

CITY OF BELLEVUE
CITY COUNCIL

Summary Minutes of Study Session

December 2, 2019
6:00 p.m.

Council Conference Room
Bellevue, Washington

PRESENT: Mayor Chelminiak, Deputy Mayor Robinson, and Councilmembers Lee, Nieuwenhuis, Robertson, Stokes, and Zahn

ABSENT: None.

1. Executive Session

The meeting was called to order at 6:03 p.m., with Mayor Chelminiak presiding. He noted the addition of an Executive Session at the end of the Study Session agenda.

2. Study Session Items

(a) Update of Bellevue Economic Development Plan

City Manager Brad Miyake introduced discussion regarding the update of the Economic Development Plan.

Jesse Canedo, Chief Economic Development Officer, introduced Tony DeLisi and John Rees of Avalanche Consulting. Mr. Canedo said this is the fourth in a series of discussions with the Council regarding the process to update the Economic Development Plan.

Philippa Marsh, Economic Development Manager, said staff released a request for proposals (RFP) in July to identify a consultant to assist with the City's update to its Economic Development Plan. She recalled the 2020 plan objectives including support for the creative economy, small businesses, and retail activity; the identification of best practices for integrating new businesses into the community; support of capacity building for community groups; the integration of key recommendations from the Tourism Plan; support for local workforce development; and modifications to the plan to make it easier to update. She said the consultants conducted focus groups and stakeholder interviews to discuss the creative economy, small businesses, retail, and capacity building.

Tony DeLisi, Vice President for Avalanche Consulting, provided background information regarding their firm, which is located in Austin, Texas and has worked with more than 100 communities since 2005. Their services are focused on economic development strategies, labor analysis and talent planning, marketing and branding, organizational assessments, and Headlight data portals. Mr. DeLisi noted their recent work with the Sonoma County Economic Development Board; City of Provo, Utah; West Palm Beach, Florida; and Longmont, Colorado. Avalanche Consulting is currently working with the City of Cleveland, Ohio related to equity and inclusion issues.

Mr. DeLisi described their holistic approach and noted that the lens for modern economic development planning includes the consideration of arts and culture, recreation, the environment, public spaces, human health and safety, talent and education, transportation and housing, leadership and public policy, and entrepreneurship and innovation. The initial discovery phase of the process to update the City's Economic Development Plan extends over approximately six months and includes stakeholder engagement and a review of other existing plans that might be relevant. Phase 2 will focus on updating the strategies and actions outlined in the Economic Development Plan, a review of best practices, the development of partnerships within the community, and the identification of metrics to monitor the progress of the plan's implementation.

Mr. DeLisi said the consultants have been working since October to conduct an extensive information review, stakeholder engagement, discussions with City staff, and the identification of benchmark communities to compare with Bellevue. The five benchmark communities are Sunnyvale, California; Santa Monica, California; Boulder, Colorado; Arlington, Virginia; and Cambridge, Massachusetts. Mr. DeLisi said Bellevue shares a number of challenges found in high growth, desirable communities including transportation, affordable housing, the demand for services, changes in density and neighborhood character, environmental impacts, and the need for fiscal and economic resiliency. He noted Bellevue's intentional investments in culture and quality of life, celebrating and supporting diversity, strategic redevelopment efforts (e.g., BelRed, Eastgate, Factoria, and Wilburton areas), regionalism and partnerships (i.e., Innovation Triangle), and the leveraging of unique industry, geographic, and cultural assets.

John Rees, Research Director for Avalanche Consulting, said that Bellevue has nearly one job per resident. Software is the single largest employment cluster with more than 20,000 jobs, which represents five percent of all software jobs in the United States. Mr. Rees noted that Bellevue's industry diversification falls below the national average, however. Bellevue is the third best educated of America's 200 largest cities. Many residents work outside of the city and local jobs are filled primarily by non-residents. Mr. Rees said that building a sustainable economy requires workforce planning, regional cooperation, and strategic investments that support the recruitment and retention of talent.

Ms. Marsh said the consultants will be back in Bellevue in January to continue the stakeholder engagement efforts. City staff will present the Data Analysis Report and Key Findings to the Council in late January.

Councilmember Nieuwenhuis observed that much of the consultant's experience is on the east coast. Mr. DeLisi noted their experience on the west coast and acknowledged that states have different factors including legal and tax issues. He said there tends to be a greater focus on transparency and working with stakeholders on the west coast than elsewhere. Responding to Mr. Nieuwenhuis, Mr. Rees said the participants in the recent public outreach indicated that they generally feel Bellevue is an affluent community that is proactive in planning and addressing needs. Mr. DeLisi said there are opportunities to bring organizations and people together, including in the area of arts and culture.

Mr. Nieuwenhuis said he likes the focus on building economic resilience and industry diversity. Mr. DeLisi acknowledged that the City has some level of control in terms of land use and other planning decisions. He noted that educational opportunities and talent are an important factor in building resilience as well.

