

CITY OF BELLEVUE
CITY COUNCIL

Summary Minutes of Regular Meeting

September 28, 2020
6:00 p.m.

Virtual Meeting
Bellevue, Washington

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

ABSENT: None.

1. Call to Order

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

2. Roll Call

City Clerk Charmaine Arredondo called the roll. All Councilmembers were present and participating remotely.

(a) World Alzheimer's Day Proclamation

Councilmember Zahn read the proclamation recognizing September 21 as World Alzheimer's Day in Bellevue. More than 120,000 people in Washington are living with Alzheimer's disease, relying on 353,000 unpaid caregivers. She referenced ALZWA.org for additional information.

(b) King County Councilmember Reagan Dunn

Mayor Robinson welcomed King County Councilmember Reagan Dunn to provide a briefing.

Councilmember Dunn highlighted King County's efforts to mitigate the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, including the health, financial, social, and economic impacts. He said the County postponed the property tax deadline and passed emergency economic relief for individuals, businesses, and organizations. King County is distributing 5 million cloth face coverings and 20 million disposable face coverings to residents, workers, and businesses. Councilmember Dunn said the County is updating its pandemic and emergency plans. He commented on the COVID-19 pandemic and the positive correlation of face masks and strong social distancing measures leading to a reduction in the number of new infections. He briefly highlighted the King County

Council's work on Project CARE, payment plans for property tax bills, countywide pandemic response plans, and other items.

Councilmember Dunn said he serves on the executive committee for the King County Regional Homelessness Authority (KCRHA). He noted that former Mayor John Chelminiak serves on the KCRHA Implementation Board.

Mr. Dunn commented regarding King County Flood Control District projects. He commented on the Willowmoor floodplain restoration project and the February 2020 flood event. He recalled that in 2016, the Flood Control District Executive Committee approved the 30-percent design for the project. He said there is currently \$1 million in the proposed King County budget for the Willowmoor project. However, he said more funding and work are needed.

Councilmember Dunn highlighted elements of the King County economic forecast and 2021-2022 Biennium Budget.

Mayor Robinson thanked Councilmember Dunn for the update.

Councilmember Zahn said she appreciates working in partnership with King County. She commented on the increased need for social services funding due to the impacts of the pandemic. She said transit services will be important as the economy reopens. She would like Bellevue to be a leader in economic recovery.

Mr. Dunn acknowledged that agencies, including Metro, will be competing for constrained funding. He anticipates significant discussion regarding criminal justice funding. He expressed concern that the federal government has not provided needed funding to local governments.

Deputy Mayor Nieuwenhuis thanked Councilmember Dunn for his work. Responding to Mr. Nieuwenhuis, Mr. Dunn said that King County worked with the Gates Foundation to establish the vaccine program in Renton. In further response, Mr. Dunn said there has been discussion regarding affordable and/or transitional housing in the Eastgate area. However, he said that cities will make their own decisions about projects within their boundary.

Mr. Nieuwenhuis noted a proposed reduction in King County's law enforcement budget and asked whether that would affect the City of Bellevue. Councilmember Dunn said that 30-40 sheriff's deputy positions will be eliminated, while the City of Seattle will eliminate more than 100 officers. He said those reductions are likely to have an impact on the overall region.

Councilmember Barksdale said he appreciates the work of King County in response to the pandemic. He expressed support for the Willowmoor project to address restoration, flood mitigation, and environmental resilience.

Councilmember Dunn welcomed Mr. Barksdale to the Bellevue City Council. Regarding the Willowmoor project, Mr. Dunn said the final design is more expensive than the other two alternatives. However, it provides additional environmental and other benefits.

Councilmember Robertson thanked Councilmember Dunn. She said the Willowmoor project needs to address both environmental and flood control objectives. She encouraged King County to work with the property owners to ensure proper drainage.

