

CITY OF BELLEVUE
BELLEVUE PLANNING COMMISSION
STUDY SESSION MINUTES

January 22, 2020
6:30 p.m.

Bellevue City Hall
City Council Conference Room 1E-113

COMMISSIONERS PRESENT: Chair Morisseau, Commissioners Ferris, Malakoutian, Moolgavkar

COMMISSIONERS ABSENT: Commissioners deVadoss, Laing

STAFF PRESENT: Emil King, Michael Austin, Gwen Rousseau, Community Development Department; Eric Engmann, Development Services Department

COUNCIL LIAISON: N/A

GUEST SPEAKERS: None

RECORDING SECRETARY: Gerry Lindsay

1. CALL TO ORDER
(6:54 p.m.)

The meeting was called to order at 6:53 p.m. by Chair Morisseau who presided.

2. ROLL CALL
(6:54 p.m.)

Upon the call of the roll, all Commissioners were present with the exception of Commissioners deVadoss and Laing.

3. APPROVAL OF AGENDA
(6:54 p.m.)

A motion to approve the agenda was made by Commissioner Ferris. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Malakoutian and the motion carried unanimously.

4. REPORTS OF CITY COUNCIL, BOARDS AND COMMISSIONS – None
(6:55 p.m.)

5. STAFF REPORTS
(6:55 p.m.)

A. Planning Commission Meeting Schedule

Community Development Department Assistant Director Emil King reviewed the calendar of upcoming meeting dates and agenda items. He stressed that the dates on the calendar were tentative and noted the cancelation of the February 12 meeting.

Mr. King informed the Commissioners that the old window of December and January was still being used for submitting Comprehensive Plan amendments. Under the new rules recommended by the Commission, the new deadline of September 15 will go into effect in 2020. The applications received will be reviewed with the Commission on February 26.

The Commissioners were told a walking tour of the Grand Connection is tentatively planned for March 11.

The position vacated by Commissioner Barksdale is being advertised. The term has roughly three years remaining. The application deadline is January 24. The Chair and Vice Chair will be involved in reviewing the applications.

Commissioner Moolgavkar asked when a new Council liaison to the Commission would be appointed. Mr. King said Mayor Robinson was currently rounding out the process of making liaison appointments to all city boards and commissions. Correspondence will be sent out to the Commission as soon as an appointment is made.

On the topic of firearms and gun safety, Mr. King informed the Commission that the city's process for addressing the issue that was before the Commission as a potential Comprehensive Plan amendment has taken its next steps. The amendment materials were transmitted to the City Manager's Office and on January 21 there was a thoughtful presentation given by the Deputy City Manager Nathan McCommon, Assistant Director of the Department of Parks and Community Services Toni Esparza, and the Chief of Police Steve Mylett. Their collective presentation detailed the city's thinking about firearms and gun safety throughout the organization. Many of those who were part of the Commission process were in attendance and indicated afterwards that they had been satisfied with the presentation. A thoughtful proclamation was made stressing that firearm safety is an ongoing matter of high importance, and pledging that the city would continue to proactively address the issue through communications, education, partnerships and law enforcement outreach.

Mr. King noted the Commission's packet of correspondence from the public included items regarding a Park Point planned unit development. He stressed that as a Process I application, the issue is not under the purview of the Commission.

6. ORAL AND WRITTEN COMMUNICATIONS – None
(7:09 p.m.)

7. PUBLIC HEARING – None
(7:09 p.m.)

8. STUDY SESSION
(7:09 p.m.)

A. Grand Connection Sequence One Guidelines and Standards Update

Mr. King welcomed two new staff, Eric Engmann with the Development Services Department, who most recently worked for the city of Seattle, and Michael Austin with the Community Development Department, who most recently was a consultant in the Seattle area.

Mr. Austin said the Grand Connection is Bellevue's signature downtown placemaking effort. Its main focus is on being people focused, interactive and connected experience in the heart of

Bellevue. There are three supporting goals: to function as a distinctive and connected pathway that shares a strong sense of character and an exceptional level of design; to focus on access and serving as a 24-hour public amenity that is welcoming and universally accessible; and to focus on inclusion to reflect and advance Bellevue's status as a global multicultural community with exceptional places to live, work and play. The route links Meydenbauer Bay Park to the Eastrail framework plan.

