

CITY OF BELLEVUE
CITY COUNCIL

Summary Minutes of Study Session

February 19, 2019
6:00 p.m.

Council Conference Room
Bellevue, Washington

PRESENT: Mayor Chelminiak, Deputy Mayor Robinson, and Councilmembers Lee, Nieuwenhuis, Robertson¹, Stokes, and Zahn

ABSENT: None.

1. Study Session

Mayor Chelminiak called the meeting to order at 6:03 p.m. and noted that Councilmember Robertson would be joining the meeting shortly.

Mr. Chelminiak introduced the addition of an agenda item to hear an update on the recent winter storms.

(a) Update on City's Response to Recent Winter Storms

Nathan McCommon, Deputy City Manager, thanked Mayor Chelminiak for signing the declaration of emergency during the two weeks of snow and ice. Mr. McCommon thanked staff for their response to the storms, and the public for keeping the City informed about problem areas. City staff worked around the clock for 12 days.

Paula Stevens, Interim Transportation Director, commented on the Transportation Department's responsibility to ensure the health and safety of the public during winter weather. She said a number of staff worked 12-hour shifts during the two weeks. She noted that the lessons learned have already been put into action as staff prepares to respond to future events.

Ms. Stevens noted the involvement of more than 200 staff members from a number of departments (i.e., Fire, Police, Transportation, Parks, Utilities, Service First, Fleet and Dispatch, and the City Manager's Office), including department Public Information Officers.

¹ Councilmember Robertson arrived at 6:34 p.m.

Mark Poch, Assistant Transportation Director, said the City begins testing and preparing snow and ice removal equipment in late summer/early fall. Interdepartmental staff training is held in October. As storms are predicted, staff monitors the weather reports and establishes staffing plans on Thursdays to prepare for the weekends.

Mr. Poch described the snow response priorities map and highlighted the roads and routes that are cleared first. With a number of snowfalls over the two-week period, snow removal efforts were rotated throughout the community. Mr. Poch said staff was able to respond to every request for assistance from the Police Department and the Fire Department. He shared a story in which the snow plow crews were able to quickly clear a route for emergency responders who needed to access a residence at a higher elevation.

The City's communications activities involved interdepartmental coordination as well as external communications:

- 12 website feature updates,
- 10 email alerts to 11,000 subscribers,
- 34 Facebook posts, 106 Tweets, direct replies to inquiries, and
- Bellevue Service Center dispatch responded to 1,100 requests for service.

Mr. Poch said recovery efforts are ongoing, including repairs to road striping and picking up vegetation, debris, and sand. Staff meet after winter weather events to discuss the City's response, lessons learned, and improvements for future responses.

Mayor Chelminiak thanked everyone for their hard work, long hours, and dedication to meeting the City's needs.

Responding to Deputy Mayor Robinson, Mr. Poch said it is very helpful when residents are able to clear their sidewalks.

Councilmember Zahn thanked staff and their families for the extra time required of staff to respond to the snow and ice. She wondered whether there is more the City could do to help residents prepare for similar events and to check in on their neighbors who might need assistance. Mr. Poch said he would add that issue to the list of items to discuss as part of staff's debriefing.

Councilmember Stokes said he heard some complaints. However, there were many positive comments on Nextdoor.com regarding the City's response. He expressed an interest in comments from the public during the storms. Mr. Poch said staff will work to compile those comments and input.

Councilmember Lee complimented staff for their good work. He reflected on the City's addition of snow removal equipment in recent years, including less expensive surplus equipment. He said there is a big difference between Bellevue and other cities in terms of preparedness and road conditions.

Councilmember Lee said a resident contacted him with concerns regarding disruptions to garbage and recycling services. He suggested that the City communicate with the garbage contractor regarding winter weather practices.

Councilmember Nieuwenhuis thanked staff and the community for their efforts during the snow storms. He said he heard a number of stories about neighbors helping and checking in on each other. He said he appreciated the City's strong social media presence to update the public.

Mayor Chelminiak reminded the public that they can look at Bellevue's traffic cameras online to check road conditions.

