

East Bellevue Community Council
Summary Minutes of Regular Meeting

May 3, 2022
6:30 p.m.

Virtual Meeting
Bellevue, Washington

PRESENT: Chair Kasner, Vice Chair Dhananjaya, Alternate Vice Chair Epstein and Councilmembers Hummer and Lai

ABSENT: None

STAFF: Mike McCormick-Huentelman, Assistant Director, Community Development
Mark Heilman, Neighborhood Outreach Manager, Community Development
Brian Wendt, Assistant City Attorney, City Attorney's Office

1. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 6:30 p.m., with Chair Kasner presiding.

2. ROLL CALL/FLAG SALUTE

Deputy City Clerk Karin Roberts called the roll and all Councilmembers were present. Councilmember Epstein led the flag salute.

3. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Councilmember Lai moved to amend the agenda to add Item 9(a) a presentation by Terry Cullen, Item 9(b) a discussion regarding the landmark trees resolution, and Item 10(a) a vote on the resolution. Councilmember Epstein seconded the motion, which carried by a vote of 5-0.

Vice Chair Dhananjaya moved to approve the agenda, as amended. Councilmember Epstein seconded the motion, which carried by a vote of 5-0.

4. COMMUNICATIONS: WRITTEN AND ORAL

Heidi Dean, a resident of Newport Hills, said she is disappointed that the EBCC will no longer exist after its July meeting. She expressed concern that misinformation by elected officials contributed to the state legislature's approval to disband the two community councils in the state. She expressed appreciation for the efforts and expertise of Councilmember Hummer, who previously served as the EBCC Chair. She encouraged East Bellevue residents to continue to advocate for their neighborhoods.

Eckart Schmidt expressed concerns regarding access to the Puesta del Sol school. He said 151st Place NE will be widened because the Bellevue School District has failed to comply with the requirement of the concomitant zoning agreement that the District signed when the area was rezoned. He expressed concern that the street will change from one-way to two-way traffic. He thanked the EBCC for their efforts to represent residents with the City.

Gerry Hughes thanked the EBCC for their service on behalf of the neighborhood. He noted that he served on the EBCC for five years. He said he shares Ms. Dean's concerns about how the sunseting of the state's community councils was handled by elected officials.

Cynthia Cole said she appreciated that the EBCC enabled residents' voices to be heard. She said Lake Hills is the second largest community in Bellevue and the EBCC was created when the area was annexed by the City. She said the EBCC was instrumental in the development of electrical substations, the aquatic center, the designation of Larson Lake and the Robinswood property as parks, and the revitalization of the Lake Hills and Kelsey Creek shopping centers. She said the EBCC has had a positive impact on the redevelopment of schools in the area. Ms. Cole said the decision to sunset the EBCC should have been left to be made by the EBCC. She thanked Councilmember Hummer and all of the EBCC members for their service over the years.

Bal Simon thanked the EBCC for representing residents and expressed his disappointment that the EBCC has been discontinued by the state legislature. He thanked the EBCC for its role in securing negotiations with the Bellevue School District regarding the development of Puesta del Sol school. He suggested that the EBCC should have been able to continue for four more years after the election last fall.

5. REPORTS OF CITY COUNCIL, BOARDS, and COMMISSIONS: None.

6. REPORT OF THE CHAIR

(a) Lake Hills Neighborhood Association Report

Chair Kasner asked Sandra Hughes to provide an update regarding the Lake Hills Neighborhood Association (LHNA).

Ms. Hughes highlighted the neighborhood's Earth Day event at the Lake Hills Shopping Center, noting that Mayor Robinson, Deputy Mayor Nieuwenhuis and Councilmember Zahn were in attendance as well as EBCC member Betsi Hummer. The next event will be held on May 26, which will be a Zoom meeting focusing on neighborhood character, landmark trees and sidewalks. The annual picnic will be held on Saturday, July 16, at Evergreen Park.

On behalf of the Association, Ms. Hughes thanked the EBCC for their fantastic work and efforts on behalf of the community.

Chair Kasner said he will not be able to attend the May LHNA meeting or the June EBCC meeting.

7. DEPARTMENT REPORTS

(a) Neighborhood Services

Chair Kasner introduced Mike McCormick-Huentelman, Assistant Director of the Community Development Department, and Mark Heilman, Neighborhood Outreach Manager, to provide an update on neighborhood services.

Mr. McCormick-Huentelman described how Chair Kasner and former Councilmember Gerry Hughes welcomed him to the City and gave him a tour of East Bellevue. Mr. McCormick-Huentelman said the City has enjoyed an effective partnership with the EBCC. He thanked EBCC members for their work in the community.

Mr. McCormick-Huentelman said the neighborhood services division addresses the distinct elements of Bellevue's neighborhoods as well as ongoing investments Citywide. He said the Community Development Department's broad vision is to secure Bellevue's future as a livable, inspiring, vibrant and equitable community. He said neighborhood services staff help to connect individuals to appropriate resources and operate a conflict resolution center. He noted the City's efforts to increase public participation in local government and referred the public to the City's web site for more information about neighborhood services.

