

CITY OF BELLEVUE
CITY COUNCIL

Summary Minutes of Extended Study Session

October 12, 2015
6:00 p.m.

Conference Room 1E-113
Bellevue, Washington

PRESENT: Mayor Balducci, Deputy Mayor Wallace¹, and Councilmembers Chelminiak, Lee, Robertson² and Stokes

ABSENT: Councilmember Robinson

1. Executive Session

The meeting was called to order at 6:05 p.m., with Mayor Balducci presiding. There was no Executive Session.

2. Approval of Agenda

→ Councilmember Stokes moved to approve the agenda, and Councilmember Lee seconded the motion.

→ The motion carried by a vote of 4-0.

3. Oral Communications

- (a) John Merrill, representing the Coalition of Eastside Neighborhoods for Sensible Energy (CENSE), said residents feel disenfranchised by the ongoing Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) review process for the Puget Sound Energy (PSE) Energize Eastside project. CENSE members believe that a combination of alternatives would be the best solution, possibly including one or more peaking plants. He said PSE dismissed a number of options from consideration in the EIS process. Mr. Merrill urged the Council to invest the time and resources to get this right and to be a national leader in engaged citizenship and smart growth. He submitted his comments in writing as well as a report presenting CENSE's comments on the EIS Phase I Scoping.

¹ Deputy Mayor Wallace arrived at 6:40 p.m.

² Councilmember Robertson arrived at 6:10 p.m.

- (b) Filip Lazar, representing the Sunset Community Association, expressed concern about the City's new CryWolf alarm registration program. He suggested an alternative fine and penalty approach and presented his perspective on the likelihood of false alarms. He submitted his comments in writing.

Mayor Balducci noted that 98 percent of the home security alarm events in Bellevue are false.

- (c) Dick Morris, President of the Sunset Community Association, said he hopes Mr. Lazar could work with City staff in monitoring the home alarm program. Mr. Morris thanked the Council for restoring the Neighborhood Enhancement Program (NEP).
- (d) Alex Zimmerman, StandUP-America, said he comes every Monday to ask the City Manager to hold monthly or quarterly public Q&A sessions. He is confused that other residents do not support this request. He characterized City officials as idiots and mafia.
- (e) Bill Hirt recalled his last appearance two months ago expressing concerns about the Sound Transit East Link light rail project. He said Sound Transit has lied to the City and the public about the impacts, ridership, and feasibility of the project. He expressed concern about the impending closure of the South Bellevue Park and Ride. He said that, when East Link begins operating in eight years, there will be one four-car train traveling through Bellevue every eight minutes. Mr. Hirt submitted his comments in writing.
- (f) Jens Nedrud, Puget Sound Energy's Senior Project Manager for the Energize Eastside project, commented on PSE's handling and protection of critical energy infrastructure information, which is classified information that could impact the security of the electrical system and the public. He described the three criteria used to evaluate requests for information: 1) requester's background, 2) requester's qualifications to understand the technical information and to protect it, and 3) requester's need or purpose for the information. He said confidential customer information is not released to public.
- (g) Bart Goft expressed concern regarding the CryWolf home alarm registration program recently implemented in Bellevue. He received an invoice for a \$100 late fee on his \$12 annual fee. He sent the fee on October 3 for a due date of October 5. He questioned the rationale for the \$100 fee. He said he called the CryWolf customer service number earlier in the day and was on hold for an hour and a half. He hung up and called the City and spoke with the City Clerk, who referred him to Detective Amanda Jensen. Detective Jensen said residents will not be charged the late fee. Mr. Goft questioned CryWolf's authority to charge the late fee.

Mayor Balducci asked the City Manager to follow up with information on the \$100 late fee, especially given that this is a new program.

Councilmember Robertson requested more information on the customer service problem. She said another resident has expressed concerns about calling CryWolf. Mr. Goft said there was no recording when he was on hold that the company was closed for the Columbus Day holiday.

- (h) Don Marsh, representing CENSE, referred to Mr. Nedrud's earlier comments. He believes that information was provided because CENSE has been requesting the information addressed by Mr. Nedrud. Mr. Marsh said the two individuals requesting the information on CENSE's behalf are a former PSE Vice President of Power Planning and an industry expert who would like to understand the need for the Energize Eastside project. Mr. Marsh said the individuals were specific about the information requested but did not receive a response for some time. PSE initially suggested a conference call but later decided against speaking with CENSE or its representatives. Mr. Marsh said PSE ultimately responded that CENSE does not have the right to see the information if they are questioning the need for the project because PSE has already proven the need for the project.

