

CITY OF BELLEVUE
BELLEVUE PLANNING COMMISSION
STUDY SESSION MINUTES

March 9, 2022
6:30 p.m.

Bellevue City Hall
Virtual Meeting

COMMISSIONERS PRESENT: Chair Malakoutian, Vice Chair Ferris, Commissioners Bhargava, Brown, Goeppele, Morisseau

COMMISSIONERS ABSENT: Commissioner Moolgavkar

STAFF PRESENT: Thara Johnson, Emil King, Kate Nesse, Chris Iverson, Chris Long, Department of Community Development; Matt MacFarland, City Attorney's Office

COUNCIL LIAISON: Not Present

GUEST SPEAKERS: None

RECORDING SECRETARY: Gerry Lindsay

1. CALL TO ORDER
(6:31 p.m.)

The meeting was called to order at 6:31p.m. by Chair Malakoutian who presided.

Chair Malakoutian stated that the meeting was being held remotely via zoom.

Deleted: in order to comply with the Governor's emergency order concerning the Open Public Meetings Act, which prohibits in-person meetings

2. ROLL CALL
(6:31 p.m.)

Upon the call of the roll, all Commissioners were present with the exception of Commissioner Moolgavkar who was excused.

3. APPROVAL OF AGENDA
(6:32 p.m.)

A motion to approve the agenda was made by Commissioner Brown. The motion was seconded by Vice Chair Ferris and the motion carried unanimously.

4. REPORTS OF CITY COUNCIL, BOARDS AND COMMISSIONS – None
(6:33 p.m.)

5. STAFF REPORTS
(6:33 p.m.)

A. Planning Commission Meeting Schedule

Comprehensive Planning Manager Thara Johnson took a few minutes to review the Commission's schedule of upcoming meeting dates and agenda items.

Ms. Johnson noted that the public hearing for the privately initiated Comprehensive Plan amendment had been scheduled and notice published for March 23. However, word was received earlier in the day that the applicant had withdrawn the application.

The Commissioners were informed that the schedule called for bringing back the bylaws for discussion on April 27. Ms. Johnson shared that there will potentially be some changes to the bylaws based on the Governor's latest order relative to the pandemic and going to a hybrid format for future meetings. It may be necessary to hold off the bylaw discussion until a future date.

Assistant City Attorney Matt MacFarland shared that he had gone through the bylaws and flagged the Commission-driven changes previously discussed, and that he had checked in with the City Clerk's office and it looks like all is good to go. He reminded the Commissioners that when Covid started a motion was made to suspend the section of the bylaws in Article 5 that talks about in-person attendance at meetings. The City Clerk's office has indicated that section is going to need to be revisited for all of the city's boards and commissions, but that will need to wait for direction from the Council. As a practical matter, it makes sense to address both the Commission-driven amendments and the Council-driven amendments in a single study session.

Commissioner Goeppele asked if, absent the CPA public hearing on March 23, consideration of the LUCA could be moved ahead to that meeting date. Ms. Johnson said she would raise the issue with Department of Development Services staff to see if that works with their schedule.

Ms. Johnson asked which Commissioners would not be able to attend the April 13 meeting due to the school district's spring break. Vice Chair Ferris and Commissioners Morisseau and Bhargava indicated they would not be available on that date. Commissioner Morisseau pointed out that Commissioner Moolgavkar has young children and typically takes off during spring break. Ms. Johnson said that would mean no quorum for April 13.

6. ORAL AND WRITTEN COMMUNICATIONS
(6:47 p.m.)

Ms. Johnson noted that several written communications were received after the packet was sent out, all relative to the proposed LUCA.

7. PUBLIC HEARING
(6:48 p.m.)

8. STUDY SESSION
(6:48 p.m.)

A. 2022 Annual Comprehensive Plan Amendments: Introduction to Amendments to Policies in the Transportation Element and Downtown subarea Plan Related to Curb Management

Senior Transportation Engineer Chris Iverson informed the Commission that in November 2021 the City Council approved a consultant contract to assist with the development of the Curb Management Plan (CMP). Nelson\Nygaard was selected. He explained that curb management is an interesting topic in that it is both widely known and generally misunderstood. The curb space is typically understood to be the zone bordering the streets and sidewalks and amenity areas. The

multifaceted space generally does not get a lot of attention in traditional planning initiatives. According to the Institute of Transportation Engineers, curbside management seeks to inventory, optimize, allocate and manage the curb space to maximize mobility, safety and access for the wide variety of curb demands. Curb demands range from on-street parking to passenger pick-up/drop-off, transit loading/unloading and some of the newer mobility options such as hailing rideshare vehicles, getting on or off employer shuttles, receiving delivery packages and placemaking functions such as on-street dining areas.

