CITY OF BELLEVUE
BELLEVUE TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION
RETREAT
MINUTES

October 10, 2019
5:30 p.m.

Bellevue City Hall
City Council Conference Room 1E-113

COMMISSIONERS PRESENT:	Chair Wu, Commissioners Bishop, Leitner, Tropin, Marciante, Teh, Ting
COMMISSIONERS ABSENT:	None
STAFF PRESENT:	Kevin McDonald, Paula Stevens, Andrew Singelakis, Department of Transportation
OTHERS PRESENT:	Councilmember Lee; Marci McReynolds, Natalie Daniels, Conflict Resolution Center
RECORDING SECRETARY:	Gerry Lindsay

1. CALL TO ORDER AND ROLL CALL

The meeting was called to order at 5:43 p.m. by Chair Wu who presided.

Upon the call of the roll, all Commissioners were present.

Chair Wu took a moment to thank the Commissioners, the staff and Council leadership for their hard work and creativity on behalf of the Commission.

2. TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION GROUP PICTURE

A group photo was taken.

Councilmember Lee said the Commission has good leadership and good members. He said he takes special pride in the Commission because given that he had a direct or indirect role in choosing each Commissioner. Transportation issues affect Bellevue citizens every single day. As growth occurs, transportation systems are always the first to be impacted and the first in need of being addressed. Transportation is the key to the future growth of the city.

3. BELLEVUE TRANSPORTATION OVERVIEW, CHALLENGES AND DIRECTION

Department of Transportation Director Andrew Singelakis shared with the Commission the transportation department's organization chart. He noted that he as Transportation Director reports to the City Manager's Office. In turn the City Manager reports to and gets direction from the City Council. There are some 150 staff in the transportation department operating under the mission statement: "To provide a safe and efficient transportation system that supports livable neighborhoods and a vital economy in partnership with our diverse community." The department's annual operating budget is around $30 million, and the capital budget over a six-year period is $278 million. Within the department there are three main divisions: Traffic Management, which includes traffic engineering, road maintenance,

operations, neighborhood services, right-of-way and development review; Capital Program Services, which primarily handles the design and construction of larger roadway projects; and Transportation Planning, which includes transportation policy, transportation planning, finance and other elements. The department's Transportation Policy Advisor reports directly to the Transportation Director.

Mr. Singelakis said the city's first Comprehensive Plan was adopted in 1974 as a policy document with broad policies aimed at guiding the work done by the various city departments, including the transportation department. The Comprehensive Plan is amended annually and updated every ten years. From the beginning, the Comprehensive Plan has had a multimodal focus for the way transportation planning is done. The transportation section of the Comprehensive Plan is most relevant to the transportation department. It has ties to other planning documents, including the Transit Master Plan, the Pedestrian/Bicycle Transportation Plan, and the Downtown Transportation Plan. The land use chapter of the Comprehensive Plan is relevant to transportation given that land use and transportation planning go hand in hand. The economic development section of the Comprehensive Plan is also particularly relevant to transportation planning, as are the environment, and capital facilities elements.

There were several big policy items included in the 2015 update to the Comprehensive Plan, notably Vision Zero, Complete Streets, Multimodal Level of Service, Technology, Equity and Access, and the intent to develop a Transportation Master Plan.

For 2020, some of the major topics that the Transportation Commission will consider are the Transportation Improvement Program, Vision Zero action plan strategies, Northeastern Bellevue transportation study, Wilburton subarea plan, the I-405 access study, the Transportation Master Plan budget request, the Environmental Sustainability Initiative, and downtown curbside management.

With regard to relationships and responsibilities, Mr. Singelakis noted that the public, the staff and stakeholders provide input to the City Council. The Council in turn assigns work to the city's boards and commissions, which then provide recommendations back to the Council. The Transportation Commission is a creature of the Council and as such needs to receive direction from the Council. That is not to say, however, that the Commission cannot make additional recommendations to the Council in conjunction with the Council liaison.

Mr. Singelakis pointed out that under BCC 3.63.070, which details the powers and duties of the Transportation Commission, it is stated that "The commission shall act in a policy advisory capacity to the city council. The commission may hold public hearings and shall conduct studies, perform analyses, and prepare reports as required by the traffic standards code or requested by the city council. The commission shall review, advise, and make recommendations to the council as needed regarding:" The following are examples of powers and duties: advise/inform City Council; provide detailed study and recommendations on important issues/policies; provide additional eyes and ears for Council on important issues; hold public hearings; and channel public input into Board/Commission recommendations."

