

CITY OF BELLEVUE  
CITY COUNCIL

Summary Minutes of Extended Study Session

May 13, 2019  
6:00 p.m.

Council Conference Room  
Bellevue, Washington

PRESENT: Mayor Chelminiak, Deputy Mayor Robinson, and Councilmembers Lee, Robertson, Stokes<sup>1</sup>, and Zahn

ABSENT: Councilmember Nieuwenhuis

1. Approval of Agenda

The meeting was called to order at 6:03 p.m., with Mayor Chelminiak presiding.

→ Deputy Mayor Robinson moved to approve the agenda, and Councilmember Robertson seconded the motion.

→ The motion carried by a vote of 5-0.

(a) Affordable Housing Week Proclamation

Deputy Mayor Robinson read the proclamation recognizing the week of May 13-17, 2019, as Affordable Housing Week in Bellevue.

Joel Ing, representing the Housing Development Consortium Board of Directors, thanked the Council for the proclamation and for its continued support of affordable housing.

Rachel Krinsky, Executive Director of LifeWire, thanked the Council for recognizing the urgent need for affordable housing. She said LifeWire provides services to victims of domestic violence, who often do not have access to financial resources. She noted that survivors of domestic violence are among those most likely to become homeless. Ms. Krinsky encouraged the City to continue to seek additional resources and solutions to address homelessness.

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<sup>1</sup> Councilmember Stokes arrived at approximately 6:20 p.m.

Donata Brenner, case manager with Hopelink, noted that the goal of Affordable Housing Week is to highlight the level of need and potential solutions. She encouraged everyone to participate in related events throughout the week.

Mayor Chelminiak thanked the guests for their work and noted that affordable housing is a high priority for both the City and Bellevue residents and businesses.

(b) National Kids to Parks Day Proclamation

Councilmember Robertson read the proclamation declaring May 18, 2019, as National Kids to Parks Day in Bellevue and encouraged all residents to take the children in their lives to a park.

Dustin VanNieulande, Park Ranger, thanked the Council for the proclamation and for the continued support of Bellevue's park system.

(c) National Police Week Proclamation

Mayor Chelminiak read the proclamation recognizing the week of May 12-18, 2019, as National Police Week in Bellevue. He noted that May 15 is Peace Officer Memorial Day in honor of fallen officers.

Carl Kleinknecht, Assistant Police Chief, thanked the City Manager, City Council, and the community for their support of the Bellevue Police Department. He noted that 144 officers nationwide, with an average age of 37 years old, were killed in 2018 and approximately 60,000 officers are seriously assaulted every year. Two officers in Washington were lost this year: Ryan Thompson, Kittitas County Sheriff's Office and Justin DeRosier, Cowlitz County Sheriff's Office.

2. Oral Communications

- (a) Paul Tefft spoke in support of the 108<sup>th</sup> Avenue NE bikeway project. As a public transit operator, he said traffic is more predictable and safety has been improved. He suggested improvements at 108<sup>th</sup> Avenue NE and NE 12<sup>th</sup> Street, where vehicles turning right conflict with bikes traveling northbound.
- (b) Claire Martini, representing the Cascade Bicycle Club, thanked the City for implementing the 108<sup>th</sup> Avenue NE demonstration bikeway project in 2018. She expressed support for the Transportation Commission's recommendation to retain and enhance the bike lane. She encouraged the City to build an east-west bike path connection in 2019.
- (c) Sue Amorosi expressed support for the 108<sup>th</sup> Avenue NE bikeway project. She commutes by bike from Kirkland to Bellevue and appreciates the bike lane's safety improvements as well as the connections to other bike routes.
- (d) Vishnu Mangipudi, representing the Bellevue Youth Link Climate Action Team, expressed support for the City's efforts to mitigate the effects of climate change. He

expressed concern regarding the negative impacts of hurricanes and flooding on agriculture. He thanked the Council for allocating \$100,000 toward the Environmental Stewardship Initiative (ESI) plan update and for addressing climate change issues in Bellevue. He said he looks forward to strong, effective, and measurable actions.

### 3. Executive Session

At 6:35 p.m., Mayor Chelminiak declared recess to Executive Session for approximately 25 minutes to discuss one item of property acquisition and one item of property disposition.