Mr. Iverson said the purpose of the CMP is to create a long-range vision that will establish new policies and guidance for how the curb areas are to be designed, maintained and operated over time. At its core will be the establishment of a visions and values framework. Some of the main tasks for the Planning Commission will be to deliberate on policies and policy amendments through the Comprehensive Plan amendment to realize the desired curb management outcomes. Some of the specific action items will be addressed at the staff/practitioner level or by the Transportation Commission, most notably the establishment of a contextualized prioritization framework for curb use; development of a curbside playbook of tools to deliver better curb outcomes; and building an organizational and staffing framework to implement the CMP.

Bellevue's fast growth is one of the primary reasons why new emphasis is being placed on the concept of curb management. With new development comes new opportunities but also increased challenges. One of the challenges is increased traffic from multiple modes and the associated demands. The curb management approach must be deliberate about accommodating the growth by allowing a myriad of curb uses in specific ways. In part, the need for a CMP stems from the increase in new mobility services, such as e-commerce, rideshare and electric vehicle charging stations. The pandemic [also](#) inspired new innovating strategies for placemaking functions in Bellevue, nationwide and around the world ranging from outdoor dining areas, broader outdoor seating areas and park-lets that can accommodate mini events.

Mr. Iverson said the curb serves as the border between the traveled way and the pedestrian realm. It is effectively the shoreline of the street. Just as water shorelines accommodate things like boat parking, commercial activities, passenger loading/unloading, seating and dining, placemaking and activation, and greenery, the curb accommodates those same functions. Not having organized structures around [curb spaces](#) can lead to poor outcomes [affecting](#) both the safety and efficiency of the transportation system [and](#) detracting from [the city's](#) livability.

Curb management as a concept is not new to Bellevue. People interact with the curb all the time in terms of parking, getting on or off a bus and sitting in an on-street dining area. Many of the practices have, however, been ad hoc and piecemeal over time. In the mid-1990s Bellevue formalized a time-limited on-street parking program. Some 20 years later the city turned to more deliberate on-street parking and curb management practices via the Downtown Transportation Plan. As Uber and Lyft became more ubiquitous and as things like micromobility came to the forefront, the city began regulating various services and companies. In 2019 the city launched some specific curb space pilots using technology to leverage the burgeoning field and coming up with ways to more specifically monitor curb use. The world changed in 2020 and the city transitioned to thinking about how to provide safe places for people to be outside and the result was the creation of the Al Fresco Dining Program and the 3-Minutes Food Priority Pickup Zone, and the ushering in of taking a more cohesive approach to curb management.

Some curb management practices are already identified in existing city plans. The Downtown Transportation Plan has [recommendations](#) covering on-street parking and other curb uses, and the Downtown subarea plan has policies that speak to curb uses. The Smart Mobility Plan from

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2018 has strategies to implement curb technologies. The Environmental Stewardship Plan also has recommendations for optimizing curb management practices in the city. The city's current approach to curb management remains somewhat reactionary in terms of enforcement and operations. There is no solid structure or operational guidance for the existing right-of-way or for development review. As the city changes, the ways in which the curbs spaces are managed need to change with it. The CPA regarding curb management will seek to affect changes to the Transportation Element and the Downtown subarea plan. The policies that will be recommended will largely be heavily involved in the Transportation Element, which means that technically they will be citywide policies. Down at the nuts and bolts level, however, a lot of the recommendations will be focused on the high-growth Performance Management Area Type 1 as defined within the ongoing Mobility Implementation Plan, this generally includes the Downtown, Wilburton, East Main and BelRed neighborhoods.

