

CITY OF BELLEVUE  
CITY COUNCIL

Summary Minutes of Regular Meeting

October 15, 2024  
6:00 p.m.

Council Chambers  
Bellevue, Washington

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

ABSENT: None.

1. Call to Order

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

Ms. Robinson said individuals are not allowed to disrupt the meeting, which includes talking out of turn or without permission, interrupting or making sounds when someone else is talking or approaching a Councilmember or City employee who is staffing the meeting. If a person disrupts the meeting, Mayor Robinson will issue a warning or ask the person to leave the room for the rest of the meeting. She asked everyone to express themselves without name-calling, taunting or disparaging others.

2. Roll Call; Flag Salute

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

(a) Arbor Day Proclamation

Councilmember Stokes read the proclamation recognizing October 26, 2024, as Arbor Day in Bellevue and urged all community members to plant trees to help promote the well-being of present and future generations. Bellevue has been recognized for the 33<sup>rd</sup> consecutive year as a Tree City USA community by the National Arbor Day Foundation.

Curtis Kukal, Park Ranger, introduced Laura Lawler, a Bellevue Master Naturalist volunteer. Mr. Kukal said the Bellevue naturalists play an instrumental role in the annual Arbor Day planting event and in other projects throughout the year.

Ms. Lawler said she appreciated the City's commitment to trees, especially native trees and environments. She said it takes 300 years to restore a forest after demolition and commented on

the importance of ongoing tree protection and restoration initiatives. Ms. Lawler thanked City staff for involving volunteers in their efforts.

(b) Hindu American Awareness and Appreciation Month Proclamation

Councilmember Lee read the proclamation recognizing October as Hindu American Awareness and Appreciation Month in Bellevue. He encouraged everyone to learn about the Hindu American community and to celebrate the cultural, ethnic, linguistic and religious diversity in Bellevue.

Atul Hirpara thanked the Council for the proclamation, which he said sends an important and meaningful message to the Hindu American community in Bellevue and the region. He said he looks forward to continuing to collaborate with the City. He noted upcoming activities including the Diwali holiday on October 31.

3. Approval of Agenda

Mayor Robinson noted the addition of Agenda Item 7(a) to address an appeal filed earlier in the day related to the notice of exclusion from participating in public comment that she issued the previous day to Mr. Alex Tsimerman.

→ Deputy Mayor Malakoutian moved to approve the agenda, amended to add Agenda Item 7(a) as described above. Councilmember Stokes 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) Joe Kunzler expressed concern that Alex Tsimerman is potentially driving with a suspended driver's license. He thanked Mayor Robinson and the Council for excluding Mr. Tsimerman from participating in public comment tonight. He thanked the Council and the City Clerk for their public service.

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

6. Report of the City Manager: None.

7. Council Business and New Initiatives

- (a) Appeal related to the notice of exclusion from participating in public comment issued to Alex Tsimerman

Mayor Robinson asked the Council to consider an appeal of the notice of exclusion from public comment participation pertaining to Alex Tsimerman. She said the notice of exclusion prevents Mr. Tsimerman from participating in public comment periods during City Council meetings for a 30-day period. As the presiding officer, Mayor Robinson said she has the authority to issue a notice of exclusion for any individual who repeatedly disrupts, disturbs or otherwise impedes the orderly conduct of Council meetings.

Over the past six months, Mr. Tsimerman has disrupted, disturbed or otherwise impeded the orderly conduct of meetings at least 10 times. Mayor Robinson said he was warned that his behavior violated the rules in every case. At six of the meetings, he continued to violate the rules despite being warned and was escorted from Council Chambers. At two meetings, Mayor Robinson called a recess to suspend the meeting. She said Mr. Tsimerman's violations of the rules of decorum and refusal to correct his conduct after being warned have caused actual disruptions and disturbances and impeded the orderly conduct of the meetings, which is the basis for her issuance of the notice of exclusion for the next 30 days. Mayor Robinson said Mr. Tsimerman filed an appeal earlier in the day.

Acting City Attorney Trisna Tanus said that, under the Council Rules, any person excluded from participation in future public comment periods or from attendance at future Council meetings may file an appeal, stating the basis for the appeal, to the City Clerk within six business days of the posting of the notice of exclusion on the door of Council Chambers. The notice of exclusion was posted on October 14 and an appeal was filed within the required deadline. Ms. Tanus said the Council must consider the appeal during tonight's meeting.

Ms. Tanus said the Council will consider and make a decision about whether to uphold or overturn Mayor Robinson's exclusion order. Upholding means denying the appeal and that the mayor issued the notice of exclusion consistent with Council Rules. Overturning means granting the appeal and that the mayor did not properly issue the notice of exclusion.