At 7:01 p.m., the Executive Session was extended. The meeting resumed at 7:12 p.m.

### 4. Study Session Items

#### (a) Council Business and New Initiatives

- Councilmember Zahn moved to excuse Deputy Mayor Robinson from the May 20 and May 28, 2019 Council meetings. Councilmember Stokes seconded the motion.
- The motion carried by a vote of 5-0, with Councilmember Robertson temporarily away from the table.

#### (b) Diversity and Inclusion at the Bellevue Botanical Garden

City Manager Brad Miyake introduced discussion regarding the efforts of the Bellevue Botanical Garden to incorporate diversity and inclusion in their operations.

Nancy Kartes, Manager of Bellevue Botanical Garden, recalled that the garden opened to the public in 1992. She noted that the American Public Gardens Association defines best practices for public gardens that align well with the City's Diversity Advantage Plan.

Sue Johnson, Co-President of the Bellevue Botanical Garden Society, said the garden is free and open every day.

Ms. Kartes said the City adopted the Diversity Advantage Plan in 2014, which coincided with the opening of the garden's new visitor and education centers. All garden staff participated in cultural competency and implicit bias training, and Diversity Advantage team members worked with the garden's docents and other stakeholders to share information about the increasingly diverse population in Bellevue. Ms. Kartes said the garden conducted a survey to learn more about the visitors and why they visited.

Ms. Johnson said the garden involved multiple stakeholders in identifying barriers to inclusion and exploring strategies to remove those barriers. In 2017, the City's Diversity Advantage team gave a presentation to the leaders of all 10 Botanical Garden partner organizations. The garden formed its own diversity committee comprised of garden staff, Bellevue Botanical Garden Society staff, and volunteers. The committee identified three areas of focus: 1) deeper

engagement with the diverse visitor audience, 2) the establishment of connections with communities in which English is a second language, and 3) an intentional, inclusive approach to volunteers, members, staff, and leaders to better reflect and represent the community.

Ms. Johnson said the garden engaged the Russian-speaking community and formed relationships through a cultural exchange program with Russian gardens. The garden participated in a work program for differently abled young adults and audited the garden site to evaluate physical accessibility.

Ms. Kartes said the garden created a welcome brochure in 2018 that is translated into the top five languages spoken in Bellevue households. She said the garden is exploring ways to engage with the Japanese community as it prepares for the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Bellevue's Sister City relationship with Yao, Japan. The garden's education programs accommodate children with special learning and physical needs.

Ms. Johnson noted that private funding provided more benches. The concrete ramp to replace gravel will be built in June with funding from the Bellevue Botanical Garden Society and the Tateuchi Foundation. She said the garden is developing a new volunteer group of multilingual greeters and will partner with the Chinese immigrant community to offer programming.

Ms. Johnson invited everyone to visit the garden through May 19 to celebrate National Public Gardens Week. Ms. Kartes said the botanical garden's work is attracting attention, and she has been invited to serve on a panel at the American Public Gardens Association's annual conference in Washington, D.C., in June. The garden will host a regional diversity and inclusion workshop this fall, and the City's Diversity Advantage team will serve as facilitators for the workshop.

Mayor Chelminiak thanked staff for the presentation.

Councilmember Robertson said the garden is such an important part of the community. She looks forward to visiting the garden with the delegation from Yao in November.

Deputy Mayor Robinson said she visited the garden on Mother's Day and was pleased to see the improvements to accommodate all visitors and to provide paved paths. She thanked the presenters for their efforts to be inclusive with the community.

Councilmember Stokes recalled the dedication of the Ravine Experience swinging bridge and other events at the garden over the years. He thanked the garden staff and supporters for their leadership in expanding the garden's community outreach.

Councilmember Lee complimented the garden for providing a beautiful public space and for reflecting the City's commitment to diversity and inclusion.

Councilmember Zahn said she recently attended an event featuring the Bellevue Youth Symphony Orchestra, with the musicians playing throughout the garden. She was pleased to see the multilingual greeters and the diverse crowd. Responding to Ms. Zahn, Ms. Kartes said the garden has plants from around the world.

Responding to Mayor Chelminiak, Ms. Kartes said the garden has approximately 400,000 visitors annually. Mr. Chelminiak thanked staff and the Bellevue Botanical Garden Society for their hard work.