Councilmember Stokes said he visited Austin at the time when their light rail ballot measure failed. Responding to Mr. Stokes, Mr. DeLisi said Austin has many of the same challenges found in Bellevue in terms of the creative economy and planning for growth. Mr. Stokes said Bellevue is a cultural and economic driver in the region, and it is important to maintain a regional focus. In further response to Mr. Stokes, Mr. DeLisi concurred with the importance of identifying ways to keep pace with changes related to growth. Mr. DeLisi said that one objective of the Economic Development Plan update is to structure the plan to be more easily updated and revised.

Councilmember Lee thanked staff and the consultants for their work and concurred that a focus on talent and people is critical. He said he liked the consultant's holistic view of all of the factors related to economic development. He questioned what Bellevue can do to add to its quality of life, technology sector, and arts and culture environment. He noted the importance of innovation and entrepreneurship. Mr. Lee said he appreciates the stakeholder outreach, and he encouraged the consultants and staff to consider Councilmembers as stakeholders as well.

Responding to Mayor Chelminiak, Mr. DeLisi said that Bellevue has a high concentration of software publishing jobs, while Silicon Valley has more jobs focused on technology devices and manufacturing. Mr. DeLisi said there is a high concentration of individuals and companies that hold patents in this area.

Responding to Mr. Lee, Mr. DeLisi said that this part of the country is well known for its outdoor recreation and parks. However, he said the focus on the arts could be more robust in Bellevue. Mr. Rees acknowledged that providing cultural facilities has a number of challenges.

Councilmember Zahn said she too likes the holistic view described by the consultants. However, she noted that sustainability is not referenced and she believes that should be included in the holistic lens.

Responding to Ms. Zahn, Mr. Rees said the consultants feel comfortable with the list of benchmark cities. However, he said their analysis will not be limited to those cities, especially as the update process moves forward. Mr. Rees said that very few communities are as educated as Bellevue.

Councilmember Zahn noted that the concept of an inclusive economy is not referenced in the objectives related to updating the Economic Development Plan. Mr. DeLisi said they are currently working with the City of Cleveland related to diversity issues and initiatives. Ms. Zahn noted Bellevue's Smart City strategy, diversity plan, and environmental stewardship activities and the role they play in attracting businesses. Mr. DeLisi said the relocation of REI's headquarters to Bellevue acknowledges the value of environmental stewardship and overall quality of life. Ms. Zahn expressed concern that the cost of housing could have a negative effect in the long run.

Deputy Mayor Robinson said that Bellevue's economy reflects industry diversity beyond the information technology sector. Mr. DeLisi acknowledged that Bellevue is diverse in terms of the types of software that is produced. However, the large share of software jobs could potentially affect the local economic resiliency. He said there are opportunities to grow other sectors.

Councilmember Robertson asked staff to provide the list of stakeholders to the Council. She expressed support for looking at the themes of diversity and quality of life. She said the consideration of diversity applies to both the population and to the types of businesses. She noted that many local service-oriented businesses are finding it challenging to remain in Bellevue due to the cost of real estate. She noted the community assets of Bellevue College and the Global Innovation Exchange (GIX). She said that Intellectual Ventures in Bellevue is in the top five owners of patents in the United States. Additional assets are the public school district, parks, a growing arts and culture community, and the future Grand Connection and regional aquatics center. Ms. Robertson said Bellevue has high ratings for public safety. She highlighted the importance of Bellevue's Smart City initiative, as well as private business efforts related to autonomous vehicles and 5G technology. Ms. Robertson encouraged staff and the consultants to involve Councilmembers as stakeholders in the update of the Economic Development Plan.

Responding to Mayor Chelminiak, Mr. Rees said that the number of jobs identified related to software publishing refers to software companies and does not capture individuals working in information technology jobs at other businesses. Mr. Chelminiak expressed an interest in how the focus on economic development might help solve the challenges of diversity, inclusion, and the socio-economic features of the community. He said that transportation and housing are key challenges wherever there is a strong economy. He noted the importance of public transit options and encouraged the exploration of ways to make housing more affordable beyond multifamily housing.

(b) Newport Hills SE 60th Street Neighborhood Park

City Manager Miyake introduced discussion regarding the SE 60th Street neighborhood park to be developed in the Newport Hills area and the related public engagement process.

Shelley McVein, Deputy Director, Parks and Community Services Department, noted that Heather Trescases, Chair of the Parks and Community Services Board, was in the audience. Ms.

McVein said staff is seeking Council input regarding the Board's recommended plan for the park.

Glenn Kost, Park Planning and Development Manager, provided an overview of the Newport Hills park location and the area of residents that received mailings regarding the planning process. He said approximately two-thirds of the site is heavily wooded and must be preserved. The developable area covers three acres and has been used informally as a dog park and off-leash area in recent years.

Public engagement activities to date include the mailing of information to 3,189 residents and advertisements on the City's and neighborhood association's web sites as well as on Nextdoor.com. Public meetings were held on May 21 with 75 attendees, July 23 with 50 attendees, and September 24 with 53 attendees. He said that the meeting attendees and individuals who provided comments were widely distributed throughout the planning area. Councilmembers, City staff, and members of the Parks and Community Services Board attended the meetings as well.