(b) Environmental Stewardship Initiative (ESI) Strategic Plan Update

City Manager Brad Miyake said this topic was last before the Council on November 13, 2018. At that time, staff presented a proposed work plan for updating the 2013-2018 Environmental Stewardship Initiative (ESI) Strategic Plan.

Arun Jain, Assistant Director of the Community Development Department, introduced staff's presentation regarding the update to the ESI Strategic Plan. He noted that this is the first of three study session discussions regarding the update.

Jennifer Ewing, Environmental Stewardship Program Manager, recalled that priority 11 of the City Council Vision Priorities is to review the progress of the ESI plan and to analyze additional steps the City might wish to take to achieve environmental goals, including the tree canopy goal. The ESI Strategic Plan has five focus areas: Greenhouse Gas Emissions, Mobility and Land Use, Energy and Water, Materials Management and Waste, and Ecosystems and Open Spaces. The plan includes 57 actions and 17 sustainability indicators.

[Councilmember Robertson arrived at 6:34 p.m.]

Ms. Ewing said the Council approved Resolution No. 7517 in 2006 in support of the Mayors Climate Protection Agreement. She highlighted the goals for reducing greenhouse gas emissions for both municipal operations and the community. The Environmental Element of the Comprehensive Plan updated in 2015 reflects the goal of increasing the tree canopy to 40 percent citywide. The Transportation Element of the 2015 Comprehensive Plan update reflects a goal to reduce the drive-alone rate for Bellevue residents to 55 percent by 2035.

The ESI Strategic Plan identifies a number of environmental management goals: 1) divert 50 percent of all waste to recycling or composting, 2) increase renewable energy usage in Bellevue, 3) expand the use of alternative fuel vehicles, 4) maintain at least 70 percent of the public urban forests in Class 1 or Class 2 condition, and 5) complete the implementation of the ESI Strategic Plan. Ms. Ewing noted that the use of solar power in Bellevue increased from enough energy to power approximately nine homes in 2011 to sufficient energy to power 150 homes in 2017. In 2009, there was a handful of electric vehicles in Bellevue. However, as of 2016, there were approximately 900 electric vehicles registered in Bellevue.

Forest health is measured based on the tree canopy and the percentage of invasive species. Class 1 and Class 2 refers to lower levels of invasive species and the ability to keep those plants under control. Ms. Ewing said that 72 percent of Bellevue's forest is in Class 1 or Class 2 condition. Overall, Ms. Ewing said that 96 percent of the 57 action items in the ESI Strategic Plan are either implemented or initiated at this point.

Ms. Ewing provided additional details regarding the goals of the ESI plan. One of the goals from the Mayors Climate Protection Agreement is to reduce community greenhouse gas emissions by seven percent below 1990 levels by 2012. She noted that per capita emissions have declined by approximately 23 percent between 2011 and 2017 due to more energy efficient development. Emissions from municipal operations decreased by 19 percent between 2011 and 2017. The City anticipates that the purchase of renewable energy through Puget Sound Energy's Green Direct program will continue to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

Ms. Ewing described the goals and status of measures related to drive-alone trips and the tree canopy. She noted a reduction in drive-alone trips from 72 percent in 2007 to 64 percent in 2017. Public transportation ridership increased from 11 percent in 2012 to 12.8 percent in 2017. Bellevue's citywide tree canopy is 37 percent. Ms. Ewing said an additional 700 acres of tree canopy are needed to achieve the 40-percent goal. The plan update will analyze how the City could achieve that goal.

Next steps are Study Session 2 in May to consider new enhanced goals and to discuss the process for updating the ESI Strategic Plan. Study Session 3 in the fall will provide an update on the types of strategies under consideration as well as a report regarding public engagement and input.

