

CITY OF BELLEVUE
CITY COUNCIL

Summary Minutes of Study Session

June 1, 2015
6:00 p.m.

Council Conference Room
Bellevue, Washington

PRESENT: Mayor Balducci, Deputy Mayor Wallace, and Councilmembers Chelminiak, Lee, Robertson, Robinson, and Stokes

ABSENT: None.

1. Executive Session

Deputy Mayor Wallace opened the meeting at 6:01 p.m., and declared recess to Executive Session for approximately 15 minutes to discuss one item of potential litigation.

The meeting resumed at 6:50 p.m., with Mayor Balducci presiding.

2. Study Session

(a) Energize Eastside Phase 1 Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) Update

City Manager Brad Miyake recalled that, during the May 11 meeting, Council directed staff to develop a letter from the Council with comments on the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) scoping for Puget Sound Energy's (PSE) Energize Eastside project. The draft letter is included in the meeting packet for the Council's consideration. The Council will also have the opportunity later to discuss another letter responding to mitigation as part of Phase 2 of the EIS.

Deputy City Manager Kate Berens said this is part of the EIS process for the Energize Eastside transmission line project. Bellevue is the lead agency for that State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA) process. This EIS will be completed in two phases. The first phase will consider technical alternatives to meet the stated need for additional power supply and reliability, as well as the environmental impacts for each. The second phase, later this year or early next year, will narrow the alternatives and address more details on impacts and mitigation. June 15 is the deadline for submitting comments on the EIS scoping process. The City's SEPA official will review the comments and determine the appropriate scope for this phase.

Ms. Berens said this is a little unusual in that the Council is submitting its own comments, just as the public submits its comments. Staff will submit the Council's letter by June 15 and is seeking Council feedback and/or approval of the draft letter.

Mayor Balducci said the draft letter is included in the meeting packet.

Councilmember Robinson said the agenda memo has three bulleted items: 1) alternatives to a wired solution as well as alternative alignments, 2) elements related to environmental health, and 3) neighborhood impacts of visual, vegetation, safety and reliability. She said those points are not actually in the letter.

Mayor Balducci said alternatives are addressed somewhat in letter. However, she suggested that environmental health should be added. Ms. Robinson reiterated her request for language on neighborhood impacts.

Deputy Mayor Wallace questioned Ms. Berens' earlier statement that it is unusual for the City Council to comment on the EIS. He recalled that the Council submitted numerous comments during the East Link light rail process.

Ms. Berens said it is less common to comment on the EIS scope. Also, in other contexts where the City has submitted comments, Bellevue was not the lead agency. Sound Transit was the lead agency for the East Link EIS.

Councilmember Lee said public safety should be an element of neighborhood impacts.

Councilmember Chelminiak said the letter is so broad it almost seems as if the Council is not paying sufficient attention. However, he understands the advantage of keeping the comments to a level in which a range of issues can be considered. He said this is essentially an economic decision for PSE. He said the City consultant's report and the Columbia Grid report identify four alternatives that would meet the goals of PSE's Energize Eastside project. However, they were not chosen by the Columbia Grid group.

Mr. Chelminiak said he is interested in looking at both the environmental impacts and the economic aspects of the alternatives. He observed that the alternatives in the Columbia Grid report were rejected, apparently for some regional purpose, which is unclear in the reports.

Ms. Berens said staff can modify the comment letter to recommend looking at alternatives that have been rejected through the Columbia Grid process. Mr. Chelminiak said he does not want a situation in which alternatives that meet the project's goals are not studied in terms of environmental and economic impacts. He believes this should be within the scope of the EIS review. He said one safety issue that has been raised is the oil pipeline along some of the proposed alignments.

Councilmember Stokes concurred that the letter needs to walk a fine line between making sure certain items are included and being broad enough to be open to additional alternatives and solutions. He noted that this is just Phase 1 of the EIS and the Council will have the opportunity to provide additional comments before Phase 2 goes forward. He said the Council is concerned about the project and ensuring electrical reliability while maintaining Bellevue's quality of life.

Councilmember Stokes concurred with the added language suggested so far in the discussion.

Councilmember Robertson agreed with the suggested additions as well, including Councilmember Chelminiak's point about economic impacts. She wants the EIS to look at both ratepayer impacts and impacts on property values.

Ms. Robertson noted the public's concerns about the Olympic pipeline. She said the letter does capture much of what she had in mind about alternatives. However, she wants to ensure there is a full alternative analysis, including whether the project is sized appropriately and not more than is needed to serve the Eastside. She said would like to see a more detailed comment letter. She acknowledged that public comments are captured well in Attachment 2.

