

CITY OF BELLEVUE
CITY COUNCIL

Summary Minutes of Regular Meeting

October 28, 2025
6:00 p.m.

Council Chambers
Bellevue, Washington

PRESENT: Mayor Robinson, Deputy Mayor Malakoutian and Councilmembers Bhargava¹, Hamilton, Lee, Nieuwenhuis and Sumadiwiryra

ABSENT: None.

1. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 6:00 p.m., with Mayor Robinson presiding.

2. Roll Call; Flag Salute

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

(a) Dutch American Heritage Day Proclamation

Councilmember Nieuwenhuis read the proclamation declaring November 16, 2025, as Dutch American Heritage Day in Bellevue. He encouraged everyone to join in celebrating the longtime relationship between the Netherlands and the United States and the many contributions of Dutch Americans to our community and country.

Hans Brinkoff, speaking on behalf of the Dutch Consulate and the Dutch American community, shared his own story of living in the Netherlands and the United States as an employee with Holland America. He said he looks forward to celebrating the 250-year relationship between the two countries next year.

(b) Veterans Day Proclamation

Councilmember Lee read the proclamation recognizing November 11, 2025, as Veterans Day in Bellevue and encouraged everyone to join in honoring the service, courage and sacrifice of our veterans and their families.

¹ Councilmember Bhargava participated remotely.

Jarrold Larson, Bellevue Firefighter, Ladder 107, said it is not uncommon for veterans to later work in the fire service where the values are the same: teamwork, representing something larger than yourself and protecting others. He expressed appreciation for the veterans in the Fire Department and in other areas of public service.

3. Approval of Agenda

→ Deputy Mayor Malakoutian moved to approve the agenda, and Councilmember Nieuwenhuis seconded the motion.

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

4. Oral Communications

City Clerk Arredondo said the total time for oral communications is for a period not to exceed 30 minutes and topics must relate to City of Bellevue government. Persons speaking to items on the agenda will be called first and if time remains, others will be called. The presiding officer is authorized to give preference to individuals who have not spoken to the Council within the past 60 days or who are speaking to items that will come before the Council in the upcoming 60 days. Ms. Arredondo said individuals are allowed to speak for up to three minutes and only three speakers are allowed to speak to any particular side of a topic. In compliance with Washington state campaign laws regarding the use of public facilities, no speaker may support or oppose a ballot measure or candidate for election.

- (a) Debbie Lacy, representing Eastside for All and several other nonprofit organizations, encouraged the Council to increase human services grants in the mid-biennium budget update. She expressed concern regarding the federal government's efforts targeting and disappearing immigrants and suspected immigrants. She said a number of small organizations are showing up at the Northwest Detention Center to help families assign guardianship for children left behind and to provide food and other necessities to detainees. Ms. Lacy said the cities of Bellevue, Kirkland and Redmond have been asked to contribute to a rapid response fund.
- (b) Cristina Dugoni spoke regarding Overlake Farm and the development of a 4,000 lineal foot sewer extension along 140th Avenue. She said they are currently negotiating a latecomer's agreement with the Bellevue Utilities Department. She said the Valley Creek sewer line failed in 2013 and they solved that problem for the City. She asked the Council to direct City utilities staff to provide a reservation of capacity. She said the developers of the sewer extension are entitled to latecomer's fees from approximately 70 parcels.
- (c) Lalita Uppala, Executive Director, Indian American Community Services, urged the Council to increase human services funding to support emergency crisis services across BIPOC communities to address a significant increase in immigration-related crises. She said immigrant populations in Bellevue fear for their safety.

- (d) Dr. Sue Mercer, following up on a previous speaker's comments about sewer lines, reminded the Council that there is a lake at the corner of SE 16th Street and 156th Avenue SE where the culvert is not being properly maintained. She expressed concern about traffic lights that need attention and noted that she submitted a list to the City. She said she is getting married soon to a person with a permanent resident card, or green card. She suggested that the City consider pressing charges against any U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) officers who violate the U.S. Constitution by arresting American citizens or green card holders. Dr. Mercer expressed concerns regarding 24-hour parking restrictions in neighborhoods, including along 156th Avenue. She asked the Council to change the law and to grandfather those residents who owned their homes before the changes in parking restrictions were made. She described an issue with her driveway and suggested it is the City's responsibility to correct the curb to enable her to improve the safety of her driveway.
- (e) Alex Tsimerman expressed concern that some elected officials have dual citizenship and made a disparaging comment about immigrants.