The Commission was last involved in the work two years ago. In April 2018 the Commission was provided with an overview of the Grand Connection vision and with highlights of the work associated with the Comprehensive Plan amendments, Land Use Code updates and design guidelines. Then in May the staff reviewed with the Commission the draft policy language and changes to graphics and maps proposed for the Comprehensive Plan amendments. In December of that year amendments to the Comprehensive Plan specific to the Grand Connection were accepted.

Mr. Austin explained that Sequence One is focused on guidelines for the corridor beginning at the intersection of 100th Avenue NE and Main Street and running up to the transit center at 110th Avenue NE. Sequence Two will entail that section running from 110th Avenue NE to the Eastrail line in the Wilburton community. Sequence One is currently being given primary attention.

The design guidelines are one of the many implementation strategies and they are intended to make the framework plan come to life. There are also activation strategies taking place along with multiple intersection improvements along the corridor in several parts of the downtown. The design guidelines serve as an implementation tool for the goals and values of the Comprehensive Plan. They are intended to promote excellence in the design of the community and to provide common language to enable efficient dialogue and review between the public, the city and developers for potential and active projects. The Pedestrian Corridor and Major Open Space design guidelines were written to serve three specific groups, namely the public, developers and design teams, and Development Services. They are relied on to provide language for how projects are reviewed and they benefit the public by ensuring premier quality in the downtown walking environment. Those guidelines run the length of the Grand Connection corridor, but adoption of the Comprehensive Plan amendment means they will be replaced by the Grand Connection Sequence One guidelines.

There are a number of strategies and projects under way that support the Grand Connection overall, including the Bellwether Arts Festival, design review of active projects, the Wilburton code and policy update, the I-405 freeway lid feasibility study, and wayfinding projects.

Mr. Austin said he and Mr. Engmann serve as part of the core team involved in the Grand Connection process. He said he represents the Department of Community Development while Mr. Engmann represents the Department of Community Services. The team structure includes representation from Parks and Community Services and the Transportation Department. There are also a number of subject matter experts in the mix that bring a number of different perspectives to the table. The entire process is guided by the oversight team which is led by Community Development and Development Services. The core team serves as an outlet to the respective departments and many of the subject matter experts are embedded in the four core departments.

The general outline for moving forward include the existing Pedestrian Corridor and Downtown Design Guidelines, along with the Grand Connection Sequence One framework plan. Those

guidelines feed into the articulation phase which involves auditing what is in place, conducting walking audits, determining what is working well, identifying the elements that would help usher in an exceptional level of design, and how the new set of guidelines should be structured. That work will transition into the formulation phase where the various elements will make it onto paper after a full public process. Finally, the work will be adopted in the form of updated Grand Connection Guidelines and Standards.

Commissioner Ferris said she assumed the outreach efforts would go beyond just the downtown and West Bellevue areas. Mr. Austin said that absolutely is the case. The project is a reflection of the entire community. While there is an increasing number of individuals living in the downtown, input from all city residents is welcomed.

Mr. Austin said the schedule calls for moving into the formulation phase in late March/early April, and the adoption phase in early July. Adoption by the Council is anticipated by the end of the year. Currently the next steps will involve continuing the staff audit of the existing guidelines and standards and a staff draft of them. There will be Commission work sessions and associated recommendations along with continued public outreach and engagement. Mr. King added that the Grand Connection is a significant work program item for the Commission in 2020.

Commissioner Moolgavkar asked if developers are working well with the city to incorporate the new design guidelines as they bring projects forward. Mr. Austin said the framework plan identifies a few recommendations for things like weather protection, consistency in plantings and landscaping, and the treatment of Compass Plaza. The project on the DOXA site are taking queues and notes from both the existing guidelines and the framework plan even though they do not necessarily have to use the latter as guidance.

B. 2020 Census: The What, Why and How

Senior Planner/Demographer Gwen Rousseau shared with the Commissioners an introductory video produced by the city and featuring Councilmember Lee. She noted the video is being translated into Chinese, Spanish, Russian and Korean.