Ms. Tanus said the Council Rules state that the presiding officer is authorized to issue a notice of exclusion to any individual who repeatedly disrupts, disturbs or otherwise impedes the orderly conduct of Council meetings. She said the mayor is able to issue a notice only if she considers the following factors: 1) the seriousness and number of disruptions or violations, 2) their impact on the orderly conduct of Council meetings, 3) whether the conduct threatens public safety, and 4) the person's record at these meetings. Ms. Tanus said the mayor is required to apply the facts to these factors and to decide whether to exclude the individual from public participation or from the meetings themselves, as well as the length of the exclusion (up to 60 days). Mayor Robinson's notice of exclusion documents Mr. Tsimerman's continued violations of Council Rules of Decorum and a record of the dates and descriptions of occurrences of violations. Ms. Tanus said the mayor has decided that Mr. Tsimerman's violations warranted an exclusion from participating in public comment at Council meetings for a period of 30 days.

Ms. Tanus said that, for this appeal, the Council should review both the notice of exclusion and Mr. Tsimerman's written appeal reflecting the basis of his appeal. The Council should determine whether the facts support the mayor's findings and that the mayor properly considered the required factors in issuing the exclusion order. Ms. Tanus said the Council shall not solicit any testimony and, at the end of Council deliberations, the Council should take action to uphold or overturn the notice of exclusion.

The meeting was paused briefly to allow Councilmembers to review the documents.

→ Deputy Mayor Malakoutian moved to uphold the notice of exclusion order issued to Mr. Alex Tsimerman. Councilmember Stokes seconded the motion.

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

#### 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 7-0, and the following items were approved:

- (a) Council Minutes  
*Minutes of September 24, 2024 Regular Meeting*
- (b) Ordinance No. 6807: 1) authorizing execution of an amendment and supplements if necessary to the Interlocal Cooperation Agreement with King County for the Conservation Futures open space acquisition program, providing the City with \$752,000 in King County Conservation Futures proceeds; 2) amending the 2023-2029 General Capital Investment Program (CIP) to increase the budget for the Parks & Open Space Acquisition (CIP Plan No. P-AD-82) by \$752,000.
- (c) Ordinance No. 6808 amending Ordinance No. 6739 to conform Section 2 of Ordinance No. 6739 to Attachments A and B releasing a portion of a public utility easement located at 14121 NE 20th Street which has been declared surplus to the City's needs and is no longer required for providing continued public utility service.
- (d) Resolution No. 10423 authorizing execution of a five-year Wireless Communication Facilities Site Lease Agreement with an automatic five-year extension with T-Mobile at Fire Station #8 located at 5701 Lakemont Blvd. SE.
- (e) Resolution No. 10424 authorizing the execution of Supplemental Agreement No. 4 to the Professional Services Agreement with HNTB Corporation in the amount of \$855,665.63, plus all applicable taxes, for a total contract amount of \$1,204,864.81, plus all applicable taxes, for civil and structural engineering

design services for the Mountains to Sound Greenway Trail - 142nd Place SE to 150th Avenue SE Project (CIP Plan No. PW-W/B-86 and PW-R-199). This project is partially funded by the Neighborhood Safety, Connectivity and Congestion Levy.

9. Public Hearings: None.

10. Study Session

(a) Summary of Outreach Activities and Community Questions in Support of Local Street Speed Limit Reduction Project

Acting City Manager Diane Carlson introduced discussion regarding a proposed reduction in the speed limit to 20 miles per hour, except as otherwise posted.

Andrew Singelakis, Director, Transportation Department, said staff has been busy over the past six months sharing information with the community about the proposed reduction in the speed limit. The program builds on successful speed limit reduction pilot programs in three Bellevue neighborhoods.

Vanessa Humphreys, Neighborhood Traffic Safety Services Manager, recalled that staff presented information regarding this topic in February. At that time, the Council provided direction to staff to conduct community outreach and to return with an update to the Council. Staff proposes lowering the speed limit on most local streets from 25 miles per hour to 20 miles per hour. Project implementation entails replacing approximately 350 speed limit signs and 150 pavement markings at an estimated cost of \$600,000. The project responds to community concerns and support for the Vision Zero program and represents a culture shift in Bellevue toward safe traffic speeds.

Ms. Humphreys said lowering speed limits has been expanding nationwide as other cities have adopted similar Vision Zero goals. Since 2020, the City tested lowering the speed limit to 20 miles per hour in three neighborhoods (i.e., Surrey Downs, East Bellevue Greenway and Eastgate) and found it to be effective in reducing higher traffic speeds. Ms. Humphreys said surveys for the Eastgate and East Bellevue Greenway areas indicated strong community support for the lower speed limit.

There are two street types in Bellevue: 1) local, where speeds are managed by the traffic calming program, and 2) arterials, where upcoming work is planned to address arterial speed management. A local street is defined in the Comprehensive Plan and generally involves shorter trips, lower traffic volumes and the presence of driveways. They often lack sidewalks and accommodate vehicles, bikes and pedestrians. Ms. Humphreys said a tool is available on the City's web site for residents to identify whether their street is targeted for the reduced speed limit. She said education has been a strong component of the outreach plan involving community organizations and general public feedback.

