

CITY OF BELLEVUE  
CITY COUNCIL

Summary Minutes of Regular Meeting

May 6, 2025  
6:00 p.m.

Council Chambers  
Bellevue, Washington

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

ABSENT: None.

1. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 6:01 p.m., with Mayor Robinson presiding. She said the rules for participating in public meetings prohibit individuals from disrupting the meeting at any time. This includes talking out of turn or without permission, interrupting or making sounds when someone else is talking, or approaching Councilmembers or City employees who are staffing the meeting. If a person disrupts the meeting, Mayor Robinson will give a warning, end the person's remaining comment time and/or ask the person to leave the meeting. She encouraged a civil discourse avoiding name calling and false accusations against others.

2. Roll Call; Flag Salute

City Clerk Charmaine Arredondo called the roll and all Councilmembers were present. She noted that Councilmember Bhargava would be taking his seat at the dais after being sworn in.

Councilmember Hamilton led the flag salute.

(a) Swearing in of Newly Appointed Councilmember Vishal Bhargava

Mayor Robinson said Councilmember Stokes recently retired following 14 years of service on the Council.

City Clerk Arredondo conducted the swearing in of newly appointed Councilmember Vishal Bhargava.

(b) Jewish American Heritage Month Proclamation

Councilmember Nieuwenhuis read the proclamation declaring May 2025 as Jewish American Heritage Month in Bellevue. He encouraged everyone to honor the history and ongoing contributions of Jewish Americans to our community and nation.

Regina Friedland, Regional Director, American Jewish Committee (AJC), thanked the Council for the proclamation. She said the establishment of Jewish communities on the Eastside began in 1961 when Bellevue's first synagogue, Temple Sinai, was founded. A few years later, Temple B'nai Torah was founded and, by 1980, Bellevue was home to the Jewish Day School of Metropolitan Seattle. Continued growth in the local Jewish community brought the opening of the Eastside Torah Center and additional smaller congregations. Ms. Friedland commented regarding the Jewish community's early involvement with local schools, social services programs, City commissions and public life. She said the current Jewish community includes business owners, teachers, doctors, artists and public servants committed to building a strong and inclusive Bellevue.

Ms. Friedland said she has collaborated with Councilmember Nieuwenhuis through their involvement with the AJC. In 2022, Bellevue became the first city in the Pacific Northwest and the second city on the West Coast to adopt the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance's working definition of antisemitism.

(c) Affordable Housing Week Proclamation

Councilmember Bhargava read the proclamation declaring May 12-16, 2025, as Affordable Housing Week in Bellevue and encouraged everyone to recognize the importance of affordable housing in building a strong, inclusive community.

Patience Malaba, Executive Director, Housing Development Consortium (HDC), thanked the Council for the proclamation. She congratulated the City for being recognized as the 2025 Frank Chopp Public Sector Champion by the HDC for its unwavering commitment to addressing affordable housing issues. She looks forward to the continued development of housing, especially in the Wilburton transit-oriented development area.

Saghar Amini, Advocacy and Policy Manager, Habitat for Humanity Seattle-King County, said she was speaking on behalf of all of the HDC members. She said the City's proclamation affirms that housing is the foundation of a thriving community and reflects Bellevue's commitment to addressing the affordable housing crisis. She said safe, stable and affordable housing is not a luxury but a necessity that allows people of all backgrounds and income levels to live, work and contribute to the community. Ms. Amini thanked the Council for the proclamation. She congratulated Councilmember Bhargava on his appointment to the Council and noted his commitment to housing while he served on the Planning Commission.

(d) National Police Week Proclamation

Councilmember Lee read the proclamation recognizing May 11-17, 2025, as National Police Week in Bellevue. He encouraged everyone to honor the service and sacrifice of our law enforcement officers and to appreciate and support their role in ensuring a safe community.

Constance Slappey, Assistant Chief of Police, said National Police Week recognizes and honors the great sacrifices police officers make to keep their communities and cities safe. As someone who has worked in the profession for nearly 29 years, she said the support and trust the City

extends to its police department is a gold standard. Assistant Chief Slappey said the department has the resources it needs to keep Bellevue a safe place to live, work and visit. She thanked Councilmembers for standing with them when the department has gone through great losses. She thanked the Council for the proclamation and expressed appreciation for their support.

