

CITY OF BELLEVUE  
CITY COUNCIL

Summary Minutes of Regular Meeting

February 12, 2024  
6:00 p.m.

Council Chambers  
Bellevue, Washington

PRESENT: Mayor Robinson, Deputy Mayor Malakoutian and Councilmembers Hamilton, Lee, Nieuwenhuis, Stokes and Zahn

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 Lee led the flag salute.

- (a) Day of Action and Remembrance for Japanese American Incarceration During World War II Proclamation

Councilmember Nieuwenhuis read the proclamation recognizing February 19, 2024 as the Day of Action and Remembrance for Japanese American Incarceration During World War II. He urged the community to reflect on this unfortunate time in our nation's history and to join with the City in committing to protecting everyone's civil rights.

Mr. Nieuwenhuis said the City will host "Within the Silence" presented by Living Voices at City Hall on Thursday, February 22, 6:00-8:00 p.m., and the public is invited to attend.

Ren Watanabe said her grandparents and great grandparents were incarcerated during World War II and it was an honor to be here for this acknowledgement. She said she has heard personal stories from her family about their experiences. She noted the importance of learning from history to avoid repeating the same mistakes. She said her uncle served in the 442<sup>nd</sup> Regimental Combat Team during World War II and just turned 101 years old. She thanked the Council for the proclamation.

3. Approval of Agenda

- Deputy Mayor Malakoutian moved to approve the agenda, and Councilmember Stokes 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) Dietra Clayton, representing The Sophia Way, expressed support for the Human Services Commission's work. She said The Sophia Way housed 146 women in 2023 and \$250,000 went directly to supporting clients in their efforts to transition to permanent housing. She asked the Council to continue to look out for those who are less fortunate and thanked them for all of their efforts.
- (b) Kyle Sullivan, a Kirkland resident, expressed support for the Bike Bellevue plan, noting that he often rides his bike to Bellevue businesses. He expressed concern about the carbon emissions generated by passenger cars. He said that building electric vehicles is carbon intensive and they do not address the issue of reducing our reliance on individual cars. He said car infrastructure is expensive and takes up a lot of space in terms of roadways and parking lots. He said that continuing to expand bicycle infrastructure will help increase the number of people using bikes for transportation.
- (c) Suzanne Baugh said she has lived in Lake Heights for nearly 34 years and, during that time, the Newport Hills shopping center has deteriorated as a neighborhood retail and service destination. From 2016 to 2018, two developers proposed projects that were viewed favorably by the Council and the community. However, the projects did not fit within neighborhood business parameters and a Comprehensive Plan Amendment (CPA) process was required and attempted. Several Newport Hills residents testified before the Planning Commission and the Council in favor of the CPA. However, after a small but loud minority vote voiced intense opposition to changing the shopping center, the owner lost heart and the developers withdrew from the process. She said a mixed use-low land designation was recently assigned to the center with no evidence that a financially viable project could be achieved within that land designation. Ms. Baugh proposed a that a mixed use-medium designation be approved now during the Comprehensive Plan periodic update process. She believes the MU-M designation will help to achieve a financially viable project.
- (d) Heidi Dean said the Council already voted to study the Newport Hills shopping center, along with other neighborhood centers, for the potential of mixed use-low rise development. She said the center was under contract before the pandemic and has a buyer who is still waiting. She said that changing the designation to MU-M would effectively

be a spot rezone in the Comprehensive Plan. Ms. Dean said she opposes efforts to upzone the shopping center property. She said talking points heard the previous week and tonight match the talking points of prospective developers.

- (e) Paul Quinn, a Sammamish resident, said King County documents indicate that two-thirds of what is sent to the landfill can be either recycled or composted. He said Bellevue's diversion rate is essentially flat when comparing 2022 to 2023. With Bellevue's strong environmental stewardship plan, Mr. Quinn suggested better progress toward increasing recycling and composting. He noted handouts he provided to the Council. He encouraged the City to increase efforts to educate the public about disposing of waste. He suggested that the City provide every household and business with a free indoor recycling container and a free countertop kitchen scraps container. He suggested weekly pickup of recycling and compost. He highlighted additional suggestions from his written submittal.
- (f) Jacquelyn Kimzey expressed support for the Bike Bellevue plan. She said she frequents businesses in Bellevue and expressed concern about the safety of bicycling on Bel-Red Road. She expressed concern that the plan could be delayed and encouraged the Council to move forward as quickly as possible.
- (g) Anthony Tseytlin, a resident of the Wilburton neighborhood, expressed support for the Bike Bellevue plan. While close to downtown, he said he is hesitant to ride his bike due to safety concerns. He said biking along Bel-Red Road is dangerous as well. He encouraged the City to enhance multimodal transportation in Bellevue.
- (h) Alex Tsimerman noted the proclamation recognizing Japanese American internment during World War II and said the Council should respect people now.

