

CITY OF BELLEVUE
CITY COUNCIL

Summary Minutes of Regular Meeting

February 4, 2025
6:00 p.m.

Council Chambers
Bellevue, Washington

PRESENT: Mayor Robinson, Deputy Mayor Malakoutian and Councilmembers Hamilton, Lee, Nieuwenhuis and Stokes

ABSENT: Councilmember Zahn

1. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 6:01 p.m., with Mayor Robinson presiding.

Ms. Robinson said individuals are not allowed to disrupt the meeting, which includes talking out of turn or without permission, interrupting or making sounds when someone else is talking or approaching a Councilmember or City employee who is staffing the meeting. If a person disrupts the meeting, Mayor Robinson will issue a warning, end the speaker's comment time or ask the person to leave the room for the rest of the meeting. She asked everyone to express themselves without name-calling, taunting or disparaging others.

2. Roll Call; Flag Salute

City Clerk Charmaine Arredondo called the roll and all Councilmembers except Councilmember Zahn were present. Councilmember Nieuwenhuis led the flag salute.

(a) Black History Month Proclamation

Deputy Mayor Malakoutian read the proclamation recognizing the month of February 2025 as Black History Month in Bellevue. He encouraged everyone to reflect on our shared history, honor the invaluable contributions of Black Americans and to recommit to the fight against racism.

Regina Glenn expressed support for the proclamation honoring Black History Month. She said the proclamation is not merely symbolic but has the potential to spark meaningful conversation about belonging, commitment and empowerment. She commented on the importance of coming together as a community regardless of race or background. She commented on her community involvement and thanked everyone who volunteers and supports events and activities. She noted the importance of shared values such as equality, justice and community engagement.

Dr. Linda Whitehead, Chief Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Officer, City Manager's Office, commented on the origin of Black History Week and Month. She said February is significant as a way to honor the birthdays of President Abraham Lincoln and Frederick Douglass. Dr. Whitehead invited everyone to attend the Black History Month reception on February 5 at City Hall.

3. Approval of Agenda

→ Deputy Mayor Malakoutian moved to approve the agenda, and Councilmember Stokes seconded the motion.

→ The motion carried by a vote of 6-0.

4. Oral Communications

City Clerk Arredondo said the total time for oral communications is for a period not to exceed 30 minutes and topics must relate to City of Bellevue government. Persons speaking to items on the agenda will be called first and if time remains, others will be called. The presiding officer is authorized to give preference to individuals who have not spoken to the Council within the past 60 days or who are speaking to items that will come before the Council in the upcoming 60 days.

- (a) Sandy Sharma said he has lived in Bellevue for approximately 20 years and worked in the area of innovation, including as a consultant in both the public and private sector. He commented on the importance of human-centered innovation. He said he is enjoying working with the Innovation Forum and optimistic about the potential outcomes.
- (b) Gayathri Venkataraman expressed support for the Innovation Forum and noted her professional background, including experience in evaluating and improving permit processing. She said innovation is critical for our future and for humanity. She noted her interest in continued community service.
- (c) Paul Quinn said residents and businesses are currently charged for solid waste utilities services based on the sizes of the containers. He said customers should be charged based on both volume and the type of materials. He made suggestions for improving landfill diversion rates. He said he submitted written comments to the Council before the meeting.
- (d) Alex Tsimerman expressed concerns regarding the Bellevue Police Department, noting that he has been prosecuted five times since 1996.

Mayor Robinson issued two warnings to Mr. Tsimerman that he was disrupting the meeting as he continued to speak beyond his allotted three minutes.

- (e) Vicky Baguette, a resident of Bellefield Residential Park, said she serves on the homeowners board and on the committee that is working to help clean up and restore a pond in their community. She recalled that she spoke to the Council on November 12,

2024, requesting help to re-route toxic spills sent through the storm water drainage system north of their community into a water conveyance system that continues to the Mercer Slough. Ms. Baguette said a water retention pond would solve the problem and a space for a pond has been reserved in the Surrey Downs neighborhood north of Bellefield residences. She said the most recent toxic spill occurred in Fall 2024 and consisted of motor oil, which was confirmed by the environmental protection team working for the City of Bellevue. She said photos of the spill were submitted to the Council. She noted the impacts on wildlife and the water flowing into the Mercer Slough. Ms. Baguette asked the City to build a retention pond on the south end of the Surrey Downs neighborhood to correct the problem.

Mayor Robinson asked staff to reach out to Ms. Baguette. City Manager Diane Carlson said the Utilities Department would contact her.