(e) Public Service Recognition Week Proclamation

Councilmember Sumadiwirya read the proclamation declaring May 5-11, 2025, as Public Service Recognition Week in Bellevue and encouraged everyone to recognize and thank public employees for their outstanding contributions to their communities and the country.

City Manager Diane Carlson said City employees work every day, quietly and purposefully, to provide excellent service to the community. Employees maintain infrastructure, work to connect neighborhoods, support families in need and implement a broad range of programs and services. Ms. Carlson said public service touches every part of the community and reflects the City's values. She thanked the Council for the proclamation and recognition.

3. Approval of Agenda

- Deputy Mayor Malakoutian moved to approve the agenda, amended to remove Item 8(e), Resolution No. 10505 from the Consent Calendar. 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) Loretta Lopez said the City has worked for decades to plan for increased density, particularly in the BelRed, Factoria, Downtown and Wilburton areas. She said the City has spent millions of dollars on affordable housing initiatives and is now addressing middle housing. The state legislature has approved legislation requiring all cities to allow 4-6 units in every residential zone. Ms. Lopez said many residents are not aware of the law and its implications. She urged the City to adopt the state legislative requirements and to not exceed or add any further provisions. She said the law enables a massive change in neighborhoods and will be difficult to implement. She expressed concern regarding the complexity of the law and the potential for unintended consequences. As an example, she said staff recommends considering driveways as open space.
- (b) Chris Lonowski concurred with Ms. Lopez' comments and noted that he emailed the Council earlier in the day with his summary of a Bridle Trails Community Club meeting

the previous evening. He said most residents were not aware of the new state law, and most of what is being proposed by the City goes beyond the state requirements. Mr. Lonowski expressed concern regarding the impact on neighborhoods and raising children in Bellevue. He said the City's proposal does not require a property owner to live on site. He expressed concern regarding the lack of parking requirements, increased height restrictions and decreased setbacks.

- (c) Tim Hay commented regarding middle housing. He expressed concern regarding density, parking capacity, emergency access and garbage collection access.
- (d) Paul Rood expressed concern regarding vehicles noise. He said that between 2016 and 2020, he spoke with the Bellevue Police Department, Washington State Patrol, King County Sheriff's Office, State Department of Ecology and Bellevue's state legislative representatives about vehicle noise enforcement. He said the State indicated that this is the responsibility of local governments. He said a testing program for vehicle noise is needed to obtain a valid and defensible result. He said no one checks new vehicle standards.

City Manager Carlson said there have been many complaints recently about vehicle noise. She said the Bellevue Police Department had already planned an emphasis on both vehicle speeding and noise in May.

- (e) Anne Rittenhouse said the City is doing too much, too quickly to address housing through the Comprehensive Plan, Grand Connection project, middle housing in the Wilburton Land Use Code Amendment (LUCA), affordable housing initiatives, BelRed Spring District development and neighborhood subarea plans. She said this is causing stress on residents and City staff, and she believes that staff has rushed the middle housing planning work. She said she attended the Planning Commission's public hearing and some of the commissioners seemed to struggle to understand all of the different scenarios and requirements. Ms. Rittenhouse said staff presented a flawed LUCA to the Planning Commission, which will be presented to the Council. She encouraged the City to follow the State's minimum requirements for middle housing. She said residents are now learning about staff's proposal and they are angry.
- (f) Edmond Rittenhouse said that over the past several years, he and others have been invited by the City to participate in development opportunities. The 20-year Comprehensive Plan update process included several phases to inform and gather community input, which were invaluable in helping to produce the plan update. Mr. Rittenhouse said he also participated in updating the Great Neighborhoods Plan. He expressed concern that middle housing has not been addressed with the same level of community education and engagement. He said he attended the Bridle Trails Community Club meeting the previous evening and several City staff were there to answer questions about the proposed LUCA. He said residents were surprised at the legislation regarding middle housing and became increasingly upset as the meeting progressed. He said it appears the City worked with developers to add provisions that would make it easier to develop housing. Mr.

Rittenhouse encouraged the Council to not adopt the LUCA as written by staff and to develop the appropriate regulations in partnership with the community.