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Mr. Iverson said the curb issues currently in play result from a misallocation of space and resources. Taxis and rideshares stop in the middle of lanes and blocks traffic because there is not enough curb space to allow for pulling over to safety pickup or drop-off passengers. There are also constraints relative to on-street parking, or parcel package delivery and for bike/scooter share. The inefficiencies within the right-of-way have triggered the need to design the streets to accommodate peak hour traffic volumes, making it necessary for curb areas to be used solely for travel lanes. In the future the ideal will involve a more organized approach with specific spaces for placemaking, passenger pickup and drop-off, for transit and bicycle mobility as well as vehicle mobility. The efficiencies will lead to a more multimodal transportation system overall.

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To date the process has involved conducting various focus groups and stakeholder initiatives. The Commission and the Council have been kept updated. The schedule calls for finalizing the plan by the end of the year though it is subject to change as needed. There is currently a CMP questionnaire posted to the engagingbellevue.com platform. A curb summit event is slated for later in the month; it will involve a deep dive into curb management practices with a national expert who will facilitate the discussion. The Planning Commission, the Transportation Commission and the City Council will be engaged on various elements of the project.

The overall approach will be fairly consistent with how the Mobility Implementation Plan was conducted in 2021. As the MIP worked through the process, many of the policies were workshopped through the Transportation Commission, and eventually a transmittal was forwarded to the Planning Commission outlining their recommendations. The Planning Commission then reviewed the policies and set them for public hearing. Ultimately a Comprehensive Plan amendment will be needed to add, modify or remove policies to better align the Comprehensive Plan with changed conditions. The potential policy concepts include curb placemaking and activation functions; support for developing curbside mobility hubs; support for curb management technologies and innovations; amended language to address new mobility functions such as accommodating rideshare services, freight providers and micromobility services; and support for the creation of a dedicated curb management program.

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The Transportation Commission is expected to have a recommended suite of policy changes transmitted to the Planning Commission in June.

Vice Chair Ferris asked for a definition of "dedicated curb program" and asked what "TNC" and "PMA" stands for. She also asked if there will be any focus on areas of the city outside of the growth areas. With regard to community outreach, she stressed the need to be aggressive in letting the community know about the work. Mr. Iverson said currently there are different workgroups at the city that manage specific functions of the curb, such as construction leasing

and commercial permits, the on-street dining program, and enforcement. All of those elements are currently independent from one another. The intention is to bring them all together into a dedicated curb program. He explained that “TNC” stands for transportation network companies such as Uber and Lyft. “PMA” stands for Performance Management Area, which is an element from the Mobility Implementation Plan that addresses the layered approach for multimodal concurrency. The current approach to developing a Curb Management Plan does not include streets outside of the high growth area. That is not to say those areas will not be considered as a future action item. He agreed with the need to get the word out to the public as broadly as possible.

Commissioner Bhargava asked about the relationship of curbs, sidewalks and bike lanes in light of a Curb Management Plan. He also noted that over time the intensity of traffic along certain street sections changes over time, and commented that street sections are difficult to change after the fact. He asked how frequently the Curb Management Plan will have to be revised to account for changes in intensity and traffic movement on different streets. Mr. Iverson said the main takeaway relative to the relationship of curbs, sidewalks and bike lanes is that the curb is the medium ground between the travel right-of-way and the pedestrian realm. In [downtown Bellevue](#), the sidewalk and planter strip is unique in that the requirements for development are listed in the Land Use Code. Other communities have their sidewalk and planter requirements listed in their transportation codes or transportation manuals. The Curb Management Plan project will not result in any changes to the Land Use Code, though there may be recommendations to consider making changes to the code to allow for more flexibility for sidewalk, planter and curbside designs to accommodate various uses. With regard to bike lanes and mobility in general, the process will include the development of curb typologies based on street design and already adopted long-range transportation plans, all with an eye on how a specific curb should function. He allowed that it is difficult and expensive to redesign streets to address changes in traffic intensity over time. One of the goals of the project is to identify strategic locations where there can be a more dynamic approach to curb use. At some times of the day a specific curb could be used as a travel lane, and when the traffic is lighter it could be used on-street parking or pickup and drop-off or freight and parcel delivery.

