

CITY OF BELLEVUE
CITY COUNCIL

Summary Minutes of Regular Meeting

February 3, 2026
6:00 p.m.

Council Chambers
Bellevue, Washington

PRESENT: Mayor Malakoutian, Deputy Mayor Hamilton and Councilmembers Bhargava, Briar, Nieuwenhuis and Sumadiwirya¹

ABSENT: Councilmember Robinson

1. Call to Order

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

- Deputy Mayor Hamilton moved to excuse Councilmember Robinson's absence from tonight's meeting, and Councilmember Nieuwenhuis seconded the motion.
- The motion carried by a vote of 6-0.

2. Roll Call; Flag Salute

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

(a) Black History Month Proclamation

Deputy Mayor Hamilton read the proclamation recognizing February 2026 as Black History Month in Bellevue. He encouraged everyone to join in honoring the invaluable contributions of Black Americans to our community and nation and to recommit to the work of addressing racism and advancing equity.

Jerry Lee, MG2 Foundation Executive Director and co-curator for the Black History Month art exhibition, thanked the Council and City Manager's Office for their support of Black History Month. He commended the City for its leadership in emphasizing inclusion and diversity beginning many years ago before it became more widespread.

¹ Councilmember Sumadiwirya participated remotely.

Charlese Jackson, MG2 Executive Administrator, commented on the importance of investing in artists, storytellers and community builders to create space for healing, opportunity and belonging. She thanked the Council for the proclamation.

Jay Taylor, MG2 Architect and co-curator, encouraged everyone to visit the Melodies of the Diaspora art exhibit in City Hall and the Bellevue Arts Museum celebrating 100 years of Black History Month. He thanked City staff for their support and partnership.

Fancy Vargas, Elevate CEO/Creative Director and co-curator of the Melodies of the Diaspora exhibit, said she grew up in Seattle but now lives in Bellevue. She said that, living in Bellevue and seeing how it has grown and is embracing all cultures, she looks forward to continuing collaboration with the City.

3. Approval of Agenda

- Deputy Mayor Hamilton moved to approve the agenda, and Councilmember Nieuwenhuis seconded the motion.
- The motion carried by a vote of 6-0.

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. Individuals 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. Each speaker is allowed up to three minutes to speak and a maximum of three speakers are allowed to speak to any one side of a particular 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.

- (a) Saghar Amini, representing Habitat for Humanity, expressed support for the updated Affordable Housing Strategy reflecting a clear commitment to keeping Bellevue a welcoming and accessible place for people of all income levels to live and thrive. She thanked the City for its explicit prioritization of home ownership and expanded affordable housing incentives.
- (b) Nikki Stuck, representing the Bellevue Chamber of Commerce PLUSH (Permitting, Land Use, Sustainability and Housing) Committee, thanked staff for working with them over the past year as the City updated its Affordable Housing Strategy. She expressed concern regarding over-reliance on taxing housing to fund housing, whether through inclusionary mandates or fees in lieu. She encouraged an emphasis on incentives over mandates.
- (c) Daniel Landes, Vice President of Development for the King County Housing Authority, spoke on behalf of the Eastside Affordable Housing Coalition and expressed support for

the Affordable Housing Strategy. He said the plan includes numerous strategies, ideas and actions to truly address housing affordability. He expressed support for mandatory inclusionary zoning. Mr. Landes thanked City staff for their work and partnership.