4. Study Session

(a) Council Business and New Initiatives

Councilmember Chelminiak said Councilmember Robinson is the Council's liaison to the Special Events Committee and has requested the appointment of Roz Liming to the promoter-business representative position on the committee.

- Councilmember Chelminiak moved to appoint Roz Liming to the Special Events Committee, and Councilmember Stokes seconded the motion.
- The motion carried by a vote of 5-0.

Referring to the Energize Eastside item, Councilmember Lee questioned the City's role within the context of the concerns about and requests for information from Puget Sound Energy. City Manager Miyake said staff will provide more information to clarify the City's role.

[Deputy Mayor Wallace arrived at 6:40 p.m.]

(b) The Diversity Advantage Update

City Manager Miyake introduced staff's update on the implementation of The Diversity Advantage plan.

Mike McCormick Huentelman, Neighborhood Outreach Manager, recalled that The Diversity Advantage plan was adopted in December 2014. He and Terry Smith, Assistant Director of Parks and Community Services, co-manage the initiative. Mr. McCormick Huentelman introduced the diversity staff team: Mark Manuel, Diversity Outreach and Engagement Administrator; Jenny Mechem, ADA/Title VI Administrator; and Elaine Acacio, Diversity and Inclusion Program Administrator.

Mr. McCormick Huentelman said The Diversity Advantage plan contains 60 recommended action items built around the principle of continuing to grow as a culturally competent city,

organization, and economy. Diversity encompasses race, culture, age, sexual orientation, gender, ability, and socio-economic status. Four concepts forming the foundation of the plan are equity, access, inclusion and opportunity. Access addresses barriers to participation and communication. Inclusion refers to meaningful participation that shapes planning and decisions. Opportunity refers to integrating the needs and assets of the community.

Mr. Manuel thanked the Council for its support of the initiative and provided an update on community outreach and engagement. He noted that it takes time to develop trust and meaningful interactions and partnerships within the community. He said staff has connected with more than 100 individuals since May in the areas of education, government, community leaders, private sector, human services providers and other nonprofit organizations. The City is tracking these contacts as part of a targeted strategy for moving the diversity plan forward.

Mr. Manuel said the City will continue to work on civic engagement and to develop a volunteer strategy. He said The Diversity Advantage breakfast is scheduled for October 21 for all stakeholders who provided input to the plan as well as new contacts established this year. He invited everyone to the Unity Through Diversity celebration on November 12 at Bellevue Youth Theatre.

Mr. Manuel said the initiative refers to both a Diversity Network and Diversity Institute. The Diversity Network is an ongoing group charged to improve outreach and relationships with isolated communities. The Diversity Institute will be a short-term advisory group beginning next year to focus on education and the celebration of Bellevue as a welcoming and inclusive community.

Ms. Mechem recalled being before the Council in July for the proclamation recognizing the 25th anniversary of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). Her current primary project is the ADA self-evaluation and transition plan. She said a number of departments are participating in the evaluation, including the Transportation Department and Information Technology Department. Ms. Mechem said she is working on developing relationships with the disability community to learn about their needs and to involve them in the development of policy.

Ms. Mechem said the ADA self-evaluation includes a review of programs and facilities. In 2008, the Transportation Department completed an award-winning survey and developed a new methodology for assessing programs.

Ms. Mechem said the ADA team is working on communications, policies and practices. She described Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, which is a set of federal procurement regulations that effectively addresses technology accessibility and has accomplished more in that area than the ADA. She said Section 508 is a good example of how policy can be drafted to promote accessibility and non-discrimination.

Ms. Mechem said she will be working with the Human Resources Department to develop reasonable accommodation policies, and with the Police and Fire Departments on public safety and emergency planning. Staff is in the beginning stages of preparing the Title VI report. She

said the Transportation Department has completed much of this work and she is working to broaden its applicability citywide.

Ms. Mechem reported that the City is installing a new hearing assistive loop system in the Council Chamber, Council Study Session room, Bellevue Youth Theatre, and the Bellevue Botanical Garden.

Councilmember Robertson said she is pleased that the ADA review is underway. She recalled a citywide survey of the transportation system several years ago and questioned the status of the implementation of that work.

Ms. Mechem said her understanding is that the Transportation Department has been addressing some of the higher priority items identified in that assessment. She said she could follow up with more details for the Council. Implementation will largely be guided based on the areas with the highest usage and needs.

Responding to Councilmember Robertson, Ms. Mechem said the City's capital projects are following universal design guidelines. Ms. Mechem said staff is very knowledgeable about those principles.

