

CITY OF BELLEVUE
CITY COUNCIL

Summary Minutes of Regular Meeting

January 6, 2026
6:00 p.m.

Council Chambers
Bellevue, Washington

PRESENT: Mayor Malakoutian, Deputy Mayor Hamilton and Councilmembers Bhargava, Briar, Nieuwenhuis, Robinson and Sumadiwirya

ABSENT: None.

1. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 6:06 p.m., with Councilmember Robinson presiding.

2. Roll Call; Flag Salute

City Clerk Charmaine Arredondo called the roll and all Councilmembers were present. Councilmember Briar 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 Robinson nominated Councilmember Malakoutian 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 Malakoutian as Mayor.

Mayor Malakoutian thanked his colleagues for their support and confidence in him. He thanked Councilmember Robinson for her leadership as mayor over the past six years. He commented on the importance of keeping the people of Bellevue at the center of their work.

Mayor Malakoutian invited nominations for Deputy Mayor.

Councilmember Sumadiwirya nominated Councilmember Hamilton to serve as Deputy Mayor.

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

At 6:08 p.m., Mayor Malakoutian declared a brief recess. The meeting resumed at 6:34 p.m.

Mayor Malakoutian congratulated Councilmember Briar on her election and welcomed her to the Council.

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 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) Janis Hyne, a resident of the Bridle Trails neighborhood, commented on good government through unity of purpose and brotherhood. She thanked Councilmembers for their willingness to serve and wished them happiness and wisdom in the new year.
- (b) Talia Thomas, Community Specialist at Plymouth Crossing, said her job is to organize as much activity, connection and normalcy as possible to make home feel like home. She plans activities, cooks for the residents, takes people to shows and helps residents participate in the broader community. She asked the Council to remember that Plymouth Crossing residents are members of the community who shop here, build relationships and call Bellevue their home. She noted that Councilmembers will be invited to their Friendsgiving this year and she hopes they will be able to attend.
- (c) Aaliyah Bains, a Bellevue resident, noted her degree in criminal justice from the University of Washington and experience working in community health for more than eight years. She expressed concern about the negative things that have been said about

the Eastgate housing campus. Ms. Bains said that one year in permanent supportive housing is less expensive than 16 days in a King County hospital or 10 weeks in a King County jail. She said the disabled, individuals experiencing homelessness and populations of color are most likely to be victims of crime. She encouraged the Council to consider those on the margin of the community.

(d) Lisa Pierce, a resident of Plymouth Crossing for two years, said her life was going well until her husband passed away. She said she has never used drugs and did not understand the effects of trauma. She never imagined she would be homeless. She said Plymouth Crossing has provided her with a home and a family. She took on the responsibility of the Tenant Council Chair to show ownership and accountability for her community and to help her fellow residents.

5. Reports of Community Councils, Boards, and Commissions

(a) 2026 Grant Allocations to Artists and Arts Groups Serving Bellevue

City Manager Diane Carlson opened discussion regarding the 2026 art project grant allocations to artists and arts groups in Bellevue.

Lorie Hoffman, Arts and Creative Economy Manager, Community Development Department, said staff is seeking direction regarding the grant recommendations from the Arts Commission. The grant program is consistent with the Council's 2024-2026 priority to explore options to expand arts funding through mechanisms such as the annual grant process and direct investments in the BelRed Arts District.

Manette Stamm, Arts Program Assistant, said the City has three art grant programs (i.e., project grants, Eastside Arts Partnership grants and capital facility grants), and tonight's item relates to project grant allocations, which follow a yearly funding cycle. The other two types of grants are awarded every two years. Ms. Stamm said the grant applications are reviewed by an allocations committee of Arts Commissioners and community members focusing on the following evaluation criteria: artistic innovation, public access and benefits, and project feasibility.

Artists and organizations submitted 67 project grant applications totaling \$464,000 in funding requests. Ms. Stamm said the proposed 2026 allocations total \$200,000 and include 31 project grants totaling \$187,000 and 13 bonus grants of \$1,000 each specifically for projects in the BelRed Arts District.

Erika Enomoto, Vice Chair of the Arts Commission, highlighted two projects recommended for grant funding. The first involves the development of pollinator hubs, or outdoor community art installations, offering educational and artistic resources. The second is the Teen Art Studio provided through the Gage Academy of Art at the Highland Community Center. The program has a free weekly drop-in art program for teens, and students learn from professional teachers. Art supplies and a meal are provided and this project was recommended for a BelRed bonus.