- (d) Claire Xu commented on the importance of including youth voices when discussing housing priorities. She said the City's housing needs assessment indicated that 19 percent of all individuals experiencing homelessness in King County in 2020 were under 18 years old. During a three-day count in 2024, 123 people were living in vehicles in Bellevue and approximately 38 percent were children. Last year there were 651 students in the Bellevue School District who were experiencing homelessness. Ms. Xu encouraged housing near schools, libraries and other community resources.
- (e) Brady Nordstrom, representing the Housing Development Consortium and Eastside Affordable Housing Coalition, expressed support for the Affordable Housing Strategy and noted that it reflects deep engagement with a diverse group of stakeholders. He thanked the City for including strategies to engage those most impacted by the housing crisis in discussions and decisions. He said it is critical to have strategies that reduce costs and project timelines.
- (f) Kunal Chopra, CEO of Certivo, expressed support for the Innovation Forum program and the City's broader commitment to innovation. He commented on the importance of supporting entrepreneurs and encouraged the City to continue to expand the program.
- (g) Barb Wilson, Microsoft, expressed support for the updates to the multifamily tax exemption (MFTE) program. She said the program has been the most effective tool for delivering workforce affordable housing in this region. She expressed support for the Wilburton Subarea Plan and encouraged the Council to expand the "supercharger" incentive to the BelRed corridor and other areas. She thanked the Council for its continued commitment to housing development.
- (h) Neil Kumar, a freshman at Bellevue High School, said he was one of four people and the only student selected to be part of the City's inaugural Civic Innovation Challenge. He said he was able to work directly with City staff and Bellevue College to pilot FindIt AI, an application to help people recover lost items more quickly and with less frustration. He appreciated being able to collaborate with professionals and mentors.
- (i) Tim Hay said there is a wetland within 1.5 miles of Bellevue Square that is worthy of study by appropriate experts. The wetland covers 8.5 acres between NE 8th Street and Bel-Red Road at approximately 128th Avenue, west of the golf course. He said the area is home to a broad range of wildlife including eagles and deer and he asked the City to protect the area from development. He expressed concern about layoffs at local companies and said the plans to create housing might exceed the need based on layoffs and an ongoing decrease in the number of jobs.

- (j) Patience Malaba, Executive Director of the Housing Development Consortium and Co-Chair of the Eastside Housing Roundtable, thanked the Council for the MFTE program updates, especially the Wilburton area “supercharger” option.
- 5. Reports of Community Councils, Boards, and Commissions: None.
- 6. Report of the City Manager: None.
- 7. Council Business and New Initiatives: None.
- 8. Consent Calendar
 - Deputy Mayor Hamilton moved to approve the Consent Calendar, and Councilmember Nieuwenhuis seconded the motion.
 - The motion to approve the Consent Calendar carried by a vote of 6-0, and the following item was approved:
 - (a) Ordinance No. 6900: 1) authorizing execution of Amendment 8 and supplements, if necessary, to the Interlocal Cooperative Agreement with King County for Conservation Futures program, providing the city with \$3,487,244 for the completed property acquisition in the Coal Creek/Lakemont neighborhood along with \$105,000 for site stabilization costs, and \$4,422,630 for the completed acquisition of properties in the Lake Sammamish neighborhood, 2) amending the 2025-2030 General Capital Improvement Program (CIP) Fund to increase the appropriation by \$105,000, and 3) amending the 2025-2030 General CIP Plan to increase the budget by \$105,000 for Parks & Open Space Acquisition (CIP Plan No. P-AD-82).
 - (b) Ordinance No. 6901 amending chapter 4.52 of the Bellevue City Code to increase utilization of the City’s Multifamily Tax Exemption (MFTE) Program and promote the construction of affordable housing by expanding program options, clarifying program standards, revising exemptions applicable to areas with mandatory inclusionary zoning or near frequent transit service, improving alignment with land use codes, updating definitions, administrative and monitoring provisions, and correcting typographical errors and internal citations; providing for severability; and establishing an effective date.
 - (c) Resolution No. 10580 authorizing execution of the Telecommunications Right-of-Way Use Agreement with Forged Fiber 37, LLC.
 - (d) Resolution No. 10581 authorizing execution of an Exclusive Negotiations Agreement with Su Land Inc. for the redevelopment of the City-owned 130th parcels.
- 9. Public Hearing: None.

10. Study Session Items

(a) Innovation Forum Update

City Manager Carlson introduced discussion regarding the Innovation Forum initiative.

Sabra Schneider, Chief Information Officer, Information Technology Department, recalled that the program was designed to align with the Council's vision of innovation. It brings together government, education, private business, startups, nonprofits and community members to help drive innovation in and outside of City Hall. She noted there were approximately 50 attendees at the first innovation preview event and 275 attendees at an event last fall.

Molly Bandel, Business Operations Program Manager, Information Technology Department, said the Innovation Exchange event was held at City Hall on October 16, 2025. There were approximately 273 attendees, 48 speakers and panelists, and 13 learning sessions.

Ms. Bandel said the City launched a community challenge for startups last summer to submit ideas to help drive innovation and service delivery within the City and community. Four applicants were paired with design partners to collaborate and test their civic innovation solutions. Ms. Bandel highlighted the competing projects and programs.

PJ Rodriguez, Chief Operating Officer, Information Technology Department, said three sub-teams were formed with the goals to: 1) support and enhance digital equity, 2) augment policies and priorities, and 3) grow thriving innovation ecosystems. The teams adopted nine short-term goals in June 2025 and five have been completed. Mr. Rodriguez said Bellevue College hosted the Smart City Hackathon. Mr. Rodriguez highlighted the growing number of innovation public-private partnerships.