- (g) Joe Kunzler thanked the Council for the proclamation recognizing Jewish American Heritage Month in Bellevue.
- (h) Alex Tsimerman said he has made numerous complaints about the City over the past 30 years. He has spoken publicly to local governments throughout the region approximately 5,000 times and he has been trespassed by King County approximately 6,000 times. He said he has been trespassed approximately 90 times and prosecuted five times by the City of Bellevue.

Councilmember Hamilton raised a Point of Order and interjected that campaigning is prohibited in City Hall and it is inappropriate for Mr. Tsimerman to hold a sign as a candidate running against the mayor. Mr. Hamilton said that running for Mayor Robinson's seat on the Council disqualifies Mr. Tsimerman from criticizing the mayor during oral communications. He requested that Mr. Tsimerman follow the rules or be asked to leave.

Mayor Robinson informed Mr. Tsimerman that Councilmember Hamilton's comments constituted a warning for violating the rules.

Mr. Tsimerman expressed support for President Trump.

- 5. Reports of Community Councils, Boards, and Commissions: None.
- 6. Report of the City Manager: None.
- 7. Council Business and New Initiative

Mayor Robinson indicated that two Councilmembers would be absent from the May 13 meeting.

- Deputy Mayor Malakoutian moved to excuse Councilmember Nieuwenhuis and Councilmember Sumadiwirya from the May 13, 2025 Regular Meeting. Councilmember Nieuwenhuis seconded the motion.
- The motion carried by a vote of 7-0.
- 8. Consent Calendar
  - Deputy Mayor Malakoutian moved to approve the Consent Calendar, amended to remove Item 8(e), and Councilmember Nieuwenhuis 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 April 15, 2025 Regular Meeting*  
*Minutes of April 22, 2025 Regular Meeting*
- (b) Resolution No. 10502 of the City Council of the City of Bellevue, Washington, supporting the countywide ballot proposition for funding the Medic One/Emergency Medical Services (EMS) levy for the period from January 1, 2026, through December 31, 2031, pursuant to RCW 84.52.069.
- (c) Resolution No. 10503 authorizing execution of a second contract amendment with Innovative Data Acquisition, LLC dba (IDAX) to increase the contract's value by an amount not to exceed \$101,000, which brings the total contract value to \$450,000 plus all applicable taxes, and to exercise the last remaining option to renew the contract for an additional one-year term.
- (d) Resolution No. 10504 authorizing execution of an agreement with Owen Equipment Company for the purchase of one new vacuum-excavator, in the amount to not exceed \$656,387.98, plus applicable taxes.
- (f) Resolution No. 10506 authorizing Housing Stability Program funding in the amount of \$1,305,798 in capital funds and \$67,590 per year for five years, for operations, maintenance, and services, for the Amani Home Project; approving conditions for funding recommended by staff; and authorizing the City Manager to enter into agreements for the Project and execute necessary documents consistent with approved conditions.
- (g) Resolution No. 10507 authorizing execution of a two-year General Services Contract, with the option to renew for an additional three-year term, and execution of the concurrent lease agreements with Best Kayak Rentals, LLC to operate a paddle sport rental program out of the Meydenbauer Bay Park Whaling Building located at 2 - 99th Avenue NE, and Enatai Beach Boathouse located at 3519 108th Avenue SE.
- (h) Resolution No. 10508 authorizing an amendment to the Professional Services Agreement with 4 Tomorrow in the amount of \$712,500.00, plus all applicable taxes, for a total contract amount not to exceed \$1,384,850, to facilitate a Safe Parking Program.

Item pulled:

- (e) Resolution No. 10505 authorizing execution of 2025-2028 Interagency Agreement between the Washington State Department of Natural Resources and the City of Bellevue for wildland fire or other emergencies.

At 7:00 p.m., Mayor Robinson declared a short break. The meeting resumed at 7:12 p.m.

9. Public Hearings: None.

10. Study Session

(a) Open Government Training – 2025 Update

City Manager Diane Carlson introduced the open government training required every four years for Councilmembers.

Mayor Robinson warned Alex Tsimmerman to not disrupt the meeting.