John Murphy, Senior Planner, said the goals of the community outreach were to inform, educate and answer questions from the community. He said the City's communications have reached tens of thousands of community members and staff has personally spoken with hundreds of people. The outreach effort was conducted through community events (e.g., Crossroads Farmers Market, Newport Hills Community Club, EarthFest at Bellevue Botanical Garden), It's Your City newsletter, social media and online information in multiple languages.

Question raised by the public asked whether the reduced speed limit will be effective, safety outcomes will be improved, the speed limit will be enforced, and the lower speed limit will increase travel times. There was an interest in whether there will be accompanying traffic calming measures and whether speeds will be reduced on arterials. Mr. Murphy said there was broad agreement that many people drive too fast in Bellevue neighborhoods.

Mr. Murphy said the three pilot program neighborhoods experienced a reduction in traffic speeds, especially at the highest speeds. He said more speed limit signs will be added and some streets are proposed to remain at the current speed limit. He said lower traffic speeds improve safety outcomes and the speed limit will be enforced. He said submitting a traffic service request (TSR) will be the best way for residents to connect with enforcement efforts. He said transportation staff will provide data regarding areas with higher traffic speeds to the police department.

Mr. Murphy said any change in travel time is negligible, primarily because local streets serve shorter trips. He said there will continue to be traffic calming projects including traffic circles, speed humps, radar signs and other measures. He said five projects are in planning or design to further reduce traffic speeds. He said arterial traffic speeds are not addressed in the current effort. However, next year staff will advance the development of the speed management plan for arterials.

Mr. Murphy said 12 streets are recommended to remain at 25 miles per hour and five are recommended to retain their 30 miles per hour speed limit. He said the recommendations are based on less mixing between travel modes on those streets, fewer driveways, and connections to major streets that serve as the primary access in a neighborhood. He said SE 32<sup>nd</sup> Street at the south end of the Woodridge neighborhood, recommended for 25 miles per hour, is a one-block segment that connects Richards Road to 128<sup>th</sup> Avenue SE, and ultimately to the freeway on-ramp.

Mr. Murphy said a change in the speed limit requires an amendment of Bellevue City Code Chapter 11.32. It currently reflects a default speed limit of 25 miles per hour on all streets, except as otherwise posted. The proposed amendment is to establish a default speed limit of 20 miles per hour, except as otherwise posted.

Mr. Murphy said staff is seeking Council direction to return with an ordinance for final action on the consent calendar on October 22 and to move forward with project design. New speed limit signs will be installed beginning in Fall 2025 and continuing through Spring 2026. Staff will continue their outreach and public education efforts as the project is designed and implemented.

Communications will include information in It's Your City, transit advertising, yard signs, a children's art contest, in-person briefings and community events.

- Deputy Mayor Malakoutian moved to direct staff to return at a later date with an ordinance on the consent calendar that will alter Bellevue City Code Chapter 11.32 and set a default speed limit on all streets of 20 miles per hour, except as otherwise posted. Councilmember Stokes seconded the motion.

Councilmember Nieuwenhuis, liaison to the Transportation Commission, thanked staff for their significant efforts with the community. He acknowledged the challenge of initiating a culture shift and gaining widespread compliance. He expressed concern regarding motorcycles racing on 148<sup>th</sup> Avenue every Saturday night. He suggested that signage will not be sufficient and that robust enforcement will be necessary. He expressed concern about the estimated cost of \$600,000 to change the signage and noted that other projects might be a better use of the funding (e.g., bike corridor on Spring Boulevard). He looks forward to reviewing the data following the implementation of the lower speed limit.

Mr. Murphy said that for the three pilot program areas, data was reviewed following the first three months of implementation and further analyzed after approximately six months.

Responding to Mr. Nieuwenhuis, Mr. Murphy said the arterial study will begin early next year and will take 12-16 months to complete. Mr. Murphy said Safe Streets for All grant funding will contribute to the study effort.

Councilmember Zahn expressed support for moving forward and noted that one of the pillars of the Vision Zero program is safe traffic speeds. She concurred with Mr. Nieuwenhuis about the importance of enforcement in influencing a culture shift. She asked whether the City will be partnering with the Bellevue School District in this effort.

Ms. Zahn asked whether the streets recommended for higher speed limits (i.e., 25 and 30 miles per hour) are identified in the Vision Zero high injury network. She asked about the use of traffic cameras to assist in enforcement.

Mr. Singelakis said that traffic safety cameras will be provided through grant funding. He said the impact of the higher speed limits will be studied and compared to lower speed limit streets after the program is implemented.

Ms. Humphreys said the City plans to partner with the school district, for example for the children's art contest.