Mayor Robinson asked Mr. Tsimerman to be civil in his comments about his fellow residents in this building that belongs to the people.

Mr. Tsimerman repeated his comment about people with dual citizenship.

Mayor Robinson said his comments were not relevant to the Council's business. She asked Mr. Tsimerman to leave and he was escorted from the meeting.

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

- (a) Consideration of Appeal of Notice of Exclusion Issued by the Planning Commission Chair Negin Khanloo to Avrum (Alex) Tsimerman

City Attorney Trisna Tanus asked the Council to consider an appeal of a Notice of Exclusion issued by Planning Commission Chair Negin Khanloo to Alex Tsimerman. The notice was issued on October 22 banning Mr. Tsimerman from attending Planning Commission meetings for 60 days, or until December 21. Mr. Tsimerman filed a timely written appeal and under the Bellevue City Code, the Council must consider the appeal and determine whether to grant or deny the appeal. Ms. Tanus said the Council should not consider any other information, facts or testimony that is not contained in the exclusion order or appeal documents.

- Deputy Mayor Malakoutian moved to deny the appeal of the Notice of Exclusion issued by Planning Commission Chair Khanloo to Alex Tsimerman on October 22, 2025. 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, 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 October 14, 2025 Regular Meeting
- (b) Motion to reject all bids for Bid No. 25000, Mountains to Sound Greenway Trail - 142nd Place SE to 150th Avenue SE project (CIP Plan No. PW-WB-86).
- (c) Resolution No. 10551 authorizing execution of Job Order Contract (JOC) agreement (s) with Saybr Contractors Inc., and Centennial Contractors Enterprises, for an initial term of two years with an option to renew for two years, in an amount not to exceed annually \$4,000,000 (each), plus applicable taxes.

9. Public Hearings: None.

10. Study Session

- (a) Brand Identity Community Feedback Report

City Manager Diane Carlson introduced staff's presentation of the City brand identity community feedback report. This initiative is consistent with Council priorities to establish an updated brand identity that resonates with Bellevue's diverse communities and aligns with the City's core values and vision.

Michelle DeGrand, Chief Communications Officer, said Council priority 2 reflects direction to establish an updated brand identity for the City and priority 10 refers to enhancing community engagement efforts to increase equitable public participation in decision-making and to improve the reach and effectiveness of the City's engagement strategies.

Ms. DeGrand said a brand refers to the visual, behavioral and verbal experience provided by an organization. She said data was collected through presentations and meetings including focus groups, community listening sessions, community survey, engagement with internal groups of staff and Councilmembers, and small business outreach.

Megan Hatheway, Research Director, DH Communications, said members of the public who participated in the community engagement process were asked to think of words that describe Bellevue. Key words cited included safe, clean, beautiful city, neighborhood, expensive, parks, business community, diversity, culture, friendly and welcoming community. A similar question

about perceptions of City of Bellevue government elicited words that included well managed, responsive, growth and business focused, bureaucratic, does not represent residents, supports quality of life and diverse cultures, taxes and traffic. Two top features reflected in reference to both Bellevue as a community and City government were beautiful natural areas and clean and safe city.

Ms. Hatheway described community feedback regarding the visual and verbal identity of Bellevue. Comments noted that resources are professionally prepared but are dense with text and would be more effective with graphic and visual content. Additional comments suggested that visual tools should reflect the community's diversity, communications should be available in more languages, and that the current branding and materials are not reflective of the vibrant communities and natural environment. Participants suggested that ongoing, relational engagement opportunities are preferred over transactional activities and outreach. They encouraged the City to partner with community organizations to engage them as trusted messengers in diverse communities. Some individuals indicated they felt that decisions were often already set before initiating public involvement and others encouraged ways to engage people across learning styles, abilities, languages and personal preferences.

Participants in focus groups and respondents to the community survey identified their preferred communication channels ranked as follows: 1) City website, 2) City newsletters and emails, 3) It's Your City newspaper, 4) social media, 5) community events and gatherings, 6) City-hosted gatherings and meetings, 7) contact with local officials, 8) local media outlets and, 9) MyBellevue app.