- (f) Todd Woosley, owner of the Brierwood Center in the Wilburton/BelRed area, said the site provides a good opportunity for new housing to help support the City's overall housing goals and affordable housing targets. He asked the City to postpone the release of the request for proposals (RFP) for the Wilburton transit oriented development (TOD) site. He said that site is surrounded by Brierwood Center property. Mr. Woosley said it would be more feasible to develop housing over a larger area. He asked the City to use the same policy it is using on the BelRed TOD site and to wait until the Land Use Code Amendments are adopted. He said a meeting is scheduled for February 5 at City Hall to discuss opportunities for all of the sites. Mr. Woosley suggested it is premature to release a RFP the day after the public is invited to learn about these sites. He said they would like to work with the City and others to explore the potential for a collaborative process that will optimize the production of affordable housing.

5. Reports of Community Councils, Boards, and Commissions: None.

6. Report of the City Manager: None.

7. Council Business and New Initiatives: None.

8. Consent Calendar

→ Deputy Mayor Malakoutian moved to approve the Consent Calendar, and Councilmember Stokes seconded the motion.

→ The motion to approve the Consent Calendar carried by a vote of 6-0, and the following items were approved:

(a) Council Minutes

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(b) Motion to: (1) reject the bids from Accord Contractors, LLC, and Earthwork Solutions, LLC as nonresponsive; and (2) award Bid No. 24105 for the Bogline

Sanitary Sewer Rehabilitation project to Laser Underground & Earthworks, Inc., as the lowest responsive and responsible bidder, in an amount not to exceed \$2,143,900, plus all applicable taxes (CIP Plan No. S-66).

- (c) Ordinance No. 6831: 1) authorizing an increase in the construction contract with Goodfellow Brothers, Inc. (GBI) (Bid No. 24009) by \$2,242,569.06 for a total contract amount of \$14,043,637.63, plus all applicable taxes, for the 130th Avenue NE - Bel-Red Road to NE 20th Street Project (CIP Plan No. PW-R-170); 2) amending the 2025-2026 General Capital Improvement Program (CIP) Fund to increase the appropriation by \$2,800,000; and, 3) amending the 2025-2030 General CIP Plan to increase the budget for the 130th Avenue NE - Bel-Red Road to NE 20th Street Project (CIP Plan No. PW-R-170) by \$2,800,000.

9. Public Hearings: None.

10. Study Session

- (a) Recommended Land Use Code Amendment revising the City's design regulations and design review process in response to the passage of House Bill 1293, a 2023 state law restricting cities to only implement design regulations and review processes that are clear and objective.

City Manager Diane Carlson introduced discussion regarding a recommended Land Use Code Amendment (LUCA) in response to the passage of House Bill 1293, a 2023 state law restricting cities to implementing design regulations and review processes that are clear and objective.

Nick Whipple, Code and Policy Director, said staff is seeking Council direction to prepare the LUCA for adoption at a future date on the consent calendar. He said HB 1293 was passed in 2023 to encourage jurisdictions to enact regulations that will expedite permit review for projects with affordable housing. It requires clear and objective design standards, concurrent and consolidated permit review, and no more than one public meeting.

Kirsten Mandt, Senior Planner, said the LUCA focuses on including only objective standards, removing terms like "visually interesting" and "visually attractive." Intent statements may continue to include language such as "should" and "encourage," however. Ms. Mandt said the process to update the Land Use Code included: 1) review of LUC standards and guidelines and the design review process, 2) identification of standards and guidelines to retain, revise or delete, and 3) final revisions to LUC. She said staff considered two changes beyond HB 1293 related to: 1) a vesting mechanism for design review permits to vest at the time of complete application, and 2) updating the Sign Code and adding it to the City Code.

Luisa Cuellar-Calad, Vice Chair, Planning Commission, said the commission discussed the proposed code changes during two study sessions (October 23 and December 11). A public hearing was held on January 22, 2025, when the commission finalized its recommendation. The commission recommends adoption without modification. Ms. Cuellar-Calad said the LUCA was revised following the public hearing to allow a Master Development Permit to vest to the Land

Use Code at complete application when submitted with a Design Review application and both applications are complete.

Ms. Mandt said the community engagement process follows Process IV requirements for Planning Commission meetings, noticing and public hearing. The proposed LUCA was discussed by the Bellevue Development Committee on September 11, 2024. Information was provided on the City's web site and through additional community meetings.