Mayor Robinson asked Mr. Tsimerman to comment on City of Bellevue business. Ms. Robinson declared a short break and the meeting resumed within a couple of minutes.

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 Malakoutian moved to approve the Consent Calendar, and Councilmember Stokes seconded the motion.

→ The motion to approve the Consent Calendar carried by a vote of 7-0, and the following items were approved:

- (a) Ordinance No. 6777 authorizing execution of a grant agreement with the Department of Commerce to accept \$1,000,000 in reimbursable grant funding

from the Clean Energy Fund Building Electrification Program for Energy Smart Eastside to implement heat pump incentives for low- and moderate-income households; amending the 2023-2024 Operating Grants, Donations, and Special Reserve Fund to increase the appropriation by \$1,000,000 in 2024.

- (b) Resolution No. 10354 authorizing the execution of a one-year Professional Services Agreement with Hopelink to provide reimbursement services related to heat pumps installed under the Energy Smart Eastside Boost Program in an amount not to exceed \$1,700,000.00, including all applicable taxes.
- (c) Resolution No. 10355 authorizing the purchase and installation of new play equipment at Crossroads Community Park and demolition of existing play equipment by GameTime, in an amount not to exceed \$424,477, plus all applicable taxes.

9. Public Hearing: None.

10. Study Session

- (a) Sound Transit 2 Line (East Link) Project Update

Acting City Manager Carlson introduced Sound Transit's update regarding the light rail 2 Line.

Ron Lewis, Executive Director for Design, Engineering and Construction Management, Sound Transit, introduced John Lebo, East Link Executive Project Director, and Ariel Taylor, Director of Government and Community Relations for the Sound Transit East Corridor, to provide the staff report.

Ms. Taylor said the 2 Line between Bellevue and Redmond will open this spring serving eight light rail stations. She said Sound Transit has had three ballot measures over the past few decades to build upon the shared vision for light rail to transform the region. The Sound Move ballot measure in 1996 funded Link light rail from downtown Seattle to SeaTac airport, Sounder rail from Everett to Tacoma and ST Express bus service. ST2 was approved in 2008 to fund the expansion of Link to Angle Lake, Bellevue, Redmond, Northgate, Lynnwood and Federal Way and to fund Sounder service expansion to South Tacoma/Lakewood. In 2016, ST3 provided funding for Link to Ballard, West Seattle, Everett, Tacoma, Kirkland, Issaquah and Downtown Redmond; three Stride bus rapid transit lines; and two new Sounder stations.

Ms. Taylor recalled that the full East Link extension plan covers 14 miles with 10 stations and that service is anticipated to begin operating in 2025. The East Link Starter Line covers seven miles and eight stations and was approved by the Sound Transit Board as part of the 2024 Service Plan. She noted that construction errors were discovered on the I-90 bridge portion of the East Link route in 2021 and crews are working to reconstruct the track and plinths. Instead of waiting for the full route to be constructed, the Board authorized the opening of the Starter Line.

Ms. Taylor said the Lynnwood Link Extension is slated to begin operating this fall and the Downtown Redmond Link Extension is expected to open in 2025. The Federal Way Link Extension is targeted to begin operating in 2026. Ms. Taylor said the East Link route is now called the 2 Line, which will ultimately connect to Lynnwood. She said the 1 Line extends from Seattle to the airport.

The benefits of opening the Starter Line now are to introduce light rail to the Eastside, activate a segment with eight stations and to provide the opportunity to connect to major Eastside destinations, employment centers and neighborhoods. Light rail trains will arrive at stations approximately every 10 minutes between 5:30 a.m. and 9:30 p.m., seven days per week. Travel time between South Bellevue and the Redmond Technology Station will be approximately 17 minutes and all stations are ADA-accessible.

