

CITY OF BELLEVUE
CITY COUNCIL

Summary Minutes of Extended Study Session

October 28, 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

City Clerk Charmaine Arredondo opened the meeting and announced that the Council would be in Executive Session for approximately 60 minutes to discuss one quasi-judicial matter.

The meeting resumed at 7:07 p.m., with Mayor Chelminiak presiding.

2. Approval of Agenda

Mayor Chelminiak indicated that he would like to add an item regarding hate crimes and antisemitism under Council Business and New Initiatives.

→ Deputy Mayor Robinson moved to approve the agenda, amended to add a Police Department briefing regarding hate crimes under Council Business. Councilmember Stokes seconded the motion.

→ The motion carried by a vote of 7-0.

3. Oral Communications

(a) Dennis Curran, Vice President of Administrative Services, Bellevue College, spoke in support of the King County Metro RapidRide K Line.

(b) Alex Zimmerman commented regarding term limits, antisemitism, fascism, and freedom of speech.

4. Study Session Items

(a) Council Business and New Initiatives

(1) Bellevue Police Department Overview of Antisemitism

Carl Kleinknecht, Assistant Police Chief, provided a presentation regarding antisemitism. He noted that the incidence of hate crimes and non-criminal bias incidents decreased from 20 in 2016 to 11 in 2018 and seven to date in 2019. He said a hate crime is a racial or other slur based on religion, ancestry, national origin, gender, sexual orientation, or a physical or mental disability, coupled with an assault or property damage. He encouraged the public to report incidents and noted that bias-related events can be reported on the City's web site. There were a number of incidents of vandalism in 2016, including swastika graffiti that resulted in the arrest of juveniles.

Mr. Kleinknecht described the targeted groups and noted that the highest number of incidents were directed at African-Americans, Muslims, Jews, and LGBT individuals. He said antisemitic flyers were posted in Bellevue on Saturday, October 12. The Police Department was alerted to the flyers by a representative of Wade's Eastside Guns and officers were able to obtain fingerprints from the flyers. Mr. Kleinknecht said the Bellevue Police Department partners with local rabbis, the Jewish Federation of Greater Seattle, the Anti-Defamation League (ADL), and other law enforcement agencies.

Mayor Chelminiak said that recent public testimony prompted him to add this item to the agenda. He said that hate crimes and bias incidents are inconsistent with the City's vision. He said City staff and the City Council are committed to ensuring a safe community for everyone.

(2) Council Business

Mayor Chelminiak noted the passing of Jim Ellis and invited Patrick Foran, the City's recently retired Director of the Parks and Community Services Department, to comment.

Mr. Foran recalled that Mr. Ellis was a strong supporter of Bellevue's park system, and he was instrumental in the City receiving \$1 million toward the development of the Mercer Slough Environmental Education Center. He said Mr. Ellis provided a bench in Chism Beach Park approximately 10 years ago to honor the donor of that property to the City.

Mayor Chelminiak said Mr. Ellis is a civic hero who contributed a great deal to the region. Mr. Ellis was an advocate for cleaning up Lake Washington in the 1950s and for forming King County Metro in the 1960s. As a founder of the Mountains to Sound Greenway Trust, he had a vision for the trail that is now along the I-90 corridor between Seattle and Ellensburg. Mr. Chelminiak recalled attending the groundbreaking of the Mercer Slough Environmental Education Center.

Deputy Mayor Robinson said she did not know Jim Ellis but she knows his brother John. She said her thoughts and sympathies are with the Ellis family.

Councilmember Lee said that Jim Ellis was perhaps the greatest regional leader. Mr. Ellis was the father of Forward Thrust and led the Mountains to Sound Greenway project. Mr. Lee said Mr. Ellis was committed to environmental stewardship and his leadership will be missed. Councilmember Lee noted that Mr. Ellis defined leadership as vision with action.

Councilmember Stokes said that Mr. Ellis was a pillar of the community and he is proud to honor his legacy.

Councilmember Robertson praised Mr. Ellis as a primary leader in shaping Bellevue and the region through his involvement in parks and environmental initiatives, Forward Thrust, Mountains to Sound Greenway, Washington State Convention Center, and many other accomplishments. Ms. Robertson said Mr. Ellis was offered a job by President Nixon to be the first director of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). However, Mr. Ellis felt a commitment to instead continue to focus on this region and state.

Mayor Chelminiak noted that the region also recently lost Bill Ptacek, the longtime director of the King County Library System.

