

CITY OF BELLEVUE
CITY COUNCIL

Summary Minutes of Study Session

March 18, 2019
6:00 p.m.

Council Conference Room
Bellevue, Washington

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

ABSENT: None.

1. Executive Session

Deputy Mayor Robinson called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m., and declared recess to Executive Session for approximately 30 minutes to discuss one quasi-judicial matter.

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

2. Study Session Items

- (a) Update on the feasibility of providing temporary Year-Round Men's Shelter Services at Lincoln Center

City Manager Brad Miyake recalled that the Council directed staff on July 17, 2018, to work with Congregations for the Homeless (CFH) to study the feasibility of providing temporary year-round men's shelter services at Lincoln Center while the process for siting a permanent shelter is ongoing. Staff presented a feasibility study to the Council in November 2018, and the Council authorized \$135,000 to better define the project scope and to develop a cost estimate.

Nancy LaCombe, Assistant Director, City Manager's Office, presented the Interim Year-Round Men's Shelter Lincoln Center Feasibility Study, noting that the shelter is currently operated only during the winter months. Staff worked with CFH and its partners to identify the fire and life safety improvements to move forward with submitting a permit application by the end of April. The team is working toward finalizing the construction schedule and exploring potential contributions of funding and/or volunteer labor to minimize the costs. Ms. LaCombe thanked CFH's partners: Wallace Properties, Rafn Company, Kidder Mathews, GLY, and DCI Engineers

Mike Brennan, Director of the Development Services Department (DSD), described the existing building layout, which has a day center, two sleeping areas to accommodate a total of 100 men, and the CFH offices. The proposed changes move the offices to the second floor, remove walls to create the new sleeping area, and add a fire service connection, sprinklers, and other life safety items.

Matt McFarland, Assistant City Attorney, said that extending the shelter's operations to year-round use triggers the Temporary Public Safety Facility requirements provided in Land Use Code section 20.20.850. The City Manager would determine whether there is emergency circumstance and, if so, CFH could apply to operate a public safety facility to provide temporary year-round homeless shelter use. The facility would be exempt from conditional use permit (CUP) requirements and the design review approval process. The temporary year-round shelter could operate for up to three years without triggering the CUP process.

Ms. LaCombe described the public engagement plan for informing the community, gathering feedback, and addressing the public's concerns. Based on that information, CFH will develop a plan to address operational and communication commitments tailored to the services provided at Lincoln Center. The engagement plan includes notifications to properties within 1,000 feet, website and email notifications, news releases, Facebook and Nextdoor notifications, coordination with the Bellevue Police Department, and continued discussions between CFH and the surrounding businesses.

There are two options for the performance of construction, one managed by CFH and one managed by the City. Both options would utilize the design plans that have been prepared by the CFH team. Ms. LaCombe provided a schedule of the project timelines for both options. Construction management by CFH approaches the project as a privately funded tenant improvement with early demolition work to begin as early as mid-April when the seasonal overnight shelter closes. If CFH manages the construction, the project must be fully funded by the CFH team. The City would not be allowed to contribute funding. The day center would continue to operate during construction, which is anticipated to be completed by November 2019.

Construction management of the project by the City would involve the public procurement process, City contracts for building modifications, and potential private contributions. The estimated construction cost for this option is \$900,000 to \$1.2 million, and construction could be completed by February 2020.

Ms. LaCombe said staff recommends continuing to work with the CFH team and returning to the Council on April 1 to provide an update. Staff is seeking Council direction regarding the gap in shelter services during construction as well as operational funding. Ms. LaCombe said staff could seek a short-term facility to use during construction. The land use process for a short-term facility involves a declaration of emergency, the application of the Temporary Public Safety Facility requirements, public engagement, and a maximum operating period of three years.

CFH estimates a cost of \$385,000 to operate the shelter during the summer months. CFH noted the need to also fund the shelter's operations for 30 minutes in the morning between the time that the overnight shelter closes and the day center opens, and for approximately four hours in the evening between the day center's closure and access to the overnight shelter. The cost of extending the day center's hours is estimated at \$185,000, for total annual operating expenses of \$570,000 for the months that the shelter is currently closed.