Ms. Taylor said Sound Transit will celebrate the opening of the Starter Line this spring. She said she would notify the City once the date for the celebration at the Downtown Bellevue Station is set. She said Sound Transit is partnering with local organizations including the Bellevue Downtown Association (BDA), Pacific Science Center/Mercer Slough Environmental Education Center, BelRed Arts District, Eastrail Partners, Move Redmond, Microsoft and OneRedmond to host community led celebrations at each station. She noted she could provide a full list of community partners.

Councilmember Zahn said she looks forward to the opening of the Starter Line. She asked about plans for Metro bus service from the South Bellevue Station to Seattle until the 2 Line is fully operational. She questioned the closing time of 9:30 p.m., especially for riders using light rail in the evening to go out to dinner or entertainment.

Ms. Taylor said the 550 bus will continue to operate between South Bellevue and Seattle with the initial opening of the Starter Line. She said Sound Transit continues to talk with King County Metro about ongoing bus service as part of the East Link Connections project.

Responding to Ms. Zahn, Mr. Lebo said the full 2 Line is expected to begin operating in late 2025.

Councilmember Nieuwenhuis thanked Sound Transit staff for the update and said he was pleased to hear that a former Bellevue Transportation Director, Goran Sparrman, is now the Interim CEO for Sound Transit. Responding to Mr. Nieuwenhuis, Mr. Lebo acknowledged that Sound Transit discovered cracked and buckled tiles at the South Bellevue Station and hired a contractor to conduct repairs. During that work, additional issues were identified and Sound Transit ultimately decided to replace the entire tile assembly for the platform. He said similar issues were subsequently found at other stations and are being resolved, including the replacement of most of the tile at the Spring District Station.

Mr. Nieuwenhuis asked about coordination between Sound Transit and the Bellevue Police Department's transit team. Mr. Lebo said he has not been directly involved with those conversations. However, Sound Transit's safety and security team works closely with cities and

King County to develop plans and procedures for adequate security. Mr. Lebo said Sound Transit staffs security at stations as well.

Deputy Mayor Malakoutian thanked Sound Transit staff for the update. Responding to Mr. Malakoutian, Mr. Lebo said there is currently a great deal of construction activity in the region, placing a heavy demand on contractors, engineers and designers. He noted a lack of talent available for engineering and construction and suggested that some of the problems Sound Transit is experiencing stems from a lack of contractor experience. He said Sound Transit is seeking to recover its costs for the repairs and has hired national experts to assist in addressing construction issues.

Mayor Robinson commended the leadership of previous City Councils in light rail planning including former mayors Claudia Balducci, John Stokes and John Chelminiak. She looks forward to the opening of light rail as a regional asset. She expressed support for involving the community in the station opening celebrations.

Councilmember Lee recalled his history with light rail planning and noted that he appointed three Councilmembers to negotiate with Sound Transit. He said that coordination has resulted in the best Sound Transit light rail segment in the whole region. He looks forward to continued collaboration and the opening of light rail.

Responding to Mr. Lee, Ms. Taylor said she believed King County Metro plans to continue the Rapid Ride B bus service through Bellevue. Mr. Lee said he looks forward to the full opening of the 2 Line in 2025 and thanked Sound Transit for their work.

In further response to Mr. Lee, Mr. Lewis said Sound Transit's partnership with the City, including the Bellevue Police Department and Bellevue Fire Department, has a long history and previous agreements provided a framework for that collaboration. He said those agreements are reflected in all phases of light rail project delivery. He said the City and Sound Transit have participated in emergency response drills to prepare for possible incidents. He said Sound Transit will monitor how people are accessing light rail stations by all modes (e.g., bus, car, walking) as well as parking operations to address any issues.

Councilmember Stokes said he was appointed by then Mayor Lee and served on the team that negotiated with Sound Transit while planning the East Link project. He commended the ongoing collaborative effort and said he looks forward to the opening of light rail. He thanked Sound Transit for their work with the City.

Councilmember Hamilton said he appreciated all of the past work by the City Council, Sound Transit and the community in shaping the East Link project. He said he shared his colleagues' concerns about security. He asked about the anticipated ridership levels and the cost of traveling from Bellevue to Redmond on light rail.

Ms. Taylor said the current standard fare is \$3.25 and it is time-based. She encouraged riders to tap on and tap off when traveling on light rail. She said 43,000-52,000 daily riders are projected for the full 2 Line. However, that will be lower for the Starter Line.