Commissioner Bishop observed that the Wilburton subarea study appears to have been put on pause for the last year or so. The draft environmental impact statement was published but the final environmental impact statement has not yet been published. He said it was his understanding the study would next be before the Planning Commission. The Transportation Commission has for some time attempted to make a connection with the Planning Commission, but still the two commissions have never met together. The Wilburton subarea

exercise is one area around which the two commissions could coordinate, not leaving the Transportation Commission to show up after the fact.

Chair Wu asked Mr. Singelakis what issues he intends to focus on. Mr. Singelakis said the most important thing is context. He said transportation planning work is handled differently in different jurisdictions, but he said one guiding principle for him is the multimodal approach. He said during his time in Portland where Washington County had the resources to build capacity improvements, which it undertook with a robust approach, criticism was raised by the rest of the region for adding capacity. While the automobile is a critical part of the transportation future and it will not be going away, there is a critical need to provide for access for other modes of travel. Not planning for those facilities up front will mean planning for them after the fact. Community involvement is absolutely necessary in transportation planning. One approach used by Washington County was sending a flyer to every single household in the county of 600,000 residents asking them to complete a survey. The outcome was a very good database to which information could be pushed out to keep active involvement going.

Commissioner Leitner asked Mr. Singelakis what issue has been raised most by the public during his short tenure with the city. Mr. Singelakis said the bike lane on Main Street has been a big topic, and the comments from the public make it clear that there are two different sides of thinking in the city. Cycling advocates want to see the lanes constructed, but so do some who choose to travel by car and want to see bikes have a facility that will keep them from having to interact directly with automobiles. He said he also has heard a lot about development and what it will mean in terms of the ability of the transportation system to accommodate it.

Councilmember Lee asked Mr. Singelakis to comment on the issue of having the Planning Commission and Transportation Commission meet and collaborate. Mr. Singelakis said he would be willing to take a look at that, but he stressed that the work of the Planning Commission falls under a different city department. He said there have been some internal discussions around what the process might look like. Councilmember Lee said development of the BelRed corridor is a good example of transportation and planning working hand in hand with King County Metro and Sound Transit.

Commissioner Marciante said she is a believer in the need to plan comprehensively. She suggested, however, that before embarking on a program of holding joint meetings there should be some specific structure identified for how all parties will function. The specific roles and responsibilities of each body should be clear up front along with intent, purpose and structure.

Commissioner Teh noted that the Commission is to serve as additional eyes and ears for the Council on important issues, but some clarification is needed in terms of just what that means. He said he also would like to know what the Commission is not using or leveraging that would make it more effective in terms of staff feedback and recommendations to the Council.

4. TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION(ER) ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Marci McReynolds introduced herself as co-manager of the city's Conflict Resolution Center. She explained that the program offers facilitation and mediation for those in the community who have a problem with neighbors, landlords, tenants, a problem in the workplace, and between parents and teens. The Center has facilitated many public meetings and also trains people in the community to serve as facilitators, mediators and conciliators. She noted that she had met with the Chair and Vice Chair and with staff prior to the retreat to look at the issues to

be discussed. The list included how the Commission communicates internally and how it takes in work.

Commissioner Ting said he hoped to see a discussion of the Commission's roles and responsibilities and how they are viewed by the public. He said the Commission has received a lot of feedback from the public about how to vote on certain issues. In that feedback it was clear the public did not understand the role the Transportation Commission plays in making recommendations to the Council. There should be a discussion about how to inform the public about the roles and responsibilities of the Commission so that the public can effectively communicate opinions to the Commission where appropriate, to the Council where appropriate.

Ms. McReynolds suggested the place to start would be to discuss how the Commission sees its role before seeking to educate the public about the role of the Commission.

Chair Wu said the role of the Commission is to make recommendations to the Council, not to make decisions. Additionally, the Commission provides advice and suggestions to the staff along with oversight, but it does not dictate how the staff works or the work done by staff.

Commissioner Marciante added that the Commission advises on policy but it does not create policy. Chair Wu commented that the Commission is part of the policy development process, but ultimately the Council makes policy decisions.