Vice Chair Enomoto said the EAP grant activities and project grants are anticipated to serve more than one million residents and visitors and will provide more than 550,000 free and reduced admissions. The grants provide support for diverse organizations and help boost tourism and Bellevue's creative identity.

Ms. Hoffman requested Council action regarding the recommended funding allocations for the 2026 arts project grants.

Mayor Malakoutian thanked everyone for the presentation.

Councilmember Robinson thanked Vice Chair Enomoto and the Arts Commission for their work. She encouraged enhanced efforts to publicize the art installations, activities, exhibits and performances. Ms. Robinson said she would love to see a weekly series offering some type of arts event or activity throughout Bellevue. Ms. Hoffman said there are plans to increase marketing for the grant recipients over the next year. She noted that the BelRed Art District Community Alliance is working to establish an events calendar for both Bellevue and the broader Eastside.

Councilmember Bhargava thanked the Arts Commission for its work.

- Councilmember Sumadiwirya moved to approve the Arts Commission's recommended funding allocations for 2026 Project Grants and to direct staff to proceed with implementation. Councilmember Nieuwenhuis seconded the motion.
- The motion carried by a vote of 7-0.

6. Report of the City Manager: None.

7. Council Business and New Initiatives

(a) Law Enforcement Appreciation Day

Councilmember Nieuwenhuis said January 9 is Law Enforcement Appreciation Day, which honors the men and women who serve our community with courage, professionalism and a commitment to public safety. He said the Bellevue Police Department sets a high standard both statewide and nationally. He recognized those who support the dedication and sacrifice of family members in law enforcement. He thanked all law enforcement personnel that help make Bellevue one of the safest cities in the country.

(b) Council Liaison Recommendation for Appointment to Planning Commission

Mayor Malakoutian said former Planning Commissioner Carolynn Ferris resigned from her position in November 2025. However, a change in circumstances allows her to resume her service. Mr. Malakoutian recommended appointing Ms. Ferris back to her seat on the commission to serve the remainder of her original term through May 31, 2027.

→ Councilmember Bhargava moved to appoint Carolynn Ferris to resume serving on the Planning Commission through the end of her term on May 31, 2027. Deputy Mayor Hamilton seconded the motion.

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

8. Consent Calendar

→ Deputy Mayor Hamilton moved to approve the Consent Calendar, and Councilmember Bhargava 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

Minutes of December 2, 2025 Regular Meeting

Minutes of December 8, 2025 Special Meeting

Minutes of December 9, 2025 Regular Meeting

(b) Ordinance No. 6895: 1) authorizing execution of a grant agreement (and supplements if necessary) with the Washington State Transportation Improvement Board (TIB) to accept up to \$180,912 in state gas tax funding to support the construction phase of the Lakemont Boulevard RRFB at SE 58th St Project, part of the Traffic Safety Implementation (CIP Plan No. PW-R-46)), and 2) amending the 2025-2030 General CIP to increase the budget for CIP Plan No. PW-R-46 by \$180,912.

(c) Ordinance No. 6896: 1) authorizing execution of a grant agreement (and supplements if necessary) with the Washington State Transportation Improvement Board (TIB) to accept up to \$1,628,418 in state Climate Commitment Act funding to support design and implementation of the NE 2nd Street Bike Connection, Bellevue Way NE to 108th Ave NE Project, part of the Bicycle Network Facilities Implementation Program (CIP Plan No. PW-WB-85), and 2) amending the 2025-2030 General CIP to increase the budget for CIP Plan No. PW-WB-85 by \$1,628,418.

(d) Resolution No. 10569 authorizing the execution of an amendment to the Professional Services Agreement with Transpo Group USA, Inc. in an amount up to \$83,785.91, plus all applicable taxes, to continue providing project management services and engineering support for Bellevue's SMART grant project, Real-Time Signal Safety Intervention (RTSSI). The RTSSI project is funded through a federal grant from the USDOT which commenced in September 2024.

(e) Resolution No. 10570 authorizing execution of the Second Modification to the Independent Force Investigation Team - King County (IFIT-KC) Interlocal

Cooperative Agreement adding Seattle Police Department as a member agency. The agreement executed shall be substantially in the form of the agreement in the Council Library.

(f) Resolution No. 10571 to adopt the name “Eastgate Commons” for the park site located at 14700 SE 39th Street.