Councilmember Lee expressed support for the proposed reduced speed limit. He described the proposal as an incremental approach and wondered how the City can address the higher traffic speeds more holistically in terms of changing human behavior. He suggested stop signs at every intersection to slow traffic, even if vehicles do not stop.

Councilmember Hamilton said he appreciated the extensive community outreach and comprehensive effort to address the speed limit. He said signage and enforcement will be important elements of implementing the lower speed limit. He suggested outreach to local driving schools.

Councilmember Stokes expressed support for the proposal and commended the extensive community engagement. He said there was a problem with cut-through traffic and traffic speeds in the Woodridge area a few years ago, and signage and enforcement were effective in reducing traffic speeds and volumes. Referring to streets recommended for 25 miles per hour (e.g., 115<sup>th</sup> Avenue NE and 151<sup>st</sup> Avenue SE), he asked about other measures to promote safety at those locations.

Ms. Humphreys said staff can follow up regarding whether those locations are on the neighborhood safety candidate project list. She said they might be candidates for future traffic calming projects.

Deputy Mayor Malakoutian complimented staff on their community outreach, public education and data-driven approach. He said he appreciated staff's recommendations to retain higher speed limits on certain streets. He encouraged everyone to refer to speed limit information provided in navigation apps.

Mayor Robinson said there will always be drivers who regularly exceed the speed limit and she wondered how the City can protect the public from those drivers. Mr. Murphy acknowledged that there are people who will not respect speed limits and that lower speed limits will not completely solve the problem. He said lower speed limits are one tool in the Vision Zero approach. He said traffic calming projects in neighborhoods will continue to be an important element in the City's efforts to enhance safety. Mr. Murphy said the City will continue to use education and engineering solutions to address traffic safety.

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

- (b) Proposed Land Use Code Amendment Streamlining the Permitting Process and Implementing Provisions of the Local Project Review Act, RCW 36.70B, as amended by Senate Bill 5290

Acting City Manager Carlson recalled that this topic was presented to the Council in June, when they directed staff to initiate work on the Land Use Code Amendment (LUCA) to streamline the permitting process in line with Senate Bill 5290 requirements. The work also supports staff's efforts to continue to improve the permitting process.

Rebecca Horner, Director, Development Services Department, said staff is seeking Council feedback and direction to expand the public engagement process and to come back with the proposed LUCA.

Jake Hesselgesser, Assistant Director, said staff has been committed to continuous improvement since the early 2000s, and paperless permitting was fully implemented by 2019. More recently,

staff has been focused on putting the voice of customers at the center of improvement efforts through the Customer Experience Program and the establishment of the Bellevue Development Committee.

Senate Bill 5290 was signed by the governor on May 8, 2023 and went into effect that summer. It amends the Local Project Review Act [RCW 36.70B] related to land use and environmental permits. The goal of the legislation is to create efficiencies and streamline permitting, with a special emphasis on housing-related permits. The law provides mandatory permit review timelines and penalties can require the refunding of fees if a timeline is not met.

Mr. Hesselgesser said key components of SB 5290 prohibit site plan review on interior alterations, mandate clear submittal requirements, amend the definition of project permit and other terminology, amend requirements for permit application completeness and require the publication of performance reports at the local and state level. The timelines identify so-called shot clocks for permit review: 65 calendar days when a public notice is not required, 100 calendar days when a public notice is required and 170 calendar days when public notice and a public hearing are required.

Jurisdictions are subject to potential permit fee refunds for not meeting the shot clock requirements unless the local government adopts three streamlining measures to avoid the refunds. Mr. Hesselgesser said staff received direction from the Council on June 11 to adopt three streamlining measures and to introduce those in the preliminary budget.

Mr. Hesselgesser said staff conducted a detailed timeline analysis, which was presented to the Council in June. The study indicated that resource availability is a key factor. There are special circumstances and complexity factors for some of the larger permits. Mr. Hesselgesser said staff identified the alignment of certain legislative requirements with the City's current process improvement efforts.

On June 11, the Council provided direction to move four of 24 permit types to the 170-day shot clock category: Design Reviews, Master Development Plans, Critical Areas Land Use Permits and Shoreline Substantial Development Permits.

Nick Whipple, Assistant Director, said the LUCA is provided in the meeting packet as Attachment E. It codifies the permit timeline shot clocks described above and moves four permit types to the 170-day category: Design Reviews, Master Development Plans, Critical Areas Land Use Permits and Shoreline Substantial Development Permits. The LUCA updates submittal requirements and the application completeness check process. It provides a definition for "nonresponsiveness" (defined in SB 5290) when an applicant is not showing measurable progress on revisions for 60 days. Mr. Whipple said 30 days may be added to the review timeline.