Jessica Skelton, Pacifica Law Group, said the Open Public Meetings Act (OPMA) applies to all Washington public agencies and their subdivisions and was adopted to ensure that deliberations and actions by governing bodies are conducted in public. She said all meetings must be open to the public except for authorized executive sessions. A governing body is defined as the multi-member board, commission, committee, council or other policy or rulemaking body of a public agency, or any committee thereof when the committee acts on behalf of the governing body, conducts hearings, or takes testimony or public comment. A meeting occurs when a quorum or majority of the members comes together and takes action.

Action is defined broadly as the transaction of official business including but not limited to receipt of public testimony, deliberations, discussions, considerations, reviews, evaluations and final actions. Final action means a collective positive or negative decision or an actual vote by a quorum of the governing body upon a motion, proposal, resolution, order or ordinance. Ms. Skelton cautioned Councilmembers to be aware that getting together outside of open public meetings for site visits, retreats, dinners and social gatherings could be a violation of the OPMA. She said if a quorum is going to be present at an event, some cities choose to notice it as a special meeting for the Council. She suggested that if a quorum is present, the officials should avoid saying anything about City business.

Ms. Skelton said that serial discussions among elected or appointed officials, including the exchange of emails between a majority of the members, constitute a meeting under the OPMA. However, the receipt of information via email or another means is not a meeting. The OPMA prohibits voting by secret ballot at any open public meeting. Ms. Skelton said advance “agreements to agree” among officials to vote a certain way in the future could be considered a meeting given a collective intent to take action.

Ms. Skelton described the procedural requirements for regular and special meetings. The date and time of regular meetings must be established by ordinance, resolution, order or rule, and meeting agendas must be posted online 24 hours before the meeting. At a regular meeting, any Councilmember may move to amend the proposed agenda by adding an item or by proposing any other change. At a special meeting, only action that appears on the posted agenda may be taken. A special meeting may be called by the presiding officer or by a majority of the body. A special meeting notice must be issued at least 24 hours before the meeting to newspapers, radio and television stations, libraries and other individuals and groups, and must be posted on the agency’s web site. Open public meetings must be recorded and made available to the public if

requested. Meeting minutes are not required for executive sessions. Ms. Skelton suggested that Councilmembers not take notes during those sessions as well. However, the announced purpose of the executive session must be included in the regular or special meeting minutes.

Ms. Skelton recalled that, in 2022, during the COVID pandemic, the state legislature adopted new requirements and made clarifications intended to enhance public access to meetings. The laws require an opportunity for public comment at or before every regular meeting, and meetings subject to the OPMA must be held at a physical location with very limited exceptions. Agencies are encouraged, but not required, to also provide remote access to meetings.

Ms. Skelton said the presiding officer of an executive session must publicly announce at the beginning of the meeting the purpose of the session and the time it will be concluded. The announced purpose must be reflected in the meeting minutes. Ms. Skelton described the specific purposes identified in the OPMA for holding an executive session. She said Washington courts interpret executive session provisions narrowly.

Violations of the OPMA could result in fees or costs to the City and civil penalties against violating members. A violation could provide the basis for a recall action or lead to the invalidation of a Council's action and result in the loss of public trust and confidence.

Ms. Skelton provided an overview of the Public Records Act (PRA), which provides a mandate for the broad disclosure of public records. The law was enacted to increase government transparency and accountability by making records accessible to Washington citizens. It applies to all state and local agencies and there is no official format required for a PRA request. If an agency fails to properly respond to a request under the PRA, the requestor can bring an action against the agency.

Ms. Skelton described the definition of a public record under the act and noted that a requestor is entitled to all non-exempt records and may request that electronic records be produced in electronic format. A public record is any writing relating to the conduct of government or the performance of government and includes emails, texts, voice messages, tweets, instant messages, photos, videos, social media posts and electronically stored documents. Ms. Skelton highlighted state provisions regarding the different types of public records. She said social media posts can be public records subject to disclosure if the posts relate to the conduct of government or are made within the official's scope of employment or official capacity.

Ms. Skelton said the product of a request to artificial intelligence (AI) to generate a response including text, images and audio recordings, could be considered a public record if used or saved by the City.