Ian Hanson, Senior Account Executive, DH Communications, described the six focus areas identified through the community engagement process: 1) maximize high-touch, trusted communications with community partners, 2) increase the sharing of community voices in citywide materials, 3) communications should be proactive, not retroactive, whenever possible, 4) visuals used in communications should reflect the beauty, diversity and vibrancy of the community, 5) enhance language accessibility, and 6) support transparency as a priority.

Ms. DeGrand said staff will work early next year to implement low-cost updates within the current budget, identify additional items to include in the work plan and to begin implementing the full work plan. She said work is underway to develop a plain language framework, expand technology tools to assist in communication and community engagement, provide language access for vital information and to strengthen communication and engagement to enhance trust with the community.

Mayor Robinson thanked staff for the presentation. Responding to Ms. Robinson, Ms. DeGrand said the community engagement emphasis fits into the behavioral component of brand identity, while the visual component includes the City logo, publications, etc. In further response, Ms. DeGrand said Visit Bellevue recently rebranded their organization with an external focus on business attraction and tourism, in contrast with the City's branding effort focused more internally within the community.

Councilmember Nieuwenhuis thanked staff for their work. He said much of the public input confirms what he hears from individual community members on an ongoing basis. Responding to Mr. Nieuwenhuis, Ms. DeGrand said staff is exploring potential work items through early next year. Ms. DeGrand said staff distributed printed educational materials and solicited feedback from the public regarding the attractiveness and effectiveness of the documents. In further response to Councilmember Nieuwenhuis, Ms. DeGrand said all of the focus group participants were Bellevue residents or workers.

Councilmember Nieuwenhuis said he was surprised that the most preferred method of communication is the City's website. Ms. DeGrand said the public was asked how often they use certain communication tools (e.g., websites) to access information.

Councilmember Lee said he appreciated the community engagement process, including the work with trusted messengers and organizations. He encouraged a focus on diversity, relationships and transparency.

Councilmember Sumadiwiryia said she would like to be utilized more as a trusted messenger in the community. She asked how the City could elevate small businesses using branding. Ms. DeGrand said the economic development team is focused on increasing the diversification of small businesses.

Councilmember Bhargava thanked staff for the presentation and commended the emphasis on communications and simplicity. He encouraged community engagement aimed at meeting people where they are. Ms. DeGrand said they did hear from the focus groups that, for a lot of communities, City Hall is a little bit intimidating. She said the public encouraged holding activities and meetings in more welcoming spaces. Ms. Hatheway said it is beneficial to take information to events and activities to solicit public input when it is convenient for the participants. She said residents typically respond well to a welcoming environment and staff.

Councilmember Hamilton thanked staff for their work and acknowledged the comments about enhancing the visual aspects of City-produced materials. He encouraged providing the ability for the public to sign up for email lists and other digital tools to receive alerts and announcements.

Deputy Mayor Malakoutian said he appreciated the emphasis on communications through trusted messengers. He said neighborhood associations have expressed an interest in helping the City provide information to the public. He said he hears the suggestion on a recurring basis that the City should be more proactive.

Mr. Malakoutian asked whether there are any baseline metrics to track whether perceptions change over time. Ms. DeGrand said staff will develop a set of metrics to measure and help refine public engagement. She said staff is exploring additional targeted outreach to better understand the needs of different areas of Bellevue. Responding to Mr. Malakoutian, Ms. DeGrand concurred that soliciting feedback from external stakeholders would be helpful.

Mayor Robinson said Bellevue is one of the most diverse cities in the country for its size. She asked how community members can develop trust with people who are different and unfamiliar.

Mayor Robinson said trust comes from discovering shared values and common goals and by being a City that demonstrates consistency and integrity.

At 7:35 p.m., Mayor Robinson declared a short break. The meeting resumed at 7:50 p.m.

(b) 2025-2026 Mid-Biennium Update Overview

City Manager Carlson introduced staff's overview of the 2025-2026 Mid-Biennium budget update, noting that it primarily includes minor technical adjustments.

John Resha, Chief Financial Officer, Finance and Asset Management Department, said staff would provide an overview of the budget adjustments, an update on sewer rates and the proposed development services fees and rates. Staff will return on November 12 for the public hearing and follow-up discussion. Budget adoption is anticipated on November 18.