Mr. Whipple said the LUCA clarifies the use of DSD Director rulemaking in response to a longtime request by stakeholders. The Director's rules are binding administrative rules regarding the codes administered by the City. One proposed change is to replace the rulemaking public hearing requirement with an extended public notice and comment period, changing it from 14

days to 21 days. Mr. Whipple said staff believes this will enable more meaningful public engagement. He said both King County and the City of Seattle use rulemaking as a tool and do not require a public hearing for proposed rule changes. The LUCA establishes when a project may vest to a rule and how a rule may be appealed. Mr. Whipple said examples of Director's rules include clarifying the implementation of green building incentives, detailing single-family floor area ratio (FAR) calculations, and explaining the building height determination on sloped sites based on building segments.

Mr. Whipple said staff is following Process IV requirements for the LUCA which require notice in the weekly permit bulletin and a public hearing before the Council. Staff will launch a project web page and work with both internal and external stakeholders going forward. The proposed LUCA has been discussed with the Bellevue Development Committee.

Mr. Whipple said staff is requesting Council direction to schedule the public hearing for the LUCA. He said the new shot clocks will take effect on January 1, 2025, when the City will need to begin reporting on its performance to the Washington State Department of Commerce. He recalled that the Council decided to retain the processing of this code amendment and it will not be sent to the Planning Commission for review.

→ Deputy Mayor Malakoutian moved to direct staff to prepare the proposed LUCA related to SB 5290 for public hearing and action at a future meeting. Councilmember Stokes seconded the motion.

Deputy Mayor Malakoutian, liaison to the Planning Commission, thanked staff for their work on continuous improvement. He asked whether staff or a consultant have explored ways to use artificial intelligence (AI) or automation to assist with the application completeness review process to potentially expedite processing. He asked whether expedited permitting for housing could affect existing infrastructure capacity. He said he understood extending the public notice and comment period to enhance the quality and depth of the feedback, especially regarding challenging technical matters. However, he asked about the rationale for removing the public hearing requirement.

Director Horner said staff determined that changing from a public hearing to a longer comment period will produce a better outcome for residents and stakeholders, in part because the City typically receives more detailed written comments and public participation. She said the approach allows for a better staff response and longer public participation period.

Mr. Hesselgesser said Development Services staff and Information Technology staff have discussed how the City might be able to partner with external private sector technology companies to utilize some type of automated completeness review tool. He said there are both opportunities and risks associated with the use of AI technology and discussions are ongoing.

Regarding impacts to existing infrastructure, Ms. Horner said the land use entitlement process involves applicants in mitigating their impacts. She said concerns about development occurring too quickly are evaluated and they are required to mitigate impacts.

Mayor Robinson said this work is part of the effort to reduce the cost of housing. She expressed support for moving forward and thanked staff for completing this work so quickly.

Councilmember Stokes concurred with Mayor Robinson. Mr. Stokes commended staff's full implementation of paperless permitting before the pandemic and thanked them for all of their work.

Councilmember Hamilton expressed support for staff's work to date and for moving forward with the public hearing. He said SB 5290 is an important starting point for meeting the City's housing goals. He said the intent of SB 5290 was to further consolidate, streamline and improve project review and permitting with an emphasis on housing development. He said, however, the City will need to do a lot more to deliver on its housing goals. Mr. Hamilton expressed support for the proposal regarding the Director's rulemaking process.

Councilmember Lee said Bellevue values doing what is best for the public and he supports the goal of lowering housing costs. He concurred with Deputy Mayor Malakoutian's interest in the use of technology and automation. However, he acknowledged the importance of quality control when using technology tools. Mr. Lee expressed concern that the use of technology for application completeness review could result in lower quality projects. Director Horner said the LUCA does not change any of the City's standards that are aligned with the vision and policies in the Comprehensive Plan.

Councilmember Nieuwenhuis said he is enthusiastic about the implementation of SB 5290. While the proposed changes for the Director's rulemaking process are not required by SB 5290, he commended the importance of the recommendation. He said other municipalities use this process while the City of Bellevue has not done so to date. He believes this will provide flexibility and enable staff to move more quickly. Responding to Mr. Nieuwenhuis, Ms. Horner said the appeals follow the City's typical process. Mr. Whipple said more details will be provided before the public hearing. Mr. Nieuwenhuis expressed support for extending the public comment period.

Responding to Mr. Nieuwenhuis about fee refunds, Mr. Hesselgesser said the state legislation does not specify how refunds would be initiated. He said if the City implements the recommended streamlining measures, it will be exempt from permit fee refunds for a period of time and will be required to report on the City's performance to determine whether it is complying with the legislation.

Mr. Nieuwenhuis referred to the four permit types to be moved to the 170-day shot clock category and asked whether there is a goal to move them to the 100-day processing category in the future. Ms. Horner said there will be a number of streamlining improvements over the next few years that could lead the City in that direction, if feasible. Mr. Nieuwenhuis said he would like to see that as a goal. He looks forward to the creation of more housing.