Ms. Skelton said Councilmembers should segregate their City and personal email accounts and ensure that City documents are segregated from personal documents on personal devices and home computers. Councilmembers must comply with retention time periods for saving and deleting records and must be prepared to produce public records in response to a records request. Ms. Skelton highlighted the process for responding to a public records request and the legal provisions related to the retention of official public records.



Ms. Skelton said the PRA provides a cause of action for two types of violations: 1) when an agency's estimated time to respond to the request is unreasonable, or 2) when an agency wrongfully denies an opportunity to inspect or copy a public record. If there is a violation, fees and costs are mandatory. Ms. Skelton said agencies should carefully document their efforts to comply with the PRA because judges have considerable discretion in choosing penalties.

Mayor Robinson thanked Ms. Skelton for the presentation.

(b) Briefing on King County Wastewater Treatment Division 2026 Sewer Rate

City Manager Carlson introduced staff's presentation regarding King County's 2026 sewer rate proposal.

Lucy Liu, Director, Utilities Department, said staff is requesting direction to prepare a letter to the King County Council communicating the City's position regarding the proposed 2026 sewer rate, long-term rates and the importance of completing the Regional Wastewater Services Plan update. She said the City appreciates King County's ongoing efforts to look for opportunities to contain costs and to mitigate rate increases as much as possible.

Kamuron Gurol, Director, King County Wastewater Treatment Division, presented the 2026 sewer rate and capacity charge proposal. He thanked Councilmembers for their leadership in regional forums. He highlighted the North Mercer Island/Enatai sewer upgrade project and the Coal Creek sewer upgrade project. The Coal Creek project received the first Salmon-Safe certification for a wastewater infrastructure project.

Mr. Gurol said staff would brief the Regional Water Quality Committee (RWQC) on May 7. A public hearing and action by the King County Council on the King County Executive's 2026 sewer rate proposal is anticipated in June.

Mr. Gurol said the 2026 rate proposal extends the forecast period from 10 years to 20 years and updates the combined sewer overflow (CSO) consent decree cost estimates and schedule. There is also a revised approach to forecasting delivery constraints.

Mr. Gurol described a graph depicting the 20-year capital forecast by portfolio category (e.g., planning and administration, asset management, regulatory, etc.). He noted significant uncertainty beyond 2036 regarding potential other nutrient removal costs, contaminants of emerging concern, CSO cost updates and Wastewater Treatment Division security upgrades.

Mr. Gurol presented the proposed 2026 sewer rate and 2027-2045 forecast and compared it to the 2025 rate and 2026-2034 forecast. He said the proposed rate for 2026 increased from 7 percent to 7.5 percent, and subsequent annual rate increases range from 12.75 percent to 13.50 percent through 2031. He said the King County Council will also take action on the capacity charge soon. In 2024, the Wastewater Treatment Division resumed working with Raftelis to update the capacity charge methodology. Mr. Gurol said a \$62.66 sewer rate and \$77.99 capacity charge are proposed for adoption in 2026.

Mr. Gurol said King County is beginning the process to update the 1999 Regional Wastewater Services Plan (RWSP) and develop a Vision for Clean Water. The vision statement will guide planning and policy decisions as staff updates the RWSP. Mr. Gurol said the plan will reflect the shared regional values related to water quality, public health, equity and social justice, affordability, sustainability and climate resiliency. He highlighted the project schedule for updating the plan.

Ms. Liu highlighted the City's programs to assist utilities customers including direct bill discounts, indirect rebates, four months of emergency assistance or two months of bills waived through the Neighbors Helping Neighbors program.

Ms. Liu said staff is seeking direction to prepare a letter to the King County Council communicating the City's position regarding the proposed sewer rates, long-term forecast and RWSP update. Staff recommends expressing concern about the 2026 sewer rate, expressing support for the long-term forecast while sharing concerns (e.g., affordability, rate predictability, ability to deliver capital program), and developing guiding principles to guide Bellevue in evaluating the Wastewater Treatment Division's progress on the long-term forecast methodology. She said staff requests that the Council consider asking King County for additional information on alternatives that could be explored to lower and/or smooth rates over a longer period of time.