Responding to Councilmember Hamilton, Ms. Taylor acknowledged residents' concerns about noise and vibration. She said there have been only two noted complaints to the Sound Transit service department regarding those issues and both were resolved.

Mayor Robinson thanked Sound Transit staff for providing the report.

At 7:08 p.m., Mayor Robinson declared a short break. The meeting resumed at 7:18 p.m.

(b) Report on Key Findings of the 2023-2024 Human Services Needs Update

Acting City Manager Carlson introduced staff's presentation regarding the 2023-2024 Human Services Needs Update.

Michael Shiosaki, Director of the Parks and Community Services Department, introduced Dr. Megan Beers, Senior Consultant with Health Management Associates, who assisted the City with data collection and analysis for the Human Services Needs Update. He said this data directly contributed to the development of the strategic plan to be presented later in the evening.

Toni Esparza, Assistant Director, said the City has conducted Human Services Needs Updates since 1989 to be used by City staff, human services agencies and others to better understand the needs of the community and to inform policy decisions.

Dr. Beers provided an overview of the community engagement and data collection through a community survey, provider surveys, key informant interviews, focus groups, presentations to the Human Services Commission and other existing data. More than 1,000 community members and more than 65 human services agencies provided input as part of the needs update. Dr. Beers said the community survey was able to reach low and moderate income residents of Bellevue.

Themes reflected in the data include changing demographics, disproportionate impacts by race and language, lack of knowledge about available resources, importance of communication and collaboration, growing challenges for human services providers, and issues related to the cost of living, availability of housing and availability of services.

Ms. Esparza said there are critical needs in several areas as well as a shortage of available services. She said that 49 percent of survey respondents said they were able to access a human services provider when needed and 43 percent of survey respondents indicated they were able to access services in a way that supported their language and/or cultural needs.

Key findings highlighted housing and homelessness as a critical service need. The number of individuals who are severely cost burdened by rent has increased significantly and the number of individuals experiencing homelessness in Bellevue and the region is increasing rapidly. The number of students in the Bellevue School District who are experiencing homelessness increased significantly as well to 663 students for the 2022-2023 school year.

Ms. Esparza said a second critical need is food security. She noted an increasing number of Bellevue residents experiencing food insecurity and in need of financial assistance to maintain stability for the household. She said there are significant racial disparities in resources and experiences of food insecurity in Bellevue. She said there has been an increase in the number of residents accessing Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits as well, with Pacific Islander, non-Hispanic Black and Hispanic/Latino individuals receiving benefits at a higher rate than the overall population.

The third area of critical need is health and well-being. Ms. Esparza said behavioral health needs increased since the pandemic and remain high. She said there is variability in access to services based on race, ethnicity and language. She said nearly 20 percent of sixth graders report they have seriously contemplated suicide. The Washington State Department of Health has highlighted the increased risk of mental health challenges for certain youth demographics including those who are sexually and gender diverse and youth with disabilities. Ms. Esparza said fatal and non-fatal overdoses continue to increase, largely driven by fentanyl in many illegal drugs. She said substance use disorder services indicated that only 27 percent of respondents who sought services reported that they were able to access help within their community.

A fourth critical need area is violence prevention and survivor support and advocacy, especially for survivors of domestic violence. Service data also highlights the need for support for individuals experiencing other types of violence including sexual assault, abuse or trauma. The Bellevue School District identified violence as a contributor to families facing eviction and experiencing homelessness.

The fifth area of critical need is employment and education. While unemployment in Bellevue is relatively low, Black and Indigenous residents experience disproportionate rates of unemployment. Ms. Esparza noted that access to affordable child care and transportation can have a significant impact on employment. She said multiracial, single households in Washington pay the highest percentage of their income, 52 percent, toward child care. Ms. Esparza presented graduation rates for Bellevue students by race, with White, Black, Asian and multiracial individuals experiencing higher graduation rates.

The sixth critical service need relates to hate, discrimination and bias. Ms. Esparza said that 25 percent of survey respondents seeking support said they were able to access help in their community and 17 percent of the respondents indicated they were able to access support in a way that met their language or cultural needs.

The seventh critical need area is services for older adults, who identified the need for increased access to transportation, in-person services and printed materials to support meeting their basic needs and ongoing involvement in the community. Ms. Esparza noted the need for affordable housing for older adults. The eighth area of critical need is services for individuals living with a disability. Ms. Esparza noted the added barrier for individuals with a disability who do not speak English and the need for community-specific outreach, engagement and programming.