(c) Cultural Compass Plan Update Process

City Manager Miyake introduced discussion regarding the update of the Cultural Compass plan.

Jesse Canedo, Chief Economic Development Officer, noted that the arts are an important component of economic development and the overall quality of life in Bellevue.

Joshua Heim, Arts Manager, said the Cultural Compass plan was adopted in 2004 with the objective for Bellevue to become the cultural center of the Eastside. Staff is seeking Council direction to conduct a cultural needs assessment and to update the Strategic Vision and Core Initiatives outlined in the plan. Mr. Heim said the four core initiatives of the plan are participation, art/cultural districts, leadership, and visibility. A primary goal of the plan is to increase cultural participation and learning for children and families. He highlighted examples of Bellevue's cultural organizations including Bellevue Youth Theatre, Pacific Northwest Ballet, KidsQuest Children's Museum, Environmental Education Center at Mercer Slough, and Music Works Northwest.

Mr. Heim commented regarding the impact of the 2008 recession on arts organizations, the community's changing demographics, and the need for space. He said Bellevue has a growing presence of culturally specific, ethnic-based organizations that are providing important cultural connections within the community. He noted that many of the organizations are staffed by volunteers, and partnerships are a key strategy in the Cultural Compass plan. Mr. Heim said the annual strawberry festival has been discontinued, as well as the Bellevue Festival for the Arts, which is one component of the Bellevue Arts Museum (BAM) arts fair weekend in late July.

Mr. Heim suggested updating the 2004 Cultural Compass Vision to more closely match the current City Council Vision. Staff recommends revising the strategic vision and core initiatives, which are in the first chapter of the nine-chapter Cultural Compass plan. The goal is to develop a bold vision for the arts in Bellevue and a solid cultural development model to guide future activities. Phase 1 of the update process is to conduct a cultural needs assessment through a resident survey, cultural community survey, and other forms of public outreach (e.g., EngagingBellevue.com). Phase 2 is a strategic visioning process involving the Arts Commission, City Council, cultural community, and others.

Mr. Heim said the next steps are to conduct the cultural needs assessment and to provide an update to the Council. Staff anticipates that the strategic visioning process will begin with the Arts Commission in the late fall. Council approval of the updated Cultural Compass plan is scheduled for Spring 2020.

Councilmember Stokes, liaison to the Arts Commission, spoke about the importance of cultural success as an economic driver for the community. He expressed support for moving forward with the needs assessment. He said that integrating the Cultural Compass plan with the City's

broader cultural and artistic vision is important and related to community and economic development.

Councilmember Lee noted that cultural activities are the heart of the community. He expressed support for moving forward with the needs assessment. He said he appreciated the proposed next steps to update the Cultural Compass plan, and he suggested a more frequent review of the plan in the future.

Councilmember Zahn said she likes that the plan refers to facilities that teach and inspire individuals. Responding to Ms. Zahn, Mr. Heim confirmed that investments in public art are typically included in the capital budgets for specific projects. He noted that the next large public art process will focus on the Downtown Park. He said Community Development staff is working with the Transportation Department on several BelRed projects, including the development of the 130<sup>th</sup> Avenue area.

Ms. Zahn suggested a survey of visitors and others in the region. She expressed an interest in seeing how this process will tie in with the City's study related to cross-cultural programming. Mr. Heim said the update of the Cultural Compass plan will involve a cultural coordinating committee comprised of City staff to provide input and to avoid the duplication of efforts by different departments.

Councilmember Robertson expressed support for moving forward with the update process. She concurred with Councilmember Lee's suggestion to schedule regular updates of the Cultural Compass plan. Ms. Robertson noted that the City's public art incentive has been effective.

Ms. Robertson said she did not support the suggestion to conduct public outreach beyond Bellevue. She noted that some of the groups to be involved in the process include individuals from outside of Bellevue. She suggested it would be helpful for the project team to meet with every Board and Commission to solicit their input. She suggested reaching out to the Bellevue Chamber of Commerce, Bellevue Downtown Association (BDA), and the Bellevue School District as well.