Ms. Liu said staff recommends guiding principles that work toward generational equity, share changes to rates early and clearly, continue to refine forecast methodology, plan based on what can reasonably be achieved, and prioritize asset management.

Mayor Robinson thanked staff for the presentation.

Councilmember Lee thanked Mr. Gurol for the presentation and for his work on the long-term forecast. Mr. Lee commented on the challenge of providing adequate infrastructure and protecting the environment. He acknowledged the need to expand the capacity of the wastewater system due to growth. He expressed concern regarding the proposed rates for 2026 and beyond. He encouraged King County to provide a rate path that is predictable and affordable for cities and our ratepayers.

Mr. Lee requested additional information regarding how King County is engaging with the community related to the RWSP update and how the RWSP can improve long-term forecasting and leverage new opportunities to reduce costs.

Mr. Gurol said they will work with the City and Bellevue residents as desired through the RWSP update process. He said the plan will have a 30-year horizon and affordability will be a top issue throughout the planning process. He expressed a commitment to transparency in the long-range planning process.

Councilmember Hamilton thanked Mr. Gurol for the information. Mr. Hamilton noted the need for utility rates that ensure that we are able to properly maintain our systems and that allow us to

make timely, critical investments. He cautioned that even modest rate increases can have a big impact in the community. Councilmember Hamilton thanked staff for their analysis of the short-term and long-term financial impacts of decisions related to utilities. He thanked Councilmember Lee for his leadership on this issue as a RWQC member.

Councilmember Hamilton acknowledged the need to increase rates to support infrastructure investments. He expressed concern that delaying projects will increase total costs due to inflation. Responding to Mr. Hamilton, Mr. Gurol said they are continuing to look for ways to smooth the rates and shift the timing of increases. He confirmed that costs will increase.

Responding to Mr. Hamilton, Mr. Gurol said commercial, multifamily and single-family customers all pay a rate based on a residential customer equivalent (RCE). In further response, Mr. Gurol said capital investments are needed to keep the system in good repair and to increase growth capacity. He said the biggest challenge in the near term are the regulatory driven projects (e.g., CSO investments through the Mouth of the Duwamish project). Mr. Gurol said King County continues to pursue state and federal grant funding.

Councilmember Hamilton expressed support for the affordable utilities options available to residents. He said he was prepared to move forward with the letter and guiding principles proposed by staff.

At approximately 8:34 p.m., Mayor Robinson declared a short break. The meeting resumed at 8:46 p.m.

Councilmember Nieuwenhuis said the City of Kirkland was interested in hosting a summit to discuss the RWSP. Mr. Gurol said King County would be supportive of that idea. Mr. Nieuwenhuis expressed concern about the long-term rate forecast. Mr. Gurol said the RWSP covers a 30-year period and staff will learn more about the second decade as projects move forward. Mr. Nieuwenhuis said he appreciated the 20-year forecast despite a number of unknown factors.

Mr. Nieuwenhuis expressed concern regarding the rate forecast. He said residents are very concerned about the cost of living and utility rate increases can have a significant impact on individuals living on a fixed income as they age. He encouraged robust public education regarding the proposed rates and needed investments. Mr. Gurol expressed an interest in collaborating with City staff and the community.

Councilmember Nieuwenhuis expressed support for the proposed letter and guiding principles. He encouraged timely updates to the Council regarding any changes in the rate forecast. He suggested considering, during the mid-biennium budget update, additional funding for the customer financial relief programs.

Ella Williams, Intergovernmental Policy Advisor, City Manager's Office, said City staff look forward to working with the Wastewater Treatment Division regarding the proposed summit.

Deputy Mayor Malakoutian said he appreciated all of the work by staff. He thanked Councilmember Lee for his involvement in utilities issues. He concurred with concerns regarding the affordability of the proposed rate increases. Mr. Malakoutian asked about the factors underlying the significant cost increase for the Mouth of the Duwamish project.

Mr. Gurol said that as the planning process moves forward, staff learns more about the specific needs and details related to the project, including the costs of complying with state law. He said increased market costs (e.g., labor, materials) are a major factor as well.

Responding to Mr. Malakoutian, Mr. Gurol said the new proposed rates are based on the recent cost estimate for the project. The previous cost estimate was developed 3-4 years ago.

