

CITY OF BELLEVUE
CITY COUNCIL

Summary Minutes of Study Session

September 17, 2018
6:00 p.m.

Council Conference Room
Bellevue, Washington

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

ABSENT: Councilmember Robertson

1. Executive Session

Deputy Mayor Robinson called the meeting to order at 6:02 p.m., and declared recess to Executive Session for approximately 20 minutes to discuss one quasi-judicial matter.

The meeting resumed at 6:30 p.m., with Mayor Chelminiak presiding.

2. Study Session

(a) Neighborhood Transportation Levy Program Update

Deputy City Manager Nathan McCommon introduced staff's update on the Neighborhood Transportation Safety, Connectivity and Congestion Levy program.

Transportation Director Dave Berg recalled that the 20-year levy was approved by the voters in 2016, with the purpose of reducing the backlog of projects. The levy will fund crosswalks, bike lanes, sidewalks, traffic calming elements, street lighting, radar signs, and other projects. The funding covers project outreach, planning, design, and construction.

John Murphy, Associate Planner/Levy Program Co-Manager, said the levy raises \$7.4 million annually with \$2 million to be spent on reducing neighborhood congestion and \$5.4 million dedicated to safety and connectivity projects. The levy allows the City to leverage outside funding, including \$500,000 of levy funding to gain access to approximately \$1.5 million in grant opportunities. Most of the levy projects originate from existing work programs, with the exception of new neighborhood congestion reduction projects.

Mr. Murphy said the Transportation Commission and the City Council have been involved in evaluating and selecting plans and programs. He said an update was provided to the

Transportation Commission on September 13, and the Commission asked staff to relay their comments to the City Council. Mr. Murphy said the Commission wants to ensure that the City maintain its relationships with outside partners (e.g., Washington State Department of Transportation and Sound Transit) and recognizes the importance of evaluating projects upon completion. He said the projects, funded by a citywide levy, are intended to meet the overall needs of the community.

Mr. Murphy highlighted the status of the 2017-2018 projects. By the end of 2018, projects totaling \$6.2 million will be under construction or completed. As of September 10, 13 projects had been completed, eight were under construction, and 22 additional projects were in different phases of planning and design. Mr. Murphy displayed photos and described the NE 24th Street bike lane project and the 118th Avenue SE sidewalk project. In 2018, approximately 15 lane miles of new or upgraded bike facilities in Bellevue will be directly funded by the levy.

Neighborhood transportation projects have been identified over a number of years based in part on community input, and smaller projects are funded through the Neighborhood Enhancement Program (NEP). Mr. Murphy referred to the map provided in the meeting packet [Attachment D] depicting 2019-2020 projects. More than 90 levy-funded projects will be completed across all neighborhoods between 2017 and 2020. Project objectives for 2019-2020 are to continue to identify congestion projects, move forward with the construction of the 150th Avenue SE and SE Newport Way project, leverage grants and other funding sources, continue bike facilities improvements, and provide intersection improvements.

Marie Jensen, Levy Co-Manager, said staff is developing an interactive levy project map to be released within the next few weeks. It is similar to the Projects in Your Neighborhood map available on the City's website. Ms. Jensen recalled that Councilmember Robertson previously suggested adding a direct link to neighborhood transportation levy information on the MyBellevue app. The link has been added and directs the user to the levy web page, which also allows individuals to sign up for project alerts and updates.

Ms. Jensen summarized that most of the projects initiated in 2017 will be completed by 2019. She said the Council and the Transportation Commission will receive updates on the Neighborhood Congestion Reduction program in mid-2019. The first levy accountability report will be completed in early 2019 and will cover the first two years of the levy. However, annual reports will be issued beyond that point.

Councilmember Lee, liaison to the Transportation Commission, thanked staff for the update.

Responding to Councilmember Zahn, Mr. Murphy confirmed that the neighborhood subarea planning work will involve discussions regarding transportation levy projects.

Deputy Mayor Robinson observed that the levy program is a good sign of a responsive government. She thanked the Transportation Commission and staff for their work. She said the levy is enabling the City to tackle a backlog of projects, and she frequently receives compliments from the public on the levy projects. Ms. Robinson said she hears questions about bike racks from the public.

Mr. Murphy said the bike-related levy projects originate from the Bicycle Rapid Implementation Program, which is not likely to include bike racks. He said he will follow up with more information. Mr. Berg said bike racks have been installed in certain areas as part of the non-motorized access improvements program.

Councilmember Nieuwenhuis thanked staff for their work. He said he hears positive comments about the levy projects, especially the 118th Avenue sidewalk that is nearly completed. He thanked staff for adding the link to the levy information from the MyBellevue app. He commended staff's extensive public outreach. Ms. Jensen noted that the City's public engagement efforts extend throughout the life of a project, including to receive feedback regarding the effectiveness and impacts of completed projects.

Councilmember Stokes said he is pleased with the progress and coordinated efforts of the levy program. He said it would be great for the public to be able to see how the levy projects provide connections that enhance the overall transportation system. He concurred with his colleagues regarding the positive comments and feedback from the public. He thanked Transportation Department staff and the Transportation Commission for their responsiveness to the community.

