

**CITY OF BELLEVUE
ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES COMMISSION
MEETING MINUTES**

Thursday
March 5, 2026

City Hall & Remote
6:30 p.m.

1. CALL TO ORDER:

The meeting was called to order by Chair Wan at 6:30 p.m.

ROLL CALL

COMMISSIONERS PRESENT: Ken Wan (Chair), Andy Dupertuis (online), Ann Hajnosz, Gabby Lacson, Kurt Lutterman (Vice Chair), Michael Margolis, Mary Theisen

COUNCIL LIAISON: None

COMMISSIONERS ABSENT: None

OTHERS PRESENT: Lucy Liu, Director; Joe Harbour, Deputy Director; Scott Edwards, Deputy Director; Lorissa Warren, Senior Administrative Assistant; Matt Hobson, Fiscal Manager; Hana Abdulrahman, Utilities Bill Assistance Program Administrator; Jon Gire, Solid Waste Program Manager; and Laurie Hugdahl, Minutes Taker

2. APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA

Motion made by Commissioner Lutterman, seconded by Commissioner Hajnosz, to approve the agenda. The agenda was approved unanimously (7-0).

3. ORAL AND WRITTEN COMMUNICATION

Written Communications: None

Oral Communications:

Wendy Weiker, Municipal Services Manager, Republic Services, spoke to Republic's current high quality waste management services to the City of Bellevue. She urged them to remember Republic's reliability, affordability, sustainability, and innovation. She thanked the City for the partnership over the

years and stated they look forward to being a significant and competitive respondent to the RFP.

Alex Tsimerman, 14150 NE 20th Street, Bellevue, WA, complained about the time limit for speaking and for not showing speakers on the video.

4. COMMUNICATION FROM CITY COUNCIL, COMMUNITY COUNCIL, BOARDS AND COMMISSIONS

None

5. STAFF REPORTS

Deputy Director Joe Harbour commented that the boards and Commissions appreciation event is coming up in May.

6. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

A) FEBRUARY 5, 2026 MINUTES

Motion made by Commissioner Lutterman, seconded by Commissioner Theisen, to approve the 2/5/2026 minutes as presented. Upon a voice vote, the motion passed unanimously (7-0).

7. UNFINISHED BUSINESS

None

8. NEW BUSINESS

a) Solid Waste Contract Procurement

Deputy Director Scott Edwards and Solid Waste Program Manager Jon Gire made the presentation. Deputy Director Edwards shared some general background information on the current service schedule, rate structure, and contract terms. He reviewed the expected procurement timeline. The current contract expires in June of 2028. The new agreement is expected to be awarded in early 2027.

Mr. Gire reviewed key objectives in detail:

- Alignment with best practices – regional and national level best practices; expert consultant support
- Compliance with state laws and local policy – Department of Ecology (Organics Management Law and Recycling Reform Act); City of Bellevue (Diversity Advantage Plan 2035 and Sustainable Bellevue)
- Responsive to needs – Engagement/Community Outreach: surveys,

workshops, user experience research, listening sessions; Priorities: reliability, affordability, and user experience

- Explore technology and data - EV technology, real-time data, artificial intelligence, pilots

Discussion:

Commissioner Margolis asked about the balance between incentivizing recycling and reducing the integrity of what goes in the recycling containers. Mr. Gire acknowledged that is a delicate balance.

Commissioner Hajnosz asked if contractors reveal how they come up with their rates. Mr. Gire explained that contractors generally will give an overall value to the contract.

Commissioner Hajnosz asked about integrated solid waste management planning. Mr. Gire explained they work with the county and other cities to do the integrated comprehensive planning. Commissioner Hajnosz asked if they are prepared to find reasonable accommodations for all the bins in these new denser areas. Mr. Gire acknowledged this is a challenge and explained that it is a topic they are exploring. Using smaller plastic containers appears to be preferable to using the large metal dumpster-style containers.

Commissioner Margolis asked vendors to measure customer satisfaction and not to rely on Net Promoter. This would be most valuable for the City.

Commissioner Lacson asked about constraints to providing composting for all multifamily residents. She wondered if more transparency for multifamily residents would encourage more recycling and composting when available.

Commissioner Theisen commented on challenges associated with composting, especially with multifamily situations. There was some discussion about potential options to assist with this.

Commissioner Dupertuis asked about the “lean” contract costs. Mr. Gire explained that 2.99% is the current administrative fee in the contract. Staff will be looking at balancing the city costs versus what the city expects from the contractor. Commissioner Dupertuis asked about performance fees. Mr. Gire explained that the effectiveness of this will be evaluated; they will also be looking at what other cities have found effective at driving change. Commissioner Dupertuis suggested looking at contractual penalties over time which essentially becomes part of the contract costs if behavior doesn’t change.

Commissioner Margolis asked about potentially using dehydrators for compost. Mr. Gire explained that is a cutting-edge technology currently being explored.

Chair Wan commented that he is very happy to see the education component identified on the user experience portion of this. He hopes they really ramp this up. He asked if there is any desire to expand what is collected for recycling to include things like Styrofoam. Mr. Gire replied they are definitely looking into this but also need to balance it with practicality.