Responding to Mayor Balducci, Ms. Mechem said the ADA self-evaluation will identify all of the legal requirements and how the City is complying with those requirements.

Mayor Balducci noted that Councilmember Robinson has been a strong advocate for the hearing assistive loop system.

Councilmember Stokes said he is pleased to see all of the ADA access ramps in neighborhoods and he has heard positive feedback from the community.

Ms. Acacio said The Diversity Advantage plan encompasses both the community and the City organization. She described the organizational development departmental assessments to be conducted within the One City and shared leadership approach. Diversity liaisons have been identified in each department and are assisting with the assessments. Phase 1 is the audit and inventory stage which has focused on four needs repeatedly mentioned by staff: hiring, innovation, training, and communication.

Ms. Acacio said diversity staff and the Human Resources Department have prepared a proposal focused on broadening the City's recruitment efforts to ensure an exceptional candidate pool. Staff is also reviewing the life cycle hiring process. She said the diversity innovation fund was recently established to provide funding to departments, based on their applications, to help reduce barriers to programs and processes. The Diversity Advantage plan calls for cultural competence training for both City staff and volunteers. The audit effort will develop a strategic training plan to determine the sequencing of City staff. Training for Board and Commission members is slated for November 12 and December 17.

Ms. Acacio said the communication elements addressed in the audit are the redesign of the City's web site, language translation access for all City departments, interpreting and captioning services, and conducting an inventory of public documents to determine the need for translation and transcreation.

Mayor Balducci said that one topic in the development of the plan was the demographics of City staff. She said many employees have been here 20-30 years, and the community's demographics have changed more rapidly than City staff.

Responding to Ms. Balducci, Ms. Acacio said the City will continue to hire excellent candidates. Staff is reviewing systems and protocols to identify where they can be improved. One example will be broadening staff recruitment to reach a more diverse hiring pool. She noted that the training on cultural competence and implicit bias will help guide the hiring processes. In further response to Ms. Balducci, Ms. Acacio said there is a five-year plan for training all employees.

Councilmember Stokes commended the Bellevue Essentials program for attracting increasingly diverse groups of participants. He suggested that the Council participate in the cultural competence training. Mayor Balducci invited Councilmembers to participate in the November 12 or December 17 sessions for Board and Commission members.

Councilmember Chelminiak said this work shows the importance of the Council establishing the formal vision statement. Ms. Acacio concurred and noted that she has worked in this field for a long time. She has experienced initiatives that start and fail if there is not strong leadership and continued support. She said the City's investment in staff and the programs speaks well for this organization.

Mr. Manuel noted the advantages of seeing diversity as an asset rather than a negative challenge to be solved. Ms. Mechem said she was impressed with the programs and practices already in place over the years, which played a significant role in why she wanted to work for the City.

Councilmember Chelminiak questioned whether applicants understand that Bellevue's demographics have changed significantly over the past 10-20 years. Ms. Acacio said she believes that awareness of Bellevue's commitment to welcoming diversity is beginning to spread. She has been on three hiring committees since she joined the City and interviews include questions about issues around diversity.

Mr. Chelminiak said he appreciates the recognition of the difference between translation and transcreation. He said this goes beyond translating language to transcreating the visuals that are within a document, for instance, to provide meaningful symbols that are understandable within other cultural contexts.

Councilmember Robertson suggested that the City provide information on the Washington Talking Book and Braille Library to its residents. The organization provides written materials in formats for individuals who are blind and/or have hearing loss. Ms. Robertson said this free service has changed her father's life.

Councilmember Robertson expressed support for translation and transcreation goals and said she has been interested in expanding outreach and in the sharing of information in multiple languages. She questioned whether translation will go beyond the sharing of information to broadening efforts to involve a more diverse group of individuals in planning efforts (e.g., recent Comprehensive Plan Update). Ms. Robertson questioned whether City surveys are conducted in other languages.

Mr. Manuel said one objective of staff's efforts to identify and communicate with more residents and organizations is to formalize community networks. The Diversity Advantage plan includes a closer look at the possibility of creating cultural liaisons who work on behalf of the City to connect with isolated communities. Councilmember Robertson questioned the City's current efforts in this area. Mr. McCormick Huentelman said different departments are doing different things. The current audit of department practices includes an inventory to prioritize information for translation and to identify what specific communities want and need. He said there are not sufficient resources to translate all information into many languages. However, residents have encouraged the City to be consistent and reliable in the information that is translated to shape community expectations. One example could be the expectation that specific meetings will always have a Chinese translator. He said it is important to set practices that can be met.