Mr. Kost said that, following the May meeting, staff developed three alternative plans for the park with Alternative A reflecting the lesser level of development and Alternative C providing the most amenities. Those options were presented to the public during the July meeting and to the Parks and Community Services Board. The Board expressed general support for Alternative C. However, some individuals commented on the size of the off-leash area and requested that it be reduced in Alternative C to roughly equal the general use areas of the park. Mr. Kost said the Board recommended the following features: equivalent size off-leash area and general park areas, picnic shelter, lawn area, fenced off-leash area with shelter, adventure theme play area, loop trail, street frontage improvements, crosswalk, paved entry drive, parking, and restrooms. He said the Board's recommendation reflects a combination of the input from residents and Board members.

Mr. Kost said staff will work with the Police Department to address crime prevention utilizing Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) concepts. He said the bid process will occur late spring 2020 and construction completion is anticipated by the end of 2020.

Councilmember Robertson, liaison to the Parks and Community Services Board, thanked Mr. Kost for his many years of service with the City and his significant role in the acquisition and development of numerous parks. Ms. Robertson said that Board members are supportive of moving quickly to provide a project that is right for the Newport Hills neighborhood. She expressed general support for the recommended park plan. Responding to Ms. Robertson, Mr. Kost said the park's topography lends itself to an effective separation between the off-leash area and the rest of the park.

Responding to Ms. Robertson, Mr. Kost said that a project-level State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA) review will be conducted. However, a broader programmatic SEPA review would extend over 6-12 months.

Councilmember Robertson recalled that the property was acquired for the purpose of creating the park. Responding to Ms. Robertson, Mr. Kost said the park will provide a place for neighborhood events. She encouraged the installation of adult exercise equipment as noted in the original park plan. She suggested that a park ranger might be needed to monitor the off-leash area. Ms. Robertson noted the lack of dog parks in Bellevue and encouraged a review of that issue with the next major update to the citywide parks plan. She spoke in favor of equivalent sizes for the off-leash and general park areas. Ms. Robertson thanked the Parks and Community Services Board, residents, and City staff for their work.

Deputy Mayor Robinson, a former member of the Board, recalled that she first met Mr. Kost when the City completed the development of Crossroads Park. She complimented his role in creating excellent parks and public areas in Bellevue. She noted her initial skepticism about the plan for Surrey Downs Park. However, she praised staff for the wonderful outcome.

Ms. Robinson thanked residents for their involvement in parks planning. Mr. Kost confirmed that the Newport Hills park plan is a reflection of the community's input. Ms. Robinson said it is unique to Bellevue and she looks forward to the park's development.

Councilmember Zahn said she attended the three community meetings and appreciated the time spent by City staff to discuss the park alternatives and comparisons to existing parks. She said the meeting rooms were full, and she thanked staff for providing the opportunities for residents to be heard. Responding to Ms. Zahn, Mr. Kost said that universal design elements will be incorporated into the playground. Ms. Zahn concurred with Councilmember Robertson's suggestions to install adult exercise equipment in the park and to conduct further study of the demand for off-leash facilities in Bellevue.

Councilmember Lee thanked Mr. Kost for his service with the City. Mr. Lee observed that dogs are an important part of life for many residents, and the park plan responds to that demand.

Councilmember Stokes, a former member of the Parks and Community Services Board, recalled visiting the Meydenbauer Bay Park site before it was developed. He commended staff for the City's acquisition of land for future parks. He said that Surrey Downs Park reflects an amazing outcome, and he looks forward to the development of Airfield Park. He commended the Board for their review and input and expressed support for the recommended Newport Hills park plan.

Councilmember Nieuwenhuis thanked staff for the robust community outreach effort. Responding to Mr. Nieuwenhuis, Mr. Kost said the online survey results do not reflect where the respondents live. In further response, Mr. Kost said the original concept for the park did not include an off-leash area. However, it has been used informally for that purpose since 2010. Mr. Nieuwenhuis expressed support for adult exercise equipment and for further study of the citywide demand for off-leash areas. He thanked staff for the focus on safety.

Responding to Mayor Chelminiak, Mr. Kost said the Newport Hills park planning process has been similar to the approach for the most recent park in the Bridle Trails area. Mr. Kost said the

master planning process is typically used for longer term projects with multiple implementation phases.

Mayor Chelminiak asked about the residents' feedback regarding the trail connection to 116th Avenue SE. Mr. Kost said it would be a long distance to go around the school site. However, the City has received approval from the school district to develop the trail. Mr. Kost said the City has not heard opposition to the trail connection, and there has been strong support for loop trails and multiple access points in the park.

Responding to Councilmember Robertson, Mr. Kost said the name for the Newport Hills park will occur later and will involve residents and the Council.

3. Discussion of Upcoming Items: None.

4. Executive Session

At 7:43 p.m., Mayor Chelminiak declared recess to Executive Session for approximately 15 minutes to discuss one item of potential litigation. He said the meeting would resume with the Regular Session at 8:00 p.m.

Charmaine Arredondo, CMC
City Clerk

/kaw