Ms. LaCombe noted that Bellevue and potential partner cities have already established their budgets for 2019 and 2020. However, a funding request could be considered as part of the 2021-2022 human services funding. If the Council would like to continue working toward establishing an interim year-round shelter and potentially a second bridge location, the full cost of services would be the City's responsibility.

Ms. LaCombe requested Council direction regarding 2019 and 2020 funding. She asked the Council to consider whether to fund the additional hours for the shelter and/or day center.

Mayor Chelminiak thanked Kevin Wallace, a former Councilmember, for his efforts to involve the business community. Mr. Chelminiak invited Council input regarding the proposed interim shelter and related public engagement activities.

Deputy Mayor Robinson spoke in favor of establishing a year-round shelter site as soon as possible. She noted that she would like to minimize the amount of City funding for the interim shelter. She expressed support for funding the services necessary to move men out of homelessness and into stable housing.

Councilmember Robertson said she is grateful for the work of CFH, Kevin Wallace (Wallace Properties), and the other partners. She hopes they will be able to confirm that they have the means in place to provide the shelter. She spoke in favor of the City conducting outreach to identify a temporary shelter location to continue services during the renovations at Lincoln Center. She suggested involving the Bellevue Downtown Association (BDA) and the Bellevue Chamber of Commerce. She is supportive of operational funding and would like to see a budget proposal for the mid-biennium budget. She suggested applying for a grant from Microsoft.

Councilmember Lee said he prefers the private model. He would like to see continuous operations between the closing of the interim Lincoln Center shelter and the opening of a permanent shelter. Mr. Brennan said a break in operations is possible, depending on the timing of a permit application for the future permanent shelter. Mr. McFarland said the Land Use Code and the permitting process allow a temporary facility to operate for up to three years. Mr. Brennan said that, if a permanent shelter is not operational by the end of three years, a new solution will be needed. Mr. Lee suggested that perhaps the private sector will be willing to fund the interim improvements to the Lincoln Center facility. However, he acknowledged that it is the City's responsibility if not.

Councilmember Stokes expressed appreciation for Kevin Wallace's involvement in this issue. Mr. Stokes said that he and Mr. Wallace visited the shelter. Mr. Stokes said he would like to

move forward and to continue to work with the community partners. He thanked staff for their work.

Councilmember Zahn spoke in favor of establishing a year-round men's homeless shelter as soon as possible. She is pleased with the involvement of the business community. She encouraged identifying potential grant sources to cover operating costs. Responding to Ms. Zahn, Mr. Brennan said the City cannot provide funding if the interim shelter project moves forward as a tenant improvement by Congregations for the Homeless. Councilmember Zahn encouraged a partnership in which the private sector provides the capital improvements and the City covers the operating costs.

Councilmember Nieuwenhuis said he would like to see a year-round shelter available as soon as possible, preferably with no gaps in service. He concurred with Ms. Robertson's suggestion to reach out to the BDA and the Chamber of Commerce. Responding to Mr. Nieuwenhuis, Ms. LaCombe said CFH is working on developing a cost estimate. She noted that CFH is exploring the potential use of volunteer labor.

Mr. Nieuwenhuis asked whether there is anything the City could do now to help CFH, such as lowering their rental rate. Mr. McFarland said that when the City set the lease amount with CFH, the rental agreement was designed for the City to have sufficient cost recovery. However, staff could review the facility's current operating costs to consider a rent adjustment. Another component of the lease is that CFH reimburses the City for monthly electricity usage. In further response to Councilmember Nieuwenhuis, Mr. McFarland said that if the Council decided to lower the rent to a level that did not cover the building's operating costs, funding would be needed from another source. Mr. McFarland said staff can bring more information on that issue for the April 1 discussion.