Councilmember Robertson suggested that announcements in utility bill mailings should include information in the most common languages about how to contact the City for additional information in their language. She said there might be opportunities to partner with neighboring agencies (e.g., Bellevue School District, Bellevue College, other cities) for the translation and sharing of certain information. Responding to Ms. Robertson, Mr. Smith confirmed that there was a recent lawsuit involving the Seattle School District and the ability for blind individuals to receive information. Ms. Mechem said Title VI has a number of requirements related to these needs.

Councilmember Lee said this is an exciting and impressive program, and he encouraged staff to continue to include the Council in discussions about staff's activities. He said it is important to continue to focus staff and other resources on the City's objectives and on continued changes in the community's demographics and needs. Mr. Lee said inclusion and active engagement are important at all levels, and he is pleased that the Council and City Manager strongly support The Diversity Advantage plan. He said training in cultural competence is an important step toward employees truly believing in and supporting the goals and values of embracing diversity. Mr. Lee said Bellevue is demonstrating leadership in this area. He thanked staff for their work.

Continuing with the presentation, Mr. Smith highlighted accomplishments, ongoing practices, and upcoming priorities for the City organization and the community. He said cultural competence was added as a criteria for evaluating the 2015-2016 Budget proposals. Ongoing practices include outreach to establish trust with social networks; increasingly diverse representation on Boards, Commissions and other committees; developing partnerships; strengthening staff recruitment efforts; and investing in innovative ways to provide culturally competent services and broaden civic engagement.

Mr. Smith said feedback from the community indicates appreciation for the Council's work and involvement in community events, training for Boards and Commissions, and the inclusion of diversity policies in the Comprehensive Plan.

Councilmember Stokes said his discussions with the community indicate that residents are recognizing what the City is doing to embrace the assets of a diverse population.

Councilmember Robertson observed that, despite different backgrounds, most people who move to Bellevue have common values and priorities including a safe community, high-quality education, and employment.

Mayor Balducci thanked staff for the update and said it is great to have a team of employees dedicated to the diversity program.

City Manager Miyake thanked Planning and Community Development Director Chris Salomone and Parks and Community Services Director Patrick Foran for their roles in the development of The Diversity Advantage initiative. He said they showed strong leadership by attending meetings and engaging with the community.

(c) Development Activity Update

Mr. Miyake introduced staff's update on local development activity.

Mike Brennan, Director of the Development Services Department (DSD), said the department is managed as a line of business to deliver a process that is predictable, efficient and understandable to the people who use it. Under the One City model, the delivery of development services is coordinated throughout the organization and not by different departments working independently.

Mr. Brennan highlighted the major "crane" projects currently under construction: Bellevue Park Apartments, Centre 45, Lincoln Square expansion, Main Street-Bellevue Gateway, Soma II, and the Spring District. He described the volume of permit activity and the valuation of issued construction permits since 2005, square footage under construction since 2012, and the inspection workload since 2005. Major projects currently in construction (i.e., those listed above as well as Alley 111 Apartments, Enatai Elementary, Nine Two Nine Office Tower, and Bellevue at Main) total approximately 8 million square feet, which correlates to the inspection workload.

Gregg Schrader, Building Official, provided additional details on a number of the Downtown and BelRed projects. He commented on multifamily construction in the southwest corner of the Downtown (Old Bellevue), office buildings, school projects, and Sound Transit's East Link light rail project. Staff has been busy reviewing and processing multiple permits related to the East Link project.

Mr. Schrader described projects for which the City has been contacted by developers to discuss aspects of their conceptual plans: Park 8 (Bellevue International Plaza), Bellevue Square

southeast expansion, Bennett Elementary, Bosa Way, Four 106 (Fana), Evergreen Plaza, Sherwood Center, Spring District Block 12 and the Global Innovation Exchange (Block 14), and Tillicum Middle School.

Deputy Mayor Wallace questioned whether Downtown projects are being designed with an intended result consistent with the Downtown Livability Study or whether they are consistent with current Codes. Mr. Brennan said the City provides feedback during conceptual discussions about the current Code. In some cases, the plans do not conform to requirements and the City alerts developers to the design changes that will be necessary.

Deputy Mayor Wallace encouraged staff to identify and address conceptual plans that are clearly out of scale with the current Code. He cautioned against development plans based on what might be adopted as part of the Downtown Livability work. Mr. Schrader acknowledged that the Park 8 conceptual design would not be approved under the current Land Use Code.