Commissioner Bhargava asked what teeth the proposed approach will have to drive change. Mr. Iverson said part of the initiative involves making sure the recommendations for creating something like dynamic curb use will be paired with an enforcement mechanism that will actually allow that to happen. Currently, simply making curbside changes without changing the enforcement rules would run up against insufficient resources to make the changes work. One of the considerations associated with the development of the Curb Management Plan will be to determine how much money will need to be allocated toward dynamic enforcement approaches and [other strategies](#).

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Commissioner Goepple said the shoreline analogy is very appropriate. Shorelines face strenuous demands but are often ignored. Even so they are lively locations and for good reason. He stated that mobility, safety and access are very important, especially in the Downtown. Construction sites often cordon off public curb areas and appropriated for private use during construction, limiting access and mobility. He asked if those issues will be addressed by the curb management process. Mr. Iverson said that issue will be discussed. The hope is that ultimately there will be workshops with the right-of-way team and other city departments to come up with a balanced approach to accommodating pedestrian access and mobility.

Commissioner Brown allowed that the use of sidewalks by restaurants was very much in vogue during the pandemic. For most of the year, however, the weather in Bellevue is not conducive to

outdoor dining. She asked if a street-level restaurant can simply take over the sidewalk area in front of their business. Mr. Iverson said under the current approach restaurants must apply for a sidewalk café permit under the right-of-way use code. Part of the reason staff felt compelled to initiate the Comprehensive Plan amendment was to create more policy support for placemaking within the right-of-way. The sidewalk area is in the quasi right-of-way area though often it is on private property under a public easement. Most curbside areas within the right-of-way used for parking are within the actual city owned right-of-way. There has been a lot of positive feedback about the sidewalk outdoor dining project, but there is no solid policy support for it. There has also been positive feedback about continuing those types of uses post-pandemic. Other cities around the area have had year-round outdoor dining areas for some time.

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Commissioner Morisseau thanked staff for the presentation and said she looked forward to the creation of a cohesive plan. She recommended reviewing the lessons learned from other cities across the nation that have gone through the process already. She also recommended allowing for some flexibility in evaluating the efficiency of the program over time.

Commissioner Goeppele commented that notwithstanding that the weather in Bellevue is not always great, the placemaking element will be important. He said he lived in Amsterdam where there are many places to meet outside even though the weather is similar to Bellevue's. Such places make the quality of life better for all.

Chair Malakoutian echoed the need to be determined in reaching out to the public to gain their comments and suggestions. He also agreed with the need to review what other cities have done that have worked.

B. Comprehensive Plan Periodic Update: Introduction and Overview of Scope and Process

(7:37 p.m.)

Senior Planner Dr. Kate Nesse stated that the Planning Commission is the primary body that issues recommendations to the Council regarding the Comprehensive Plan. Other boards and commissions will be involved in the periodic update process, but their recommendations will be forwarded to the Planning Commission. The Growth Management Act requires cities to have a Comprehensive Plan, which provides a vision for growth reaching out 20 years. The horizon year for the update will be 2044. The Comprehensive Plan includes a vision as well as several elements, each with policies that guide city actions and decisions. The Comprehensive Plan also guides capital investments.

The current Comprehensive Plan includes a vision and each element has a narrative that explains the background and general approach to the policies, and includes a set of goals and policies. It is divided into two sections: Volume 1 is the Comprehensive Plan itself, and Volume 2 contains the subarea or neighborhood plans. The land use map is housed in Volume 2.

The Comprehensive Plan is required to be updated every eight to ten years. The Puget Sound Regional Council updated its Vision 2050 and the Countywide Planning Policies, and King County created its Countywide Planning Policies. Bellevue's Comprehensive Plan will be more specific to the city but will need to fit within those overarching documents. Additionally, the Council has updated its vision with a focus on housing options and affordability; maintaining economic innovation; and protecting the environment. As part of the Countywide Planning Policies process, growth targets were established collaboratively with all the cities in the county. The updated Comprehensive Plan must plan for that growth.

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Bellevue is a metropolitan job center and will continue to be going forward. There is a clear need and desire to see housing growth occur at the same pace as job growth. The target is 70,000 jobs and in order to maintain the jobs/housing ratio of 2:1, it will be necessary to target 35,000 new housing units. Bellevue currently has the capacity to meet the jobs target but not the housing target.