Councilmember Robertson, liaison to the Bellevue Library Board, said Mr. Ptacek led the King County Library System for 25 years, during which time it was named the 2011 Library of the Year by the National Library Journal. During his tenure, the Bellevue Regional Library opened in 1993 and it is now the busiest library west of the Mississippi River. Mr. Ptacek later became the CEO of the Calgary Public Library until his death from cancer on October 15. Ms. Robertson said Mr. Ptacek made sure that the library system was a good partner with the City, and he implemented numerous practices to make libraries more useful and accessible to the community.

Councilmember Stokes said he enjoyed Mr. Ptacek as a friend and as a tremendous asset to the community.

(b) Briefing on King County Metro Transit's New RapidRide K Line

City Manager Brad Miyake noted that Metro's RapidRide K Line is a new route between Totem Lake Center, South Kirkland Park and Ride, Downtown Bellevue, and the Eastgate Park and Ride.

Joyce Nichols, Director of Intergovernmental Relations, introduced Chris O'Claire, Mobility Division Director for King County Metro Transit. Service on the RapidRide K Line is anticipated to begin in 2025. Ms. Nichols noted that East Link light rail will begin operating in 2023, and I-405 bus rapid transit (BRT) service will begin in 2024.

Ms. O'Claire introduced Vic Stover, K Line Project Manager, and Hannah McIntosh, RapidRide Program Director. She thanked the Council for their leadership in regional transit efforts and noted that Metro Connects is the long-range plan for public transportation in King County. The plan includes a network of 26 RapidRide lines designed to bring more frequent and reliable bus service, bus station upgrades and customer amenities, and enhanced access and connections to transit. There are currently six RapidRide lines, including the B Line through Bellevue, which

represent 18 percent of the overall ridership in King County. An additional seven lines will be implemented by 2027.

Ms. O’Claire said that RapidRide service needs priority in the right-of-way to maximize speed and reliability. She said Metro will work with the cities of Bellevue and Kirkland, as well as the business community, to ensure the success of the RapidRide K Line service. The line travels from Totem Lake to the Eastgate Park and Ride, which is one of the largest in the system and located next to Bellevue College, the third largest college in the state. The RapidRide K line connects Metro bus route 271 with the future 250 route and travels through Kirkland and Downtown Bellevue. King County Metro will work with the cities of Bellevue and Kirkland over the next few years to determine the preferred alignment.

Ms. O’Claire noted that the plan aligns with the Bellevue Master Transit Plan and the City’s objective of abundant access to transit service. She said Metro will continue to work with the City of Bellevue to enhance the existing B Line and to increase ridership. She noted an interest in restructuring transit services in Bellevue to align with Sound Transit’s light rail Blue Line service beginning in 2023. She said the overall integrated transit network includes I-405 bus rapid transit (BRT) to become operational in 2024.

The Bellevue College Connector is a partnership project between the City, Bellevue College, and King County Metro. The City and Metro have committed \$400,000 and the college has committed \$100,000 to advance the study of the project.

Planning for the RapidRide K Line will consider a number of elements including travel times and potential time savings, equity and social justice, destinations and activity centers, network implications, and projected future ridership. Ms. O’Claire noted the importance of community engagement to determine the best service for Bellevue.

The estimated budget for the K Line is approximately \$90.5 million. Metro has received Regional Mobility Grant funds from the Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) and is pursuing Federal Transit Administration (FTA) Small Starts funding for the project. King County Metro local funds provides approximately \$45 million, leaving a funding gap of approximately \$40 million. Ms. O’Claire said Metro will explore additional financing options with the City and others.

Ms. O’Claire said that Metro’s community engagement regarding the K Line project is committed to ensuring an equitable perspective from stakeholders who have not traditionally been heard in transit planning. Metro has initiated interviews with a number of partners, including the Kirkland Boys and Girls Club, Hopelink, AtWork, Attain Housing, Chinese Information and Service Center, Youth Eastside Services, Bellevue Downtown Association, Kirkland Chamber of Commerce, Kirkland Downtown Association, Catholic Community Services, Bellevue College, and others. Ms. O’Claire said the Phase 1 community survey will be launched in November. She noted that King County Metro staff is available for meetings and community engagement activities with the cities of Bellevue and Kirkland and with local employers.

Mayor Chelminiak thanked staff for the presentation and for Metro's partnership with the City.

Councilmember Lee said he appreciated Metro's work with local jurisdictions and its community engagement efforts. He said the Metro Connects plan is consistent with the City's multimodal transportation vision.