Responding to Councilmember Robertson, Mr. Heim said that, last year, the City piloted the cultural liaison program in the grants process and offered technical assistance in six languages. The same cultural liaisons were involved in the cross-cultural programming study. Ms. Robertson encouraged public outreach in a number of languages other than English. She questioned the meaning of the term "cultural communities." Mr. Heim said the definition in the Cultural Compass plan refers to the full range of fine and traditional art forms, the humanities, as well as the history and heritage of this community and the region. It refers to the built environment as well as the traditions of all Bellevue residents, both longtime and newly arrived. Councilmember Robertson thanked the Arts Commissioners for their work.

Deputy Mayor Robinson said the community's arts and cultural components are the essence of what Bellevue is as a community. She suggested it will continue to be important to invest in the arts as Bellevue grows. She asked about engaging students of the Bellevue Essentials program in the strategic visioning process. Mr. Canedo said staff will coordinate with the program.

Mayor Chelminiak thanked staff for the presentation. Responding to Mr. Chelminiak, Mr. Heim said the Festival of the Arts was the portion of the BAM arts fair located outside of the former Cost Plus store. Mr. Heim said the property is under redevelopment, and that component of the larger arts fair could not find an alternate location.

Mr. Chelminiak expressed concern about plans to discontinue the strawberry festival. He noted he has received feedback that the event had become overly focused on vendors instead of on the heritage of Bellevue.

Mr. Chelminiak suggested coordinating with the Theatre at Meydenbauer Center to explore their cross-cultural programming. He recalled that the Cultural Compass envisions Bellevue as the cultural center of the Eastside. He suggested it would be beneficial to involve other arts organizations in the region to determine how they view Bellevue.

Responding to Mayor Chelminiak, Mr. Heim said staff will return in late fall with the results of the needs assessment. At that time, staff will request Council direction regarding the core priorities to incorporate into the vision.

At 8:16 p.m., Mayor Chelminiak declared a short break. The meeting resumed at 8:24 p.m.

(d) Downtown Bikeway Projects: Assessment and Proposed Next Steps

City Manager Miyake introduced staff's update regarding the 108<sup>th</sup> Avenue NE demonstration bikeway project and the potential for a Main Street bike lane between Bellevue Way and 108<sup>th</sup> Avenue NE. The Transportation Commission is seeking Council direction to evaluate the proposed Main Street bike lane project.

Paula Stevens, Interim Transportation Director, opened discussion regarding the two Downtown bikeway projects. She recalled that the Council adopted the Pedestrian and Bicycle Transportation Plan in 2009, which reflected the City's commitment to implement bicycling facilities in Bellevue, including one north-south and one east-west corridor by 2014. The Bicycle Rapid Implementation Plan released in April 2016 provided staff and the Transportation Commission with the tools to guide the implementation of the bicycle corridors. The neighborhood transportation levy approved by the voters in November 2016 includes funding for bicycle facilities as well.

Staff worked with the Transportation Commission, Bellevue Downtown Association, and the overall community to gather input regarding the implementation of bike projects in the Downtown. In 2018, the Council expressed support for implementing a demonstration bicycle project along 108<sup>th</sup> Avenue NE.

Franz Loewenherz, Principal Transportation Planner, recalled that, on February 5, 2018, the Council provided direction to staff to evaluate the before and after conditions along 108<sup>th</sup> Avenue NE and to work with the Transportation Commission to develop an assessment framework. Staff met with the Commission on April 12, 2018, at which time the Commission endorsed an assessment framework informed by input from the BDA, industry best practices,

and guidance documents from other communities. The framework focused on safety, efficiency, and livability factors. Prior to the July 2018 opening of the 108<sup>th</sup> Avenue NE bike lane, staff collected data from the City's traffic signal control system, bluetooth readers, thermal sensors, and other technologies, as well as through discussions with the community in the form of online questionnaires and conversations with residents, businesses, transit operators, and others.

Mr. Loewenherz said staff presented the results of the assessment to the Transportation Commission on March 28, 2019. He said there were no changes in Police-reported collisions during the demonstration bikeway project. The community survey indicated that 64 percent of drivers liked the enhanced separation between cars and bicycles, and 87 percent of cyclists reported that they feel safer and more comfortable. There was an 18 percent decrease in bicycle riding on sidewalks, which enhanced the pedestrian experience.

