crime is a concern in all communities. He said he has a network of state and federal counterparts who deal with similar challenges. Mr. Drever said he volunteers in the community as a coach for youth sports. He has served as President of the Police Officers Guild.

Councilmember Stokes asked Mr. Drever to comment on the role of a City Councilmember and what it takes to perform the role well.

Mr. Drever said the legislative branch is responsible for adopting laws to ensure that services are provided efficiently and equitably to the community. He said he would come to Council meetings well prepared from reading the agenda packet and interested in public input. He encouraged extensive community outreach to listen to residents and business owners. He said it is critical to include the community's voice in the Council's decision making.

Councilmember Nieuwenhuis asked about the top priorities facing Bellevue and how Mr. Drever would address them.

Mr. Drever noted his commitment to public safety, which goes beyond law enforcement to include streets, parks, emergency services, infrastructure and equal access to programs and services. He said it is important to provide adequate resources to the Bellevue Police Department to allow for effective recruitment and retention. He noted the difficulty in recruiting police officers, especially compared to when he started in law enforcement 32 years ago. He described how he meets individually with new employees to discuss expectations. Mr. Drever said top City priorities include housing, affordable housing and homelessness. He said it is important to have an accurate understanding of the community's needs, especially with the new state mandate regarding middle housing and increased density. He said there are concerns about the potential impacts of boarding houses. He noted the importance of transportation issues and the preservation of neighborhood character.

Councilmember Hamilton asked Mr. Drever to comment on a time when he navigated a complex decision-making process involving conflicting viewpoints, interests or competing priorities.

Mr. Drever said he experiences that challenge on a daily basis. He described his team approach involving stakeholder engagement and the use of objective data to guide decisions. He commented on the need to modify police operations during the COVID pandemic and the value of a collaborative approach.

Councilmember Lee asked how Mr. Drever would actively support and advance the Council's vision.

Mr. Drever said he would pursue a collaborative approach to implement the Council's vision. He said it is important to challenge ourselves and to continue to grow as individuals and as a community. He would educate himself about all of the issues before the Council and work to engage the community.

Mayor Robinson thanked all of the candidates for their time and interest in participating in the interview process. She said the Council would have an Executive Session to evaluate the candidates and would potentially take action to appoint the new Councilmember following that session.

8. Consent Calendar

→ Deputy Mayor Malakoutian moved to approve the Consent Calendar, and Councilmember Stokes seconded the motion.

→ The motion to approve the Consent Calendar carried by a vote of 6-0, and the following items were approved:

- (a) Council Minutes
Minutes of March 4, 2025 Regular Meeting

9. Public Hearings: None.

10. Study Session

- (a) 2025 State Legislative Session Update

City Manager Carlson introduced staff's update regarding the state legislative session.

Katie Halse, Assistant Director of Intergovernmental Relations, City Manager's Office, said this legislative session is the first of a two-year biennium and is a 105-day long session. The session will focus on developing the 2025-2027 operating, transportation and capital budgets. Ms. Halse said more than 2,000 bills have been sponsored but not all have survived. She said the City's cross-departmental legislative team has reviewed more than 350 bills to date and approximately 90 of those bills are still alive. She highlighted some of the bills that are no longer viable.

Ms. Halse said the Council's 2025 State Legislative Agenda was adopted in October 2024 and serves as a compass for representing the City. The agenda is the primary lens used to assess funding opportunities and develop strategies to address priorities.

Key priorities for this legislative session include the Bellevue Grand Connection, transportation, digital permitting and affordable housing. Ms. Halse said the City's request for \$900,000 for safety and accessibility improvements to City Hall Plaza was submitted. Bellevue has also been advocating for approximately \$50 million for the Grand Connection I-405 crossing. The City requested that funding through a partnership and it is dependent on whether a transportation funding package moves forward.

Ms. Halse said two key transportation priorities are the I-405/SR 167 corridor (four projects) and the SR 520/124th Avenue NE interchange. Funding for the former is included in the Governor's proposed budget and a budget request has been submitted for the 124th Avenue NE interchange project. Another funding request is for \$2.7 million to modernize MyBuildingPermit.com to remain an industry leader in digital permitting technology solutions.

Ms. Halse said the City and others are asking the state legislature to provide adequate funding and resources to implement recent state land use and housing legislation in the areas of transit-oriented development (HB 1491), lot splitting (HB 1096, SB 5559), parking minimum requirements (SB 5184) and the Housing Accountability Act (SB 5148).

Ms. Halse said the state budget deliberations continue to be a challenge. She noted shortfalls in the operating and transportation budgets and decreasing revenues over the next four years. She commented on the impacts of inflation, interest rates and tariffs on the economy. She said the budget writers estimate a \$12 billion shortfall over the next four years for the operating budget, while the Governor's Office estimates a \$15 billion shortfall. She said the outgoing and incoming governors have identified approximately \$7 billion in proposed reductions. She said Senate and House leadership and budget writers are also working to identify \$6 billion in reductions.

Ms. Halse said new revenue sources under consideration include an employer payroll tax, surcharge on excessive executive compensation, Business and Occupation (B&O) tax surcharge, capital asset ownership (wealth tax), firearms tax and self-service storage tax.

The transportation budget has a \$8 billion shortfall over the next six years. Ms. Halse said there have been conversations about how to fill the shortfall including a tire fee, weight fee, gas tax increase, rental car fee, tolling and a bike tax. She said any new revenues would be used to fund existing projects and would not fund new initiatives or projects.