Deputy Mayor Malakoutian expressed concern regarding the ability to forecast and manage long-term utility rates due to unknown factors. Mr. Gurol said the Wastewater Treatment Division conducts its cost estimates consistent with national best practices and tries to make them as accurate as possible. He acknowledged that he has higher confidence in the short-term versus long-term forecast.

Responding to Mr. Malakoutian regarding the projected completion of the Mouth of the Duwamish CSO project in 2034, Mr. Gurol said the deadline is in the consent decree.

Councilmember Sumadiwiryia said the discussion has addressed most of the questions she had in mind. She thanked King County for the transparency in the rate proposal. She expressed support for the utilities rate relief programs.

Responding to Ms. Sumadiwiryia, Mr. Gurol said he believed that the rate path can reasonably deliver the capital program. He said King County is using a number of strategies and techniques, including collaborative delivery techniques. He said they are using programmatic delivery, a type of capital project delivery, to allow staff to collaborate more effectively.

Councilmember Bhargava thanked Mr. Gurol for the presentation. He concurred with his colleagues' concerns about affordability. He thanked Mr. Gurol for acknowledging the lack of full confidence in the long-term forecast.

Mr. Bhargava asked about the ability to extend capital expenditures over a longer timeline into the future to help smooth utility rates. Responding to Mr. Bhargava, Mr. Gurol said much of the capital program is financed through debt to spread the costs over a number of years. Mr. Gurol said they are working with lenders and regulators to extend the debt terms for as long as possible. In further response, Mr. Gurol said the RWSP represents the first 30 years of the 75-year Wastewater Treatment Division vision.

Councilmember Bhargava expressed support for staff's proposed letter and guiding principles.

Mayor Robinson expressed strong concern regarding the rate forecast and the potential significant impacts on residents and businesses. She expressed support for the proposed letter. She suggested a national effort to lobby for federal support. Responding to Ms. Robinson, Mr.

Gurol confirmed that King County continues to utilize federal Water Infrastructure Finance and Innovation Act (WIFIA) loans.

Responding to Mayor Robinson, Ms. Liu said the current income threshold for the rate assistance programs is 50 percent of the average median income. Ms. Liu said staff is looking at options that would make it easier for residents to qualify for discounts. She said the program is currently funded at \$300,000 per year.

Mayor Robinson acknowledged a Council consensus to send the proposed letter regarding the projected rates and RWSP.

Councilmember Lee noted the RWQC's efforts to address questions and thanked staff for their work in regional projects. He said federal funding is needed for the large infrastructure projects.

Responding to Mayor Robinson, staff said they can include support for a federal response and broader infrastructure package in the letter.

- Deputy Mayor Malakoutian moved to direct staff to prepare a letter to the King County Council communicating the City's position concerning the proposed 2026 sewer rate, including sharing the Council's thoughts regarding the long-term rate path and the importance of completing the RWSP update. Councilmember Nieuwenhuis seconded the motion.
- The motion carried by a vote of 7-0.

(c) Office of Housing Launch Update

City Manager Carlson introduced staff's update regarding the new Office of Housing.

Bianca Siegl, Director, Office of Housing, said the impetus for creating the Office of Housing came from Council guidance and last year's budget process. It also responds directly to three of the 2024-2026 Council Priorities, including updating the Affordable Housing Strategy and continuing homelessness response work. The Office of Housing is focused on increasing access to safe and affordable housing for everyone. The purpose of the office is to: 1) strengthen partnerships, leverage resources and align City teams to increase housing options, 2) facilitate policies, projects, services and resources to accelerate the production and preservation of housing in Bellevue, and 3) address homelessness response via engagement, case management, and access to housing and services.

Ms. Siegl noted there are multiple interdepartmental partnerships related to housing issues. The 2025 Office of Housing work plan priorities are: 1) organizational development, 2) housing policies, programs and funding, and 3) homelessness response. She said they are in the process of selecting a consultant to conduct an organizational development study and to explore strategies for sustained funding to support affordable housing.

Ms. Siegl said the 2025 update to the Affordable Housing Strategy is underway. She highlighted recent outreach events with community partners.

