

CITY OF BELLEVUE  
CITY COUNCIL

Summary Minutes of Study Session

December 4, 2017  
6:00 p.m.

Council Chamber  
Bellevue, Washington

PRESENT: Mayor Stokes, Deputy Mayor Chelminiak, and Councilmembers Lee, Robertson, Robinson, Wallace and Zahn

ABSENT: None.

1. Oath of Office

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

Mayor Stokes recalled that Ernie Simas filled an unexpired term on the Council through the previous week. Janice Zahn was elected to serve in the November election and, by state law, her term started once the election was certified on November 28.

Mayor Stokes introduced District Court Judge Lisa O'Toole to conduct the swearing in of Ms. Zahn. Mr. Stokes paused the meeting briefly to allow time for photographs.

2. Executive Session [Moved to end of Study Session]

3. Study Session

(a) Update on Resident Request for Interim Walkway on SE 35<sup>th</sup> Place

City Manager Brad Miyake asked staff to provide an update regarding two residents' request for an interim walkway on SE 35<sup>th</sup> Place in the West Lake Sammamish neighborhood.

Mark Poch, Assistant Director of Traffic Management, said that SE 35<sup>th</sup> Place is a ¾-mile collector-arterial that connects SE Eastgate Way and, after turning into SE 34<sup>th</sup> Street, West Lake Sammamish Parkway. He said there are short segments of sidewalks on the west and east ends of the road. However, the center stretch does not have sidewalks or a path. The center segment sidewalk project is in the Transportation Facilities Plan (TFP) with an estimated cost of \$5 million due to the topography and drainage issues.

Mr. Poch said King County currently has a major sewer project underway in the area from Vasa Park, along SE 38<sup>th</sup> Street and 164<sup>th</sup> Place SE, to SE 35<sup>th</sup> Place. The potential interim walkway project under consideration is a two-block stretch along SE 35<sup>th</sup> Place.

Mr. Poch presented photos of the current roadway, which has a narrow shoulder and ditch with a small stream. King County has temporarily filled a section of the ditch with dirt as part of the sewer project. He noted that it provides a flat area similar to what could be created as an interim path.

Following the November 20 Council meeting, staff identified two key questions for determining the feasibility of an interim project: 1) What is the environmental classification of the stream?, and 2) Is King County interested in joining the City in this project? Next steps are to assign a project manager and to determine the project feasibility, scope, permitting requirements, funding sources, and estimated total cost. Mr. Poch said staff will continue to keep in touch with the residents who requested the walkway and will update the Council.

Responding to Councilmember Robinson, Mr. Poch said it is possible that the project will be as simple as a paved shoulder, 8-10 feet wide. The long-term plan for the TFP project is to install a typical raised sidewalk with curb, gutter, and bike lane.

Responding to Councilmember Zahn, Mr. Poch confirmed that the \$5 million noted in the agenda memo is the cost of the long-term sidewalk project in the TFP.

Responding to Councilmember Robertson, Mr. Poch said the interim walkway project would accomplish work that would contribute to and be compatible with the future sidewalk project. Ms. Robertson expressed support for moving forward with an analysis of the interim walkway.

Deputy Mayor Chelminiak noted that more information on the stream will indicate potential mitigation measures and will assess the impact on the water outfall if the stream is replaced with a pipe. Responding to Mr. Chelminiak, Mr. Poch said the road is a collector-arterial, which is the lowest level of arterial, that collects traffic to carry it to higher traffic volume facilities such as West Lake Sammamish Parkway.

Councilmember Lee said it is good that staff responded to a citizen's request so quickly. He expressed support for further study regarding the feasibility of the project.

Responding to Mayor Stokes, Mr. Poch said a cost estimate has not been prepared. However, staff is hoping it will be as low as \$100,000. Mr. Poch said the cost is largely dependent on the mitigation that will be required and whether King County might contribute to the project. He said the interim walkway would likely be an asphalt paved shoulder, potentially with a buffer between the walkway and traffic. In further response to Mr. Stokes, Mr. Poch said the full West Lake Sammamish \$5 million project in the Transportation Facilities Plan will need to be moved into the Capital Investment Program (CIP) plan in the future in order to move it forward.