Mayor Chelminiak expressed enthusiasm regarding the progress of the levy program. He noted that the projects were in existing plans and they are projects wanted by the public. However, funding was not previously available. He opined that any new projects to be added to the levy program need to compete with the existing list of projects. He commended the addition of bike lanes and the City's efforts to accelerate projects through the Bicycle Rapid Implementation Program.

(b) Conformance Amendments to the Land Use Code, Noise Control Code, Sign Code, and Environmental Procedures Code

Deputy City Manager McCommon introduced discussion regarding code amendments to the Noise Control Code, Sign Code, and Environmental Procedures Code. He said staff is seeking Council direction to bring back the proposed ordinances for final action on October 1.

Carol Helland, Code and Policy Director, said the conformance amendments are not substantive and are intended to enhance consistency, clarify regulations, and streamline the code language.

Trisna Tanus, Legal Planner, said the conformance amendments are necessary to: 1) achieve consistency with the new Downtown Code, LUC 20.25A, Eastgate Land Use Code Amendments, and State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA) rules; 2) incorporate the International Building Code and Bellevue City Code amendments related to construction type in the Factoria Development Area III; and 3) clean up and clarify errors, omissions, and/or internal conflicts.

Ms. Tanus said the conformance amendments are a Process IV Land Use Code Amendment through City Council legislative action. The LUCA was introduced to the Planning Commission on March 28. The Commission held a public hearing on May 9 and approved a recommendation to adopt the proposed amendments. During the May 16 meeting, the Commission reconsidered

that vote and agreed to schedule an additional public hearing with a new, more comprehensive noticing of the hearing. Following the Planning Commission's June 13 public hearing, the Commission voted to transmit the final recommendation to the City Council. Ms. Tanus said there were no comments during the September 11 courtesy public hearing held by the East Bellevue Community Council (EBCC). She said staff is seeking City Council direction to return with the related ordinances for action on October 1. Action by the EBCC to approve or disapprove the LUCA is anticipated for November 6.

Ms. Tanus said the decision criteria for the LUCA are outlined in LUC 20.30J. The Planning Commission determined that the LUCA is consistent with the Comprehensive Plan; enhances the public health, safety, and welfare; and is not contrary to the best interest of citizens and property owners in Bellevue.

Councilmember Zahn questioned whether the City periodically reviews the Sign Code to evaluate provisions related to the visibility and legibility of signage. Ms. Helland said the City has not reviewed the Sign Code for the ability to communicate a message based on font size or the size of the sign content. The Sign Code regulates the size, location, and number of signs. In further response to Ms. Zahn, Ms. Helland said that a review of the Sign Code is on the Council's list of topics for potential code amendments. She will add the visibility issue to be considered by staff and the Council.

Deputy Mayor Robinson thanked the Planning Commission and the Mayor, liaison to the Commission, for a very thoughtful recommendation. She thanked staff for their work in support of the Commission and Council.

Councilmember Nieuwenhuis expressed support for the conformance amendments.

Councilmember Stokes concurred and thanked staff and the Planning Commission for their efforts to ensure consistency between codes and the Comprehensive Plan and to streamline codes.

Responding to Councilmember Lee, Ms. Helland said the codes are reviewed for conformance amendments approximately every two years. She said the City maintains a docket of issues raised by the development community and the general public, and addresses those issues during the periodic reviews. She noted the ongoing objective to ensure efficiency and predictability in the permit process.

Mayor Chelminiak thanked staff for their work and commended the Planning Commission for holding a second public hearing.

Responding to Councilmember Lee, Ms. Helland said the amendments that affect the Factoria Development Area III allow residential development to take advantage of the 5-over-2 (i.e., five levels of wood frame construction over two levels of concrete construction) provisions that were adopted into the Building Code several years ago. Those provisions do not change the vision for Factoria or the intensity and density of development allowed in that area.

Mayor Chelminiak asked staff to bring the ordinances back on a future Consent Calendar. However, noting that Councilmember Robertson is absent, he said she might have input or feedback when she returns.

(c) Update on 2018 Neighborhood Walks

Mr. McCommon reported that staff conducted a number of neighborhood walks this year as a new approach to community outreach.

Mike McCormick Huentelman, Assistant Director of Neighborhood Services, introduced the update on the Neighborhood Walks program. He said the City hosts two neighborhood leadership gatherings per year (February and September), with the most recent one being a tour of the Bellevue Service Center (BSC). The City introduced its new Director of Community Development during the February meeting. In preparation for that meeting, staff conducted a citywide survey soliciting input and suggestions under the new leadership. A recurring theme was a suggestion to spend some time in neighborhoods. Mr. McCormick Huentelman said the City Manager determined that neighborhood walks would be a good idea not just for Community Development staff, but for the entire Leadership Team.