Councilmember Nieuwenhuis said he appreciated Ms. O'Claire's reference to reflecting Bellevue's values in its transportation system. He asked about the core criteria for determining where to place the RapidRide lines.

Ms. O'Claire said Metro considers productivity, which includes ridership and land use patterns, the geographic distribution of transit service, and social equity. She said that RapidRide service must also align with the objectives and plans of the affected cities.

Mr. Nieuwenhuis complimented the new branding, station design, and customer amenities provided with RapidRide service.

Councilmember Robertson observed that the RapidRide network will significantly improve the connectivity between Eastside cities. She spoke in support of the route through Bellevue College. Responding to Ms. Robertson, Ms. O'Claire said Metro is currently studying the Eastgate Park and Ride as a mobility hub serving multimodal transportation. Ms. Robertson encouraged Metro to consider improvements for accessing the lot, especially for picking up and dropping off riders. In further response to Councilmember Robertson, Ms. O'Claire said this is the beginning of the process. Metro staff will work closely with City staff as the planning for the K Line moves forward.

Councilmember Robertson encouraged Metro to coordinate with both the Bellevue Chamber of Commerce and the Bellevue Downtown Association. She suggested creating an effective connection between the light rail Blue Line and the RapidRide B Line in Redmond.

Councilmember Zahn noted the importance of connecting Bellevue College to the University of Washington, which is currently provided by Metro bus route 271. She encouraged outreach to the Bellevue School District and human services organizations through the planning process.

Responding to Ms. Zahn, Ms. O'Claire said that Metro is required to set the alignment for the K Line before applying for 2021 grant funds. Ms. O'Claire said Metro is also interested in identifying funding support from local jurisdictions and others. Ms. Zahn suggested that the community outreach could perhaps be included in the census process.

Councilmember Stokes said he appreciated the signage at bus stops that indicates the number of minutes until the next bus. He looks forward to the City's continued collaboration with Metro. He is pleased with the regional effort to involve stakeholders in the process. He noted the interest of the Bellevue Chamber of Commerce's transportation committee in transit issues.

Deputy Mayor Robinson said she hopes Bellevue will continue to be served by all electric buses. She encouraged Metro to emphasize transit-oriented development (TOD), including affordable

housing, around BRT nodes. Responding to Ms. Robinson, Ms. O’Claire said Metro meets regularly with regional commute platforms, including Choose Your Way Bellevue.

Mayor Chelminiak observed that the City’s efforts related to transit will potentially be more important than the road work projects. He said the Bellevue Transit Master Plan enables the City to work effectively with Metro to implement abundant access to transit services. He observed that the City will need to be involved in certain capital investments. Mayor Chelminiak said that Metro’s attention to the last mile will increase transit ridership. He suggested there are ways that would potentially be more cost-effective to achieve that goal than massive investments in Park and Ride facilities.

Mr. Chelminiak thanked Ms. O’Claire for the update.

At 8:31 p.m., Mayor Chelminiak declared a brief recess. The meeting resumed at 8:40 p.m.

(c) Washington State Transportation Commission Road Usage Charge Pilot Project

City Manager Miyake noted that the Washington State Transportation Commission’s Road Usage Charge (RUC) pilot project was initiated in early 2018 and ended in January 2019. He recalled that the Council was briefed on the project in September 2018.

Reema Griffith, Executive Director of the Washington State Transportation Commission, provided an update on the RUC pilot project. In 2012, the state legislature directed the Transportation Commission to identify a sustainable, long-term revenue source for the state transportation system that could transition from the current gas tax. The pilot project tested a fee of 2.4 cents per mile. The project was a simulation and no money was collected except in the cross-border testing with Oregon’s existing system. Ms. Griffith noted that the Seattle Electric Vehicle Association and Plug-in America were supportive of the project.

The pilot project tested a number of mileage reporting options including odometer readings, prepaid mileage permits, Milemapper iPhone app, and plug-in devices. The project explored the issues related to integrating road usage charge programs nationally. Two private firms provided the mileage collection and account management services for the pilot program. Ms. Griffith said that individuals had questions during the enrollment process. However, few participants contacted the help desk once the program was launched.

The average vehicle gas mileage for the study was 23.1 miles per gallon compared to the statewide average of 20.5 miles per gallon. Fully electric vehicles drove 31 percent less than gas-powered vehicles, and plug-in hybrid vehicles drove 18 percent less. This implies that electric vehicle drivers would pay less with a RUC than under a flat fee system. Ms. Griffith said that six percent of the 2,033 participants switched mileage reporting methods during the pilot project, and one percent switched the private service provider who managed the RUC accounts.

