

CITY OF BELLEVUE
CITY COUNCIL

Summary Minutes of Special Meeting

January 4, 2022
10:00 a.m.

Virtual Meeting
Bellevue, Washington

PRESENT: Mayor Robinson, Deputy Mayor Nieuwenhuis, and Councilmembers Barksdale, Lee, Robertson, Stokes and Zahn

ABSENT: None.

1. Welcome and Introductions

Mayor Robinson called the meeting to order at 10:02 a.m. and welcomed the following state legislators in attendance:

41st District

Senator Lisa Wellman
Representative Tana Senn
Representative My-Linh Thai

48th District

Senator Patty Kuderer
Representative Vandana Slatter
Representative Amy Walen

Mayor Robinson introduced Joe Fain, CEO and President of the Bellevue Chamber of Commerce, and Patrick Bannon, President of the Bellevue Downtown Association (BDA), and noted that the Council and staff have coordinated with both organizations in developing several of the City's legislative policies.

2. Bellevue's Legislative Priorities

Briahna Murray, Vice President/Lobbyist, Gordon Thomas Honeywell, commented regarding the top transportation priorities related to the completion of the I-405 and SR 167 corridors, Sound Transit's STRIDE bus rapid transit, and the state legislature's transportation revenue package. She acknowledged that there is now a funding shortfall due to the pandemic and decreased toll revenues. She thanked Senator Kuderer and Representative Slatter for their efforts encouraging the Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) to outline different solutions and to identify the resources needed for I-405 and SR 167 projects. The funding gap was estimated at \$450 million and WSDOT identified a number of funding/revenue options for consideration.

Ms. Murray said that, in December, the governor's proposed supplemental transportation budget allocated \$450 million to deliver the projects using federal American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds and a sales tax deferral. The WSDOT report identified an option using GARVEE (Grant Anticipation Revenue Vehicle) bonds, which are currently in use to fund the SR 520 floating bridge. However, upon completion of that project they could be transitioned to the SR 167 or I-405 corridors.

Ms. Murray said the state legislature must provide funding certainty in 2022 in order for WSDOT to go out to bid and keep projects moving forward. She encouraged legislators to adopt a transportation revenue package. She highlighted additional transportation priorities for Bellevue including Eastrail, SR 520/124th Avenue interchange, I-405 South Downtown Access Project, key connections on I-405 at SR 520 and I-90, and the Mountains to Sound Greenway trail. Ms. Murray said it is important to support an equitable multimodal transportation system in Bellevue.

Mayor Robinson thanked Ms. Murray for the presentation and asked the BDA and Chamber representatives to comment on their priorities.

Mr. Fain said this is the third year that the Chamber and the BDA have worked together to develop a joint transportation priority package. Two of their top priorities are the SR 520/124th Avenue interchange and the I-405 Downtown Access improvements at the Lake Hills Connector. Mr. Fain said both projects are particularly important for bus rapid transit and multimodal transportation strategies.

Mr. Bannon said he is pleased to see the alignment of priorities between the City, the community and legislators. He thanked the City Council and staff for their work with the BDA, the community and the state legislature. He said the transportation projects are critical for Bellevue's multimodal connectivity and for supporting continued job growth.

Mayor Robinson said the City appreciates its partnerships with the BDA and the Chamber.

Councilmember Robertson, liaison to the Bellevue Transportation Commission and a member of the Puget Sound Regional Council (PSRC) Transportation Policy Board and the King County Regional Transit Committee (RTC), thanked everyone for participating in the meeting. She spoke to the need for action in 2022 to resolve the funding shortfall for the I-405 and SR 167 projects and to implement bus rapid transit on I-405 in alignment with Sound Transit's schedule.

Councilmember Zahn, a member of the I-405/SR 167 Executive Advisory Board and the Eastside Transportation Partnership (ETP), said she appreciates the legislators' hard work in the area of transportation. She noted the importance of the I-405 and SR 167 projects and said Bellevue has been working with other Eastside cities to pursue transportation funding.

Senator Wellman said she would like to see Bellevue's plan for transitioning to support bicycle usage in the downtown. She expressed an interest in learning more about the City's plans related to electric vehicles and autonomous vehicles. Mayor Robinson said staff would follow up with information on the City's pedestrian-bike plan.

Representative Slatter thanked the City for its great work throughout the pandemic. She thanked the Council for recognizing the value of the north end I-405 improvements and the importance of preparing for Sound Transit's bus rapid transit. As a member of the House Transportation Committee, Ms. Slatter raised the issue of using GARVEE bonds for the I-405 and SR 167 work. She commended the cities along the I-405 and SR 167 corridors for their united effort in support of transportation projects and funding.

Senator Kuderer, a Bellevue resident, thanked the City for effectively steering the community through a challenging time. She confirmed that the transportation revenue package is a high priority for the legislature. She said the state legislature understands the importance of transportation improvements for Bellevue's continued employment growth.