Councilmember Robertson referenced the need for 700 more acres of tree canopy to reach the City's goal, and asked about the timing and whether there is an implementation strategy. She said that tree regulations are anticipated to be addressed through the City's neighborhood planning efforts. Ms. Ewing said further analysis is needed to set a timeline for expanding the tree canopy. She said it could take a couple of decades to reach the goal. Ms. Robertson asked whether the tree canopy potential in the BelRed area, Eastgate, and along the Eastside Rail Corridor has been quantified. Ms. Ewing said there have been discussions about increasing the tree canopy in the BelRed area as it redevelops. However, further analysis is needed. Ms. Ewing said that the streetscapes to be developed in the BelRed area provide opportunities to add trees. She noted that low impact development principles will contribute to the City's efforts as well.

Councilmember Zahn thanked staff for the report. She said she would like to see specific metrics associated with the goals and milestones.

Ms. Zahn noted that the single-family garbage diversion rate (i.e., recycling and food/yard waste) is higher than the commercial and multifamily rates. Ms. Ewing said the single-family diversion rate of 67 percent is typical for the region and slightly higher than many cities. She said the Utilities Department has a pilot program with multifamily properties to encourage organics

collection and increased recycling. Responding to Councilmember Zahn, Ms. Ewing said she would follow up with information regarding construction waste.

Ms. Zahn asked whether the City is accounting for the future loss of older and diseased trees as it considers goals and actions for increasing the tree canopy. Ms. Ewing said the Parks and Community Services Department incorporates that into their forest management practices. Ms. Zahn suggested providing information to residents about ways to assess the health of trees and to keep them healthy.

Councilmember Lee complimented staff on their work and concurred with Councilmember Zahn's suggestion for more metrics. He noted there are non-City programs that contribute to the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions (e.g., commute trip reduction program, Puget Sound Energy's alternative energy program), and it would be good for the City to add to those efforts. Ms. Ewing concurred with the importance of partnerships and cooperative efforts. In further response to Mr. Lee, Ms. Ewing said that reducing traffic volumes and greenhouse gas emissions in Bellevue is an overall transportation goal with a number of strategies, including the use of electric vehicles. She said the City anticipates maintaining a mix of travel modes.

Councilmember Stokes said that individual Councilmember briefings with staff might be helpful in preparing for the next study session discussion. He said it is important to understand that things have changed in Bellevue. He believes there are new opportunities for improving the tree canopy and recycling rates. He encouraged continued efforts to engage the community in pursuing the ESI goals and thanked staff for their work. He suggested a stronger focus on moving forward more aggressively.

Councilmember Nieuwenhuis concurred with Mr. Stokes' suggestion for an enhanced focus on the ESI plan. Mr. Nieuwenhuis encouraged specific plans with actionable tactics and performance metrics. He asked whether there are other organizations and avenues that could help to expedite the process.

Deputy Mayor Robinson said the City does not have control over the types of energy used by Puget Sound Energy. Ms. Ewing confirmed that the tracking of greenhouse gas emissions involves looking at the fuel mix of local utilities. In further response to Ms. Robinson, Ms. Ewing said she would provide information regarding overall energy usage in Bellevue.

Ms. Robinson noted that, despite tree regulations, there are still instances of clear-cutting in the community. She questioned whether the City could make it harder to remove multiple trees. She suggested exploring a requirement to replace trees as well.

Mayor Chelminiak said that 700 acres is approximately 3.5 percent of Bellevue's land mass. He questioned whether it is possible to expand the tree canopy to that extent. He encouraged increased energy efficiency in older homes and commercial structures.

Mr. Chelminiak thanked staff for the update and concurred with his colleagues about enhancing the ESI Strategic Plan with the pending update.

(c) Cultural and Economic Vitality Office Fourth Quarter 2018 Update

Mac Cummins, Community Development Director, introduced staff's update regarding the Economic Development Plan. He said staff is seeking Council direction to enter into two interlocal agreements related to the work.

Jesse Canedo, Interim Chief Economic Development Officer, recalled that the Economic Development Plan was adopted on July 7, 2014. He highlighted key fourth quarter performance measures and noted that Bellevue's office vacancy rate is below four percent.

Mr. Canedo said staff is seeking Council direction to approve two interlocal agreements: Innovation Triangle and the Startup425 program. The Innovation Triangle is a partnership with the cities of Kirkland and Redmond, with participation from One Redmond, a public-private economic development partnership. The Innovation Triangle focuses on business development, website and marketing materials, international lead generation, and relocation assistance. The partnership was established in 2016 and it complements the City's efforts with the Greater Seattle Partners (formerly the Economic Development Council).