Responding to Councilmember Nieuwenhuis, Ms. LaCombe said the City works with the cities of Kirkland and Redmond. She noted that all of the homeless services providers are in need of funding. She said the City continues to work with King County as well.

Mayor Chelminiak said he would like to see a good plan for how this is going to be financed and who will do the fundraising. He expressed concern about whether a permanent shelter will be in place within three years. Mr. Brennan acknowledged that there are systems in the Lincoln Center building that are at the end of their life cycles (e.g., heating, air conditioning, ventilation), as well as the normal wear and tear of an older building.

Mr. Chelminiak noted general Council support for maintaining continuous operation of the shelter and related services. He questioned whether it would be possible to keep the current shelter open through May to provide more time for identifying a bridge location for the shelter during remodeling. Mr. Brennan noted that the City's building and public safety officials are already not fully comfortable with housing the shelter in that facility. Mr. Chelminiak recalled that an individual died last year a few days after being released from the shelter.

Mayor Chelminiak expressed an interest in whether CFH anticipates reaching full capacity during the summer months. He said he would like a clear understanding of the cost of establishing a bridge location while Lincoln Center is remodeled for the ongoing use of the shelter and CFH offices. Ms. LaCombe requested Council feedback regarding what it needs from CFH and its team to be assured that they will be able to raise the necessary funding. Mr. Chelminiak said he would like to see a plan of how the project team plans to achieve the funding goal, whether the project costs are realistic, and how the money will be used.

Councilmember Robertson said she would like to see a plan, schedule, budget, and some type of guarantee (e.g., loan, bond, etc.) from the CFH team.

Deputy Mayor Robinson said the City should continue to work with the CFH team. She would like staff to pursue options for a temporary shelter site during the Lincoln Center renovations. She expressed support for providing \$570,000 to expand the shelter's hours beyond the current seasonal model.

Ms. Robinson recalled that the Council provided a maintenance fee for Lincoln Center, in part to help lease the open office spaces. She questioned how the shelter renovation will affect the ability to lease those offices. Ms. LaCombe said the anticipated project is limited to a small portion of the building, and construction would not affect those offices. She said staff will provide an update on April 1 regarding the vacant and leased spaces in the building.

Councilmember Zahn highlighted the importance of public engagement and outreach. She requested a cost estimate for the sprinkler system and other items that would not involve volunteer labor, as a starting point for identifying the minimum project costs.

Ms. Zahn said that sometimes during construction, there is a fire watch so that even if there is not a sprinkler system in a building, the business is allowed to continue to operate. She wondered whether that is an option for keeping the shelter open through May. Mr. Brennan said a fire watch is already a current condition of the building's operations. He said staff will work to identify a solution that will avoid an interruption in operations.

Councilmember Nieuwenhuis suggested including any in-kind donations in the presentation of the plan, schedule and budget. He asked whether the current tenants at Lincoln Center have been notified of the potential construction. Ms. LaCombe said staff has not yet engaged with the tenants regarding the project. However, the construction will be in the southern portion of the building and the other tenants are in the north end of the building.

Councilmember Lee said he appreciated the questions from his colleagues. He thanked staff for their work and responsiveness to the Council's concerns.

Mayor Chelminiak noted that the City is on a path toward operating a full-time shelter for men experiencing homelessness. He thanked staff, CFH, and the business community for their hard work on this project.

3. Council Discussion of Upcoming Items

(a) Bellevue Conflict Resolution Center Update [*Regular Session Agenda Item 6*]

City Manager Brad Miyake introduced staff's update regarding the City's Conflict Resolution Center, which was formerly known as the Neighborhood Mediation Program.

Marcia McReynolds, Conflict Resolution Program Co-Manager, described the Center's mission to build the problem-solving capacity of the people who live and work in Bellevue. She said the City helps to initiate constructive communication between residents. However, staff and program volunteers do not offer advice but help to direct the parties to listen to one another while negotiating to resolve the conflict. Key sources of conflict in recent years include trees, fences, landlord-tenant issues, and cultural differences.