Dr. Nesse said the Comprehensive Plan update will focus on several areas. Planning for growth will require looking at the Land Use Map amendments and the broader categories, all with an eye on how everything fits into the Countywide and Regional Centers structure. The update will also look at ways to expand housing options and affordable housing units, and approaches to combat homelessness. There will be a focus on creating vibrant places at a variety of scales and locations. The issue of equity will be given attention in terms of outreach and in terms of focusing on the underserved and underrepresented community members. One of the Countywide Planning Policies aims to address the legacy of discrimination so that will be a key element of the equity scope. The update will also emphasize sustainability and resilience.

The update will be a two-year process. Currently under way is the process of updating the vision and alignment. From there land use alternatives will be drafted and analyzed as part of an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). The existing policies will be analyzed as part of laying the foundation for future planning. Once the results of the EIS are in, the focus will turn to growth-related policy updates. Finally the work will involve revising and refining before the Commission sends a recommendation to the Council to adopt the Comprehensive Plan update.

Dr. Nesse said a fairly robust community engagement strategy has been outlined. The focus in 2022 will be on affirming the vision. That will be followed by exploring livability and laying the foundation for future planning. In 2023 the focus will be on exploring growth alternatives and refining the plan and policies. The community will be involved throughout the process through several streams of engagement, including events, surveys and discussions. Groups called strategy teams will be formed to give feedback and offer recommendations. As always, public comment will be welcomed at all board and commission meetings as well as at Council meetings. All of that feedback will influence the work of staff as they draft the plan for the Commission and the public to comment on. The Commission will ultimately make a recommendation to adopt to the City Council.

Several types of outreach activities will be utilized. A questionnaire will be mailed out to all Bellevue households. There will also be mailed announcements. The engagingbellevue.com website is up and active and has already generated comments and questions. Both in-person and virtual workshops and presentations are planned. Several tabling events have already been held at grocery stores and the like. There will be a focus on equity as part of the outreach efforts. Three cultural outreach ambassadors will be assigned to the work. Materials will be translated, and there will be multilingual outreach.

Dr. Nesse said the public input and vision updates will be shared with the Commission in June. In September land use alternatives will be brought forward, and in December the Commission will review the initial analysis done on the policies.

Commissioner Morisseau referred to the presentation slide on types of outreach activities and zeroed in on the equity heading. She noted that in fact the bullet points under the equity heading were more about diversity in terms of different cultures and languages. She asked if equity is in fact the objective, and if so, what approach would be used to achieve the objective in the

outreach process. Dr. Nesse said staff are working to identify the best way to reach underrepresented groups. The cultural outreach assistants is one method. The intent is to ensure there will be equitable representation at the table. That is not to say that will result in equitable policies, so at the policy drafting stage it will be necessary to bring that lens to the policies to avoid perpetuating past discrimination and injustice in the policies to be moved forward. Each of the strategy teams will be asked to view things equitably, but one of the strategy teams will be specifically focused on equity. That team will have members with particular skills or lived experiences that will bring to bear an educated equity lens.

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Commissioner Morisseau said she looked forward to additional conversations about equity as the steps are identified. She said the approach overall is good but stressed that the devil is in the details. She noted that one paragraph in the packet materials for the meeting mentioned the approach of having targeted focus groups, including cultural and youth focus groups. The examples give were Chinese, Latinx and South Asian as well as youth. One group it would be helpful to have as part of the conversation would be the Black community, which was not specifically mentioned in the documentation, including sub-groups within the Black community.

Commissioner Bhargava said comprehensive planning is essential in setting the stage for the future. It is also necessary to engage with the larger community in the process. The question is what to do with the community input and how it can impact the plan in any meaningful way. Dr. Nesse said much will depend on the stage of the process. Exactly what the community engagement activities are intended to yield has been identified along with how the information will be used. Much of the community engagement processes build on one another and the areas of contention identifying during the visioning will be included in the statistically valid survey to understand across the board how people are feeling about those issues. It will ultimately come down to priorities and tradeoffs. The staff will work under the guidance of the Commission and the City Council.

Ms. Johnson added that in addition to the Planning Commission, all of the other city boards and commissions will play significant roles in the process.