Councilmember Zahn expressed support for staff's work and her colleagues' comments. She noted the importance of defined expectations and predictability. She said she supports the proposal regarding the Director's rulemaking process. She asked whether the public comments

are shared with the public. She noted that a number of cities are exploring the use of AI to assist in the permitting review process. Referring to the application completeness review, Ms. Zahn asked whether the City has the resources to help applicants achieve compliance.

Responding to Councilmember Zahn, Ms. Horner said the permit streamlining measures apply to all permit types listed in the meeting materials.

Mr. Whipple said the code already authorizes the Director's rulemaking role. However, it has not been used by the City. He said any public comments related to rulemaking will likely be documented in related meeting materials. Ms. Zahn said it would be helpful for the public to hear each other's comments and staff's responses.

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

At 7:50 p.m., Mayor Robinson declared a short break. The meeting resumed at 8:02 p.m.

- (c) Budget Deliberations: Discussion of the 2025-2026 Operating Budget and the 2025-2030 Capital Improvement Program Plan through the Vibrant Economy and High Quality Built & Natural Environment Strategic Target Areas

Acting City Manager Carlson said this is the second of three study sessions to address the six budget strategic target areas.

John Resha, Chief Financial Officer, Finance and Asset Management Department, recalled that the first public hearing on the 2025-2026 Operating Budget and the 2025-2030 Capital Improvement Program (CIP) Plan was held on July 9. The City Manager's preliminary budget was presented to the Council on September 17 and the second public hearing was held on September 24. The final public hearing will be held on November 12 and budget adoption is tentatively set for November 19. The strategic target areas to be discussed tonight are Vibrant Economy and High-Quality Built and Natural Environment.

Emil King, Director, Community Development Department, began the presentation of the Vibrant Economy strategic target area. The proposed 2025-2026 budget builds on work during 2023 and 2024 including the Startup 425 Accelerator program, workforce development, completion of retail study, initiation of cultural facility grants, establishment of Bellevue-Redmond Tourism Promotion Area (TPA) Advisory Board, and partnerships with Visit Bellevue (e.g., Bellhop program, Bellevue Lake cruises, food tours and Belle the Bobcat/Japan marketing efforts).

Mr. King said the TPA fee will add approximately \$7.5 million in the 2025-2026 budget to pursue the work plan approved by the Council. He said tourism activities will include team hosting and watch parties for the 2026 FIFA World Cup tournament. The Bellhop ride service in the Downtown, BelRed and Wilburton areas will be expanded and additional activities include culinary events, continued focus on creating a Japanese Market and a new airport shuttle.

The creative economy and public art budget funds arts grants, art acquisition, continuation of the cultural facility grants and new artwork at Crossroads Park, BelRed Arts District 130<sup>th</sup> Avenue area, and along the Eastrail. To support businesses, the Economic Development Plan will be updated through 2030. The City will expand its work with the Old Bellevue Merchants Association and BelRed Arts District Community Alliance to promote public space management and programming. Mr. King noted plans to expand programming to the Factoria and Wilburton areas as well.

Director Horner said Development Services Department staff are eager to support small businesses and public space activation through its Customer Experience Program and direct communication with stakeholders. She said permitting assistance would provide an additional benefit for that program and multiple departments will coordinate their efforts to better serve the public. She said the program anticipates one full-time employee and additional consultant funding in the budget.

Councilmember Lee said economic development staff have been working particularly hard since the pandemic to address the impacts on local businesses. He said there continues to be a number of uncertainties, however, including office vacancies, current and future economic conditions, tourism, and continued hardships for a number of businesses. He suggested looking at the broader picture of economic development and focusing on retaining and attracting businesses. He suggested establishing a separate economic development department to develop and implement the strategic plan. He said the budget should include adequate resources for the purpose of attracting and retaining technology businesses.

Mr. Resha said staff would follow up on Mr. Lee's questions and comments as memory bank items. Mayor Robinson noted that much of the information is provided through the quarterly economic development updates.

Deputy Mayor Malakoutian said he appreciated staff's efforts related to diversifying the economy, supporting small businesses and workforce development. He wondered whether past and current initiatives are sufficient to achieve the City's goals. He asked staff to add his issues to the memory bank list for future discussion. He asked whether efforts are focused on sustainability and green technologies. He asked about support for the arts, media and design entities. He said he would like to be sure that the City's investments support entrepreneurs from diverse socio-economic backgrounds and underrepresented communities.

Councilmember Zahn expressed support for streamlining the permitting process for activating public spaces. She suggested activations at City Hall and other City-owned facilities. She asked whether streamlining efforts will address reducing permitting fees. She expressed support for the airport shuttle from downtown hotels. She encouraged efforts to showcase Bellevue during the 2026 FIFA tournament. She encouraged more funding for the arts, including for more programming, performances and pop-up events.

Responding to Ms. Zahn, Mr. King said the current Economic Development Plan goes through 2025 and staff will begin updating the plan this winter for 2026-2030.