Mayor Robinson thanked staff for the information.



Councilmember Nieuwenhuis said these are sobering statistics and findings. He said the City needs to do more, such as providing more culturally competent services to residents. He suggested that enhanced access to child care would enable more people to work and decrease the unemployment rate. He expressed concern about students experiencing homelessness. Responding to Mr. Nieuwenhuis, Ms. Esparza said the increase in the number of students experiencing homelessness is thought to be due, at least in part, to the financial impacts of the pandemic.

Councilmember Zahn, liaison to the Human Services Commission, commented on the importance of homelessness prevention. Responding to Ms. Zahn, Ms. Esparza said the impacts of racism and discrimination lead to disparities in nearly every service area. Mr. Shiosaki said that even though we know the demographics of the Bellevue community, it is startling to see the lack of access to services for individuals who do not speak English as a primary language. Dr. Beers said that feedback from focus groups highlighted the challenge of accessing services that do not exist based on language or cultural needs.

Deputy Mayor Malakoutian said it saddens him to see the ongoing challenges related to homelessness, hunger and health care access. He said no one should have to struggle with those basic human needs. He asked how Bellevue's needs compare to surrounding cities. Ms. Esparza confirmed that the needs are consistent across jurisdictions.

Councilmember Lee said the data is useful to inform the City's actions. He thanked staff for their work.

Councilmember Stokes said living costs have increased significantly in recent years, as have racism and other forms of division in society. He said that while aspects of the economy are improving, the benefits are not necessarily reaching lower income individuals. He noted the need for increased investments and strategic action.

Councilmember Hamilton said the information collected through the Human Services Needs Update is alarming and heartbreaking. He said the report is a helpful tool for the City and service providers. He encouraged enhanced communication and collaboration between the City and community. He commented on the challenge for human services providers of attracting and retaining staff.

Mayor Robinson expressed concern that less than half of the survey respondents indicated they knew where to access help if they felt their housing was threatened. She said it is more cost effective to prevent homelessness than to re-house people and provide services related to their experience of homelessness. She encouraged a strong emphasis on preventing homelessness.

(c) Presentation of the Human Services Strategic Plan with Key Objectives

Mr. Shiosaki welcomed Jimmy Singh, Chair of the Human Services Commission, to the meeting. He said staff is seeking Council direction to return with a resolution on a future consent calendar to adopt the 2024-2030 Human Services Strategic Plan.

Chair Singh said the Human Services Commission has observed significant increases in the number of grant applications and the dollar amounts requested. Throughout and since the pandemic, from 2020 to 2024, the Council made increased investments in human services by providing an additional \$20 million to support the needs of the most marginalized community members. He said low and moderate income households continue to feel the impacts of the pandemic.

Mr. Singh said the Human Services Commission endorsed the Human Services Strategic Plan on December 5, 2023. He thanked the Council for its support of human services and for the opportunity to serve on the commission.

Ms. Esparza highlighted the Council's investments in one-time human services funding since 2020. The Human Services Fund is funded in the General Fund and the Housing Stability Program is supported by a sales tax. A portion of the Housing Stability Program funds is allocated toward behavioral health and housing-related human services and a portion goes toward on-site services for projects receiving capital funding through the program. An additional funding source is the federal Community Development Block Grant program. Ms. Esparza noted that one-time funding provided by the Council over the past few years will be spent by the end of this year.

Ms. Esparza said the Human Services Strategic Plan is organized by four objectives, with each having specific actions. The first objective is: Expand equity-focused and data-driven decision-making that best addresses the most significant community needs, prioritizing investments in the areas of greatest disparities for Bellevue residents. Dr. Beers said this objective was informed by several key pieces of community feedback including the desire to co-design services with impacted communities and the need to increase access to culturally competent assistance in multiple languages.

Ms. Esparza recalled that the Council previously asked staff to consider how to distribute expenditures differently. She said the Council encouraged the use of an equitable funding framework and expressed an interest in wanting to understand the impact of investments on individuals and the community. Actions under the first objective include using data to make decisions about where to invest human services dollars, continued equity training for commission members and staff involved in evaluating funding requests, developing a standardized framework for evaluating funding applications, involving a diverse panel of community members to review applications, analyzing funding recommendations to improve the equitable distribution of funds and maintaining a reporting dashboard to monitor the use of City resources.