Mr. Resha said the technical adjustments ensure that funds are directed to the right place. Adjustments to revenues encompass the one percent property tax, development services fees, telecommunications in the public right-of-way, school impact fees (reduced to \$0), sewer rates and no changes to major taxes. Key adjustments in expenditures include personnel adjustments, contractual agreements and technical streamlining.

Evan Phillips, Director, Financial Strategy and Performance, noted that the adjustments reflect previous Council action and do not include any policy changes. He said the City of Bellevue receives 13 percent of property tax collections, King County receives 19 percent, Bellevue School District receives 28 percent and the State of Washington receives 33 percent.

Deputy Mayor Malakoutian thanked staff for their work.

Councilmember Hamilton said he would like staff to explore ways to support immigrant and refugee communities. He suggested directing some of the Council Contingency Fund to the Human Services Fund to provide additional grants. He asked staff to bring back ideas on November 12 about how the City could increase its assistance.

Responding to Councilmember Sumadiwirya, Ms. Carlson said the City's website provides links to services and non-profit organizations.

Responding to Councilmember Lee, Mr. Resha said the City and many surrounding jurisdictions are experiencing a dip in revenues that has resulted in program and staffing reductions. He said the City has utilized cash reserves and is relying on small adjustments, including the one percent property tax, to mitigate the temporary decrease in revenues. Mr. Phillips said the property tax is the most stable revenue source and retaining the one percent adjustment helps to balance the City's revenue portfolio. He noted that approximately 41 percent of the property tax increase goes to voter-approved levies (e.g., parks, Fire facilities, transportation).

Councilmember Nieuwenhuis thanked staff for the update. He suggested that the one percent property tax be a separate Council vote on November 18 and staff concurred. Mr. Nieuwenhuis

acknowledged that Development Services Department Director Horner continues to work to improve and streamline the permitting process. Mr. Nieuwenhuis wondered whether the department is in need of additional resources. If so, he would like the Council to consider using a portion of the Council Contingency Fund to support the streamlining effort.

Councilmember Nieuwenhuis asked whether staff received copies of the letters from AT&T and other wireless providers regarding concerns about fee adjustments related to the right-of-way. Mr. Resha said he was aware of the letters but has not yet seen them.

Mayor Robinson noted that a high percentage of Bellevue's property taxes go to public education. She said the Bellevue School District is the best in the state.

Referring to the budget, Mayor Robinson noted the anticipated wage increase and cost-of-living adjustment for staff but not for Councilmembers. She suggested the Council consider a provision for an annual automatic cost-of-living increase in Council salaries.

Ms. Robinson said she would like to discuss the suggestions for the use of the Council Contingency Fund. She expressed support for the proposed human services navigator function. She said she appreciated the permitting recommendations and asked whether the Development Services Department has adequate funding for that initiative.

(c) Briefing on Proposed 2026 Sewer Rate Adjustment

Ms. Carlson introduced staff's update regarding proposed fee and rate adjustments in the 2025 mid-biennium budget.

Lucy Liu, Director, Utilities Department, said the current adopted sewer rate is 7.6 percent. However, due to higher wholesale costs from King County, a 0.3 percent increase is proposed, resulting in a rate of 7.9 percent. She said future wholesale wastewater treatment costs will be fully evaluated during the 2027-2028 budget process.

(d) Development Services Permit Fees, Issaquah and Renton School District Impact Fee Schedule Update, and Transportation Small Wireless Facility Fees

Director Horner introduced staff's update regarding a number of fees.

Jake Hesselgesser, Assistant Director, Development Services Department, provided an update on development activity. He said permit activity for major projects has slowed over the past two years due to difficult financing conditions, high construction costs and increased interest rates. He presented a graph depicting building valuation by category (i.e., major projects, commercial, residential, new residence) since 2014. He said there is currently a robust development pipeline with housing projects, including affordable housing units. He commented on process improvements related to customer feedback, permit streamlining, and enhancing consistency and transparency.