3. Remarks from State Legislators

Representative Senn said she has proposed legislation that will allow school transportation levies to include electric infrastructure investments (e.g., electric buses, charging stations). She noted her efforts related to blockchain technology. She said she has drafted a bill to ban the open carry of firearms at city council and school board meetings. She continues to work to address youth homelessness and to prevent individuals exiting foster care, mental health care or jail from becoming homeless. An additional priority is developing a workforce of professional care workers to provide child care, long-term care, and assistance for individuals with disabilities.

Representative Walen noted three top priorities for the state legislature, in addition to transportation: 1) fix the long-term care trust program, 2) clarify police accountability rules, and 3) address issues related to actions of the insurance commissioner. She has a housing bill that addresses mandatory upzoning around transit stops, area-wide SEPA (State Environmental Policy Act) review, and density bonuses for passive housing. She supports her colleagues' efforts related to gun violence prevention. Ms. Walen noted her interest in supporting schools and addressing funding inequities in school districts. She expressed concern regarding the structural inequity represented by the two community councils in the state (Bellevue and Kirkland).

Representative Thai said her top priority for this legislative session is to continue to address the mental health needs of children and youth. She noted the importance of building the capacity to support our youngest future leaders. She said schools are in need of more nurses and counselors as well as ways to provide behavioral health support. She currently serves on the Civil Rights and Judiciary Committee, Finance Committee, Rules Committee and the Housing, Human Services and Veterans Committee. She noted her support for transportation funding and the I-405/SR 167 projects.

Senator Wellman said that, as chair of the Senate Early Learning and K-12 Education committee, one of her main concerns throughout the pandemic has been education. She said that when she visits school districts, what she hears is that they feel like their communities are out to get them. She encouraged a focus on stabilizing the education system as it recovers from the impacts of the pandemic. Ms. Wellman serves on the Environment, Energy and Technology Committee and is focused on ensuring that broadband access is available to everyone at a price they can afford. Additional priorities are clean/green infrastructure investments and the creative economy.

Representative Slatter noted the importance of addressing police accountability and the long-term care trust during this legislative session. She commented on the workforce shortages in health care, behavioral health, and nursing. She described a package of bills focused on post-secondary education, financial aid, and the Washington College Grant program. Ms. Slatter said she is working on a data privacy bill and she would like to create an agency to address data privacy.

Senator Kuderer, chair of the Senate Housing and Local Government Committee, highlighted programs to provide attorneys for individuals at eviction hearings and to provide permanent rental assistance. She said she sees housing as a human right and a public health issue. She is working with the governor's office to create an agency to assist local governments in handling homeless encampments. Ms. Kuderer said she is working with the Office of Homeless Youth to extend the maximum age requirement for benefits to age 25. She noted her work related to single-family zoning.

Mayor Robinson noted that the City of Bellevue allocated millions of dollars toward rental assistance before funds were available from the county, state or federal governments.

4. Discussion

Councilmember Stokes said the Council adopted the City's Affordable Housing Strategy in 2017. Since that time, the City has created or preserved more than 4,000 affordable housing units, with 700 more currently in the pipeline. He thanked the state legislature for helping cities to implement affordable housing rules. He said the City has adopted Land Use Code amendments to allow a greater variety of housing types and to encourage infill development. He said Bellevue lowered the minimum parking requirements for certain affordable housing near frequent transit service and adopted affordable housing density bonus provisions for qualifying faith-based, nonprofit and public properties. Mr. Stokes noted partnerships with the King County Housing Authority, Microsoft, Amazon and the business community to address housing needs. He highlighted the East Main transit-oriented development (TOD) area's affordable housing incentives. He expressed appreciation for HB 1590 revenues and other state funding to address housing needs. He asked whether the state legislature would be able to provide more funding for housing this session.

Deputy Mayor Nieuwenhuis thanked the legislators for their work in 2021 to fund alternative police response models. He said Bellevue recently completed a Community Crisis Assistance Team (CCAT) pilot program that paired a mental health professional with the police response to 911 calls involving behavioral health and individuals in crisis. From 2015 to 2020, Bellevue police officers responded to more than 6,000 calls related to suicide or emotional/behavioral health, reflecting a 56 percent increase since 2016. Mr. Nieuwenhuis said the CCAT program was successful in increasing the diversion rate from hospitals or jail while also reducing police use of force incidents. He would like to see state funding for the long-term implementation of the program.

Councilmember Barksdale expressed an interest in criminal justice system reforms that promote equity and provide greater safety for communities that have historically been harmed through

racism and implicit bias. He expressed support for efforts to fill the gaps in existing local public safety response, including enhanced mental health services, especially for the most vulnerable community members. Councilmember Barksdale said the Council supports state funding to augment locally funded programs that build capacity to address racial equity and inclusion initiatives.

Councilmember Lee said Bellevue supports policies and investments to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and to improve the environment through the City's Environmental Stewardship Initiative (ESI). He said the Council adopted a goal to reduce emissions by 50 percent by 2030. He commented on the role of electric vehicles and smart mobility vehicles in reducing harmful emissions. He expressed an interest in the state legislature's plans to address climate change in this legislative session, including technology solutions.

Mayor Robinson thanked the state legislators for their leadership on behalf of the 41st and 48th districts and for their work with the community.

5. Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 11:00 a.m.

Charmaine Arredondo, CMC
City Clerk

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