Ms. Mandt said staff was seeking direction to prepare the LUCA for adoption at a future date on the consent calendar.

Mayor Robinson thanked staff for the presentation and thanked Vice Chair Cuellar-Calad for her comments.

Deputy Mayor Malakoutian complimented staff for their work and thanked the Planning Commission for their time and review. He thanked everyone for continuing to build trust with the community. He asked about the anticipated impact of the code revisions on design quality.

Mr. Whipple said the more subjective language in the previous text was in the guidelines, which are difficult to enforce. He said staff describes the context and intent of Bellevue's goals, and the City provides alternate paths to compliance, including to foster creativity. He said Development Services staff is always open to technology to streamline operations.

Councilmember Nieuwenhuis thanked everyone for their work. He expressed concern about holding only one public hearing, however. Mr. Whipple said the City has not been requiring specific meetings because the developers always provide public meetings. That provision has not been changed for this update.

Mr. Nieuwenhuis said he received an email from a constituent regarding two items that were removed from the LUCA. Mr. Whipple described the downtown code proposals for weather protection and public seating and noted that the topics are adequately addressed in other code sections.

Councilmember Lee thanked the Planning Commission for their work and public engagement. Responding to Mr. Lee, Mr. Whipple commented on the benefit of continuing to refine and clarify the code language. Mr. Lee complimented staff on their work.

- Deputy Mayor Malakoutian moved to direct staff to finalize the LUCA ordinance for final action as part of the consent calendar at a future meeting. Councilmember Stokes seconded the motion.
- The motion carried by a vote of 7-0.

(b) 2024 Crime Statistics and Trends

City Manager Carlson introduced the Bellevue Police Department's update on 2024 crime statistics and trends.

Wendell Shirley, Chief of Police, said law enforcement has experienced significant changes since 2020, which presented challenges for retaining and recruiting officers. He expressed appreciation for the ongoing support of City leadership and the community.

Chief Shirley provided an update regarding officer pay and benefits, hiring bonuses, the Officer Wellness program, career opportunities and a take home vehicle program.

Assistant Chief of Police Andrew Popochock said the police department is budgeted for 206 commissioned officers and currently has 190 positions filled. There are 46 professional staff (e.g., administration, records, forensics, and property and evidence) filling 50 budgeted positions. Assistant Chief Popochock said the department's professional development addresses leadership training, servant leadership principles, recognition, internal communications and promotions. Chief Shirley commented on the importance of recognition and promotional opportunities.

Chief Shirley commented on the department's PIE (Prevention. Intervention. Enforcement.) philosophy. He said the National Incident-Based Reporting System (NIBRS) tracks crimes against persons, crimes against property and crimes against society.

Assistant Chief of Police Constance Slappey noted a six percent reduction in overall crime in 2024, with a two percent reduction in crimes against persons, seven percent reduction in crimes against property and a four percent increase in crimes against society. Assistant Chief Popochock noted that the increase in crimes against society was due largely to drug charges. Assistant Chief Slappey said there were 524 fewer crime incidents in 2024 compared to 2023.

Assistant Chief Popochock said the top five crimes in Bellevue are shoplifting, motor vehicle thefts and prowls, theft, vandalism and simple assault. He described a recent enhanced focus on shoplifting after the number of incidents increased from 2023 to 2024. Simple assault cases increased while crime rates for the other three categories above decreased. Chief Shirley commented on the community's concerns about shoplifting and the department's work with local businesses.

Assistant Chief Popochock said there were 739 fewer calls for service in 2024 compared to 2023. The average response time in 2024 was 3 minutes and 35 seconds. He described the SPIDR app used in the 911 dispatch center that texts updates to individuals who call for service.

Chief Shirley described the department's extensive community engagement activities including the Stop the Lift holiday campaign, auto wheel lock theft initiative, business retailer meetings, Shop with a Cop, youth camp, National Night Out, community meetings and Sector Watch newsletter.

Chief Shirley thanked the Council and community for their support and commended the men and women of the police department for their dedication and commitment to keeping this community safe.

Mayor Robinson thanked staff for the presentation. Responding to Ms. Robinson, Chief Shirley said the City does track hate crimes and he would follow up with more information.

Councilmember Hamilton said he was impressed with how well the department has executed its plans to lower crime and expand the police force. He said he has been in the field with Bellevue officers a couple of times and has been impressed with their handling of situations and the public. He thanked Chief Shirley for his recent statement regarding the role of the Bellevue Police Department related to the immigration status of individuals. He invited Chief Shirley to let him know when he can support their efforts.

