

CITY OF BELLEVUE
CITY COUNCIL

Summary Minutes of Study Session

December 11, 2017
6:00 p.m.

Council Conference Room
Bellevue, Washington

PRESENT: Mayor Stokes, Deputy Mayor Chelminiak, and Councilmembers Lee, Robertson, Robinson, Wallace and Zahn¹

ABSENT: None.

1. Executive Session

Deputy Mayor Chelminiak opened the meeting at 6:00 p.m., and declared recess to Executive Session for approximately 20 minutes to discuss one item of potential litigation.

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

Mr. Chelminiak noted that the live streaming of the meeting was not functioning properly.

2. Study Session

- (a) Recommended Allocation of Funds to Artists and Arts Groups through the Eastside Arts Partnerships, Special Projects, and Power UP Bellevue Funding Programs

City Manager Brad Miyake introduced staff's presentation of the funding recommendations finalized by the Arts Commission during its December 5 meeting. The Council approved the recommended funding guidelines in mid-September. Staff is seeking Council approval of the funding plan that was developed based on those guidelines.

Joshua Heim, Arts Program Manager, presented the 2018 grant allocation recommendation developed by the Arts Commission for arts and heritage nonprofit organizations and for individual artists. The Arts Commission's allocation committee included Becky Lewis, Carl Wolfteich, Maria Lau Hui, and two arts professionals. Each member reviewed and scored the applications based on the criteria in the funding guidelines before meeting as a group to discuss the applications.

¹ Councilmember Zahn participated remotely via telephone.

Mr. Heim said the recommended allocations total \$123,000 to 27 arts nonprofit groups and four individual artists. An additional \$25,000 in biennial grant funding received from King County was allocated to five nonprofit partners for capacity building projects. Mr. Heim said that artists and arts groups will serve more than 700,000 patrons in Bellevue, provide free or reduced cost access for more than 50,000 people, engage 2,800 artists and 3,200 volunteers, and build the capacity of five organizations to weather future funding uncertainty.

Mac Cummins, Director of the Planning and Community Development (PCD) Department, said Councilmember Robertson requested a list of the 2017 allocations, which is provided in the Council's desk packet.

Responding to Councilmember Lee, Mr. Heim said Power UP Bellevue is a pilot grant program the City is implementing with funding from King County 4Culture. The program responds to needs expressed by nonprofit organizations and artists earlier in the year. The group noted the need for resources to build the strength of their core business. There are five pilot projects anticipated for 2018 in the areas of comprehensive digital communications, strategic planning, and outreach and storytelling to expand an organization's donor base. Mr. Heim said the projects provide one-time funds to help the organizations increase the number of individuals served now and in the future.

In further response to Mr. Lee, Mr. Heim said the overall objective of the Power UP program is a response to immediate requests and to an analysis of how nonprofits have performed over the past decade since the recession. Bellevue lost half of its arts nonprofits during the recession because they were not capitalized, lacked office space, and/or lacked access to high-quality, specialized volunteers. The mission of Power UP is to ensure the continuance of arts organizations in Bellevue following the next economic downturn. Mr. Heim said the City held a Power UP workshop in September to address the relevant issues and challenges with the arts organizations. The five organizations targeted to receive the funds are the Bellevue Youth Symphony Orchestra, Music Works Northwest, Tasveer South Asian Film Festival, Emerald Ballet Theatre, and Evergreen Ballet Theatre. Mr. Heim said a consultant will continue working with the organizations.

Councilmember Robertson asked staff to provide information in the future on both the previous year's and current year's recommendations in a chart format. She observed that the organizations funded last year are receiving the same or a higher dollar amount, while some organizations received no funding. Mr. Heim said the Bellevue Downtown Association and the Eastside Heritage Center both had staff changes and missed the application deadline.

Responding to Councilmember Zahn, Mr. Heim said the Power UP organizations receive \$5,000 each, and the other funding allocation dollar amounts vary. For the Eastside Arts Partnership, the three criteria are creative participation, public benefits (e.g., scholarships, free tickets), and financial sustainability and management practices.