Councilmember Robinson said the comment letter refers to analyzing energy demand and forecast methodologies. She said the scope of this project is based on the demand forecast. When she looks at the demand forecast, her biggest fear is that it is using an antiquated technology to create a solution for a demand that might not be accurate for Bellevue. She wants to be sure that the demand forecast is accurate and that the solution is the best one for today and not what was determined 25 years ago.

Ms. Robinson said Appendix H describes the hourly electrical demand profile. PSE states that "because temporarily storing large amounts of electricity is costly, the minute-by-minute interaction between electricity production and consumption is very important." She said PSE bases its needs analysis on this premise. She observed that, as energy storage improves, that determination will become less important. She wants to ensure the project is considering the latest and near-term future technologies.

Councilmember Chelminiak said the City consultant's report was a financial investment, and now it appears, by having a broad letter, the Council is being asked to somewhat ignore that report for the scoping phase. He said the consultant's report was helpful in refocusing the purpose of the project. He said it is not so much about an imminent brown-out by 2017. It is that, if the system has two major outages at the time of peak power, there is a problem. He said the consultant's report indicates that PSE is planning for that scenario to meet the North American Electric Reliability Corporation (NERC) standards.

Mr. Chelminiak questioned whether there is a way, since the project will affect the environment, to look at whether the NERC standards are reasonable standards to be met in a temperate climate zone such as the Puget Sound region. If he reads the consultant's report correctly, there is no need for the project under a scenario involving one outage. He noted there have been public comments about whether PSE considered all of the generation capability available that could respond to one major outage. This issue was not addressed by the City's consultant.

Mr. Chelminiak said mitigation and compensation should be addressed within the scope of the EIS. He acknowledged that mitigation will be addressed through consideration of the Land Use application. He questioned what can be mitigated and how impacts are compensated, particularly with regard to the loss of tree canopy. He said the Ecosystem Service Analysis for the north part

of the proposed line goes through what is considered the forested tree canopy as opposed to open space, somewhat treed, or simple rights-of-way.

Mayor Balducci questioned whether his comments relate to input for the draft letter. Councilmember Chelminiak said this is similar to the question raised throughout planning for the Sound Transit light rail project, which is: When will the process address mitigation and compensation? Mr. Chelminiak said he is not sure whether these comments are, or could be, relevant to the EIS scoping process.

Ms. Berens said staff will draft language to address mitigation, including a statement that the City anticipates a more refined analysis of the impacts and appropriate mitigation during Phase 2 of the EIS. She said compensation is a separate issue. The environmental official for the EIS is limited to asking the applicant to look at reasonable alternatives and elements of the environment listed within SEPA legislation. However, there is the ability for the official to include other factors relevant to the decision. The decision here is the permitting decision, and it might be necessary to determine how to submit comments that may or may not be within the authority of the SEPA environmental official to include in the EIS.

Councilmember Lee said he appreciates the Council's diligence in this matter. He said it is important to ensure that the EIS review is thorough and does not omit important issues. He said there will be more opportunity for comments and input.

Councilmember Robertson said there have been requests from the public to extend the EIS scoping comment period. Ms. Berens said the comment period is set by law and cannot be extended by the City. She referred Council and the public to a memo on the Energize Eastside web site that can be accessed via the City's web site. Ms. Berens said there have been five public meetings to provide the opportunity for comments, and comments can continue to be submitted in writing until June 15.

Mayor Balducci said the different roles of the Council in this process are somewhat awkward. She suggested acknowledging this in the letter, including how the Council sees its role in submitting its own comments. She said the Council represents the community with regard to reliable electrical service and public interests. However, the City also has the direct managerial role as the lead for the EIS and is potentially in an approval role if there are appeals regarding PSE's application.

Ms. Balducci said she supports Councilmembers' comments during the discussion. She said the purpose of the EIS is to unearth information and to make sure there has been a significant and thorough review of the potential impacts of different courses of action before a decision is made on an alternative. She concurred with comments about ensuring that a sufficient range of alternatives are studied and with Mr. Chelminiak's comment about studying the economics of different alternatives. She said the community has suggested alternatives and those should be studied if it seems appropriate.

(b) Review of recommended Comprehensive Plan Update

Mayor Balducci said she anticipates that an additional discussion will be needed on June 8 to complete the review of the Comprehensive Plan Update.

Planning Director Dan Stroh said staff would continue its review with the Transportation Element. He recalled that this is the Round 1 review, and the Round 2 review and refinement will be addressed in late June. Staff anticipates adoption of the Comprehensive Plan Update in July.

Paul Inghram, Comprehensive Planning Manager, recalled that, during the May 11 discussion, the Council briefly addressed differences between the recommendations of the Planning Commission and the Transportation Commission on policies TR-1 and TR-4. He said revised language to reflect Council direction will be brought back within the next few meetings.