Ms. Robertson asked what King County is doing to plan for safely reopening the economy. Mr. Dunn said the County is actively involved in monitoring and responding to the pandemic. He said King County residents have done a good job of social distancing. He noted the increasing number of cases in Florida and expressed concern about their plans to fully reopen all businesses. Councilmember Robertson concurred that this area is doing well due to social distancing and the usage of face masks. Ms. Robertson thanked King County for the CARES Act funding for organizations in Bellevue.

Councilmember Robertson commented that transit use and patterns will likely be different following the pandemic. She said the King County Regional Transit Committee (RTC) is currently discussing potential changes to the service guidelines. She noted that Eastside residents are concerned about the potential reduction in transit service.

Councilmember Stokes said he served on the Flood Control District Board in 2016. He encouraged moving forward with the Willowmoor project as soon as possible. He thanked the County for considering fish habitat as well as the flood control objectives. He thanked Councilmember Dunn and the King County Council for their work. Mr. Stokes said he is interested in seeing how the City could expand its efforts with the King County Flood Control District and the King Conservation District.

Councilmember Lee commented on the uncertainty related to the pandemic and the challenge of continuing to deliver services with decreased funding. He asked about County funding for local governments and questioned what local and county governments can do to support the reopening of the economy.

Councilmember Dunn said the County has federal COVID-19 funding that has not yet been spent. He said financial assistance will be provided to social services organizations that provide critical safety nets in the community. He said it is important to leverage the federal dollars wisely. Mr. Dunn cautioned against reopening too quickly and causing additional closures. He expressed concern regarding homelessness, especially when the eviction ban expires. He said the region should be putting money into services and direct financial assistance to prevent homelessness.

Mr. Lee said he is glad to have Councilmember Dunn working on behalf of Bellevue residents.

Mayor Robinson thanked Councilmember Dunn for his support of all of Bellevue's efforts, including the Eastrail project, flood control, and the COVID response. Ms. Robinson said she is proud of the City's investments in rental assistance to help both renters and landlords. She encouraged continued efforts to obtain additional federal funding.

3. Approval of Agenda

→ Deputy Mayor Nieuwenhuis moved to approve the agenda, and Councilmember Lee seconded the motion.

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

4. Oral Communications

- (a) Ruth Lipscomb opined that the Mayor's Pledge to review the Bellevue Police Department's use of force policies is too narrowly defined. She expressed concern regarding the role of racism in law enforcement. She urged the Council to expand the scope of the review to include all related policy areas of the police department (e.g., hiring, training, discipline, reporting, and data tracking). She encouraged a broader review employing a racial equity lens when evaluating and establishing policies.
- (b) Christopher Randels said he was speaking on behalf of Downtown for People, a grassroots organization of Bellevue community members, residents, workers, and students who are advocating for a better transportation system. He said the group opposes building any new interchange on I-405 in the downtown. He expressed concerns regarding climate change. He discouraged building more roads and encouraged the expansion of multi-modal transportation options.
- (c) Sally Fouche, a resident of the Eastgate/Somerset area, commented on the Mayor's Pledge to evaluate the police use of force policies. She encouraged the City to make a stronger statement regarding examining racial equity. She expressed concern regarding the accessibility of information for the public. She said tonight's meeting agenda does not indicate the subject of the Mayor's Pledge. She encouraged targeted efforts to communicate with Bellevue's younger population under age 30. She suggested that the City make the topic more prominent on its website. She thanked Councilmembers for their work.
- (d) Mallory Van Abbema, representing the Housing Development Consortium of Seattle and King County, expressed concern regarding the lack of affordable housing. She expressed support for Bellevue's work to reform parking requirements in areas with frequent transit service. She expressed support for Action C-1 in the City's Affordable Housing Strategy. She encouraged incentives to produce affordable units in mixed income developments. She thanked the Council and staff for their work on behalf of the community. She encouraged continued regional partnerships to create affordable housing.
- (e) Lei Wu expressed support for the development of a multicultural/cross-cultural center. She thanked staff for their efforts to address cultural diversity, social equity, and cross-cultural issues. She said it is more important than ever for people to come together and to understand each other. However, the pandemic is making it difficult to get together with family and friends. Ms. Wu encouraged the City to move forward with developing alternatives and program options for a multicultural center.