Commissioner Marciante suggested the role of the Commission is to implement Council policy and provide specificity. The Commission can recommend policy, but the Council sets the broad strokes of policy and the Commission moves forward relative to providing a framework and tools and solutions in support of Council policy. Where a Commissioner believes a Council policy is wrong, voicing that personal view should have no place in the work of the Commission. The Commissioners should align their participation with the city's policies.

Commissioner Ting commented that where the Commission is asked to act in its policy advisory capacity within the framework set by the Council, there may opinions on the part of individual Commissioners that should be held to themselves.

Mr. McDonald allowed that there are exceptions to that approach. The Council at times asks the Commission for advice on a particular topic, such as Complete Streets or Vision Zero, where the Council sought from the Commission a recommendation for how to include the concepts in the Comprehensive Plan. The Commission did as requested and those policies are now in the Comprehensive Plan. Additionally, during the Comprehensive Plan update the Commission went through every single policy in the Transportation Element and provided comment on whether it should stay, be modified, or removed. The process also afforded the Commission opportunities to recommend adding new policies, one of which was the recommendation to develop a transportation master plan.

Commissioner Bishop commented that there are some specific tasks assigned to the Commission, such as developing the Transportation Facilities Plan project list. The work of developing the list entails a realm of subset issues around which the Council has not provided any specific direction but for which the Commission must come up with ways of thinking about them, which moves the Commission into the line of setting policy.

Chair Wu stated that Commissioners should avoid imposing their own personal perspectives

and regarding them as city policies.

Commissioner Marciante commented that the situation is different where the Council asks for policy related advice specific to transportation. In terms of the transportation implementation plan, there is a framework in which the Commission does its work, and that includes seeking guidance on the broader policy framework.

Commissioner Ting asked what the venue is by which ideas the Commission has that spring up outside of Council direction can be discussed and recommended. Commissioner Bishop pointed out that the Commission is free to provide suggestions regarding new matters or initiatives the Council might consider.

Mr. Singelakis said the most recent example is the letter submitted to the Council from the Commission in which the suggestion was made to consider the development of a transportation master plan. The Commission should rely on the expertise of staff in drafting letters to the Council in which suggestions are made. He stressed that the Council is not bound to accept such recommendations from the Commission. Mr. McDonald added that there should be consensus among the Commissioners on the content of such letters. Mr. Singelakis pointed out that where the staff disagree with a Commission suggestion, they are also free to share their opinion with the Council. The Commission should not, however, overplay its hand in making unsolicited recommendations.

There was agreement to discuss at a later time the issue of Commissioners addressing the Council directly not as representatives of the Commission but as private citizens, and whether recommendations to the Council need consensus or a mere majority.

Ms. McReynolds triggered a specific discussion of instances in which the staff hold opinions that differ from the Commission. Commissioner Marciante said the Commission benefits from hearing the positions of staff even when they have a different opinion. The staff are very knowledgeable and experienced and it is always important for them to explain their positions, even if the Commission ultimately elects not to accept their advice. She agreed that the staff are free to forward to the Council a separate letter outlining their opposing viewpoints. The staff have always been respectful of the Commission's views.

Ms. Stevens pointed out that in addition to the Commission being allowed to forward suggestions and recommendations to the Council in written format, the Commission is also charged with communicating with the Council on a quarterly basis highlighting major activities, future work plans, changes to work plans and any policy direction requested. The quarterly communication is an opportunity to make suggestions regarding ideas and to seek specific guidance around issues being addressed.

Commissioner Leitner asked if the quarterly communication is something that should be drafted by the Commission rather than the staff. Ms. Stevens said staff stands willing to help craft communications to the Council. The process of crafting should involve conversations with staff in which they share their expert advice.

Commissioner Marciante stated that while the Council would benefit from receiving a quarterly report outlining the accomplishments and current tasks of the Commission, the Commission itself would benefit from seeing on a quarterly basis a review of the work done.

Commissioner Teh agreed the quarterly report would be a good idea and that it would be the

mechanism for staff to offer differing views. Mr. Singelakis said staff's input would include things like resources and the ability to do something the Commission is suggesting.