Ms. Schneider said digital equity will continue to be a focus going forward, as well as the second Civic Innovation Challenge and the Innovation Exchange event in June 2026. She highlighted an upcoming event to award 60 laptop computers, along with one-year of Internet service, to community members.

Mayor Malakoutian thanked staff for the presentation.

Councilmember Sumadiwiryia congratulated staff on the success of the innovation events. Responding to Ms. Sumadiwiryia, Ms. Schneider said staff is working to develop a formal outreach strategy. In further response, Ms. Schneider said the City is working with the public to develop privacy and AI-related policies.

Councilmember Briar expressed enthusiasm for this effort and thanked everyone for their work and for involving young people in the community.

Councilmember Bhargava commended staff on their progress and for the focus on digital equity. He thanked all of the community partners and the Innovation Challenge participants. Responding to Mr. Bhargava, Ms. Schneider highlighted ideas for future activities and events.

Councilmember Nieuwenhuis expressed strong support for the program and thanked everyone for their work.

Deputy Mayor Hamilton expressed support for the innovation program and noted a number of benefits, including related to digital equity. He thanked staff for the focus on AI and said he looks forward to future updates.

Mayor Malakoutian thanked staff for their extensive involvement with the community and said he looks forward to future activities. Responding to Mr. Malakoutian, Ms. Schneider highlighted the City's private sector partners to date.

At 7:10 p.m., Mayor Malakoutian declared a short break. The meeting resumed at 7:20 p.m.

(b) Recommended 2026-2032 Affordable Housing Strategy

City Manager Carlson introduced discussion regarding the 2026-2032 Affordable Housing Strategy.

Bianca Siegl, Director, Office of Housing, noted that the Affordable Housing Strategy includes overall housing priorities as well. She said staff is seeking Council feedback regarding the draft update to the strategy.

Hannah Bahnmitter, Senior Affordable Housing Planner, Office of Housing, said the strategy is a short-term action plan that was first adopted in 2017. The update was launched in November 2024 and implements Comprehensive Plan policy goals. The 2035 housing targets are 19 percent of units serving households earning 0-30 of the area median income (AMI), 10 percent serving households 30-50 percent AMI, 11 percent serving households earning 50-80 percent AMI and 59 percent of the units as unrestricted by income.

The five overall Affordable Housing Strategy goals are: 1) affordable housing, 2) housing stability, 3) housing equity, 4) housing for unique needs, and 5) increased supply and diverse types of housing. Ms. Bahnmitter said there are different needs and solutions at different affordability levels. Housing for households earning below 50 percent AMI requires public investment and includes emergency housing/shelters, permanent supportive housing and non-market rate rental housing.

Ms. Bahnmitter described the community outreach process, noting that 325 community members participated in four public events and 60 organizational partners were involved in workshops and presentations. Surveys were conducted of organizations and the general public, and 150 individuals with lived experience participated in more than 30 listening sessions.

Ms. Bahnmitter said the Affordable Housing Strategy contains five high-level policy outcomes, 24 strategies and more than 80 actions. She highlighted 20 actions designated as high-priority implementation actions. She provided additional details regarding housing targets, noting that 4,000 affordable units are anticipated to be developed over the next 10 years. She said the plan includes both outcome metrics (i.e., overall impact toward the goal) and implementation metrics (i.e., measures progress of specific activities).

Ms. Bahnmitter said the affordable housing goal area is focused on building or preserving more income-restricted affordable housing through acquisition and preservation, reductions in costs and construction timelines, new and expanded resources and incentives, and partnerships. One strategy is to explore new revenue sources and financing tools. The housing equity goal is focused on eliminating disparities in housing by race, ethnicity, status, sexual orientation, ability and income. Housing stability is focused on increasing the ability of low- and moderate-income households to continue to live in their home or neighborhood. Housing for unique needs focuses on creating more affordable units for individuals with certain needs including senior adults, families and people with disabilities. The housing supply goal is focused on creating more housing in general with a broad range of housing types, including middle housing and smaller homes.

Ms. Siegl said the City continues to solicit public input and staff is planning two public information sessions in the near future. She said a number of departments beyond the Office of Housing are involved in this effort.

Mayor Malakoutian thanked staff for the presentation and for their extensive work within the community.