(b) Update on East Link Construction and South Bellevue Traffic Mitigation Project

City Manager Miyake opened staff's update on the construction of Sound Transit's East Link light rail project, a City traffic mitigation pilot project in South Bellevue, and overall communications by Sound Transit and the City.

Maher Welaye, Engineering Manager, noted that Sound Transit began construction of the downtown light rail tunnel in mid-2016 and of the overall project in Bellevue earlier this year. He said the heavy civil construction will continue through mid-2021, and work on electrical and communications systems will be ongoing through early 2022. Testing and pre-revenue operation of the system is slated for mid-2023. Mr. Welaye said the heavy construction period will have the greatest impact on Bellevue streets. He presented a number of photos depicting the current construction activities along the alignment from South Bellevue to the BelRed corridor.

Bellevue Way SE will operate with two lanes in the peak direction throughout construction. Mr. Welaye recalled a number of recent weekend closures for utilities work. He said Bellevue Way will not be closed again until the end of the light rail project when the roadway will be fully restored. The current closure of 110<sup>th</sup> Avenue NE in front of City Hall will remain in place until summer 2018. The tunnel is anticipated to reach the NE 6<sup>th</sup> Street portal by December 2018. The City is working with Sound Transit to determine ways to mitigate traffic and to minimize impacts to businesses in the BelRed corridor when the construction reaches that point.

Mike Brennan, Director of the Development Services Department (DSD), described the transition from design and mitigation permits to the technical permits for the project, including building, right-of-way, clearing and grading, and utilities permits. Permit conditions and City Codes regulate construction hours, noise exceptions, permanent noise walls, erosion control, and traffic control. The City is conducting daily inspections of the project, coordinating with Sound Transit inspectors, participating in weekly contractor meetings, and correcting violations. Mr. Brennan said that complaints about the rough surface on Bellevue Way SE and about construction noise outside of the approved working hours have been resolved. He said that traffic management and keeping the public informed are ongoing priorities as well.

John Murphy, Associate Planner, described a pilot project for neighborhood traffic mitigation in South Bellevue to discourage traffic from diverting to neighborhood streets during East Link construction. The project was implemented on September 5 and restricts turn movements at SE 16<sup>th</sup> Street and 108<sup>th</sup> Avenue SE and at SE 16<sup>th</sup> Street and Bellevue Way SE. Traffic volumes on side streets in that area have decreased by approximately 31 percent, and there has not been increased traffic on neighborhood streets farther south in the Enatai area. Community feedback has been positive about the decreased traffic on side streets. However, residents are inconvenienced by the turn restrictions and report that it is an additional burden for them.

Mr. Murphy said that, in response to input from the community, staff will make modifications to the project and extend the pilot program through the end of the school year next June. The changes will allow residential access across Bellevue Way SE at SE 16<sup>th</sup> Street. An all-way stop will be implemented at the intersection as well. Mr. Murphy said staff will continue to monitor the project and to work with the Police for feedback on enforcement.

Marie Jensen, East Link Community Relations, said there have been few complaints about the closure of the South Bellevue Park and Ride, construction noise, and impacts to the Mercer Slough Nature Park, and no complaints regarding spillover parking. There has been a moderate level of contacts and complaints regarding the weekend Bellevue Way/I-90 ramp closures, the roadway condition on Bellevue Way, and the neighborhood traffic mitigation pilot project. The City has received minimal complaints regarding construction at the City Hall site, the NE 2<sup>nd</sup> Street bike detour and displaced parking, and business access in the BelRed area. Ms. Jensen said that she and the project manager have regular meetings with individuals in neighboring buildings to share information. She said the contractor on NE 2<sup>nd</sup> Street is working with the City to install signage for alternate parking spaces.