Councilmember Nieuwenhuis congratulated the police department for the recent arrest related to an assault on an elderly woman. Responding to Mr. Nieuwenhuis, Chief Shirley said the majority of new staff were new hires and there have been eight lateral hires. In further response, Chief Shirley said 694 employment applications have been received since the beginning of 2024. He provided a brief overview of the hiring process.

Responding to Mr. Nieuwenhuis, Assistant Chief Slappey provided additional comments regarding the overall crime trends in 2024. Councilmember Nieuwenhuis said he wants to be sure the police department is keeping pace with other agencies in terms of recruiting and retention tactics.

Councilmember Stokes said it is important for the public to know about all of the good things the police department is doing. He thanked them for their continued advances in public safety.

Councilmember Lee said Bellevue is one of the best cities for public safety. He thanked staff for the update and extended his ongoing support to the police department. He expressed support for technology-based solutions. Mr. Lee expressed an interest in more information about hate crimes.

Deputy Mayor Malakoutian thanked everyone for their work and commended the six percent reduction in overall crime and the 3:35 minutes response time. He commended the police department's thoughtful efforts in recruiting, training, professional development and recognition. Responding to Mr. Malakoutian, Chief Shirley described the reorganization plan to create four divisions.

At 7:42 p.m., Mayor Robinson declared a break. The meeting resumed at 7:53 p.m.

(c) Update on Innovation Forum Progress to Date and Forum Event in November

City Manager Carlson introduced staff's update regarding the Innovation Forum's initial public engagement efforts and results.

Sabra Schneider, Chief Information Officer, commented on the importance of innovation in all aspects of the community including systems, institutions, businesses, schools and government.

The forum will officially launch in March to prioritize citywide innovation, assess emerging technologies, support digital equity and expand partnerships.

PJ Rodriguez, Assistant Director, Information Technology Department, said the community engagement process involved informal brainstorming sessions, an open survey, a preview event at City Hall and interviews with community, non-profit and business partners. The preview event was held in November 2024 and approximately 50 attendees participated in small group discussions and panel discussions.

Mr. Rodriguez described the emphasis on supporting and enhancing digital equity, augmenting policies and priorities to drive innovative initiatives in the organization, and cultivating an innovation ecosystem.

Ms. Schneider said efforts to support and enhance digital equity include free technology support, basics classes, access to technology, free and low-cost internet connectivity, and training and education partnerships for job readiness. She commented on policies to make it easier to test and grow innovative ideas, ensure that City policies support equitable technology development, advise on emerging technologies and to draft an innovation framework. She commented on supporting a thriving innovation ecosystem to partner with education institutions, support small business start-ups and to connect the City and the community.

Ms. Schneider said the City will host the Inclusive Innovation Forum on March 5, 6:00-8:00 PM at Bellevue City Hall. Register via bellevuewa.gov/inclusiveinnovation. The Startup 425 Accelerator Cohort 2 program is accepting applications for the next 15-week educational program.

Deputy Mayor Malakoutian said he appreciated all of the Innovation Forum-related work, including robust community engagement. He expressed support for the work related to policies and activities. Responding to Mr. Malakoutian, Ms. Schneider said the community engagement involved representatives of Amazon, T-Mobile, Microsoft and Google. In further response, Ms. Schneider said key performance indicators are emerging as the work plan is developed.

Mayor Robinson expressed support for the initiative and thanked Ms. Schneider and Mr. Rodriguez for their work.

Councilmember Lee said Bellevue has a healthy and successful technology community. He expressed support for the Innovation Forum and partnerships and for the City's role in supporting them.

Councilmember Hamilton said this is a smart way for the City to support innovation that promotes opportunity, equity, mobility and economic development. He thanked staff for their work and the emphasis on digital equity.

11. Land Use: None.

12. Other Ordinances, Resolutions, and Motions: None.

13. Written Reports

- (a) Update on Cascade Water Alliance Long-Term Water Supply Contracts with Tacoma Public Utilities

14. Unfinished Business: None.

15. New Business: None.

16. Executive Session

- (a) Pending Litigation [RCW 42.30.110(1)(i)]

At 8:18 p.m., Mayor Robinson declared recess to Executive Session for approximately 20 minutes to discuss one item of pending litigation. She said the meeting would adjourn following the session.

17. Adjournment

The Executive Session concluded at 8:45 p.m. and the meeting was adjourned.

Charmaine Arredondo, CMC
City Clerk

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