In terms of efficiency, the 108<sup>th</sup> Avenue NE corridor maintained motor vehicle throughput at intersections and travel times for both cars and buses. The bikeway project avoided shifting traffic to other downtown streets. There was a 35 percent increase in bicycle ridership, and 56 percent of the individuals who have biked along 108<sup>th</sup> Avenue NE agreed that additional physical separation is warranted to enhance the experience. Mr. Loewenherz noted potential project refinements to enhance the experience along the corridor including adding regulatory signage, elevating the bikeway to reduce conflicts with vehicles, installing bike signals at intersections, and adding planter boxes and curbing.

Transportation Commission Chair Lei Wu said the Transportation Commission voted 4-2 in favor of retaining the 108<sup>th</sup> Avenue NE bikeway and implementing refinements to the corridor based on community feedback and staff's observations. She said the project has been a success to date and the Commission looks forward to additional refinements.

Ms. Wu said the Transportation Commission is seeking Council direction to evaluate a potential Main Street bike lane project and to report back to the Council. She noted the availability of neighborhood safety, connectivity and congestion levy funds to implement one or more additional bikeways in the downtown. If directed by the Council, Ms. Wu said the Commission will discuss the project further during its May 23 meeting. She said Bellevue staff has been invited to the June 5 meeting of the Bellevue Downtown Association's transportation committee to discuss bikeway projects.

Councilmember Robertson expressed interest in an analysis of the per-person throughput for both the 108<sup>th</sup> Avenue NE project and the Main Street project. She recalled that the 108<sup>th</sup> Avenue NE bikeway was originally intended to be a year-long project. Noting that four months of data has been provided, she expressed an interest in a full year of data. Responding to Ms. Robertson, Ms. Stevens said staff's plan is to continue the 108<sup>th</sup> Avenue NE project and to implement refinements. Ms. Robertson said she would prefer a Council discussion before deciding whether to make the bikeway permanent.

Councilmember Zahn suggested an analysis of curbside pick-up and drop-off locations along 108<sup>th</sup> Avenue NE. She thanked the Transportation Commission for moving this initiative forward.



Deputy Mayor Robinson thanked staff for the 108<sup>th</sup> Avenue NE demonstration bikeway project. Responding to Ms. Robinson, Mr. Loewenherz said staff's intent is to keep the thermal sensors in place to monitor usage. However, staff recommends redeploying the bluetooth readers to measure travel times on the proposed Main Street bikeway. Mr. Loewenherz said staff does not anticipate that there would be significant changes in the project's performance with longer term data collection. He suggested that staff will hear from the public if the 108<sup>th</sup> Avenue NE bikeway project begins causing problems. In further response, Mr. Loewenherz said the 108<sup>th</sup> Avenue corridor is specifically referenced in the 2009 Pedestrian and Bicycle Plan as part of the Enatai-Northtowne connection.

Ms. Stevens acknowledged that there have been concerns in the community regarding the use of a portion of the right-of-way for bicycling facilities. She said it is also the first time for the rapid implementation of this type of project. She anticipates that there will be increased ridership during the summer. However, additional benefits of the bikeway are enhanced safety and a more enjoyable cycling experience.

Councilmember Stokes thanked the Transportation Commission for its thorough review. He is comfortable with the continuation of the 108<sup>th</sup> Avenue NE bikeway. He noted that the City committed to implementing the Pedestrian and Bicycle Plan.

Councilmember Lee asked whether the Transportation Commission discussed the curbside pick-up and drop-off issue and/or per-person throughput. Ms. Wu said that pick-up and drop-off impacts were analyzed, and some of those locations were moved to other streets. She said the impacts on vehicular travel was an important consideration for the Commission as well. Mr. Lee said he is satisfied that the Commission has done its work.

Mayor Chelminiak said this a great example of Bellevue doing things right and it should be celebrated. He said the 108<sup>th</sup> Avenue NE bikeway has not adversely affected traffic, and both drivers and cyclists feel safer and more comfortable. He noted that the bikeway projects are implementing the adopted policy of the City. He sees the bikeway project as a complete success.

Councilmember Robertson said she is supportive of the 108<sup>th</sup> Avenue NE project. However, she would like to receive one year's worth of data when it becomes available. She noted that she would like to see data regarding per-person throughput for any project that is repurposing pavement to another travel mode.

Mayor Chelminiak noted that vehicle traffic has not been affected by the project and throughput has not been diminished. He suggested moving to discuss the proposed Main Street bike lane project.