Ms. Rousseau said the census is a head count of every person living in the United States. The constitution mandates that the census occur every ten years. The Census Bureau is the agency responsible for the count, and their motto is to count everyone once, only once, and in the right place.

Since 1790 the census has determined the number of seats each state receives in the House of Representatives, thus a complete and accurate count ensures states get their fair share of representation in Washington D.C. In 2010 Washington state gained a tenth seat in the house as a result of growth revealed by the census data.

Leaders use census data to help inform their decisions based on how many people would benefit or be impacted. Locally, Bellevue leaders use census data to understand the diverse needs of the city's population and to anticipate how the population might change in the future. Census data helps to guide planning for the future by providing critical information on the population served in terms of age, household type, race and ethnicity, and whether people own or rent their own home.

Ms. Rousseau said with an accurate account and a fuller understanding of who lives in Bellevue, it becomes easier to plan for housing, jobs, schools, transportation, water and emergency

services. It enables the city to tailor its services to fit the needs of the population. For instance, race data along with age data has been used to look at recreational services in the community. In terms of efficiency, the data informs decisions about the size of needed water pipes, what size and how many buses should be run on certain routes, and a myriad of other considerations. In terms of equity, the census is key to ensuring that everyone has access to services, facilities and the resources they need. The data is also used to enforce anti-discrimination laws, regulations and policies, such as the Voting Rights Act, Equal Employment Opportunity through the Civil Rights Act, a fair allocation of bilingual services to school districts, and making sure transportation and housing do not have any unintended consequences for specific groups.

The census informs decisions about how billions of dollars are allocated across the country. In 2016 alone, over \$16 billion were allocated to Washington state. That equates to about \$2300 per person. Locally, the Bellevue School District over the past ten years has received over \$112 million in federal grants for things like Head Start, teacher quality, bilingual services, the school lunch program, the breakfast program and special education. The city has received more than \$76 million in transportation grants. The city also receives state tax distributions based solely on official population estimates, and over the past decade that has amounted to more than \$40 million from the state. Bellevue's Parks and Community Services has received close to \$13 million, \$5.8 million in Community Development Block Grants from the federal government and \$7.8 from state grants for capital projects.

Ms. Rousseau said in March residents will start receiving letters from the Census Bureau. For the first time in history, the census will be conducted primarily online, a move that will save a huge amount of money and will be far more accurate. Reminder postcards will be sent out later in March and early in April. April 1 is Census Day. For those who have not by then filled out the census, the Bureau will send out another letter that will include both a reminder and a paper questionnaire. A final reminder postcard will be mailed out the last week of April. During the months of May, June and July, census workers will be sent out to collect information from those who do not otherwise respond. There will be 12 non-English languages available along with telecommunication devices for the deaf and Braille options. Language guides will be available in 59 languages and in large print format.

The census will ask for basic information, including age, Hispanic origins, race, relationship to the householder filling out the form, sex and whether or not they own or rent their homes. In addition, some operational questions will be asked, such as how many people live in the home, their names, and phone numbers.

Ms. Rousseau stressed the importance of making sure everyone understands that their responses will be kept confidential. Title 13 of the U.S. code is the section that protects census data. It states that the data can only be used for statistical purposes, which means the data gets aggregated and no personally identifiable information can be released for a full 72 years. Census staff swear an oath for life and violating the oath can result in a \$250,000 fine and/or five years in prison. The code also specifically states that a person's responses cannot be used against them. The census bureau cannot share any person's individual responses with any other government agency.

There are challenges involved in taking the census. Over the decades there has been a declining self-response rate, while at the same time the cost of the census has increased dramatically to about \$15 billion, which equates to about \$100 per household. The census is the biggest mobilization effort the country undertakes outside of war. Other challenges include funding shortfalls that have resulted in a lower Census Bureau visibility; concern over misinformation,

disinformation and simple confusion; various distractions; and the fact that currently the job market is incredibly tight. The latter means the Census Bureau is finding it difficult to hire people to do the enumeration. There are several particular challenges facing Bellevue, not the least of which is the fact that about 24,000 residents, or 17 percent of the population, entered the United States after the last census in 2010. That means they have never experienced a census and may be unaware of its importance. Nearly 43 percent of Bellevue's residents speak a language other than English in the home, and of those 15 percent report speaking English less than very well. About 34,000 Bellevue residents are non-US citizens; that is nearly a quarter of Bellevue's population. The city is working to identify where the hard-to-count populations are located. They include factors such as recent immigrants and renters. Young children and babies are often overlooked, as are low-income residents.