Ms. Jensen said Sound Transit's primary communication tool is its construction alerts posted to their website and emailed to their subscribers. She checks that information daily and adds it to the City's web page. Other communication tools include social media, neighborhood news sources, the *It's Your City* newsletter, traffic mitigation map, and Access Bellevue mailer. Ms. Jensen noted that some of the structures left vacant for demolition due to the light rail project have been used by the Fire Department for training exercises. Residents have been allowed to rescue plants from the Winters House and from vacant houses in the Surrey Downs area.

Responding to Councilmember Robertson, Mr. Brennan said the City does receive notifications regarding complaints made to Sound Transit, and staff follows up with the agency to resolve issues. Ms. Robertson said she was pleased to see the timely response related to construction noise at night.

Ms. Robertson questioned the City's efforts to ensure good traffic flow during the holiday season. Mr. Welaye said the City monitors downtown traffic and does not allow contractors to close lanes during this time, unless the closure will not have traffic impacts.

Ms. Robertson suggested it would be useful to have automated signage at primary entry points to the downtown (e.g., 112<sup>th</sup> Avenue, Main Street and Bellevue Way) to provide up-to-date information on traffic conditions. Mr. Welaye said the City has received similar input from others, and staff is working on signage.

Councilmember Wallace thanked staff for responding quickly to address complaints and concerns. He observed that the construction appears to be going well.

Mr. Wallace questioned the status of the 11 parcels acquired by Sound Transit to demolish the homes. Mr. Brennan said five of the homes will remain as a buffer for the adjacent neighborhood. He said Sound Transit will determine the disposition of those properties. The City is not currently planning to acquire the properties. Mr. Wallace suggested that the City consider acquiring the properties. He encouraged staff to research state law regarding Sound Transit's use of surplus property.

Responding to Councilmember Wallace, Mr. Welaye said the road-over-rail segment on 112<sup>th</sup> Avenue of the alignment is slated for construction in late 2018. Mr. Wallace recalled that the

Council and staff worked hard to keep the light rail alignment out of the right-of-way. The original plans identified alignment options along the middle or west side of Bellevue Way SE as well as a surface crossing at 112<sup>th</sup> Avenue SE. He said the traffic impacts during construction will not be as bad as they could have been under those scenarios.

Deputy Mayor Chelminiak concurred with Mr. Wallace's comments but acknowledged that temporary lane closures on Bellevue Way SE have inconvenienced drivers. Mr. Chelminiak noted the 60-foot buffer required for the remaining properties along the alignment on 112<sup>th</sup> Avenue SE.

Councilmember Zahn said she was pleased with the mitigation planning and implementation, and noted the importance of current traffic information for drivers. With regard to the closure of the South Bellevue Park and Ride, she questioned whether there has been a reduction in transit riders because people might be driving now instead of using alternative bus stops and leased lots.

Mr. Welaye said Sound Transit is monitoring its mitigation plan with regard to the Park and Ride closure. He will request that information. Ms. Zahn said it appears that traffic is heavier on I-90. She encouraged the City to monitor areas around the construction sites to identify and remove rocks and other debris hazards.

Councilmember Lee thanked staff for the update and for working with the public. He said Bellevue has always done a good job of mitigating traffic and working with contractors. He said this is one of the largest construction projects in Bellevue's history, and it is important to remain vigilant about impacts to the public. He encouraged staff to keep the public informed about the construction schedule, ongoing impacts, and the public benefit of the final project.

Mayor Stokes concurred with Councilmember Wallace's comments regarding the work of the Council and staff to improve the alignment and to minimize construction and operational impacts. Mr. Stokes said it was rewarding to work with Councilmembers Robertson and Wallace in the negotiations with Sound Transit regarding a number of aspects of the project. Mr. Stokes said all Councilmembers worked together to create the best project for Bellevue, and he thanked staff for their work.

2.     Executive Session [Shifted from earlier in the agenda.]

At 7:21 p.m., Mayor Stokes declared recess to Executive Session for approximately 15 minutes to discuss one personnel matter. He noted that the meeting would resume with the 8:00 Regular Session.

Kyle Stannert, CMC  
City Clerk

/kaw