Chair Wu pointed out that staff provided strong support when the Commission elected to recommend to the Council the creation of a transportation master plan. While the Council chose not to approve the Commission's recommendation to increase the budget to start the work on the transportation master plan, the staff and the Commission will be working together to develop a scope for the work that will ultimately inform a budget request. Strong collaboration between staff and the Commission will yield good outcomes. She added that the Commission should take the responsibility for the content of the quarterly report to the Council.

Commissioner Marciante suggested that a format and structure for the quarterly report should be developed, and the Commission and the staff should work together to see that accomplished. Commissioner Bishop agreed and said a schedule for preparing the quarterly report should also be determined, and it should include time on the agenda to discuss what should be included.

Commissioner Leitner stressed the need to have consensus and final agreement on what gets presented to the Council. Commissioner Marciante agreed and suggested the report should also include minority opinions where they exist relative to specific issues.

Councilmember Lee expressed that in situations when everyone agrees, there are no problems. Where there are disagreements, however, especially with the staff, the reasons behind those disagreements need to be made clear. A quarterly report would be a great channel of communication, the question is how it should be utilized. There would certainly need to be some boundaries built into the framework along with some flexibility. The recommendation from the Commission to develop a transportation master plan was fully embraced by the staff and by the Council. Not every issue, however, will enjoy that level of unanimous support.

Ms. McReynolds turned the focus to the communication pipeline that carries direction from the Council to the staff and then to the Commission. She allowed that there has been some discord around that process.

Chair Wu pointed out that by the time the Commission receives direction to address something, things are very specific and the Commission works with it. She said she feels at times as though the Commission is too constrained by not being allowed input into developing the issues ahead of the full discussion and study process.

Commissioner Teh commented that for much of the direction that comes from the Council, the Commission is left without any context relative to where it fits into the overall plan. There is an unknown quantity about the communications that happen with staff and Council,

Commissioner Marciante stated that as a Commissioner the way she interacts with Council policy is through the reports received as part of agenda items. The reports, prepared by the staff, include a background section and general information about the item. She said in preparing for a discussion she must rely on the packet information and hope that it will provide sufficient context. At times it does, at other times it provides too much context and background information, making it difficult to synthesize, and at other times it does not provide enough context. It would make it easier to have fewer items on a given agenda, allowing for an appropriate time to review the context of issues and to discuss them.

Mr. McDonald commented that because the Commission typically meets only once a month, there is a need to include several items on the agenda for each meeting. When workload dictates and as requested by the Commission, two meetings could be scheduled per month, reducing the workload per meeting and increasing the overall meeting time.

Chair Wu said the meetings need to be structured in a way that will set the Commission up for success. A second meeting in a month should be scheduled as needed to accommodate the workload. Commissioner Marciante agreed and said it would be very helpful to schedule items in a way that will allow studies to proceed in an orderly and cohesive way.

Commissioner Teh said for every agenda item it would be helpful to have an executive summary of no more than a single page. The summary should outline the context and possible outcomes along with a staff recommendation.

Commissioner Ting concurred. He said his process when starting a study involves first reading through the packet materials and thinking about the principles and value systems behind the decisions to be made. It would be helpful if the person putting the packet together could include a clear statement regarding decisions and prioritizations. There should also be full disclosure of all relative data and cause.

Commissioner Leitner commented that in addition to reading through the packet materials, she seeks out and reads the City Council minutes in which the direction given to the Commission is recorded. There should be at the Commission level a conversation about the intent of a given body of work as a way of getting all Commissioners and staff to a level place of understanding.

Commissioner Tropin agreed and suggested that beyond truing interpretations regarding intent there should be a conversation about why the Council wants to see a particular issue studied. Chair Wu added that currently the interpretation of what the Council wants comes from the staff.

Commissioner Bishop commented that when a new issue comes up, like the transportation master plan, the Council general puts out principles that define the basic issue. Before the Council settles on transportation issues, however, the Commission should be allowed to participate in the discussion of what might go into the principles the initiative will rest on.

Commissioner Marciante asked if that would mean the Commission would tell the Council what things are important and in need of a determination, if it would mean the Commission would rank issues for the Council. She said she could agree with an approach that allows the Commission to ask specific questions for the Council to answer in creating an appropriate framework, but would not agree to an approach that would have the Commission participating with the Council in determining what is important and what is not, because policy decisions should be left to the elected officials.