5. Reports of Community Councils, Boards, and Commissions: None.

6. Report of the City Manager

(a) Advancing the Mayor's Pledge

City Manager Brad Miyake introduced staff's update regarding the Mayor's Pledge to review the Bellevue Police Department's use of force policies. He noted that a written update is included in the meeting packet. He recalled that the City selected the Office of Independent Review to assist with this effort.

Nathan McCommon, Deputy City Manager, said the police use of force policies are under review by the consulting team. The pledge calls for community engagement and three public listening forums are scheduled: Tuesday, October 13, 5:30-7:00 p.m.; Thursday, October 15, 11:30 a.m.-1:00 p.m.; and Saturday, October 17, 11:30 a.m.-1:00 p.m. All of the events will be online and a number of interested stakeholders will be invited to discuss their opinions and experiences. Mr. McCommon said that the outreach materials will be provided in English and in the next five most-spoken languages in Bellevue. He said the public engagement phase will begin next week. Following that process, the consultants will compile and analyze the data and input.

(b) Recent Bellevue Television Awards

Kate Berens, Deputy City Manager, announced that Bellevue Television (BTV) received five awards from the National Association of Telecommunications Officers and Advisors in September: 1) Award of Excellence for public health programming, 2) Award of Distinction for public education, 3) Award of Distinction for the in-depth look at fire recruit training, 4) Award of Honor for overall excellence, and 5) Award of Honor for BTV's magazine format series, Lake to Lake. She noted BTV's partnership with Bellevue College to provide the programming.

Ms. Berens thanked Robin Steel, BTV Manager; Ben Shahabi and David Richardson, BTV; and Brad Harwood, Chief Communications Officer.

7. Council Business and New Initiatives

There was no discussion.

8. Consent Calendar

→ Deputy Mayor Nieuwenhuis moved to approve the Consent Calendar, and Councilmember Stokes seconded the motion.

→ The motion to approve the Consent Calendar carried by a vote of 7-0, and the following items were approved:

- (a) Ordinance No. 6527: 1) authorizing execution of a grant agreement (and supplements if necessary) with the Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) to accept up to \$1,352,998 in federal Emergency Relief funding to support the design and construction of a permanent repair of 98th Avenue SE at the intersection with SE 11th Street; 2) amending the 2019-2020 General Capital Investment Program (CIP) Fund to increase the appropriation by \$1,352,998; and, 3) amending the 2019-2025 CIP Plan to increase the budget for the Major Maintenance Program (CIP Plan No. PW-M-19) by \$1,352,998.
- (b) Resolution No. 9821 authorizing execution of an Intergovernmental Agreement for EMAC (Emergency Management Assistance Program) and PNEMA (Pacific Northwest Emergency Management Arrangement) with Washington State Military Department, Emergency Management Division, which provides the option for the City of Bellevue to participate in intrastate and state-to-state mutual aid during times of emergency or disaster.

9. Public Hearing: None.

10. Study Session

- (a) South Downtown I-405 Access Study

City Manager Miyake introduced discussion regarding the South Downtown I-405 Access Study. He recalled that the I-405 Master Plan was developed in 2002. That plan identified a new interchange in the South Downtown area of Bellevue. Mr. Miyake said this topic was originally scheduled to come back to the Council in April. However, the City was unable to address the topic at that time due to pandemic-related public meeting restrictions in place.

Andrew Singelakis, Transportation Department Director, said staff is seeking Council direction to carry forward alternatives that passed the fatal flaw screening for further evaluation. The South Downtown I-405 Access Study is important to position the City to be prepared to pursue funding if a statewide transportation package is approved. He said the study will provide some certainty for Downtown businesses and residents as well. Mr. Singelakis noted the need to complete the East Main Land Use Code Amendment (LUCA) process before moving forward with the I-405 study.