Mr. McCormick-Huentelman presented a map of Bellevue's 16 neighborhood subareas. He said each neighborhood has a distinct character and special amenities. He recalled that the City added a section on neighborhoods when the Comprehensive Plan was updated in 2015 to articulate the elements of a healthy neighborhood. He talked about the importance of preserving each neighborhood's individual character. He said that over the past 10 years of working with the community, the top priorities of constituents are traffic and mobility, a high quality built and natural environment, public safety, homelessness services, a caring community, and affordable housing. He encouraged the public to access extensive information and interactive maps via the City's web site.

Mr. McCormick-Huentelman highlighted demographic information regarding the Lake Hills area, noting that it has a higher population (18,573 people) than the Downtown. Approximately 70 percent of households are single-family residences and 29 percent are multifamily units and apartments. Mr. McCormick-Huentelman presented information regarding the population by age groups and race and by the percentage of residents who speak English and/or other languages. He noted the availability of community resource guides in multiple languages at City Hall and the Crossroads Mini City Hall and said information is provided in multiple languages online as well. He said the Lake Hills area has a slightly higher percentage of individuals who identify as having a disability.

Mr. McCormick-Huentelman said the City is working to update its Comprehensive Plan to add 35,000 housing units and 70,000 jobs by 2044. He said this is an opportunity to think about how to plan for growth while maintaining neighborhood livability. He referred the public to [EngagingBellevue.com](https://engagingbellevue.com) for information about the Comprehensive Plan update and the opportunity to provide input.

Mr. McCormick-Huentelman said the City's conflict resolution center is focused on disputes between neighbors and between landlords and tenants. The program also refers residents to other resources.

Mr. McCormick-Huentelman said the Mini City Hall at Crossroads shopping center is now fully reopened Monday through Saturday, 10:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. He noted the upcoming Experience Bellevue neighborhoods conference on May 14 offering 20 workshops related to multiple City departments, projects and programs.

Councilmember Hummer said she has used the conflict resolution center and had positive outcomes. Responding to Ms. Hummer, Mr. McCormick-Huentelman said staff can help direct residents to the appropriate staff to address their questions and concerns. He confirmed that they hear complaints and concerns regarding the redevelopment of older housing into larger homes.

Mr. Heilman described staff's focus on topics based on what they are hearing from residents about their priorities, goals and concerns. Key topics recently include trees, COVID-19, and the parks and open space plan.

Ms. Hummer expressed concern regarding the redevelopment of housing into larger homes and the removal of trees. She said the Bellevue School District reflects a larger percentage of Spanish-speaking residents in East Bellevue as well as a higher percentage of students living in poverty. She asked whether the City has plans to subsidize low-income housing.

Mr. McCormick-Huentelman noted the City's involvement in the wrap around services program with the Bellevue School District.

Mr. Heilman described staff's current efforts to learn more about multifamily housing in Bellevue and to engage multifamily property managers. He noted efforts to increase participation in recycling and compost services.

Ms. Hummer recalled that the successful effort to preserve Highland Village apartments as affordable housing was initiated following an EBCC meeting where the topic was raised. She encouraged staff to reach out to underrepresented communities.

Vice Chair Dhananjaya thanked staff for the presentation and for their work in the community.

Responding to Councilmember Lai, Mr. McCormick-Huentelman said the conflict resolution center handles approximately 300 cases annually. With the significant increase in conflicts between landlords and tenants, the City has handled 600 cases so far this year. Mr. Lai thanked City staff for their work.

Councilmember Epstein thanked staff for the information and commented that there are more similarities between neighborhoods than he would have thought.

Mr. Dhananjaya said it would be interesting to compare information regarding investments and resources in different neighborhoods.

Chair Kasner thanked staff for their work and for attending this evening's meeting.

Mr. Heilman thanked EBCC members for their advocacy on behalf of residents.

Mr. Heilman said that neighborhood services staff represent different sections of Bellevue and manage the Neighborhood Enhancement Program (NEP). He encouraged EBCC members and the public to visit the City's web site for more information regarding the NEP. He highlighted the City's Cultural Conversations events, Bellevue Essentials course, neighborhood walks, virtual walks and volunteer opportunities. He urged residents to become involved in their communities.

Chair Kasner asked about City support for neighborhood picnics. Mr. Heilman said the City supports picnics with announcement banners, flyers and A-boards, and staff provides assistance as needed regarding permits and other requirements. Mr. Heilman noted staff's plans for upcoming Zoom meetings to provide advice to residents about holding block parties and picnics.

Mr. Kasner said he registered to attend the May 14 neighborhoods conference.

Councilmember Hummer suggested sending Neighborhood News to more residents. She encouraged the City to enhance its outreach to neighborhood associations. She recalled that City Councilmember Jennifer Robertson advocated for adding the neighborhoods section to the Comprehensive Plan in 2015.