Ms. Halse noted an interest in ensuring that state-shared revenues currently distributed to local jurisdictions remain at existing levels. Another key issue is to consider whether the effect of the budget proposals is to transfer state responsibilities to local jurisdictions.

Ms. Halse said the evaluation of revenue proposals should look for sustainable strategies that demonstrate a fiscal responsibility to support economic prosperity, maintain long-term competitiveness, foster innovation and growth, attract talent, promote fair competition among businesses, ensure jurisdictions can plan for the future, and are derived from less volatile or economically sensitive sources.

Ms. Halse said budget proposals will begin to roll out on March 24 and committee hearings are anticipated that week. She highlighted key legislative dates through the end of the session on April 27.

Mayor Robinson thanked staff for the presentation and her colleagues for all they have done to support the Council's legislative agenda.

Councilmember Hamilton thanked staff for all of their work. He said Councilmembers have had the opportunity to promote the City's legislative priorities. He hopes Bellevue receives its funding requests.

Responding to Mr. Hamilton regarding revenue proposals, Ms. Halse said she repeatedly hears that no revenue option is off the table. Staff is evaluating all of the options and she has not heard a consensus on any specific proposal.

Genesee Adkins, Deputy City Manager, said staff will know more in another week or so. She suggested that balancing the budget will involve austerity measures coupled with specific revenue tools.

Councilmember Hamilton said he appreciated slide 11 listing the criteria for evaluating revenue proposals. He expressed concern regarding the impact of revenue options on residents, workers and businesses.

Responding to Councilmember Stokes, Ms. Halse said staff is evaluating proposed budget reductions in addition to the new revenue proposals. Mr. Stokes thanked Ms. Halse for her work and for the update to the Council. In further response to Mr. Stokes, Ms. Halse said Governor Ferguson is focused on a reduction approach before assessing new revenues. Governor Ferguson has not expressed support for any specific revenue option. Ms. Adkins said it will be challenging to resolve the budget before the end of the legislative session.

Responding to Mayor Robinson, Ms. Halse said Bellevue has been able to be nimble in response to fluctuating revenues.

John Resha, Chief Financial Officer, Finance and Asset Management Department, said the City ended 2024 within two percent of the budget forecast. The 2025 forecast anticipated slow growth in B&O tax and sales tax collections. Mr. Resha said staff monitors the economy, including the impact of tariffs on the cost of doing business.

Responding to Mayor Robinson, Ms. Halse said Councilmember Nieuwenhuis will testify this week in support of HB 1980, which allows employer shuttles to use BAT (business access and

transit) lanes under certain conditions. Ms. Halse thanked Councilmember/Representative Zahn for advancing the legislation in such a timely manner.

Deputy Mayor Malakoutian thanked staff and Bellevue's legislative delegation for their continued advocacy and work in a complex environment. He asked whether there are contingency plans if the City's budget requests are not met. Mr. Malakoutian complimented staff's criteria for evaluating revenue proposals.

Councilmember Lee thanked staff for all of their work. He asked how they are navigating the unpredictability of national politics and funding. He encouraged an enhanced focus on regional collaboration.

Mr. Halse acknowledged that navigating the current environment can be challenging when information changes so rapidly or staff is looking for information and proposals that do not yet exist. She said staff focuses on advanced planning and preparation to be able to effectively analyze and respond to proposals. She said staff works with Bellevue's federal delegation as well to determine how to proactively pursue grant funding.

Ms. Halse said Lacey Jane Wolfe, Intergovernmental Policy Advisor, organized a team of staff along the I-405 corridor to discuss the potential state transportation budget. Ms. Halse said there are many ways that Bellevue collaborates with other cities and agencies.

Referring to Councilmember Lee's question about dealing with unpredictability, Ms. Adkins said a key strategy is working with internal staff to clearly understand the City's requests to the state legislature and how they relate to the City budget. While the City likes to receive outside funding, Ms. Adkins said that comes with some risk because funding levels can fluctuate or be terminated. She said the City never counts on outside funding without thoughtful contingency planning.

Councilmember Nieuwenhuis thanked staff for their work with the Council and state legislature. He expressed support for the proposed criteria for evaluating revenue proposals. However, he noted that none of the proposals he has heard so far would meet the standard reflected in that criteria. Mr. Nieuwenhuis expressed concern about the impact of some of the proposed revenues, including a state payroll tax. He urged staff to keep the Council updated about revenue proposals and the anticipated impacts.

11. Land Use: None.
12. Other Ordinances, Resolutions, and Motions: None.
13. Written Reports
 - (a) Intergovernmental Affairs Monthly Update
14. Unfinished Business: None.

15. New Business: None.

16. Executive Session

- (a) Evaluate Qualifications of Candidates for Appointment to City Council [RCW 42.30.110(1)(h)]

At 8:37 p.m., Mayor Robinson declared recess to Executive Session for approximately 45 minutes to evaluate the qualifications of candidates for appointment to the Council. She said the public meeting would resume following that session.

- (b) Discussion and Potential Appointment of City Councilmember

The meeting resumed at 9:22 p.m.

Mayor Robinson said there were strong candidates and it was a difficult decision for the Council.

→ Deputy Mayor Malakoutian moved to appoint Claire Sumadiwirya to Position 5 on the Bellevue City Council, effective April 1, 2025 and contingent on Councilmember Zahn's resignation on March 28, 2025. Councilmember Lee seconded the motion.

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

17. Adjournment

At 9:23 p.m., Mayor Robinson declared the meeting adjourned.

Charmaine Arredondo, CMC
City Clerk

/kaw