Ms. Griffith said three surveys were conducted over the 12-month period. Overall, 91 percent of the participants were satisfied or very satisfied with the pilot project. The percentage of participants who indicated support for the RUC approach as a replacement of the gas tax increased between the first and third surveys. In response to a question about advice for elected

officials as they consider a road usage charge, 28 percent expressed support for moving forward now to implement a RUC system, 33 percent supported phasing the program in gradually, and 19 percent suggested applying the RUC only to vehicles currently paying no or minimal gas taxes (i.e., hybrid vehicles). The remaining participants expressed support for applying the RUC only to all-electric vehicles or suggested no action to implement a RUC system in the foreseeable future. In the third survey, 53 percent of the respondents expressed support for the RUC, 19 percent favored the gas tax, and 15 percent equally supported the RUC or gas tax.

Ms. Griffith said the Washington State Transportation Commission received a final report from the steering committee in October 2019. The commission subsequently issued 15 preliminary recommendations regarding the next steps for RUC in Washington. The recommendations suggest a review of methods for transitioning to RUC, the development of key legislative policies, and the identification of potential topics to explore in the future. They suggest a slow, gradual approach and recommend including State-owned vehicles in the first phase. Key policy recommendations suggest implementing privacy protection measures in state law specific to the RUC system and restricting the use of RUC revenues to highway-related expenditures. The commission recommends assessing the potential equity impacts of a RUC approach and is pursuing a federal grant to conduct the study. Ms. Griffith said the full report on the pilot project will be issued in January.

Mayor Chelminiak suggested that the Council develop an interest statement regarding the RUC approach. He asked staff to consider whether there is input that should be provided to the Washington State Transportation Commission before it takes action on December 17.

Responding to Councilmember Nieuwenhuis, Ms. Griffith said the commission has discussed the concept of different pricing levels based on the day of the week, time of day, and/or the facility. However, such an approach would require every driver to use a plug-in device and would likely not be supported by many drivers due to privacy concerns. In further response, she said it is possible that the state legislature could consider changing the 18th Amendment of the State Constitution regarding the use of funds on roadways. In further response to Mr. Nieuwenhuis, Ms. Griffith acknowledged the conflict between the need for gas tax revenue and the State's environmental goals, including reducing emissions.

Responding to Councilmember Robertson, Ms. Griffith said that vehicles using liquid natural gas do not currently pay a gas tax. Ms. Robertson expressed concern that, if an individual does not want to pay for miles on private roads, a GPS device would be needed. In further response to Ms. Robertson, Ms. Griffith suggested that the Council submit any comments related to the Transportation Commission's recommendations before it takes action on December 17. Ms. Griffith said the City might want to send a letter to the state legislature as well.

Ms. Robertson asked how the RUC system would work for individuals who are less experienced with technology and do not have a smartphone. She said it is very efficient to collect the gas tax. However, she expressed concern regarding the cost of collecting the RUC payments. Ms. Griffith said the administrative costs are estimated at 16-18 percent of the revenues. The collection cost for the gas tax is less than one percent.

Councilmember Robertson raised the policy question of whether a complicated new system is needed to replace the gas tax simply because some users (e.g., electric vehicles) might not be paying their fair share. She reiterated her concern regarding the collection and administrative costs and privacy issues.

Councilmember Zahn expressed support for including State vehicles in the first phase of RUC implementation. She said it is important to have a long-term, sustainable revenue source for transportation needs. She concurred with the Mayor's suggestion to develop a Council interest statement regarding the topic.

Responding to Councilmember Lee, Ms. Griffith said the Transportation Commission conducted a statewide survey before the pilot project to explore attitudes about the gas tax and the RUC. In addition to the three participant surveys, the commission received hundreds of inquiries and suggestions from individuals who were not participating in the project. Ms. Griffith said she will provide that information to the Council.

Deputy Mayor Robinson asked how the implementation of the RUC would affect gas tax funding that currently goes to the City. Ms. Griffith said policy discussions will likely be needed to evaluate the impact as the RUC becomes more widely implemented over the next 20 years.

Responding to Mayor Chelminiak, Ms. Griffith said the State Attorney General has not been asked to issue an opinion about whether the 18th Amendment constrains a road usage charge. She said the state legislature will explore ways to define and categorize the charge (e.g., tax or fee?) and to legally implement the RUC.