Motion made by Commissioner Lutterman, seconded by Commissioner Hajnosz to concur with the staff-recommended four objectives along with maintaining weekly collection for single family residents and the embedded rate structure. Upon a roll call vote, the motion passed unanimously (7-0).

b) Policy Options to Expand the Utility Bill Assistance Program

Matt Hobson, Fiscal Manager and Hana Abdulrahman, Utilities Bill Assistance Program Administrator made the presentation. Mr. Hobson reviewed background on this item and explained that staff is seeking a recommendation by the Commission to expand the Utility Bill Assistance Program.

Key Design Decisions:

1. Should the City expand the Utility Bill Assistance (UBA) program to all low-income households regardless of age or disability status?
2. Should the City increase the income eligibility criteria to match other programs provided by the City and other regional utility programs?
3. Should the City reduce the assistance amount to mirror similar utility assistance programs in the region and to reduce the funding requirements?
4. Should the City expand the program immediately or implement over a multi-year period to mitigate rate impacts?

Ms. Abdulrahman reviewed UBA industry best practices. There are currently five types of utility bill assistance offered in Bellevue. Long-Term (Utility Bill Discount and Utility Bill Rebate), Short-Term (Emergency Assistance and Neighbors Helping Neighbors), and Long-Term Utility Tax Rebate. She reviewed the results of the 2025 Bellevue Human Services Needs Survey. Depending on the approach used, is estimated that 10,000 to 14,000 or 15,000 households in Bellevue have a need for utility assistance. There was also discussion about reasons for the low participation rates, forecasts with growth, income limits/age restrictions for other programs, bill assistance rates for other programs, and the need for public education about the availability of assistance.

UBA Expansion Policy Options to Expand the Utility Bill Assistance Program.

- Option A (recommended by Bellevue Utilities): Expand program to low-income senior/disabled households with annual income at or below 80% of area median income (AMI) and maintain assistance at 70% of the utility bill. Evaluate expanding program to all low-income households as part of

future budget processes.

- Option B: Expand program to all very low-income households with annual income at or below 50% of area median income (AMI) and decrease assistance to 50% of the utility bill.
- Option C: Expand program to all very low-income households with annual income at or below 50% of area median income (AMI) and maintain assistance at 70% of the utility bill.
- Option D: Expand program to all low-income households with annual income at or below 80% of area median income (AMI) and maintain assistance at 70% of the utility bill.

It is recommended that:

- any change to the income eligibility criteria for the City's long-term UBA program is applied to the City's short-term assistance programs (e.g., Neighbors Helping Neighbors and Emergency Assistance Program) to provide consistent qualification requirements for both short- and long-term assistance.
- that the City expand the solid waste bill assistance program in 2027 by providing rebates to qualifying multi-family residential solid waste accounts. This change would provide a uniform assistance program across the City's four utilities.

Commissioner Lutterman asked why staff's recommendation is Option A. Deputy Director Edwards explained that this would provide an option to take immediate action while providing flexibility in the future to expand the program. With rising costs and the pressure of increasing rates, this is something that can be offered over the next biennium to begin to move the needle, but it is something that can be built over time incrementally.

Commissioner Hajnosz asked about current program costs. Mr. Hobson reviewed the expenditures and lost revenue associated with the current program. Commissioner Hajnosz noted they would essentially be doubling that cost and serving about 50% more. Mr. Hobson concurred.

Commissioner Lutterman asked for a breakdown of the costs for each of the options. Mr. Hobson provided the details on this.

Commissioner Dupertuis recommended focusing less on the benchmarking. He was supportive of moving forward with this.

Commissioner Lacson expressed concern about the potential for repeated delays of expanding this in the future.

Chair Wan asked why the current eligibility has seniors and disabled households as a category as opposed to just relying on AMI. Mr. Edwards explained it has to do with them being the most vulnerable populations.

Commissioner Hajnosz commented that younger people can be just as vulnerable. She was supportive of expanding the pool and also consider not just seniors and disabled folks. Deputy Director Edwards commented that this relates to expansion of long-term programs; there are already short-term programs which are open to everyone.

Commissioner Lutterman was generally supportive of making the program wider, but not as deep – perhaps the 50% AMI for a larger pool at a 50% level.

Motion made by Commissioner Margolis, seconded by Commissioner Lutterman, to approve *Option B: Expand program to all very low-income households with annual income at or below 50% of area median income (AMI) and decrease assistance to 50% of the utility bill.*

There was a question about what the difference between 70% assistance and 50% assistance. Mr. Hobson estimated it would be about a \$29 decrease to their current credit every month.

Chair Wan asked how this would impact the short-term program. Mr. Hobson explained it is already aligned at 50%.

Commissioner Theisen asked if there is any data about the enrollment rates of senior or disabled populations so they can track that in the future to see if there is a detrimental impact to them. Ms. Abdulrahman indicated they could track that moving forward.

Upon a roll call vote, the motion passed unanimously (7-0).

Motion made by Commissioner Lutterman, seconded by Commissioner Hajnosz, that the UBA short-term assistance program be adjusted to align with long-term program changes and that the solid waste rebate program be expanded to multi-family residential households. Upon a roll call vote, the motion passed unanimously (7-0).

Commissioner thanked staff for the presentation and the breadth of options presented.

9. REVIEW OF COMMISSION AND COUNCIL CALENDARS

Deputy Director Harbour reviewed the calendars.

There is a potential that April 16 will be a second ESC meeting

10. **ADJOURNMENT**

Motion made by Commissioner Theisen, seconded by Commissioner Lutterman, to adjourn the meeting. Upon a voice vote, the motion passed unanimously (7-0).

The meeting was adjourned at 8:36 p.m.

DRAFT