Ms. Esparza said the evaluation of funding applications will place a priority on joint proposals that incorporate collaborative efforts to solve complex systemic issues, have the capacity to provide culturally or linguistically specific human services, and that provide services to fill service gaps for the most marginalized communities.

The second overall objective in the strategic plan is: Increase the capacity of Bellevue's human services system by providing equitable access to human services funding opportunities to support

organizations in meeting the needs of and reducing disparities among Bellevue's most marginalized residents. Dr. Beers said the objective is informed by the desire to co-design services with impacted communities and to enhance communication and collaboration.

Ms. Esparza recalled the Council's interest in an equity-centered process with a more level playing field for agencies applying for funding. She said the Council directed staff to continue to meet with agencies to support their access to funding and to provide technical assistance. She said the Council previously expressed concern about the pay for staff of human services agencies and the need for expanded capacity in services. Actions under this objective include continuing to expand outreach to community organizations, promoting access to funding opportunities, providing supportive information and resources and adopting the best practice of a standardized 20 percent for indirect/administrative costs in contracts involving City funds.

Ms. Esparza said the third objective is: Expand access for Bellevue residents to culturally and linguistically specific human services. Dr. Beers said the objective expands on input from the community that the human services infrastructure in Bellevue has not kept pace with the increasing diversity in the community. Ms. Esparza said staff heard from the Council that it is important to work with trusted messengers who work with diverse populations. Actions include regularly identifying service gaps by cultural and linguistic community and setting targets for each funding cycle for the allocation of funds for those services.

The fourth objective of the strategic plan is: Increase key stakeholders' awareness regarding the City's human services needs, including disparities by community, and serve as a catalyst to collaboratively address those needs. Dr. Beers said this objective was driven by feedback regarding the appropriate role for the City in facilitating collaboration and also by an interest in being nimble and responsive to the changing needs of providers. She said two-thirds of organizations indicated they are facing changes in the availability of funding sources and are concerned about the implications of that challenge. Ms. Esparza recalled that the Council asked staff to explore ways to maximize the impact of every dollar and to expand capacity. Actions under this objective include increasing outreach to corporate and community stakeholders to increase awareness of the needs of the most marginalized residents, supporting provider forums focused on human services gaps and facilitating opportunities for stakeholders to respond directly to the needs of residents.

Councilmember Zahn expressed support for the strategic plan and indicated that the actions identified in the plan provide a holistic view of what the City and community need to do. She expressed concern that federal funding made available during the pandemic will be spent by the end of the year. She expressed support for the concepts of co-designing and centering community voices. She commended the focus on providing culturally and linguistically specific services.

Councilmember Hamilton referred to Objective 1 and said he hopes the City will be able to encourage the active sharing and collection of data to assist different types of providers and populations. He expressed support for the strategic plan and said he looks forward to seeing how it is implemented.

Councilmember Stokes expressed support for the strategic plan and encouraged a focus on actions that can provide the biggest impact and provide real help to the community. He said staff did an excellent job of dissecting the community to determine who needs help and what type of help is needed. He said the strategic plan provides a strong foundation going forward and thanked the Human Services Commission for their work.

Councilmember Lee thanked Chair Singh and the Human Services Commission for their work on the strategic plan and ongoing funding recommendations. He noted his longtime interest in increasing capacity and helping people to help themselves. He said continued outreach is important because some communities might not be organized and able to help each other or find help from agencies. He expressed support for helping providers to hire and retain staff. He expressed support for the objectives of the strategic plan.

Mayor Robinson said she has heard that the 211 system for accessing human services does not always work for people. She would like the City to consider creating its own navigator system with community partners to assist the public. She encouraged seeking funding from private partners to help provide services and to help pay and retain the staff of human services providers. Ms. Esparza said that helping potential partners to understand the needs is one step toward securing funding and partnerships. She said companies might be able to help in different ways in terms of providing funding or other services (e.g., food).

Councilmember Lee expressed his ongoing concern about youth mental health, especially among the Asian community. He said many families feel a stigma associated with mental health and/or are unaware of programs and assistance. He expressed support for efforts to reach Indigenous individuals and families and to determine their needs.

Deputy Mayor Malakoutian stated his understanding that government contracts for human services typically include a provision that 80 percent of the grant is paid to the service provider while the other 20 percent of expenses should be covered by the provider. He said he is pleased to see the interest in assisting with administrative costs. He expressed concern about staffing expenses for service providers and cautioned against requirements that add a burden for the agencies.