Mr. Hesselgesser reminded the Council of the cost recovery objective of 100 percent for land use discretionary review, engineering review and inspection, and technical/administrative support. The cost recovery objective for pre-submittal support, policy development and code compliance is 0 percent. Mr. Hesselgesser said the financial management guiding principles require that the funding structure support the development services line of business through economic cycles. Permit applicants should pay for services received and fees should be predictable, understandable and regionally competitive. Mr. Hesselgesser said they conduct an in-depth cost of service study every year. Staff proposes an adjustment of 2.70 percent in building permit fees based on CPI-W.

Ms. Horner introduced Matt Feldmeyer, Executive Director of Renton School District's capital planning and construction team. She said school impact fees are charged by the Issaquah and Renton school districts based on new residential construction and the funds are used to support capital programs. For both the Issaquah and Renton school districts, the proposed 2026 single-family and multifamily impact fees are zero.

Vanessa Humphreys, Assistant Director, Transportation Department, said staff proposes an ordinance that formally codifies existing lease fees charged for the use of City assets. She said staff would return in November to seek Council approval and the fee schedule will be published on the City's website. She said wireless facility lease fees are charged to telecommunications carriers when they want to make use of City-owned assets. She said the small wireless facilities program was established years ago.

Cassie Davis, Franchise Utility Manager, Transportation Department, described two fees related to small wireless facilities and a third fee related to wireless communications facilities in the public right-of-way. She said the 2026 rates will be calculated in November after the October CPI rates are published and will go into effect January 1, 2026. Ms. Davis said both fees are optional fees. The City's facility access fee provides the option for carriers to use the City's electrical infrastructure to power their privately owned small cell wireless equipment. The fee is charged annually for specific properties.

Ms. Davis asked the Council to consider directing staff to return for a future meeting with legislation to adopt fee and rate adjustments for the mid-biennium budget.

Councilmember Hamilton expressed support for the proposed budget adjustments and fees. He would like the City to continue to invest in enhancing quick and efficient permitting.

Councilmember Nieuwenhuis concurred regarding efforts to streamline the permitting process. He said a number of wireless carriers expressed concern about right-of-way fees and other issues.

Responding to Mr. Nieuwenhuis, Ms. Liu said staff plans to present policy options to the Council in the spring to consider expanding rate assistance programs.

Councilmember Sumadiwirya suggested extensive outreach to inform the community about the sewer rate adjustment and other fees.

Responding to Ms. Sumadiwiryia, Mr. Hesselgesser said the performance dashboard envisioned by staff is specific to permitting timelines. In further response, Ms. Horner confirmed that both school districts are not charging a school impact fee next year. Mr. Feldmeyer noted the current lack of enrollment growth in both school districts.

Councilmember Bhargava expressed support for Councilmember Hamilton's suggestion to use a portion of the Council Contingency Fund for human services grants.

Councilmember Lee complimented everyone on their work. He thanked Director Horner for her efforts with developers and encouraged continued efforts to expedite permitting. He encouraged consistency in inspection requirements. He expressed support for small wireless facilities.

Deputy Mayor Malakoutian referred to the comparison of Bellevue's permit fees with other jurisdictions, noting that Bellevue's fees are similar to Redmond's and lower than Seattle's or King County's fees. Kirkland and Issaquah both have lower permit fees. Responding to Mr. Malakoutian, Mr. Hesselgesser said reserves are available if an economic downturn results in reduced revenue. Mr. Malakoutian expressed concern regarding the potential impact of fee adjustments on residents.

Mayor Robinson said Bellevue is in a good financial position compared to many cities. She thanked staff for being conservative and accurate in their projections. She said she was pleased to see the strong housing development pipeline. She expressed support for additional options for utilities rate assistance. Mayor Robinson noted the need to discuss the Council's travel budget.

→ Deputy Mayor Malakoutian moved to direct staff to return with legislation for formal action to adopt fee and rate adjustments pertaining to the utilities sewer rate, development services permit fees, school impact fees and transportation wireless fees. Councilmember Nieuwenhuis seconded the motion.

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

11. Land Use Reports: None.

12. Other Ordinances, Resolutions, and Motions: None.

13. Written Reports

(a) Eastgate Campus Update: PorchLight and Plymouth Crossing

City Manager Carlson indicated that staff would provide the next update in January.

14. Unfinished Business: None.

15. New Business: None.

16. Executive Session: None.

17. Adjournment

At 9:00 p.m., Mayor Robinson declared the meeting adjourned.

Charmaine Arredondo, CMC
City Clerk

/kaw