Deputy Mayor Hamilton thanked staff for their work and noted that housing is a top priority here and around the world. He expressed general support for the Affordable Housing Strategy and for engaging more stakeholders, with an extra focus on housing suppliers, both market-rate and non-profit. He said The Seattle Times editorial board urged the state legislature to avoid policies that make housing more costly or take longer to build.

Referring to the housing stability goal, Mr. Hamilton said it would be helpful to see examples of potential tenant protections. He expressed concern regarding the proposed rental registration and inspection program and would prefer to remove that item. He said there is limited evidence that Seattle's registration program has succeeded in improving the quality of rental units and the compliance costs are high. Deputy Mayor Hamilton said he does not want the final plan to include any action that goes beyond the Council's adopted state legislative agenda.

Councilmember Sumadiwirya thanked everyone for their work and for reaching out to individuals with lived experience related to housing instability. Responding to Ms. Sumadiwirya, Ms. Siegl said the rental registration program is not one of the high-priority action items and will be considered more in the future. In further response, Ms. Bahnmitter noted the City's efforts to expedite permitting for 100-percent affordable housing projects.

Councilmember Bhargava thanked staff for their work to develop a comprehensive Affordable Housing Strategy and for their extensive community outreach. He expressed support for a focus on home ownership, expedited permitting and exploring additional funding resources. He encouraged a continued focus on incentives and on land acquisitions around transit service.

Councilmember Nieuwenhuis thanked everyone for their work on this complex topic and for the robust public outreach. He cautioned against making some of the mistakes that have occurred in other cities. While he generally supports the plan, he expressed concern that it sounds like potentially relatively heavy regulation. Councilmember Nieuwenhuis noted concerns by stakeholders regarding rental registration and inspections. He said when the idea of creating an Office of Housing was first introduced he was concerned about creating an overly bureaucratic institution. He said Bellevue typically tries to maintain flexibility and adaptability to changing circumstances. He expressed concern that regulations are more likely to hurt small landlords.

Councilmember Nieuwenhuis asked whether staff spoke with the Rental Housing Association of Washington or the Washington Multifamily Housing Association. Ms. Bahnmitter said she did not think they engaged with the City. Mr. Nieuwenhuis expressed concern that some of the actions might encourage policies that could worsen affordability and restrict housing supply. He encouraged a stronger emphasis on incentives that have been proven effective and on expedited permitting and design review.

Councilmember Briar thanked staff for their thorough work on the Affordable Housing Strategy. She said housing affordability is critical. However, she expressed concern about any regulations that could delay or block housing development entirely. She commended the prioritization of home ownership. She expressed support for exploring additional revenue sources but noted concern about potential new taxes. She encouraged a focus on working with private partners. She expressed concern about the potential rental registration program, noting that data related to Seattle's approach indicated an increase in costs as well as privacy concerns.

Mayor Malakoutian thanked staff for the information and discussion and reconfirmed the Council's commitment to addressing housing needs.

(c) City Council Initiation of 2026 Omnibus Code Amendments

City Manager Carlson introduced discussion regarding the 2026 Omnibus Code Amendments.

Nick Whipple, Cody and Policy Director, Development Services Department, said the amendments affect both the Bellevue City Code and the Land Use Code. He said staff is seeking direction to initiate the 2026 Omnibus Code Amendments and to direct the Planning Commission to review and process the Land Use Code Amendment (LUCA) portion of the omnibus package.

Kirsten Mandt, Senior Planner, Development Services Department, said this effort will address clean-up amendments (e.g., scrivener's errors, clarifications, formatting and corrections), compliance with state law, and minor policy amendments for alignment with the overall code. Ms. Mandt said there will be limited community engagement due to the routine and non-

controversial nature of the amendments. However, staff will host public events and the omnibus package will be discussed by the Planning Commission and City Council.

Ms. Mandt highlighted the anticipated timeline for the process with preliminary outreach in March, code drafting through May, a public hearing by early summer and Council action in July.

Mayor Malakoutian thanked staff for the information.

- Deputy Mayor Hamilton moved to direct staff to initiate the 2026 Omnibus Code Amendments and to direct the Planning Commission to review and process the Land Use Code Amendment (LUCA) portion of the package. Councilmember Nieuwenhuis seconded the motion.
- The motion carried by a vote of 6-0.
- 11. Land Use Reports: 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 8:25 p.m., Mayor Malakoutian declared the meeting adjourned.

Charmaine Arredondo, CMC
City Clerk

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