Chair Kasner suggested a mentorship program for neighborhood leaders and associations.

8. **UNFINISHED BUSINESS**: None.

9. **NEW BUSINESS**

(a) im4u.world Project Presentation

Chair Kasner introduced Terry Cullen, a former City employee and the founder of the im4u.world project.

Mr. Cullen described his initiative to work toward healthy and positive changes in the world and to inspire people to get involved in their local communities. He provided a presentation of stories of individuals who have made positive contributions in their communities. He encouraged everyone to access additional information on the im4u.world web site.

Councilmember Epstein moved to extend the meeting to 9:00 p.m. Councilmember Lai seconded the motion, which carried by a vote of 5-0.

Mr. Cullen shared additional stories regarding positive initiatives throughout the world to address environmental, climate change, political and social issues. He encouraged EBCC members to continue to be involved in the community.

Councilmember Hummer thanked Mr. Cullen for the presentation.

Councilmember Lai commended Mr. Cullen for his passion and efforts.

Councilmember Dhananjaya said it was nice to hear stories about initiatives around the world.

Chair Kasner thanked Mr. Cullen for his presentation.

(b) Discussion regarding Landmark Tree Resolution

Chair Kasner recalled that the EBCC and residents have been talking about tree preservation over the past several months. He suggested addressing landmark trees first as one of the areas most in need of regulation and protection. He suggested that the EBCC approve a resolution to provide input to the City.

Vice Chair Dhananjaya moved to extend the meeting to 9:15 p.m. Councilmember Epstein seconded the motion, which carried by a vote of 5-0.

Responding to Mr. Dhananjaya, Mr. Wendt said the EBCC is allowed to adopt a resolution regarding landmark trees if desired. Mr. Dhananjaya suggested using definitions and policies to address landmark trees that are similar to surrounding cities.

Chair Kasner stated his understanding that a landmark tree has a diameter greater than 24 inches. He said the purpose of establishing a resolution is to provide input to the City as it moves forward to review tree codes.

Councilmember Hummer questioned whether the EBCC should develop a resolution regarding an issue that is not officially before the EBCC for a decision.

Councilmember Lai moved to extend the meeting to 9:30 p.m. Vice Chair Dhananjaya seconded the motion, which carried by a vote of 5-0.

Mr. Lai expressed support for developing a resolution to communicate the EBCC's comments regarding landmark trees.

Councilmember Epstein concurred.

Chair Kasner encouraged defining landmark trees as 24 inches or greater in diameter.

Ms. Hummer commented that she did not believe the resolution is necessary. However, she suggested adding a whereas clause referring to Save Our Scale's presentation to the EBCC and the group's request for the EBCC's support.

Councilmember Hummer moved to amend the resolution to add a reference to the Save Our Scale group, and Councilmember Lai seconded the motion.

Vice Chair Dhananjaya expressed support for the motion.

Councilmember Epstein concurred and suggested a friendly amendment to add a clause about the historic, cultural and aesthetic value of trees.

Chair Kasner expressed support for the proposals and suggested a friendly amendment to add a reference to other tree advocacy groups that have provided information to the EBCC including 300 Trees, YMCA, and Trees 4 Livability.

Ms. Hummer suggested the following wording: “Whereas on September 8, 2021, Save Our Scale made a presentation to the East Bellevue Community Council requesting support for a change in the tree code.” Mr. Kasner concurred.

Responding to Mr. Wendt, Councilmember Epstein proposed the following wording: “Whereas landmark trees have historical and cultural value and aesthetic benefits.”

Chair Kasner proposed the following addition: “Whereas Trees 4 Livability, 300 Trees and the YMCA Earth Service Corps program presented to the EBCC during the April 5, 2022 meeting.”

At 9:30 p.m., Councilmember Epstein moved to extend the meeting for 10 minutes.
Councilmember Dhananjaya seconded the motion, which carried by a vote of 5-0.

Councilmember Hummer’s motion to add a reference to Save Our Scale to the resolution, as well as the friendly amendments proposed by Chair Kasner and Councilmember Epstein, carried by a vote of 5-0.

10. CONTINUED COMMUNICATIONS

(a) Action regarding Landmark Tree Resolution

Councilmember Epstein moved to approve the Landmark Tree Resolution, and Councilmember Lai seconded the motion.

Councilmember Hummer expressed concern that this agenda item was added tonight without advance notice to the EBCC or the public. She questioned the value of adopting the resolution for an issue outside of the EBCC’s decision-making authority.

The motion to approve the Landmark Tree Resolution carried by a vote of 5-0.

11. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

(a) Summary Regular Meeting Minutes April 5, 2022

Councilmember Epstein moved to approve the minutes of the April 5, 2022 Regular Meeting.
Councilmember Lai seconded the motion, which carried by a vote of 5-0.

12. ADJOURNMENT

At 9:40 p.m., Chair Kasner declared the meeting adjourned.

Karin Roberts, CMC
Deputy City Clerk

/kaw