Regarding permit process streamlining, Ms. Horner said staff will work with stakeholders to structure the public space activation program. She anticipates that City-owned facilities will be included in that effort. She confirmed that the Development Services Department operates under a cost recovery model. However, the public space activation program will not charge for additional permitting assistance. Ms. Horner recommended that the budget fund the study of additional needs and whether permitting assistance is still needed after the first two years.

Councilmember Zahn suggested exploring infrastructure upgrades at park/community center facilities to avoid the need for temporary generators and other equipment needed to support special events and activations.

Councilmember Nieuwenhuis thanked staff for the presentation. He asked whether permit streamlining and assistance for small businesses will include things like signage for restaurants. Ms. Horner said staff will work with stakeholders to develop the program. She anticipates that the program will work with any small business that needs permitting assistance, including for signage.

Mr. Nieuwenhuis said it is important to assist small businesses unfamiliar with the permitting process. He expressed support for efforts related to tourism and working with Visit Bellevue. He encouraged the City to constantly focus on relationships with businesses to learn what they love about Bellevue, what the City could do better, and other needs and issues. He expressed an interest in plans for increasing the diversification of Bellevue's economy.

Mayor Robinson said the Council received an email from the Bellevue Farmers Market organization. She suggested they would not need to request funding if they were part of Visit Bellevue. She expressed concern that the City is giving them only \$3,000 when they requested \$10,000. Mr. King said staff would add the item to the memory bank list and provide additional follow-up information.

Councilmember Stokes complimented staff on their work in recent years and said he believes the City has the capacity to accomplish even more. He said he appreciated the focus on arts and culture as part of economic development. He expressed support for projects related to the Eastrail and for ongoing arts and cultural facility grants. He expressed support for the Vibrant Economy budget proposal.

Councilmember Hamilton said he was impressed with the budget and the comprehensive economic development plan. He expressed support for the focus on workforce development, small businesses, BelRed Arts District programming, Old Bellevue activities and public space activation. He said he supports increased funding and planning for arts programs and arts grants. He thanked staff for their good work.

Councilmember Nieuwenhuis concurred with Mayor Robinson's comments regarding funding for the Bellevue Farmers Market. Mr. Nieuwenhuis said the Bellhop service was expanded to get to the farmers market so it would be appropriate to provide more support to the market.

Councilmember Lee noted his support for airport shuttle service from downtown Bellevue.

Mr. Resha introduced discussion regarding the High-Quality Built and Natural Environment strategic target area. He said a number of departments deliver services within this area including Parks and Community Services, Community Development, Development Services, Utilities, Transportation, Fire, and Finance and Asset Management (FAM).

Mr. King highlighted accomplishments during the 2023-2024 budget including the 2044 Comprehensive Plan Periodic Update, BelRed Comprehensive Plan Amendment (CPA), Wilburton Vision CPA, Affordable Housing Strategy implementation, Environmental Services Initiative (ESI) Plan implementation and the grand opening of the expanded Mini City Hall. Ongoing efforts include Wilburton Land Use Code Amendments, Comprehensive Plan implementation, BelRed Look Forward code amendments, and regional planning around activity centers.

Ms. Horner highlighted efforts to streamline permitting including contingent and on-call permitting staff and changes related to Senate Bill 5290. She said a new code and policy full-time employee (FTE) position will address workload demands related to land use planning initiatives and code amendment processes.

Mr. King said the budget includes significant funds for continued design of the Grand Connection I-405 crossing, work on the Metro and Lincoln Center redevelopment sites, and placemaking activation.

Michael Shiosaki, Director, Parks and Community Services Department, highlighted key 2023-2024 accomplishments: 1) acquisition of 24 acres across four neighborhood areas for parks, trails and open space, 2) Bridle Trails Valley Creek Park opening, 3) Bellevue Airfield Park Master Plan Update, 4) planting of 8,000 trees throughout the park system, and 5) restoration of park maintenance standards.

Mr. Shiosaki said the future work plan is driven by continued efforts to implement two parks levies. There are two projects left in the 2008 parks levy and a number of priorities in the 2022 levy. Mr. Shiosaki said the City appreciates the voter support of the levies as the park system is improved and expanded. Earlier this year, the Parks and Community Services Board reviewed the department's budget proposals and developed a recommendation memo that has been included in tonight's meeting materials.

Mr. Shiosaki said that 95 percent of Bellevue residents rate parks and parks facilities as good or excellent. Maintenance and operations funding in the 2022 park levy was targeted toward restoring maintenance level of service standards. The draft budget includes ongoing funding for parks renovation and refurbishment projects. Mr. Shiosaki said trails are the most used element of the park system, and 80 percent of residents use the local trail system. He said the preliminary budget, with support from the 2022 levy, restores a programmatic CIP project that funds trail development over each year of the CIP Plan.