Commissioner Bhargava said it was still not clear to him exactly how the community engagement process influences the strategic priorities. Dr. Nesse said all input is taken into consideration. In line with working to make sure all policies are equitable, even should the dominant community voice propose something that would be inequitable, the boards and commissions will not recommend having it go forward. The fact that something is proposed does not mean it will automatically be incorporated. Commissioner Bhargava commented that when there is a robust community engagement process, the notion is created within the community that they have a voice in the process, and dominant or not will have an influence on the strategic priorities in the plan itself. It needs to be made clear during the community engagement process just how the information gathered will be used and manifest in the plan. Planning is a normative exercise and must take into account things that are related to equity and justice and which are also forward looking.

Vice Chair Ferris asked if the projected new housing units are for single persons or multiple persons. With regard to combating homelessness she said she typically thinks in terms of social programs, but in terms of the Comprehensive Plan there is a concern that the focus will be on keeping homelessness out of the area. She asked for a definition of the terms “land use alternatives,” “explore livability,” “growth alternatives,” and “presentation on request.” With regard to the latter, she suggested the city should be proactive in giving presentations instead of waiting to be asked. Dr. Nesse agreed with being proactive in giving presentations in the

community. She explained that “housing units” is a generic term that refers to house, apartment, mobile home and any living situation that houses one household regardless of size. One major impediments to homelessness is having enough homes to go around, thus increasing the number of units is a primary way of addressing homelessness. Land use alternatives and growth alternatives are synonymous and refer to different ways and places to grow, particularly in terms of adding housing.

Ms. Johnson said the term explore livability was in reference to the four strategy teams and the approach to community engagement. One of the teams will be focused on livability and mobility. There will also be teams focused on placemaking and climate resilience.

Vice Chair Ferris stressed the need to clearly define all terms when working with the public. With regard to the issue of equity, she said there are experts the city could probably hire instead of just relying on internal thinking.

Commissioner Goepple noted that the materials provided to the Commission reference the fact that there is ongoing legislation at the state level about the introduction of a new climate and resiliency element. That may impact the state’s baseline requirements. He asked for some details about what that might mean for the city’s planning process. Dr. Nesse said the legislation has not yet been signed by the governor. The anticipation is that another element will be added to the Comprehensive Plan around climate resiliency. Some of the requirements within that element the city already addresses and meets. Ms. Johnson added that there remain a number of unknowns but the city is tracking the issue closely.

Commissioner Morisseau asked if the city will employ any new tools in addition to the usual means of community to reach the population demographics that have not been part of the conversation in the past. Dr. Nesse said tabling events have been set up outside of various grocery stores. Community members can sign up to be Comprehensive Plan ambassadors and the city will give them the tools they need to host their own events. The survey will be mailed out and available online in seven languages. A paid digital advertising campaign will kick off soon targeting people aged 25 to 40 and diverse audiences. A firm has been hired to come up with an advertising campaign. One neighborhood event held drew in about a hundred people; for the event coming up on March 22, 75 have already signed up. There is always more that can be done and all suggestions will be appreciated.

Commissioner Morisseau said the city will know the city is doing a good job of reaching out when the public indicates that they are aware of the process and able to participate in it. In regard to including the youth, she said some schools have organizations that amount to a mini United Nations. She suggested the students might be interested in the conversations about the Comprehensive Plan. Dr. Nesse said the original intent was to hire a cultural outreach ambassador focused on youth. It is hoped that will come to fruition.

Commissioner Morisseau said there will only be the one opportunity to influence the vision for the city for the next two decades. As such, everything that can be done must be done to do it right.

9. OTHER BUSINESS – None
(8:23 p.m.)

10. APPROVAL OF MINUTES
(8:23 p.m.)

A. February 23, 2022

A motion to approve the minutes as submitted was made by Commissioner Goepple. The motion was seconded by Vice Chair Ferris and the motion carried unanimously.

11. CONTINUED ORAL COMMUNICATIONS – None
(8:26 p.m.)

12. EXECUTIVE SESSION – None
(8:26 p.m.)

13. ADJOURNMENT
(8:26 p.m.)

A motion to adjourn was made by Vice Chair Ferris. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Brown and the motion carried unanimously.

Chair Malakoutian adjourned the meeting at 8:26 p.m.