Commissioner Bishop countered that the Commission has the role of infusing the Commission's points of view into the Council process. The Council, before developing a set of principles, should ask the Commission to weigh in on what they might look like. That would set the context.

Mr. McDonald pointed out that the process of developing the principles for the Downtown Transportation Plan was iterative. The Commission recommended a set of principles to the

Council, after which the Council made some recommendations back to the Commission for final recommendation to the Council. The end result was that both the Commission and the Council owned the principles under which the study proceeded.

Commissioner Tropin said he would like to see the Commission brought into the mix even sooner by having the Commission forward to the Council a set of issues the Commission believes to be important.

Commissioner Leitner asked where the staff would fit into that equation. Commissioner Tropin said the Council assigns work to the Commission, but the Commission should work with the staff to provide the Council with issues to consider in developing work to be assigned to the Commission.

Commissioner Ting said the Main Street bike lane project was a learning experience for him. He allowed that he was a proponent of the NE 2nd Street option as an alternative. One of the points of confusion in that process was whether or not the Commission could even offer up NE 2nd Street as a proposal. The answer from staff was to review the direction given from the Council. In developing direction for the Commission, one Councilmember suggested looking at NE 2nd Street, while another said the focus should be on Main Street. In the end, neither the vote taken or the resolution adopted specified one route or the other, leaving things open to interpretation. The Commission ultimately resolved the issue by providing feedback to the Council, but it required extra work in figuring out exactly what the Council had asked for. If NE 2nd Street had been ruled out of the running by clear Council direction, the level of discussion before the Commission would have been greatly reduced.

Ms. McReynolds asked how often the Commission faces different interpretations of the direction from Council. Commissioner Marciante said in her two years on the Commission, the Main Street bike lane project was the only such instance.

Chair Wu commented that context and intent are key to establishing direction for the Commission. Commissioner Marciante concurred and added that the memo outlining the scope of work should be a transparent interpretation of the policy context.

Mr. Singelakis said it would be a good idea to have an annual work plan established for the Commission, with specific points at which the Commission will need to act. The plan does not need to elaborate but it should serve as a roadmap.

Commissioner Ting said he would welcome having an annual work plan and suggested the public would too. He added that when the Council gives direction to the Commission, the public should be aware of the parameters of the direction, and there needs to be a mechanism by which the public receives that information and is allowed to weigh in.

Mr. McDonald agreed that the common approach in the past on both large and small items has been that the staff interpretation of Council direction is the message the Commission receives from staff. Sometimes Council is very specific in giving direction, while at other times there may be a range of options available for approaching a Council-identified issue. The Council is not likely to know the range of options from the start. The staff, though, might know some of the landmines and/or opportunities and partnerships and should use that insight in helping to steer projects in a direction that makes sense given the context. He allowed that staff has not always been transparent in describing that context, particularly where there are landmines involved. One model that has been shown to work involves staff meeting with the Chair and

Vice Chair initially to review upcoming assignments, project context and preliminary project outcomes. That model could be used to embed options into the process in conjunction with staff and the Council liaison. Before marching down a path, the full Commission should be asked to weigh in as well.

Commissioner Marciante suggested that in the end the Commission has no avenue other than to trust what it handed to it. What the Commission needs is information it can trust and rely on in making appropriate decisions. A structure is needed in which the Commission can work through gray areas by relying on the communications received. The structure should include an executive summary that outlines the relevant code, background around the issue, and the information needed to bolster understanding.

Mr. McDonald stated that the current structure of staff memos actually meets that expectation. They include an outline of the Commission's role and background information aimed at providing context. He agreed that restructuring the memos to include an executive summary could help to better communicate the parameters for the discussion that will follow.

Commissioner Marciante asked Councilmember Lee how he felt about the Commission collaborating more with the Council. Councilmember Lee said all Councilmembers appreciate having input from the Commission. The Commission does the work of interacting directly with the public, and the Commission is supposed to represent the perspective of the public. He noted that on occasion Councilmembers will have specific viewpoints based on their knowledge, information and perspective. When they advocate those positions, that can influence the Council and the staff. Surprises can never be eliminated from politics. That is the reason there needs to be an established framework in which questions can be posed and where perspectives can be presented.