Cheryl Cohen, Conflict Resolution Program Co-Manager, thanked the Council for supporting the program. She noted that she has worked with the program since its inception in 1996, with the first 10 years spent working as a volunteer. She said the program offers a range of services including conciliation between the parties and, if needed, mediation and the establishment of a written agreement. There is a large volunteer program that addresses a number of issues including noise, parking, barking dogs, fences, and trash cans. The program staff and volunteers work to facilitate negotiations between landlords, tenants, and property managers; a parent and teen; a business and consumer; and between residents and the City. The volunteer staff speak a number of languages, with the greatest demand for individuals speaking Cantonese, Mandarin, and Spanish. Volunteers receive 24 hours in conciliation training, 40 hours in basic mediation training, and monthly in-service training.

Ms. McReynolds recalled the program's efforts with residents who were angry and concerned about the prospect of Sound Transit light rail coming through their neighborhoods in south Bellevue. She noted training in facilitation and de-escalation. She said volunteers also assist staff in other public outreach efforts related to the homeless shelter, neighborhood area planning, Muslim immigrant safety, affordable housing, and the Cultural Conversations forum. Ms. McReynolds said the City has a partnership with the King County libraries in Bellevue that offers classes on listening and working together. She noted that every class has been full with a wait list. She said a survey by the library system before the program was launched indicated that 85 percent of the respondents wanted programming focused on enhancing civility.

Brian Ugai, a volunteer conciliator, shared his experience with the Conflict Resolution Center. He said he enjoys helping fellow residents and providing coaching and conciliation. He feels good about supporting the City and its efforts to listen to residents. He said he is consistently surprised with the appreciation expressed by those who are involved in mediation. He values being part of a team of exceptional people who are always trying to improve the program for the benefit of the community.

Councilmember Nieuwenhuis thanked staff for the update. Responding to Mr. Nieuwenhuis, Ms. Cohen said there are currently 35 active volunteers, and the program has managed 300-350 cases

over the past several years. The current resolution rate is approximately 82 percent, which is higher than in past years. Ms. McReynolds said Bellevue is the only city in the state with a dispute resolution program. She said the City of Vancouver discontinued its program due to budget constraints.

Responding to Councilmember Zahn, Ms. Cohen said there was a parent-teen volunteer program for many years. However, the City experienced a decline in residents' interest in that program, due in part to similar programs in schools.

Ms. Zahn said she appreciates the partnership with the King County Library System. She concurred with the need for enhanced civility in society. Ms. McReynolds noted that the class participants are an accurate reflection of the community's diversity and demographics.

Councilmember Stokes expressed support for the program and thanked everyone for their work. Responding to Mr. Stokes, Ms. McReynolds confirmed that a number of disagreements are driven by misunderstandings based on differences in cultural backgrounds, communication styles, and ways of dealing with conflict.

Councilmember Lee said it is a great thing to be able to connect and engage with people. He encouraged staff to keep up the good work.

Councilmember Robertson said the City is fortunate to have so many volunteers in this and other programs. Responding to Ms. Robertson, Ms. Cohen confirmed that there is a longstanding agreement with the City of Kirkland to share resources in providing conflict resolution.

Deputy Mayor Robinson said she is proud of this program, the parole program, and the pioneering work of the Police Department in de-escalation training. She thanked staff and the volunteers for their work. Responding to Ms. Robinson, staff indicated that the City publicizes its conflict resolution services on Nextdoor. In further response, Ms. Cohen said the City partners with the Eastside Legal Assistance Program (ELAP) in referring individuals to their respective programs.

Responding to Mayor Chelminiak, Ms. Cohen said the program is a facilitative model with a focus on bringing the parties' underlying interests to the surface. Mr. Chelminiak noted that the program is a catalyst to creating a great community.

At 7:55 p.m., Mayor Chelminiak declared recess to the Regular Session.

Charmaine Arredondo, CMC
City Clerk

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