Ms. Rousseau said the strategies that will be used will include publications, people and places. A person in the city's IT department has been tasked with combing through the Census Bureau's massive address file to make sure they have all of the addresses. That will be key to getting forms to people and making sure they get counted. Staff in the Finance department have been helpful in pulling together financial information, including local impacts to Bellevue. The city has been collaborating with other Eastside cities, including Kirkland and Redmond, to organize an Eastside outreach campaign. A kickoff event held last April in Redmond resulted in Councilmember Zahn pulling together census proclamation for Bellevue. The city has elected to contribute \$50,000 toward the regional census fund which is used fund trusted messengers who have relationships with those in some of the hardest to county populations. The Chinese Information and Service Center has been organizing complete count committees in the Chinese and Russian populations. India Association of Western Washington has been conducting census training sessions at the North Bellevue Community Center. The Eastside Refugee and Immigrant Coalition has been convening the Eastside Communities Count Committee which is made up of elected officials. The Puget Sound Muslim Community Resource Center has also been funded to conduct outreach through the mosques.

A city task force comprised of representatives from all city departments has been formed. The city's Public Information Officers have been helpful in getting the word out. There have been articles published in *It's Your City* and *Neighborhood News*. Funding from the state is expected to help defray the cost of printing publications.

Ms. Rousseau said the key messages begin with everyone counts, newborns to grandparents regardless of how long they have lived in the United States. Another key message is "10 questions, 10 minutes, 10 years," which speaks to the fact that the short time needed to fill out the census will shape Bellevue for the coming decade. Power and money is another key message. The census is the cornerstone of the country's democracy and it guides the distribution of billions of dollars every year. Also key is the message that the census is confidential, secure and protected by law.

The Commissioners were told they can help the process by becoming educated and answering people's questions and correcting any confusion. Other ways to help are to tell people about census jobs, posting to social media, adding Bellevue's 2020 Census logo to email signatures, including 2020 Census articles in local newsletters, hanging 2020 Census posters at facilities, making announcements at various events, and by hosting Census parties.

Commissioner Ferris asked if each individual living in a household must fill out the census. Ms. Rousseau explained that the census is address based. Many confuse families with households, but if there are multiple families living in the same housing unit, all of the families are associated

with the one housing unit and all will be counted on a single form.

Commissioner Ferris asked when the city receives the data from the census. Ms. Rousseau said the timeline for collecting all of the data runs through the end of July. All jurisdictions must have the data to the federal government by the end of the year. The city will begin getting some of the tabulations as early as February 2021.

Chair Morisseau asked if it will be made clear to households that have a guest house that is being rented out that the questionnaire includes the residents of the guest house. Ms. Rousseau said the Census Bureau attempts to log an address for every single dwelling. If a rented guest house does not have a formal address but does include an A or a B as part of the primary address, the Bureau will try to get a form to that dwelling. If the guest house renters do not receive mail through a separate address, they are to be included as part of the main household.

Noting that the census will primarily be conducted online, Chair Morisseau asked what resources are available for those residents do not have access to the internet or the necessary skills to fill out the form online. Ms. Rousseau said the letter every household will receive in March will direct people to fill out the census online, but an option to fill out the form over the phone will also be provided. Census questionnaire assistance centers will be set up to help people fill out the forms. Paper questionnaires will also be available.

10. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

A. October 23, 2019

A motion to approve the minutes as submitted was made by Commissioner Ferris. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Moolgavkar and the motion carried unanimously.

B. November 13, 2019

A motion to approve the minutes as submitted was made by Commissioner Malakoutian. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Ferris and the motion carried unanimously.

11. CONTINUED ORAL COMMUNICATIONS – None

12. EXECUTIVE SESSION – None

13. ADJOURNMENT

Chair Morisseau adjourned the meeting at 8:03 p.m.