Commissioner Ting asked what mechanism is to be used in going back to the Council seeking clarification of a task that has been handed to the Commission. Councilmember Lee said the Council liaison is one mechanism, the staff offer another approach, and the public process is a third. To the extent possible, the staff should not be engaged in politics. Commissioner Ting commented that in the case of the Main Street bike lanes, the Council itself did not have a consistent position, which made it difficult for the Commission to seek clarification. He suggested the Commission should adopt the widest interpretation of ambiguity in terms of direction given that the Commission and staff are all looking to do the right thing.

Commissioner Marciante stated that anything already adopted by the Council as a whole should be made part of the context handed to the Commission. The direction given the Commission from the Council certainly would be developed in light of the context.

Commissioner Leitner said the struggle relative to the Main Street bike lanes project, the context related to a document the Council adopted in 2009. Ten years ago, things in the city did not look like they do now. Commissioner Marciante agreed but pointed out that absent the Council electing to update that document, the 2009 document outlined the most current policy context. The Commission is not free to turn away from a Council-adopted document just because it is ten years old. The Commission can only rely on Council direction and documents that have been approved by the Council.

Chair Wu agreed but pointed out that the 2009 document included a lot of ambiguity. It outlined some high-priority corridors, but it also leaves a lot to the imagination in terms of project design and so forth. The Commission should when necessary call out documents that

are outdated, particularly where it can show things have changed.

Ms. McReynolds asked if, in the moment, there is a pathway open for the Commission to seek specificity from the Council.

Commissioner Bishop observed that the Commission worked on the Main Street bike lanes issue during the summer months, a time when neither the Council or the Commission holds a lot of meetings. There was at the time a desire to have a design made so that something could be constructed during the current construction season. The idea of going back to the Council seeking clarification was held back by virtue of the Council not being scheduled to meet right away.

Commissioner Bishop said he got himself into a bit of trouble with the Council on the issue of voicing a minority report. He said all is well and good where there is unanimity, but where the full Commission does not agree on an outcome, things are more difficult. The Commission did receive some direction from the Council and directly from the Mayor about how to do a minority report to the Council, which was useful. On the occasion of the Transportation Facilities Plan report, the decision of the Commission was made on the strength of a 4-3 vote, and he said he felt compelled to communicate to the Council the minority position. Doing so, however, resulted in a public lecture from the Mayor for speaking as a Commissioner and not as a public citizen.

Chair Wu asked for a reiteration of the Commission's areas of agreement relative to the discussion of roles and responsibilities of the Commission. Ms. Daniels allowed that tensions were highlighted relative to gray areas. She noted that there was agreement about the need to have a channel for expressing ideas, which could take the form of a letter to the Council drafted with the assistance of the staff. Also agreed to was the notion of reporting quarterly to the Council.

Ms. McReynolds pointed out that the Commission had not jointly read over the document outlining the Commission's power and duties and limitations. She asked the Commissioners if there was anything in the document about which they were unclear.

Chair Wu voiced her understanding of the Commission's roles and responsibilities and stressed that they vary to some degree for each assignment from the Council. Commissioner Marciante suggested it would be helpful for staff to include in the executive summary for each assignment a clear outline of the Commission's specific activities relative to the outline of the Commission's overall roles and responsibilities. Commissioner Leitner agreed that would provide a great deal of clarity.

* BREAK *

Ms. McReynolds took a moment to review the areas of agreement concerning the quarterly report to the Council. She noted that the report would serve as an update of the Commission's successes and would outline the work under way. She said there had been agreement that the report should also include a section for ideas, suggestions and proposals. The report should rely on a template and should be drafted in collaboration with the staff. There should also be a dedicated time quarterly for completing and submitting the report to the Council. Consensus around the contents of the report is not necessarily required.

In terms of the packet memos regarding Commission assignments, Ms. McReynolds said the

Commission had agreed they should include an executive summary in which the scope of work and the direction from Council are clear. The memo should put all assigned work in context of the big picture, and should include an outline of all options considered by the staff, including those rejected. The memo should candidly outline the recommendations of the staff, should include relative data, and should include the pertinent principles and relative background information as part of being clear about context. She noted it had also been agreed on that the staff would work with the Chair and Vice Chair to revise the template for the staff memos.