Councilmember Wallace said this is reasonable amount of money to allocate to this purpose. He thanked staff and the Arts Commission for their work.

→ Deputy Mayor Chelminiak moved to approve the Arts Commission's recommendations for 2018 funding for the Eastside Arts Partnerships, Special Projects, and Power UP Bellevue funding programs; and to direct staff to proceed with implementation. Councilmember Robertson seconded the motion.

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

(b) Update on I-405 Express Toll Lanes Operation

City Manager Brad Miyake opened staff's update on the I-405/SR 167 corridor. He recalled that the I-405 express toll lanes have been in operation since September 2015.

Transportation Director Dave Berg noted that traffic operations on the three freeways adjacent to Bellevue significantly affect the local arterial system. He said the Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) has invested approximately \$700 million in the freeway system through Bellevue during the past 20 years. He said the Council has supported the use of toll lanes for the purposes of improving highway operations and generating revenue. Mr. Berg said tonight's presentation will address how the I-405 express toll lanes are meeting those objectives.

Kim Henry, Program Administrator for the I-405/SR 167 Program, recalled that the I-405 Master Plan is a multimodal, multi-agency plan. He said 168,000 new residents moved to the region during the past two years, and 148,000 new driver's licenses were issued in King and Snohomish Counties during the same time period. I-405 is one of the most congested corridors in the state, and traffic volumes have increased by up to 20 percent in certain areas during peak periods.

Ed Barry, Toll Division Director, WSDOT, described the section of I-405 between Bellevue and Lynnwood with the express toll lanes. The corridor has had 28.7 million trips and 19.9 million tolled trips. Of those, there have been 8.8 million toll-exempt trips. The express toll lanes operate from 5:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m., Monday through Friday. Transit vehicles and vanpools are always exempt from tolls, as well as qualifying carpools.

Mr. Barry described the concept of dynamic tolling in which the toll pricing varies based on traffic congestion. Traffic volumes on I-405 have increased 3-24 percent, depending on the location, and the number of people moving through the corridor has increased by 5-30 percent.

When express toll lanes were implemented, the state legislature provided two performance measures for the lanes: 1) generate sufficient revenue to cover operations costs, and 2) move vehicles at 45 miles per hour during 90 percent of the peak periods. The I-405 express toll lanes are generating sufficient revenue to support operations and to invest in improvements to the corridor. However, the lanes are not meeting the speed target, primarily in the southbound section between I-5 and SR 522. The implementation of the peak-period use of the northbound shoulder on the north end of the toll lane segment significantly increased traffic flow. Between April and September, express toll lane speeds moved 45 miles per hour or faster for 85 percent of the peak period. The HOV lane met the standard only 56 percent of the time prior to the implementation of the express toll lanes.

Mr. Barry presented the total revenue generated by the toll lanes and the use of those funds. He noted that the I-405 northbound peak-use shoulder lane project converted a 1.8-mile section of the right shoulder to a general purpose lane. The project was fully funded by express toll lane revenue and opened to traffic in April 2017.

Mr. Barry described surveys conducted by WSDOT, noting that the agency is seeing a greater acceptance of the toll lanes. The survey found that approximately 60 percent of drivers like having the option of a quicker, more reliable trip. Drivers are also supportive of extending the lanes to Renton.

Mr. Henry described comparisons of traffic operations on sections of I-5 and sections of I-405, noting that traffic flow performance was much better on I-405. He said Community Transit and Metro both report reduced travel times, and Sound Transit is relying on the new express toll lanes for the reliable operation of I-405 bus rapid transit (BRT).

Mr. Henry described heat maps comparing previous traffic congestion with the current traffic congestion using the express toll lane system. He said that removing the toll lanes would degrade overall traffic performance, negatively impact transit speeds and reliability, and eliminate the revenues needed for completing the I-405 Master Plan. He highlighted the next steps in the implementation of the plan: 1) I-405/SR 167 direct connector, scheduled to open to traffic in 2019, 2) Renton to Bellevue widening and express toll lanes, scheduled to open to traffic in 2024, and 3) I-405 north end additional improvements. He said Sound Transit anticipates the opening of I-405 bus rapid transit (BRT) in 2024 as well. Mr. Henry highlighted the long-term revenue potential through 2060 for I-405/SR 167 toll lane improvements. He described improvements planned at the I-405/SR 522 interchange to be completed in multiple phases.