Mark Heilman, Community Engagement Lead, said walks were held this year in the Downtown/Northwest neighborhood, Lake Hills, Crossroads/Northeast area, Newport neighborhood, Bellevue College area, and the Lewis Creek area. Each walk was approximately two miles and extended over approximately two hours. City Manager Brad Miyake led the walks, and a recurring priority throughout the community was safety. The walks were designed to tour residential and commercial areas, parks, pedestrian routes, and traffic elements. Mr. Heilman noted plans to conduct tours with individuals who have mobility limitations to identify accessibility issues and needs.

Mr. Heilman highlighted the six walks. Key issues identified in the Downtown and Northwest area were the changing mix of homes, increased cut-through traffic, Chapin Trail, and overall walkability. Lake Hills residents communicated their pride in the neighborhood's diversity, connectivity, and natural beauty. Two houses of concern were identified and are being monitored by Code Compliance staff. Residents also highlighted a desire for a crosswalk with a traffic signal at Lake Hills Boulevard and 156th Avenue SE.

One focus of the tour of the Crossroads and Northeast area was the Crossroads Trail, which is in need of maintenance. Mr. Heilman said a project to be completed in spring 2019 will upgrade the trail and make it more accessible. He noted that Crossroads Fire Department personnel brought water to the group during their tour. He said residents talked about the importance of trees and wildlife in their neighborhood. They expressed concern regarding the future of the Bellevue Technology Center, which provides a natural buffer from the development occurring west of 156th Avenue SE.

The Newport neighborhood walk started at the top of Newport Hills and ended at the bottom. Residents noted their concern about the potential future redevelopment of the shopping center. They encouraged the creation of a Mini City Hall in the Factoria area or Newport Hills, as well

as more meetings in the community instead of at City Hall. Mr. Heilman said the walk included a bike lane on 119th Avenue that ends mid-block. Fire Department personnel met the group at the bottom of the hill to spend time with the families. The walk in the Bellevue College area raised issues regarding homelessness, the potential for a men's homeless shelter in the Eastgate area, a proposed crosswalk at Kamber Road and SE 24th Street, and the desire for wayfinding for public access.

Some of the residents who participated in the walk in the Lewis Creek neighborhood recalled the farms that were formerly in the area. Mr. Heilman said staff learned about a group of 30-40 Mandarin-speaking senior adults who gather at the visitors center nearly daily, frequently with their grandchildren. He noted that residents appreciate the opportunity for education and community engagement at the park and visitor center.

Overall, Mr. Heilman said residents commented that they were surprised and pleased to see the diversity in the City's leadership and staff, they love living in Bellevue and would like more opportunities to engage with City staff in the future, and they are interested in supporting and helping with future neighborhood walks. Mr. Heilman said the walks involved 95 residents and 44 City staff, covered 14.3 miles, crossed six bridges, involved five pet walkers, generated two Bellevue Essentials course applications, and walked through one tunnel. The efforts generated more than 58,000 impressions on Nextdoor.com as well.

Councilmember Lee thanked everyone for their efforts and participation. He noted a barrier on 118th Avenue in Newport Hills and questioned whether the City has plans for repairs.

Councilmember Zahn expressed support for the walks and noted the importance of neighborhood engagement, including perhaps Board, Commission, and City Council meetings out in the community. She would like to see more walks going forward.

Councilmember Nieuwenhuis said he also would like to see this program continue, and he asked how the City can improve the program and further expand participation for next year. Mr. McCormick Huentelman said staff participated in a debrief session following the walks and identified approximately 30 ideas for enhancing future walks. In further response, he said the participants included community leaders, Bellevue Essentials alumni, and residents who want to get involved in their local neighborhoods. The Crossroads/NE and Newport walks attracted the most participants. Mr. Heilman commented that every walk included individuals who are new to living in Bellevue.

Responding to Deputy Mayor Robinson, Mr. McCormick Huentelman said staff plans to conduct additional walks in 2019. Ms. Robinson questioned the feasibility of holding a City Council meeting away from City Hall. Mr. McCormick Huentelman said his staff would work with the City Clerk's Office to organize an off-site meeting if directed by the Council.

Councilmember Stokes expressed support for continuing the neighborhood walks program. He said he would like to encourage residents to come to City Hall as well to reinforce a citywide approach. He noted that residents throughout Bellevue might view a Council meeting in one neighborhood as not relevant to them or their interests. Mr. Stokes said the City provides a

number of community engagement opportunities, and he wants everyone to view City Hall as their City Hall.

Mayor Chelminiak said the walks are casual and inviting to residents and are a good way to engage with the public. He expressed support for the positive outcomes related to the Bellevue Essentials program. With regard to the concept of meetings out in the community, he noted that meetings involving the Neighborhood Enhance Program (NEP) and other initiatives are a more effective way to listen to the community than the more-structured Council meetings. He said it would not be possible to live stream a Council meeting online from another location. However, the meeting video would be posted within a couple of days.

3. Council Discussion of Upcoming Items: None.

At 7:56 p.m., Mayor Chelminiak declared recess to the Regular Session.

Charmaine Arredondo, CMC
Assistant Director, City Clerk's Office

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