Ms. McReynolds noted the Commission had also indicated a need to have a mechanism for gaining clarity from the Council, and what to do about a perceived ambiguity. One decision made was that where there is ambiguity, the Commission will simply decide for itself what that means.

Commissioner Marciante said where the Commission becomes aware of differing interpretations given the context, there should be a mechanism in which everyone has an opportunity to identify their own interpretation. The process should include a vote as a way of coming to a majority understanding and the context on which future decisions will be made. Where appropriate, the assumptions under which the Commission worked on an issue should be made known to the Council. By way of example, she said in a case such as the Main Street bike lane, some might say any decision should be based on the adopted Pedestrian/Bicycle Plan, while someone else might argue that in fact the plan, or specific sections of it, are outdated and no longer apply. The Commission would have a full deliberation and a vote, and the outcome of the vote would become a part of the context on which to base the ultimate decision.

Ms. Stevens voiced support for the approach and added that it could prevent the need to continually go back and revisit the issues that triggered a full discussion and a vote of the Commission.

Commissioner Tropin asked if it would be reasonable for the Commission to advise the Council to make changes to adopted policy, such as the Pedestrian/Bicycle Plan, where deemed to be outdated. Commissioner Marciante suggested such an action would certainly follow should the Commission decide something is no longer relevant. Such a recommendation could be included in the Commission's quarterly report to the Council.

Ms. McReynolds stated that the Commission had also agreed with the need to educate the public about what the Commission is and is not, and what it can do and what it cannot do. Also talked about was using the bylaws as a guideline for describing the role of the Commission for each task assigned to it.

Commissioner Ting suggested one way to keep the public informed as to the role of the Commission would be to make a statement in association with public comments at meetings. Commissioner Marciante said it would be even better to include in the packet for every project exactly what role the Commission is to play. Commissioner Ting agreed and stressed the need for the packets to show up on Mondays, not Thursdays.

5. IMPROVING THE TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION MEETING PROCESS

Ms. McReynolds asked the Commissioners to comment on what is going right in Commission meetings. Commissioner Ting said he appreciated the fact that the Commissioners are fairly polite about being recognized by the Chair before speaking. That makes the meetings run

smoother.

Commissioner Marciante said she likes the way the Chair takes the temperature of the room, avoiding long soapbox speeches where there is in fact agreement. The approach helps to identify areas of agreement and disagreement, which helps to focus the discussions.

Commissioner Tropin noted his appreciation for the way in which the Chair includes everyone in the discussion.

Chair Wu said there have been some really good presentations from the staff.

Mr. Singelakis agreed that the Commission meetings are very cordial.

Mr. McDonald voiced appreciation for the fact that the Commissioners pay attention to the packet materials before each meeting. That helps in achieving more fulfilling conversations and making progress. Commissioner Leitner agreed and said the briefings are in fact very helpful and important. By consuming them, Commissioners can come to meetings better prepared and informed. Commissioner Marciante added that the briefings make the presentations even better.

Commissioner Tropin said pre-meeting surveys, like the one the Chair sent around prior to the retreat, are a good way of setting the stage for discussions.

Commissioner Marciante commented that the packet materials do an excellent job of setting the stage for the upcoming meeting. However, if the work program document were to include references to policy context, the Commissioners would be afforded ample time to do research well in advance of meetings.

Ms. Stevens said she appreciated that the Commissioners bring to the table a high level of intellect, thoughtfulness and inquisitiveness. Those strengths aid in working with the Council and staff on behalf of the community.

Ms. McReynolds turned the focus to improvements that should be made.

Chair Wu commented that the preparation meetings to plan for upcoming meetings she has been having with the staff have proven to be very helpful and said she intended to continue them.

Commissioner Ting said the Commission had talked in the past about having more than just one or two meetings on controversial topics before having to make a decision. He said that approach would preclude having to reach conclusions in too much of a hurry. Commissioner Marciante agreed and added that the staff should be very clear defining the why behind scheduling additional discussions on controversial topics.

Commissioner Leitner reiterated the need to be respectful in tone and action. Everyone has a voice and wants to be heard, and there are ways to articulate points of view without getting heated. Expanding on that point, Commissioner Ting stressed the need for Commissioners to think about their values and principles. At the end of the day, every Commissioner is all about making Bellevue a better city. How to get there is open to interpretation and that will lead to disagreements, so everyone should keep in mind the objective of making Bellevue a better city.