Mr. Malakoutian noted that the strategic plan identifies current needs. However, he suggested discussion about potential investments in preventive measures using technology and innovative partnerships. He said it is more cost effective to prevent problems than to try to solve them. He wondered if there is a way to be more preventive using data and technology to inform actions.

Councilmember Nieuwenhuis thanked Chair Singh for his leadership and acknowledged that more funding is needed to address the significant human services needs. Mr. Nieuwenhuis expressed his interest in understanding the impact of assistance to providers and the community. He said he likes the idea of the dashboard to track key metrics and trends. He expressed support for the City's technical assistance to applicants and noted that following through to help them report data and outcomes is important as well. He expressed support for the strategic plan objectives and opined that it will help increase the City's impact. He thanked staff for listening to the Council.

- Councilmember Zahn moved to direct staff to return to the Council with a resolution adopting the Human Services Strategic Plan on a future consent calendar. Councilmember Stokes seconded the motion.

Mayor Robinson suggested adding language to Objective 4, Action Item 3, to list examples of ways that partners could provide assistance whether financial or in-kind contributions. Councilmembers concurred with the suggestion and Ms. Esparza said she would revise the strategic plan accordingly.

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

(d) Proposed Change to Council Meeting Day and Frequency of Meetings

City Clerk Charmaine Arredondo introduced discussion regarding proposed changes to the Council's meeting day and frequency of meetings.

Liesl Olson, Performance and Process Analyst, noted that the proposed changes would require amendment to the Bellevue City Code and the Council Rules of Procedures. She recalled that staff previously presented a proposal to the Council to move the regular meeting day from Monday to Tuesday and to change the number of Council meetings to three per month.

While the Council has traditionally met on Monday nights, Councilmembers have expressed an interest in moving the meetings to Tuesday nights. The biggest benefit of the change would be to give staff, the Council and the public more time between the publication of the meeting packet and the day of the meeting. Staff would continue to publish the meeting packet on Thursdays when possible. The change would allow more time for community members to review the agenda and information before each meeting and would provide more time for Councilmembers to ask questions and prepare for the meeting.

- Deputy Mayor Malakoutian moved to direct staff to prepare legislation to amend the Council Rules of Procedure and the Bellevue City Code to change the Council meeting day to Tuesday, for action at a future meeting. Councilmember Stokes seconded the motion.

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

Ms. Olson said the current Council Rules specify four meetings per month on the first four Mondays of the month. Staff proposes changing to a meeting frequency of three meetings per month on the first three Tuesday evenings. Ms. Olson said that if no change is made, the Council would continue to have the option to cancel a meeting if it is not needed and to schedule additional special meetings. She said staff anticipates that, given the workload, the Council would be able to cancel one meeting per month as it has over the past year. She noted that meetings have often been cancelled when there are holidays on Mondays and changing to meeting on the first three Tuesdays of the month would provide better predictability and

transparency for the Council and the community. Ms. Olson said a fourth meeting could be added to the schedule as needed.

Ms. Olson said that any changes will go into effect in April 2024 to allow time for staff to revise internal processes and timelines related to producing the meeting packet.

Mayor Robinson thanked staff for the presentation.

→ Deputy Mayor Malakoutian moved to direct staff to prepare legislation to amend the Council Rules of Procedure and the Bellevue City Code regarding the frequency of Council meetings, for action at a future meeting. Councilmember Stokes seconded the motion.

Responding to Councilmember Lee, Ms. Arredondo said there have been three meetings per month over the past 13 months. She noted that the proposal has been discussed at the Council retreat and with individual Councilmembers.

Mr. Lee said it is important to have plenty of time for Councilmembers to discuss issues and he would like more time for study sessions on certain topics. He said he would prefer to retain the status quo and to cancel meetings when they are not needed.

Councilmember Zahn expressed concern about making the change and noted there could be long breaks between meetings two or three times per year.

Deputy Mayor Malakoutian said he appreciated his colleagues' comments. Responding to Mr. Malakoutian, Ms. Arredondo said the preparation of the meeting packet is a fairly significant effort involving multiple staff and there are typically approximately 15 staff members available at each meeting to produce the meeting. Mr. Malakoutian said there is little material difference between the two options. However, he acknowledged that there is enhanced efficiency in having three meetings per month on a consistent schedule. He noted that meetings can be added if desired by the Council and expressed support for changing to three regular meetings.