Mayor Balducci requested an update on the traffic impacts of the project on the former Top Foods site and nearby projects in both Bellevue and Redmond. Mr. Brennan said he will work with the Transportation Department to provide more information.

Responding to Councilmember Lee, Mr. Brennan said construction activity involved more crane projects before the recession. However, the current development cycle will exceed that activity in terms of valuation.

Deputy Mayor Wallace noted the relatively broad fluctuations in the valuation of issued permits since 2006 and said it is important to be cautious during upcoming budget discussions regarding related fluctuations in sales tax revenue.

Responding to Councilmember Stokes, Mr. Brennan said the last development cycle went up and came down rather quickly. The current development recovery is increasing at a slower rate.

Continuing with the presentation, Mr. Brennan described the regional online digital plan submittal, review, and permitting process known as MyBuildingPermit.com. Online permitting and the percentage of online inspection requests have increased significantly since 2008.

Responding to Councilmember Robertson, Ms. Schrader confirmed that the City has a protocol to ensure the authenticity of engineer's stamps on online plans.

Mr. Brennan described the implementation of the mobile workforce program for City staff during 2014/2015. All Development Services inspectors now use mobile devices and inspection results are uploaded quickly.

Mr. Brennan said the statewide adoption of new construction codes is coming up next year. Customer outreach meetings are scheduled for November 13 and 20, and a discussion of the codes will be presented to the Council during the second quarter of 2016. Mr. Brennan said the upcoming customer outreach effort is intended to guide the next wave of improvements related to efficiency, the continued alignment of different cities' codes, and convenience for customers.

Councilmember Chelminiak noted how MyBuildingPermit.com was founded in collaboration with other cities in the region. Mr. Brennan described Bellevue's early work with other cities to streamline permit applications for different jurisdictions by better aligning the codes and processes. The eGovAlliance established the revenue stream and regional cooperation to support this effort.

Councilmember Chelminiak said Newport Hills residents have raised concerns that multiple building inspections are having an adverse impact on businesses. He suspects this is related to older buildings and questioned the extent to which the City works with businesses to discuss requirements before spaces are occupied.

Mr. Brennan described how the City worked with the Bellevue School District in the past to discuss the challenges of its older buildings before renovation efforts. Mr. Brennan said staff is beginning to focus more attention on new businesses moving to Bellevue to articulate the City's processes and to discuss expectations related to the modification of tenant space. Mr. Brennan said staff is interested in determining how those customers can be better served. Mr. Chelminiak said neighborhood shopping centers might be a good opportunity for applying that approach.

Councilmember Robertson said she would like more information on DSD's level of service goals. She recalled that the standard for responding to an inquiry submitted to a permit technician is to reply within 24 hours. Mr. Brennan said there are standards and metrics for responding to calls, tracking permit reviews, and providing inspections. The standard for inspections is to conduct them the next day or potentially the same day if the request is submitted before 6:00 AM.

Deputy Mayor Wallace said the use of technology has increased efficiencies and he hears positive comments about the services. However, he does hear complaints covering a number of issues and he questioned whether the City maintains a log of complaints. Mr. Brennan said he informally tracks complaints and compliments. The complaints typically indicate that the permitting process is taking too long and/or that the Codes and level of oversight is stricter in Bellevue than in other jurisdictions.

Mr. Wallace suggested that the City track complaints and the nature of the complaints (e.g., what part of the process/type of permits are taking too long) more carefully. Mr. Brennan said different customer groups have different needs. The upcoming customer outreach effort is intended to identify those needs and to obtain further feedback and suggestions.

Mr. Wallace said the City of Kirkland hired a consultant to review its permitting processes and requirements. Mr. Brennan said he would talk with Kirkland staff about that review. He said Bellevue has used consultants in a similar way in the past and anticipates using a consultant for the upcoming customer outreach effort.

Deputy Mayor Wallace clarified that he hears compliments about Bellevue's Development Services as well. However, he believes there are always opportunities for improvement. Mr. Brennan said that is staff's philosophy as well.

Mayor Balducci observed that staff has the difficult challenge of meeting deadlines and being responsive while also enforcing the codes for the benefit of the public. She expressed support for Mr. Wallace's request for tracking complaints in a more formal and detailed manner.

Ms. Balducci thanked staff for the update.

5. Council Discussion of Upcoming Items: None.

6. Continued Oral Communications: None.

At 8:44 p.m., Mayor Balducci declared the meeting adjourned.

Kyle Stannert
Acting City Clerk

/kaw