Responding to Councilmember Robinson, Mr. Henry said there are no good locations to implement a peak-use shoulder lane for southbound traffic. In further response, Mr. Henry said WSDOT has heard complaints about noise along the I-405 corridor, and the agency has heard from Woodridge residents who are not satisfied with the noise walls. He said the agency will try a different type of quiet paving to test its performance.

Responding to Councilmember Zahn, Mr. Henry said WSDOT's plans include the use of roundabouts at the I-405 and Coal Creek Parkway interchange. Funding is available but the timing of the improvements has not been finalized. Mr. Berg noted that the City is engaged in ongoing discussions with WSDOT about improvements at that location.

Councilmember Robertson said she did not see information in the presentation regarding the impact of the express toll lanes on the general purpose lane average speed. Mr. Henry said general purpose lane speeds are similar to the traffic speeds before the implementation of the express toll lanes. He said WSDOT will provide more information. Mr. Barry noted that traffic volumes have increased significantly and the performance of the general purpose lanes would likely have degraded if not for the express toll lanes.

Councilmember Robertson questioned the monitoring of freeway traffic that diverts to local streets to avoid tolls. Mr. Henry said staff can provide more information. Ms. Robertson said it

will be interesting to see the impacts after the southbound express toll lanes are extended to Renton.

Councilmember Wallace questioned the cost of \$900 million for the BRT project and the coordinated efforts between Sound Transit and WSDOT. Mr. Henry said the main infrastructure components are two transit stations to be added by WSDOT along the corridor. Sound Transit will add parking facilities and expanded bus service. Mr. Wallace said he would like to be invited to the grand opening of the BRT project. He suggested that the Council add this item to its work program for discussion next year.

Mr. Wallace noted Bellevue's plans for the Grand Connection project over I-405. He suggested that WSDOT and the City need to work together to determine how the project will be designed, funded and constructed.

Responding to Councilmember Lee, Mr. Henry said the quiet pavement tested on I-405 and SR 520 deteriorated relatively quickly and was not effective in mitigating noise. He said WSDOT will try the grooved pavement design used on the SR 520 bridge, which has been effective in reducing noise levels.

Mr. Lee said he looks forward to improvements between Bellevue and Renton. He noted the importance of considering and using a variety of solutions, including BRT. He questioned whether dedicated lanes or some other type of traffic management mechanism has been considered for commercial freight traffic. Mr. Henry said that topic was addressed in general discussions of the I-405 Master Plan, but nothing specific is included in the plan. He acknowledged the significance of moving freight through the corridor.

(c) Grand Connection Framework Plan and Wilburton Commercial Area Planning

Mac Cummins, Director of the Planning and Community Development (PCD) Department, opened discussion regarding the Grand Connection Framework Plan and the Wilburton Commercial Area planning initiative.

Bradley Calvert, Community Development Program Manager, highlighted the timelines of the Wilburton Commercial Area planning process and the Grand Connection planning and implementation process. He recalled that staff was last before the Council in June when staff released the Grand Connection Framework Plan. The goal of the plan is to document the Sequence One vision, concepts and ideas for the Grand Connection between Meydenbauer Bay Park and the Civic Center District. The plan does not extend to the I-405 crossing, which is part of Sequence Two.

Public outreach included more than 2,500 online views of the plan, emails to more than 2,000 subscribers, open houses with King County regarding the Eastside Rail Corridor, and presentations to Boards and Commissions, Bellevue Downtown Association (BDA), Meydenbauer Center, Visit Bellevue Washington, Wilburton Hill residents, and other neighborhoods.

Mr. Calvert requested Council action to adopt the Grand Connection Framework Plan and to initiate related Comprehensive Plan Amendments (CPAs).