Transportation Director Dave Berg commented on continued population growth and the increasingly urban environment. The Comprehensive Plan Update broadly addresses transportation mobility needs for all ages. It is important to integrate mobility and livability on a citywide scale, building on the Downtown Transportation Plan and the Downtown Livability Initiative work.

Kevin McDonald, Senior Planner, said the Transportation Commission spent two years reviewing Comprehensive Plan transportation policies, and a significant portion of that effort looked at multimodal mobility. In July 2014, the Council adopted the Transit Master Plan and the policy direction in that plan is reflected in the Transportation Element of the Comprehensive Plan.

Mr. McDonald said there are currently a number of places in the Comprehensive Plan that list transportation projects and their descriptions. The Update recommends developing a Transportation Master Plan to consolidate those into one document.

Mr. McDonald highlighted proposed changes to Transportation Element policies regarding the protection of environmental values and community character, neighborhood safety and livability, Mobility Management Areas (MMAs), and the creation of a comprehensive transportation projects list. He said the resulting project list was reduced from approximately 800 projects to just over 100 projects, which will provide the foundation for the Transportation Master Plan. It will be necessary to revise some of the project descriptions to align with descriptions reflected in the Transportation Facilities Plan and through the Capital Investment Program (CIP) budget process.

Responding to Councilmember Stokes, Mr. McDonald said approximately one-third of the 800 projects were removed because they have been completed. Additional projects that were eliminated involved redundancy and overlap between project references in different parts of the Comprehensive Plan. Other projects were deleted because a more recent planning effort superseded previous planning, and the most recent project description was retained. In further

response, Mr. McDonald said that moving the project references from the Comprehensive Plan to a Transportation Master Plan will allow administrative updates to be more current.

Mayor Balducci requested documentation regarding the disposition of the projects for reasons other than project completion. She wants to be sure that smaller projects have not been eliminated.

Responding to Councilmember Chelminiak, Mr. McDonald said projects will remain in the Comprehensive Plan with this Update. However, a Transportation Master Plan is anticipated with the next Comprehensive Plan Update. Mr. Chelminiak suggested verifying whether the use of REET (real estate excise tax) funding might require that projects be included in the Comprehensive Plan.

Deputy Mayor Wallace said there are many changes to the light rail Comprehensive Plan policies. He wants to ensure that the changes do not affect agreements within the East Link Amended Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the City and Sound Transit.

Mr. McDonald said the Transportation Commission, in looking at the body of light rail policies in the Comprehensive Plan, identified several policies that were positioning Bellevue to be an active participant in the light rail planning process. The Commission felt those were no longer needed because that process was concluded. Mr. McDonald said the bulk of the remaining light rail and high-capacity transit policies deal with construction, neighborhood impacts, connections to the light rail system, and with positioning Bellevue for a potential subsequent round of high-capacity transit planning and funding.

Mr. Inghram said there are four transit subsections within the Transportation Element, and the Commission attempted to consolidate those.

Responding to Deputy Mayor Wallace, Mr. McDonald said the Commission looked at mobility for all travel modes across all corridors and within specific geographic areas. The metric for vehicle mobility and level of service would be retained, to be complemented by metrics that look at multimodal mobility along corridors and in specific areas.

Mr. Wallace observed there are new technologies, including Internet-based apps and driverless cars, and questioned whether these are being taken into account in terms of long-range planning.

Mr. McDonald said one recommended policy encourages looking at emerging technologies, including driverless vehicles, as the City moves forward with its transportation planning.

Mayor Balducci said she appreciates how the Transportation Element has been streamlined and shortened. She sees increasing consistency in language about the goals related to multimodal capacity and options. However, she feels this can be further expanded and emphasized.

Ms. Balducci noted proposed policy language referring to the frequent transit network "within Bellevue." She wants to be sure the City is also looking at the broader transit system. She further suggested, in references to transit, that "and other alternatives" be added. She said this could

include bus rapid transit (BRT), expanded employer-provided transit, and other options that are not anticipated at this point.

Moving on, Mr. Inghram said changes to the Capital Facilities Element address State Growth Management Act (GMA) requirements, the City's CIP and system plans, replacement of aging facilities, and essential public facilities.

The Utilities Vision Element has two components: City-managed and non-City-managed utilities. Updated policies for City-managed utilities address asset management, utility system functional plans, and low-impact development for stormwater management. Additional policies relate to high-speed Internet access and power lines.

Responding to Mayor Balducci, City Clerk Myrna Basich said additional time for this topic is scheduled for the following week's agenda. Ms. Balducci noted that the deadline for finalizing input on the Sound Transit 3 package is June 22.

Deputy Mayor Wallace said he would like to see all policy sections that address solid waste transfer stations. Mr. Inghram said staff will provide that information.

At 8:00 p.m., Mayor Balducci declared recess to the Regular Session.

Myrna L. Basich, MMC
City Clerk

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