9. Public Hearing: None.

10. Study Session

(a) Bellevue School District Levy Renewal Briefing

City Manager Carlson introduced the presentation regarding the Bellevue School District (BSD) 2026 levy renewals.

Katie Halse, Assistant Director for Intergovernmental Relations, City Manager’s Office, said the two levy propositions will be on the February ballot for Bellevue voters. She said tonight’s briefing is informational only.

Dr. Kelly Aramaki, Superintendent, Bellevue School District, noted there are restrictions on what BSD employees can say about ballot measures. However, they are allowed to present factual information. He said the district has 19,345 students representing 125 countries of birth and 117 languages. There are 2,727 employees and 63 percent of the district’s educators have at least a master’s degree. Dr. Aramaki said the district has a 93 percent graduation rate, a 86 percent pass rate for AP exams, and four schools are typically in the top 10 schools nationally. BSD’s enrollment increased by 1,000 students over the past three years and financial recovery is exceeding expectations.

Dr. Aramaki introduced the two proposed levy renewals: Proposition 1, Educational Programs and Operations Levy, and Proposition 2, Technology and Capital Projects Levy. Proposition 1 helps fund seven periods for middle schools and high schools, Career and Technical Education (CTE) programs, STEM learning and advanced classes, counselors and nurses, safety and security staff, Special Education services, music programs, athletics and afterschool activities. Proposition 2 covers school safety and security, building maintenance and improvements, and classroom technology and training for educators.

John Harrison, Chief of Staff, BSD, said that 78 percent of the budget supports teaching and teaching support, and 13 percent supports food services, maintenance, technology, grounds, security, operations, transportation, utilities, insurance, and other items. The levy rate for the first levy is 0.75 cents per \$1,000 of property assessed value (AV) and the rate for the second levy is 0.54 cents per \$1,000 AV. For a Bellevue home valued at \$1.5 million, the cost of the two levy renewals is \$1,935 annually.

Mr. Harrison compared the 2022 levy funds to the 2026 levy funds. He said BSD schools maintain one of the lowest tax rates in the region.

Mayor Malakoutian thanked BSD staff for the presentation and noted that it demonstrates why so many families want their children to go to BSD schools.

Responding to Councilmember Briar, Dr. Aramaki commented regarding the district's cybersecurity efforts.

Responding to Councilmember Sumadiwirya, Dr. Aramaki said the levy helps to fund general operations, including teachers' salaries and additional staff. He noted the robust language programs including Spanish, Japanese, Korean, Mandarin, French and Arabic.

Mr. Harrison said the bulk of funding for multilingual learners comes from the state. However, the levy dollars enhance those programs and enable the district to provide seventh periods in middle school and high school.

In further response to Ms. Sumadiwirya, Dr. Aramaki said students are excited about the career technical programs including maritime welding and nursing. He said there are a number of internship opportunities as well.

Councilmember Robinson thanked Dr. Aramaki and all district teachers and staff for their work to support students, noting that the strong schools also help support the economy. Ms. Robinson said she would be interested in a future Council discussion about whether to take a position on the levies.

Councilmember Nieuwenhuis concurred with Councilmember Robinson. He thanked the school district for providing a welcoming, inclusive and successful learning experience. Responding to Mr. Nieuwenhuis, Dr. Aramaki said approximately 800 students are enrolled in some type of digital class. He said the district partners with approximately 100 home school families and the majority of digital and home school students live in Bellevue. In further response to Mr. Nieuwenhuis, Dr. Aramaki confirmed that affordability is a problem for teachers who would like to live in Bellevue. However, the district pays quite well and teachers receive strong support, including to work on their certification.

Councilmember Bhargava noted that he has two children in Bellevue schools. Responding to Mr. Bhargava, Dr. Aramaki said families continue to move to Bellevue to attend the schools. However, some students reside outside of the district. Many families with new students indicate they want their children to go to Bellevue elementary schools because they want to later go to Bellevue high schools. Dr. Aramaki said some families are attracted by the Arabic and Japanese language programs. Mr. Harrison said the district has increased the number of opportunities for families to access preschool. He said the kindergarten cohort was up significantly this year.

Mr. Bhargava agreed with Councilmember Robinson about the Council considering whether to take an official position on the levies. Responding to Mr. Bhargava, Mr. Harrison said the district's budget would need to be reduced by approximately 24 percent if the levies are not renewed.