Councilmember Lee acknowledged that further analysis would be helpful. He noted the letter to the Council from the Bellevue Chamber of Commerce regarding the proposed project.

Ms. Wu recalled that previous community outreach identified Main Street as the second priority bikeway project. She said the purpose and design of the project is relatively simple and straightforward. She said she did not think significant public engagement is needed, given the

earlier public process. However, Ms. Wu expressed support for providing the opportunity for additional community input.

Councilmember Lee said he would like to see further discussion of the Main Street bikeway proposal by staff, the Transportation Commission, and the Council.

Councilmember Zahn said the City made a commitment to implementing the Pedestrian and Bicycle Plan and to incorporating Vision Zero elements into the transportation system. Ms. Zahn suggested that staff review the new law dictating how vehicles should pass bicyclists to determine the anticipated impact, if any, on throughput. She acknowledged the need for an east-west bike route.

Responding to Ms. Zahn, Mr. Loewenherz said the preliminary assessment described in Attachment F in the meeting packet summarizes the analysis to date on the two Main Street project alternatives. The analysis considered the average delay and seconds per vehicle at intersections along the corridor as well as overall travel times. He acknowledged that certain individuals have reservations about the 2017 analysis of the Main Street and Bellevue Way intersection, and there are also concerns about the potential additional delay reflected in Alternative 2.

Mr. Loewenherz said the Main Street bikeway project covers approximately one mile. The repurposed segment of the roadway covers only 0.2 miles for Alternative 2. The 108<sup>th</sup> Avenue NE bikeway is a two-mile project with 0.5 miles of repurposed roadway. Mr. Loewenherz noted that the two bike projects represent 1.7 percent of the total general purpose lane miles in the downtown.

Deputy Mayor Robinson recalled that a previous traffic analysis indicated that adding the bike lane on Main Street would not affect vehicular traffic flow. She noted that Main Street is the missing link in the Lake to Lake trail system. She expressed support for the project based on safety, climate change, economic development, and transportation mobility. She thanked staff for their work.

Councilmember Stokes spoke in support of moving forward with directing the Transportation Commission to evaluate the potential Main Street bike lane project and to report back to the Council.

Councilmember Robertson said she typically is not interested in reworking projects that were established by a previous City Council. However, she noted that only two of the current seven Councilmembers were on the Council in 2009 when the Pedestrian and Bicycle Plan was adopted. She said there have been significant changes in the downtown since that time and more changes are coming with future I-405 projects, including potential changes to the interchange involving NE 2<sup>nd</sup> Street and/or Main Street. The Grand Connection project is a new element as well.

Ms. Robertson suggested studying NE 2<sup>nd</sup> Street for the potential of a bike lane in the future. She said it might be beneficial to shift the Main Street bike lane to NE 2<sup>nd</sup> Street at some point. She said that would likely be safer for cyclists and have a lesser impact on throughput.

Councilmember Robertson said she would like to see data for the traffic conditions on Main Street prior to the addition of the bike lane. She suggested that a bike lane on NE 2<sup>nd</sup> Street might have a lesser impact on the residents of the Surrey Downs and Bellecrest neighborhoods, which are already experiencing traffic revisions and limited access due to the light rail project.

Ms. Robertson said she wants to ensure that the Transportation Commission studies the alternatives including per-person throughput, impacts on Surrey Downs and Bellecrest, and the total Main Street bike lane project impacts at intersections.

Mayor Chelminiak encouraged an analysis of the effects of the rechannelization of the intersection at Bellevue Way and Main Street versus the effects of the existing bike lane. He expressed support for the proposed Main Street bikeway project. However, he expressed concern regarding the configuration of the intersection at Main Street and 108<sup>th</sup> Avenue.

- Councilmember Stokes moved to direct the Transportation Commission to evaluate a potential Main Street bike lane project, followed by an update to the Council. Councilmember Robertson seconded the motion.
- The motion carried by a vote of 6-0.

Mayor Chelminiak thanked the Transportation Commission and staff for their work.

5. Council Discussion of Upcoming Items: None.
6. Continued Oral Communications: None.

At 9:32 p.m., Mayor Chelminiak declared the meeting adjourned.

Karin Roberts, CMC  
Deputy City Clerk

/kaw