Mayor Stokes expressed support for moving forward.

Responding to Deputy Mayor Chelminiak, Mr. Calvert confirmed that the framework plan guides the planning process.

Responding to Councilmember Zahn, Mr. Calvert said the Grand Connection plan is consistent with the City's commitment to Vision Zero principles.

→ Councilmember Wallace moved to adopt the Grand Connection Framework Plan, and Councilmember Robinson seconded the motion.

Councilmember Wallace said this has been a great effort and one of the most exciting things the Council has been involved with over the past eight years. He complimented staff for the significant amount of work that has been accomplished during the past 18 months. Mr. Wallace said he would like to see a similar plan for the City's transportation technology initiative.

Deputy Mayor Chelminiak commended the great work by staff and the community, and noted the high level of interest in this project in the community. He said the Grand Connection project provides the opportunity to connect pedestrians, bicyclists, and potentially autonomous vehicles between Meydenbauer Bay and the Eastside Rail Corridor. Mr. Chelminiak said the framework plan provides the opportunity to create a project that is both memorable and do-able.

Councilmember Robinson said she occasionally hears critical comments about Bellevue's high-rise buildings. Since the Grand Connection visioning process began, she has seen the most inspired architecture and proposed development that she could have previously imagined.

Councilmember Lee commended staff for their work and expressed support for the process. He said the Wilburton Commercial Area planning provides additional opportunities related to the Grand Connection as well.

Councilmember Robertson acknowledged that this effort has involved significant work by staff and the community. She thanked Deputy Mayor Chelminiak and Councilmember Wallace for working together with staff to move the Grand Connection vision forward. She said she appreciates staff's hard work. She noted that Bellevue does a good job of setting audacious goals and completing them over time.

Councilmember Zahn expressed support for the framework plan. Responding to Ms. Zahn, Mayor Stokes said there was an extensive effort involving City staff, the Parks and Community Services Board, and residents with regard to Meydenbauer Bay Park planning.

Mayor Stokes thanked Mr. Cummins and his staff for their work on the Grand Connection project. Mr. Stokes complimented Deputy Mayor Chelminiak and Councilmember Wallace for their vision and roles in supporting the overall initiative.

Councilmember Robertson noted that the Grand Connection vision shows 100th Avenue closed near Meydenbauer Bay. She clarified that there will be no closing of the road unless and until the Council principles related to Meydenbauer Bay Park planning have been reviewed and the public process has been revisited.

Responding to Ms. Robertson, Mr. Calvert said the park is outside the scope of the Grand Connection project, which begins at 100th Avenue and Main Street. He said the Grand Connection project will be modified to reflect any changes for Meydenbauer Bay Park.

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

Mr. Cummins said the Grand Connection is a transformative type of initiative for the city. He commented on the importance of audacious goals and the ability of the Grand Connection project to unify the community and to implement urban planning objectives that will benefit the community decades into the future. He said there is a great deal of work ahead, and it is important to continue moving forward. Mr. Cummins said the Grand Connection will consolidate the City's placemaking, economic development, and arts and culture objectives.

Moving on, Mr. Calvert said the 15-member Wilburton Commercial Area Citizen Advisory Committee (CAC) focuses on transportation, land use, and urban design within the study area. Issues include the area's relationship to the Downtown, BelRed corridor, Spring District, and the Wilburton Hill neighborhood. The CAC will explore opportunities to leverage assets with the Grand Connection, Eastside Rail Corridor, East Link light rail, Global Innovation Exchange (GIX), and the new REI headquarters.

Based on the CAC's work to date, the organizing principles include density concentrated around the intersection of the Grand Connection and the Eastside Rail Corridor, development within the context of the Wilburton light rail station, the relationship of the area to the Spring District and to the East Main Station area, and transitions to the Wilburton neighborhood and park. Mr. Calvert highlighted photos depicting examples of potential architectural designs.

At 8:00 p.m., Mayor Stokes declared recess to the Regular Session and noted that the agenda item would be continued under the City Manager's Report.

Kyle Stannert, CMC
City Clerk

/kaw