Mr. Shiosaki said one key to increasing walkable access in Bellevue is acquiring land and developing small neighborhood parks, including a project in the Eastgate area at 147<sup>th</sup> Avenue

SE and SE 38<sup>th</sup> Street. The park planning process has begun with permitting and construction planned within the next two years. With funding from the 2022 levy and support from Amazon, the City launched the pop-up off-leash program with three permanent sites and a temporary site next to City Hall. Mr. Shiosaki said staff will continue those efforts next year.

Meydenbauer Bay Park Phase 2 planning is underway and funding is included in the preliminary budget. Mr. Shiosaki said the budget includes funding to continue design and permitting of a new aquatic center at Bellevue Airfield Park. A programmatic project developed in close collaboration with the City's ADA (Americans with Disabilities Act) compliance program staff will accelerate the removal of accessibility barriers across the park system.

Mr. King said the budget includes funding for Great Neighborhoods initiatives in the Crossroads and Newport areas, Neighborhood Enhancement Program (NEP), Keep Bellevue Beautiful program and Adopt-a-Street program. The NEP's next rotation will be in the Bridle Trails and Northwest Bellevue neighborhoods.

In the area of environmental stewardship, the budget includes funding to update the Environmental Stewardship Plan, maintain staff and resources, continue partnerships, and to support the Energy Smart Eastside program, Clean Buildings Incentive program and Wilburton Sustainable District planning.

In the area of affordable housing, staff will update the 2017 Affordable Housing Strategy for the 2026-2033 timeframe. The budget includes funding to create an Office of Housing with a dedicated staff team to accelerate the implementation of housing efforts, focus on unit production and pursue partnerships. Mr. King said the Office of Housing will use four staff in currently funded positions in the Community Development Department and repurpose one existing position from the City Manager's Office.

Ms. Horner said the Next Right Work efforts will continue to focus on reducing fees for affordable housing projects and reducing the costs of building affordable housing (e.g., code amendments, reduced parking requirements, City-funded street improvements).

Councilmember Hamilton said he liked the overall theme of streamlining processes to provide clarity, alignment and speed to facilitate projects and programs. He expressed support for continued progress on the Grand Connection, which will be transformational for the community. He acknowledged the importance of parks to the community and expressed support for continued robust investments. He expressed support for the creation of the Office of Housing to meet housing supply and affordability goals. He noted the need for a wide range of housing types.

Councilmember Nieuwenhuis commented on the importance of a high-quality built and natural environment and public amenities. He thanked staff for all of their hard work. He expressed support for the new off-leash areas and Meydenbauer Bay Park Phase 2 planning.

Mr. Nieuwenhuis expressed concern regarding the creation of the Office of Housing. He asked how that will relate to the efforts of ARCH (A Regional Coalition for Housing) and other housing providers. Mr. King said the relationship with ARCH will continue without any changes.

Mr. King said the objective of the Office of Housing is to accelerate the City's efforts related to sites in Bellevue and the recent update of housing policies in the Comprehensive Plan.

Councilmember Stokes thanked staff for the comments on the proposed Office of Housing and ARCH. He envisions Bellevue as a leader in providing affordable housing. He expressed support for the budget proposals and praised the holistic approach to the community's needs.

Mayor Robinson expressed appreciation for Director Shiosaki and the efforts of parks staff. As a former physical therapist, she welcomes the removal of barriers to parks and park facilities. Ms. Robinson expressed support for creating the Office of Housing and encouraged the use of City-owned properties where possible.

Councilmember Lee thanked staff for the presentation and commented on the importance of parks and park facilities. He acknowledged the critical need for housing and expressed an interest in creating the Office of Housing.

Responding to Mr. Lee, Mr. Resha said staff will provide more information regarding a cross cultural center in a future discussion. Acting City Manager Carlson said the center will be addressed on October 22.

Deputy Mayor Malakoutian congratulated staff for coordinating an impressive presentation. As a memory bank item, he asked how the City can do more in the area of environmental stewardship.

Councilmember Zahn thanked staff for their hard work and for their responsiveness to the Council's priorities. She said she appreciated the emphasis on a livable city for all, streamlining processes and continuous improvement. She observed that a number of plans will be updated in 2025. She expressed support for the off-leash dog parks and for the creation of the Office of Housing. She believes that increasing housing will contribute to the overall economy and workforce capacity. She would like to see funding for neighborhood access to the Eastrail. She expressed support for the Grand Connection project and the cross cultural center. She asked about staffing and other resources that would be needed to accelerate the implementation of the Environmental Stewardship Plan. She asked about ways to partner with the Bellevue School District in the area of environmental sustainability. She encouraged the City to explore more ways, including partnerships, to complete projects (e.g., Grand Connection, cross cultural center, fire stations).

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

16. Executive Session: None.

17. Adjournment

At 9:30 p.m., Mayor Robinson declared the meeting adjourned.

Charmaine Arredondo, CMC  
City Clerk

/kaw