Linda Abe, Affordable Housing Planning Manager, said staff is currently updating the multifamily tax exemption (MFTE) program, which is an important tool for developers that incentivizes rental housing in mixed income buildings by reducing property taxes for a given time period in exchange for providing affordable units. The purpose of the update is to incorporate refinements and to make the program more effective in expanding the production of affordable housing in transit-oriented districts across Bellevue. The MFTE program review will consider expanding the scope and eligibility of projects and will analyze options to layer incentives. Ms. Abe said staff plans to provide an update to the Council this fall.

Ms. Abe said two Affordable Housing Strategy Action C-1 projects to build affordable housing on faith-based properties are moving forward this year with the local nonprofit developer Imagine Housing. She said two City-owned sites were identified last year for the development of affordable housing: 1) half-acre site in Wilburton transit-oriented development (TOD) area, and 2) Kelly TOD site in the BelRed Arts District. Ms. Abe said the Office of Housing released a request for proposals (RFP) in March for both sites and proposals will be accepted until June 2.

Ms. Siegl said the Office of Housing is funded through the Housing Stability Program, Housing Reserve Fund, partnerships and other resources.

Nico Quijano, Homelessness Outreach Program Manager, said the homelessness outreach staff are pleased to be part of the Office of Housing. Their priorities include: 1) effective outreach, housing navigation and encampment response, 2) extension of the safe parking program and identification of a long-term host location, 3) creation of outreach data online dashboard, 4) enhancement of severe weather response when assisting individuals experiencing homelessness, and 5) continued involvement in local and regional partnerships.

Ms. Siegl said staff will be scheduling individual briefings with Councilmembers to discuss the Affordable Housing Strategy update. Additional next steps include: 1) MFTE code analysis and update, 2) selection of development teams for City-owned sites, and 3) establishment of agreements for severe weather services and outreach data sharing.

Councilmember Bhargava thanked staff for the presentation and expressed support for their work. He looks forward to the review of the MFTE program and appreciates the progress under Action C-1. He said he appreciated the outreach efforts related to homelessness and asked about strategies for homelessness prevention.

Mr. Quijano said his team focuses largely on responding to individuals experiencing homelessness. However, the Human Services Division and other departments support services that work to prevent homelessness.

Councilmember Sumadiwiryia thanked staff for the presentation and said she looks forward to future updates. She asked staff to let the Council know how it can best support them.

Responding to Councilmember Nieuwenhuis, Ms. Siegl said the Office of Housing is not directly regulating all housing in Bellevue. However, the office will serve as a point of coordination for the multiple housing initiatives, including code and policy work, underway across departments.

Councilmember Nieuwenhuis said he appreciated the focus on affordable housing and homelessness. However, he questioned the role of the Office of Housing related to market-rate housing. He noted the need for more housing overall as well as housing for different income levels. Ms. Siegl said staff is looking at the full spectrum of housing types and has ongoing relationships with the development community.

Councilmember Hamilton said he looks forward to the analysis and update of the MFTE program. He expressed support for the Action C-1 projects and thanked the Office of Housing for advancing the use of City-owned properties in the BelRed and Wilburton neighborhoods for affordable housing. He expressed support for the safe parking program. Responding to Mr. Hamilton, Ms. Siegl said significant input regarding housing has been received from numerous stakeholders and community engagement will continue.

Councilmember Lee expressed support for the safe parking program. He concurred with Councilmember Nieuwenhuis that the Office of Housing should address all types of housing for the full range of income levels. Mr. Lee encouraged active community engagement to formulate policies.

Responding to Mayor Robinson, Ms. Siegl said staff will provide periodic updates regarding the activities of the Office of Housing.

Deputy Mayor Malakoutian thanked staff for their work to address housing and homelessness within one office. He asked about the use of performance measures to track the progress related to services and programs. He encouraged innovation in less expensive and potentially faster construction, such as modular and prefabricated housing.

Mayor Robinson commented that approximately seven percent of the housing in Bellevue is vacant. She wondered if that provides an opportunity for the Office of Housing. She encouraged expediting the development of Action C-1 properties and commented that five years is too long.

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 9:53 p.m., Mayor Robinson declared the meeting adjourned.

Charmaine Arredondo, CMC  
City Clerk

/kaw