Councilmember Hamilton said the proposal for meeting on the first three Tuesdays of the month is simple and straightforward for everyone. He noted that meetings could be added if needed and said that having fewer formal meetings per month provides the opportunity for interacting with the community in other ways. He said the schedule of three monthly meetings seems to be working well over the past year.

Councilmember Stokes concurred with Councilmember Hamilton and said he believes it will be easier for the public to remember the first three Tuesdays schedule instead of having to follow variations in the schedule due to canceled meetings. Mr. Stokes said meetings can be added so the Council would not lose anything by adopting the proposed change. He suggested that the first three Tuesdays schedule would be more straightforward for the public.

Responding to Mayor Robinson, Ms. Arredondo said the proposed change will improve efficiency and save staff resources.

Councilmember Nieuwenhuis said he was in favor of retaining the status quo. He said it is easier to cancel a meeting than to add a meeting and he expressed concern that adding meetings, especially to address a topic of great interest to the public, could cause the public to see that as a lack of transparency. He expressed concern that the public would not hear about added meetings.

Mayor Robinson said the City has saved money by reducing the number of meetings to three per month. She expressed support for the change, noting that the schedule has been effective over the past year.

Councilmember Zahn reiterated her concern about the potential for longer gaps between meetings certain times during the year. She suggested perhaps scheduling the three meetings for the first, third and fourth Tuesdays of the month to avoid gaps that occur with longer months. She concurred with Councilmember Nieuwenhuis's comments about transparency for the public. She concurred with Councilmember Lee that there have been times it would have been helpful to have more time for the discussion of certain topics.

Councilmember Lee said he would like to have the ability for a single Councilmember to call for a special meeting. Responding to Mayor Robinson, Ms. Arredondo said there are legal requirements regarding special meetings, which can be scheduled by the Mayor or by a majority vote of the Council.

In further response to Mayor Robinson and Councilmember Lee, City Attorney Kathy Gerla confirmed that a special meeting must be called by the Mayor or a majority of the Council. Ms. Gerla said the Council must comply with that provision of state law.

Councilmember Stokes said the three meetings per month schedule has worked well. He said it is more predictable to schedule meetings for the first three Tuesdays than to continue to cancel one meeting per month.

Deputy Mayor Malakoutian asked about Councilmember Zahn's concern regarding longer breaks between certain meetings throughout the year, depending on the length of the month. Ms. Arredondo said there are currently fewer meetings in August and December and the Council's workload and calendar are adjusted accordingly. She said a special meeting can be added if needed. She said staff will accommodate whatever schedule is chosen by the Council, including Councilmember Zahn's suggestion for meetings on the first, third and fourth Tuesdays.

Mayor Robinson asked whether the Council should reach out to the community for feedback. Ms. Arredondo said staff will follow the Council's direction and support whatever they decide. She said the Council could solicit community input if desired. Mayor Robinson commented that skipping the second Tuesday of the month could be confusing for the public.

Councilmember Lee suggested a friendly amendment to hold a fourth meeting as a study session. There was no second.

Mayor Robinson said she was somewhat conflicted after hearing everyone's comments.

Councilmember Stokes said he felt the public would be fine with the proposed change.

Councilmember Zahn suggested first changing the meeting day to Tuesday and waiting to reconsider changing the meeting frequency.

Councilmember Nieuwenhuis concurred with Ms. Zahn and reiterated his comment about transparency for the public.

Mayor Robinson expressed support for Ms. Zahn's suggestion as well.

→ Deputy Mayor Malakoutian moved to withdraw the motion, and Councilmembers Stokes seconded the motion.

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

11. Land Use: None.

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

13. Written Reports

(a) Intergovernmental Affairs Monthly Update

14. Unfinished Business: None.

15. New Business: None.

16. Executive Session

(a) Pending Litigation – RCW 42.30.110(1)(i)

At 9:21 p.m., Mayor Robinson declared recess to Executive Session for approximately 20 minutes to discuss one item of pending litigation. She said the meeting would adjourn upon the completion of the Executive Session.

17. Adjournment

At 9:47 p.m., Mayor Robinson declared the meeting adjourned.

Charmaine Arredondo, CMC  
City Clerk

/kaw