Deputy Mayor Hamilton thanked BSD staff and faculty for their dedication and good work. He said his six children attended Bellevue schools and two of them are now teachers. He looks forward to continued partnership with the district. He agreed with Councilmember Robinson's suggestion for the Council to consider officially endorsing the levies.

Responding to Councilmember Robinson, City Clerk Arredondo said if the Council chooses to consider taking an official position on the levy, the Council must provide time for pro and con committees to comment to the Council.

- Councilmember Robinson moved that staff bring forward at a later date an agenda item that includes a discussion regarding the levy and inviting pro and con committees to comment. Councilmember Bhargava seconded the motion.
- The motion carried by a vote of 7-0.

At 7:45 p.m., Mayor Malakoutian declared a short break. The meeting resumed at 7:57 p.m.

(b) Eastgate Housing Campus Update

City Manager Carlson introduced staff's update regarding the Eastgate housing campus.

Bianca Siegl, Director for the Office of Housing, City Manager's Office, said the Eastgate campus opened in 2023 and includes: 1) PorchLight, 100-bed men's shelter, 2) Plymouth Crossing, 92 units of housing with on-site services, and 3) Polaris, 360 affordable workforce apartments. The City cooperates with agencies and the surrounding neighborhood to support the success of these services within the community. Ms. Siegl said the housing programs are consistent with the objectives of the City's Thriving People and Communities Strategic Target Area (STA).

Ms. Siegl said an action plan was created in response to community concerns expressed by nearby residents and property owners. The PorchLight shelter has implemented changes to address behavioral issues, including increasing the consequences for violating the code of conduct. Plymouth Crossing is providing enhanced health services on site and Metro has a behavioral health team at the nearby Eastgate Park and Ride. Ms. Siegl said a memo outlining shared expectations was developed between Plymouth Crossing and the Bellevue Police Department, and there has been increased outreach by the police and homelessness outreach staff. Ongoing engagement includes monthly meetings of the PorchLight community advisory group and the working group, monthly staff coordination meetings between agencies and providers, and continued outreach by social workers and others.

Ms. Siegl said PorchLight adopted Eastgate Way through the Keep Bellevue Beautiful program and conducts trash cleanups. She noted that Plymouth Crossing hosted a Friendsgiving and invited neighbors, City staff, elected officials and others. The shelter is nearly full every night with an average of 97 residents, and 35,405 bed nights were provided in 2024. In 2025, 27,557 bed nights were provided, with an average of 100 people per night, and more than 700 individuals were served.

Nico Quijano, Homelessness Outreach Program Manager, described the impact of the program on individuals who have been assisted through the shelter and ultimately found stable housing.

Ms. Siegl said Plymouth Crossing residents have a high participation rate in on-site programming and services, and more than half of the units are filled via local referrals from the City's outreach teams and community organizations.

Mr. Quijano recalled that in 2022, there were a number of individuals living in vehicles on SE 41st Place in the Factoria area. He said numerous people have been housed and are thriving at Plymouth Crossing. In 2023, he encountered a woman who was a survivor of domestic violence living in her van. She is now living in Plymouth Crossing and is able to prepare home-cooked meals for her daughter.

Ms. Siegl said overall calls for service to the Fire Department, primarily related to medical emergencies and responses by social workers, have decreased since a peak in February 2025. She noted, however, that calls to Polaris have increased as more residents move into the apartments. Police Department calls for service in November 2025 were lower than the peak in September 2024.

Ms. Siegl said staff recommends continued monitoring of the data, continued coordination with PorchLight and Plymouth Crossing staff and continued participation in PorchLight Community Advisory Group and Working Group meetings. Staff also recommends, for future permanent supportive housing in Bellevue, that the City require safety and public communications plans as part of the capital funding agreements.

Mayor Malakoutian thanked staff for the presentation and for all of their work.

Councilmember Nieuwenhuis thanked staff for the update and noted that he has discussed the Eastgate campus with residents and business owners. He commended the organizations operating the housing campus. He noted the lack of information in the presentation regarding the impacts of the campus on residents and businesses. He expressed concern about mothers who are afraid to walk their children by the campus and he noted that he observed open drug use at the Eastgate park and ride lot. He said the nearby Sunset Corporate Campus has spent hundreds of thousands of dollars on security upgrades. He said businesses in the area have reported they are losing customers.

Mr. Nieuwenhuis expressed support for the housing and services provided to those in need. However, he believes more analysis and discussion is needed. He expressed concern regarding the level of calls for service to the Fire Department and Police Department. He asked about the metrics to be tracked to monitor the action items.