Commissioner Teh stressed the need to avoid adding too many personal opinions. That may require establishing some ground rules about minding both language and tone.

Commissioner Marciante allowed that there are different ways of making Bellevue a better city. Commissioners should be respectful when providing opinions. A little personal perspective can help to clarify a statement as an opinion rather than a stated fact.

Commissioner Teh said he welcomes hearing the opinions of Commissioners, but not soapbox statements. When statements are simply repeated, they begin to sound like soapbox statements. Commissioner Marciante agreed and suggested the Chair should step in to stop reiterated statements.

Commissioner Leitner suggested Commissioners should keep in mind the WAIT principle, which is an acronym for "Why Am I Talking".

Commissioner Ting highlighted the need for Commissioners to focus on new information and analysis. If something is stated more than once, without anything new added, it should be considered soapboxing. That is where the WAIT principle should be applied. Additionally, he noted that as citizens of Bellevue, each Commissioner brings to the table their own values and what they share is a part of what Bellevue thinks. Data can be used in many different ways, but having data-based discussions, whether it be about numbers or studies and best practices, the data and any analysis needs to be viewed objectively, giving care to avoid relying too much on individual value systems in discussions. Data is data and cannot be judged differently based on one's individual value systems.

Commissioner Tropin agreed that all discussions should begin with data. He stressed, however, that limited data will hinder the process. Commissioner Teh agreed and suggested that where someone challenges the staff in regard to data, it should be done respectfully, especially given that staff are the ones who have done all the research.

Commissioner Bishop commented that data is very important to him and stressed the importance of the Commission looking at the data and understanding what it says. The Commission makes decisions based on the data and should do so appropriately and respectfully.

Chair Wu proposed putting the Commission's work plan of upcoming projects on the agenda for an upcoming meeting to allow the Commissioners opportunities to ask questions and offer comments. She stressed the need for the Commission and the staff to work as a team while maintaining independence from each other.

Chair Wu stated that the Commission is bound by the Open Public Meetings Act and the Public Records Act. Assistant City Attorney Monica Buck advises both the transportation department and the Commission and is an excellent resource when questions arise.

Commissioner Marciante observed that the first meeting in which Commissioners Leitner and Ting participated in was very contentious. She said her perception was that that meeting, and others where there have been conflicts, were very difficult. The topic was contentious for a year and she said it took her a long time to work out what the Commission was doing and why. The contentiousness arose from the difficult topic and issue, a lack of understanding of the role of the Commission, and the ambiguity of policy. The process was unsatisfactory and left her feeling uncertain about the choices made by the Commission, and it brought to light the feeling

that things could be better.

Ms. McReynolds asked if some of the tools discussed during the retreat will help to address potentially contentious issues. Commissioner Marciante said they definitely will. The practices put into motion following the Commission's retreat in 2018 helped to improve the process as well. Things will never be perfect and there will always be contentious issues.

Councilmember Lee said the world is not a perfect place. Everything the city addresses is a work in progress. He praised the Commissioners for finding ways to work together and to complement each other in working for the benefit of the city. The purpose of a retreat is to address past experiences and seek to build on them and improve processes and outcomes. During the upcoming year the Commission will tackle a number of issues and projects and when it meets for its next retreat, the issue of how things can be done better will once again be on the table. Dedication and a willingness to work is what makes the work of the Commission successful. Policies originate with the Council, but admittedly the Council has been a source of confusion. That is just reality. Nothing good happens by accident. When the Commission works closely with the staff and the Commission, good things happen. He thanked the Commissioners for their optimism and dedication.

Ms. McReynolds said she would type up her meeting notes and make them available to the Commission.

6. LOOKING FORWARD

Mr. McDonald confirmed that there would be no Commission meeting on October 24. He said he would seek a date to reschedule the topic for that meeting. The Commission's November 14 meeting has been scheduled for the Crossroads Community Center.

7. ADJOURN

A motion to adjourn was made by Commissioner Ting. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Teh and the motion carried unanimously.

Chair Wu adjourned the meeting at 9:08 p.m.

Ken McDonald — 11/14/19

Secretary to the Transportation Commission — Date

[signature] — 11/14/2019

Chairperson of the Transportation Commission — Date