During the fourth quarter of 2018, the Innovation Triangle held meetings with three prospects, including two international firms; exhibited at the Gamesforum conference; and completed a draft interlocal agreement to formalize the partnership. Work on the 2019 trade show schedule is underway, including the SelectUSA conference in June. Mr. Canedo noted that the South King County cities are interested in establishing a similar partnership.

Mr. Canedo said the proposed interlocal agreement formalizes the existing Innovation Triangle partnership and continues the coordinated business recruitment efforts. It does not create a new entity or add new work items or programs.

Mayor Chelminiak expressed support for the interlocal agreement.

Councilmember Stokes concurred and said he looks forward to the partnership's continued efforts.

Councilmember Nieuwenhuis thanked staff for the report and asked about the Innovation Triangle's focus on international businesses. Mr. Canedo said the original thinking was that the international market is more lucrative. He said there are a number of technology companies in Europe and East Asia.

Deputy Mayor Robinson said technology companies are continuing to move to Bellevue and the region. She would like to see greater coordination with educational programs to prepare individuals for local jobs. She said she would like to see an emphasis on fostering local investments and local startups. Mr. Canedo said staff will continue to explore partnership opportunities.

Responding to Councilmember Zahn, Mr. Canedo said the statistics tracked by the Innovation Triangle are aggregated for the three cities. However, marketing efforts also emphasize the attributes of the individual cities (e.g., Bellevue's urban downtown with strong transit service, Kirkland's waterfront access and creative community, and Redmond's proximity to Microsoft and bike trails). In further response, Mr. Canedo said companies are interested in multimodal transportation connectivity and a qualified workforce. Ms. Zahn expressed support for the interlocal agreement.

Councilmember Lee said he supports regional collaboration. He encouraged enhancing Bellevue's visibility and leadership in the region while collaborating with other cities.

Councilmember Robertson expressed support for the interlocal agreement. She noted that it does not address the ownership of the Innovation Triangle name and logo. She suggested adding language to the interlocal agreement to protect the rights of all partners to use the logo.

Moving to the second interlocal agreement, Mr. Canedo said the Startup425 program is a partnership of five Eastside cities: Bellevue, Issaquah, Kirkland, Redmond, and Renton. The purpose is to provide access to education and resources for first-time business owners. The program works collaboratively with the Small Business Administration, Small Business Development Center, and other agencies and organizations to enhance its effectiveness and reduce the duplication of efforts. Mr. Canedo described the Startup425 Foundations program, which is a six-week series of workshops intended to help business owners go from ideation to a business plan.

Mr. Canedo recalled that the Startup425 program began in 2016, and staff sees 2019 as a year of building strategies for continued efforts. The proposed interlocal agreement continues the provision of services to small businesses and entrepreneurs, and no new entity is created. The cities' economic development staff will continue to operate the program, with the City of Kirkland serving as the managing partner. Bellevue has been the managing partner up to this point.

The interlocal agreement requires the development of a long-range strategic plan. Mr. Canedo noted that Bellevue, Issaquah, Redmond, and Renton will contribute equally to the program's budget (\$15,000 each). The City of Kirkland will provide two dedicated staff members. Bellevue's contribution will be funded from the City's existing economic development budget.

Mayor Chelminiak noted a Council consensus to move forward with the interlocal agreements and to bring them back for formal action.

Councilmember Robertson reiterated her suggestion about protecting the Startup425 name and logo.

Councilmember Zahn expressed an interest in knowing the number of individuals who participate in the program that are able to start a business in Bellevue. She suggested collecting statistics on participation by veterans as well.

2. Executive Session

At 7:39 p.m., Mayor Chelminiak declared recess to Executive Session for approximately 20 minutes to discuss one quasi-judicial matter. He noted that the meeting would reconvene for the 8:00 p.m. Regular Session.

3. Council Discussion of Upcoming Items: None.

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

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