Ms. Siegl said the calls for service have decreased and the City will continue to work with the housing providers to address safety and specific incidents.

Mr. Nieuwenhuis asked about the Plymouth Crossing-BPD joint expectations letter and whether similar letters were in place for PorchLight or Polaris. Assistant Chief of Police Andrew Popochock said the purpose of the letter is to ensure consistency between housing staff and the BPD. Councilmember Nieuwenhuis requested an update in six months. He said he has been hearing concerns from residents in recent months.

Deputy Mayor Hamilton thanked everyone for their work in the community. He expressed appreciation for the adjustments that have been made to address issues and concerns related to the Eastgate housing campus. Responding to Mr. Hamilton, Ms. Siegl said that action plan items are addressed during the regular coordination meetings with the housing operators, and items will be added as needed. Ms. Siegl acknowledged there continues to be concerns about litter in the area and issues related to the park and ride lot.

Mr. Hamilton noted the need for more permanent supportive housing. Ms. Siegl said it is allowed wherever multifamily housing is allowed. She said financing this type of housing and related programs is challenging. She said new permanent supportive housing is opening soon in Kirkland and in Redmond.

Responding to Mr. Hamilton, Assistant Chief Popochock provided additional details regarding the calls for service. Deputy Mayor Hamilton said he is interested in information about opportunities to engage with the housing campus.

Councilmember Briar thanked everyone for their work. She concurred with Councilmember Nieuwenhuis' interest in performance metrics and information regarding the impacts of the housing campus on nearby businesses and residents. Ms. Siegl said staff will continue to monitor the effectiveness of operational changes in addressing problematic issues.

Councilmember Robinson thanked City Manager Carlson for her compassionate focus on this area and her responsiveness to the community and the Council. Ms. Robinson thanked the individuals who spoke during oral communications. She recalled the planning effort for the housing campus, which began with a plan for a shelter. She expressed concern regarding the increase in crime in the Eastgate area around the campus. Ms. Robinson suggested the creation of a safety and public communications plan for the housing campus.

Councilmember Bhargava thanked everyone for their work. He concurred with his colleagues about the importance of measuring the effectiveness of the mitigation efforts around the housing campus. He commended the housing programs for changing people's lives and expressed support for the supportive services, including those addressing mental health. He suggested conducting regular surveys to determine residents' perspectives on public safety around the campus.

Mr. Bhargava suggested establishing a success parameter for graduation to move people to other housing and to create capacity for new residents in need of help.

Councilmember Sumadiwirya said she is grateful for the housing programs and for the compassion and patience demonstrated by the surrounding residents. She expressed concern

regarding safety around the housing campus, noting that she often gives a ride to co-workers at night who live at Polaris. Ms. Sumadiwirya asked whether there is a feedback loop from residents on campus about their perception of public safety. Ms. Siegl said there is not a formal feedback loop except for the community meetings. Responding to Councilmember Sumadiwirya, Assistant Chief Popochock provided additional comments regarding the calls for service, including individuals who generate repeated calls for service.

Mayor Malakoutian thanked everyone for their work. He concurred with Councilmember Sumadiwirya's suggestion to create a feedback loop with residents. Mr. Malakoutian asked about the measures of success for the housing campus. Ms. Siegl said staff looks at outcomes for individuals and information from neighbors regarding their sense of safety. She said staff will continue to develop more performance metrics.

Mr. Malakoutian asked what might be the first step to reduce Police Department calls for service. Assistant Chief Popochock said calls for service are not necessarily bad because many of the calls are calls for assistance. However, they do require an officer response and have a cost to the City. Mr. Popochock said one way to reduce calls for service is to divert more individuals to social workers and services to address their needs and the underlying issues contributing to their housing instability.

Councilmember Robinson concurred with the importance of accurately measuring the success of the housing programs and services.

11. Land Use: None.
12. Other Ordinances, Resolutions, and Motions: None.
13. Written Reports
 - (a) 2026 Report on Emergency Procurement for Utility Connections to Shower and Laundry Trailer and for Safe Parking Location at 515 116th Avenue NE.
14. Unfinished Business: None.
15. New Business: None.
16. Executive Session: None.
17. Adjournment

At 9:17 p.m., Mayor Malakoutian declared the meeting adjourned.

Charmaine Arredondo, CMC
City Clerk
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