Mr. Chelminiak raised the issue of how the RUC would be applied to public safety fleet vehicles where the drivers do not have a choice in controlling the number of miles they drive. He suggested that the climate change benefits of clean fuel, for both private and public fleets, pose another policy topic to be considered. Ms. Griffith noted that many commercial vehicles typically have a lower fuel efficiency and their taxes could be reduced using the RUC alternative.

Ms. Nichols said staff will continue to update the Council as the process moves forward.

(d) Regional Issues

[Information provided in meeting packet.]

(e) Human Services Commission's Recommendations on 2020 Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Funding

City Manager Miyake introduced discussion regarding the 2020 Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funding recommendations.

Toni Esparza, Assistant Director, Parks and Community Services Department, noted that CDBG funds are issued directly to the City by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). She said staff is seeking Council direction to return with legislation approving the funding recommendations of the Human Services Commission.

Dee Dee Catalano, Human Services Grant Coordinator, said the City received \$764,373 in CDBG funds in 2019, and funding is expected to be similar in 2020. She noted that loan repayments in the Major Home Repair Program are considered program income and can be used for CDBG-eligible expenditures. The City expects to receive approximately \$200,000 in program income this year. Ms. Catalano said that programs receiving CDBG funding must be located in Bellevue and/or serve Bellevue residents and must benefit predominately low- and moderate-income residents. Funds must be spent in a timely manner, preferably during the program year, which makes it difficult to fund multi-year projects.

Ms. Catalano referred the Council to Attachment B of the meeting packet for the Human Services Commission's funding recommendations, which are categorized into public services, planning activities and grant administration, and capital projects and programs. Attachment C provides the contingency plan which outlines how funds will be allocated if the City's grant and home repair program income is more or less than projected.

Judith Mercer, Chair of the Human Services Commission, said six applications were submitted for 2020 CDBG funding and a public hearing was held on July 16. In addition to CDBG planning and administration, the commission recommends funding the Major Home Repair Program and the Minor Home Repair Program at their full requests. Both programs maintain and preserve affordable housing in Bellevue, especially for older adults.

The commission recommends funding Ventures Microenterprise Assistance for the first time. The nonprofit organization provides technical assistance and training for low-income residents interested in developing a business. The funds will provide an eight-week business basics course in both English and Spanish. Students receive 24 hours of training in topics such as marketing, finance, business plans, and taxes, and the graduates have access to advanced classes and coaching. Ms. Mercer said that Ventures estimates it will serve 25 low-income Bellevue residents, the majority of whom will be women, people of color, immigrants, and/or refugees. The Human Services Commission believes that the program will help individuals to become more self-sufficient and will enable them to reach their full potential.

Responding to Councilmember Stokes, Ms. Catalano said that economic development staff spoke to the Human Services Commission in April regarding its programs to support new businesses (e.g., Startup 425 program). She said the programs offered by Ventures Microenterprise Assistance focus specifically on low-income populations, especially individuals at or below 80-percent area median income (AMI). Their typical client supports a family of two earning \$24,000 annually. The Startup 425 program does not collect data on the participants' incomes. However, a survey in 2018 found that 75 percent of the Startup 425 workshop attendees had at least a Bachelor's degree, with the largest share of attendees coming from the technology industry. In addition, 25 percent of the attendees were designated as early career, 50 percent were mid-career, and 25 percent were late career. Ms. Catalano said the Startup 425 program typically serves more educated individuals, while Ventures focuses on basic education about starting a business and working toward higher income levels.

Deputy Mayor Robinson thanked the Human Services Commission for their thoughtful discussions and careful consideration of the funding applications.

Councilmember Zahn thanked Ms. Catalano for her comments regarding the differences in the Startup 425 program and the training offered by Ventures. Ms. Zahn expressed support for the recommendations.

Mayor Chelminiak asked staff to bring the item back for approval on the November 18 Consent Calendar.

(f) Mid-Biennium Budget

Toni Call, Director of Finance and Asset Management, summarized the schedule for the Mid-Biennium Budget discussions. The Development Services Department's fee update will be presented on November 4, and an overview of the General Fund forecast and budget adjustments will be provided on November 12. More details regarding the capital and operating budget adjustments will be presented during the November 18 Study Session, and the budget public hearing will be held on November 25. Staff anticipates Council adoption of the Mid-Biennium Budget on December 2.

5. Council Discussion of Upcoming Items: None.

6. Continued Oral Communications: None.

At 9:58 p.m., Mayor Chelminiak declared the meeting adjourned.

Karin Roberts, CMC
Deputy City Clerk

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