Shuming Yan, Engineering Manager, said the I-405 Master Plan is a multimodal transportation plan. He recalled that the NE 10th Street bridge and northbound on-ramp in Bellevue were completed from 2009 to 2012. The City and the Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) will select a preferred option for the South Downtown I-405 Access project. The Tier 1 fatal flaw screening of alternatives addressed Bellevue's plans and policies, WSDOT and Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) policies, and constructability in terms of cost considerations.

Mr. Yan said the community engagement process includes virtual meetings of stakeholders and interest groups as well as an online open house. The stakeholders are business and property

owners and developers within the study area. They include representatives of the Downtown Bellevue Residents Association, Surrey Downs Community Club, Wilburton Community Association, Bellecrest Neighborhood Association, and Woodridge Community Association.

Mr. Yan highlighted the stakeholder input to date. He said they are generally supportive of providing new I-405 access on the south end of downtown. They encouraged an emphasis on multimodal transportation options and on integrating the study with other planning efforts. They encouraged the City to consider the impacts to 114th Avenue, existing properties, and wetlands and to consider mitigation costs. Mr. Yan said the stakeholders encouraged the City to consider the traffic and safety impacts of the I-405 access project on local streets. He said that some of the participants wondered why the Main Street bridge alternative had been dropped.

More than 2,383 people visited the first open house hosted online at engagingbellevue.com, and 247 individuals submitted 1,164 comments. General public input shared both support for and concerns regarding the project alternatives. Individuals encouraged the City to prioritize and maintain access for pedestrians, cyclists, and transit services, and to coordinate the new interchange with other City initiatives, including the Grand Connection. The public comments expressed concerns regarding the impact on climate change, traffic impacts on local streets, and adding congestion to I-405.

Mr. Yan highlighted the initial alternative project concepts. Staff recommends moving five of the alternatives forward for Tier 2 evaluation: 1) no new access to I-405, 2) NE Second Street extension to Wilburton, 3) express toll lane access to and from the south at SE 6th Street, 4) SE 6th Street extension with southbound on-ramp, and 5) Lake Hills Connector southbound on-ramp. All of the alternatives will have pedestrian and bike components. The Tier 2 alternative evaluation will study travel time, impacts on property development, feasibility of pedestrian and bike access, policy and urban design considerations, costs, stakeholder input, and public input. Staff will report the findings to the Council, hold an online open house, and present the outcome of the City's community engagement efforts early next year.

Mayor Robinson thanked staff for the presentation.

Councilmember Robertson expressed support for staff's recommendation and the evaluation criteria. She said she is skeptical about the NE 2nd Street option because it does not provide access to I-405 and could have impacts on 114th Avenue and on redevelopment in the area. She said she would like the Council to be able to combine different elements of the alternatives. She suggested adding criteria regarding redevelopment potential as well as the impact of each of the alternatives on transit services. Ms. Robertson expressed support for strong bike, pedestrian, and transit connectivity. She said that 25,000 new jobs are coming to Downtown Bellevue over the next five years.

Councilmember Zahn said she appreciates that staff will evaluate the no build option as well as the proposed alternatives. She encouraged continuing to explore less expensive measures that would further the City's goals as well. Ms. Zahn suggested incorporating Vision Zero and safety considerations into the study. Ms. Zahn questioned whether ongoing improvements to I-405 will

accommodate the City's preferred alternative in the future. Ms. Zahn asked how staff will work with WSDOT to align the timing of I-405 projects.

Councilmember Lee expressed support for robust pedestrian and bike amenities. Responding to Mr. Lee, Mr. Singelakis said that studying the no build alternative is a requirement of the FHWA and WSDOT.

Councilmember Stokes expressed concern that the project is building an on-ramp and directing traffic onto a street (e.g., Lake Hills Connector) that is already congested. He said that a number of local streets are near maximum capacity. He recalled dealing with cut-through traffic in other areas in the past, including the Woodridge and Enatai neighborhoods.

Mr. Stokes encouraged staff to keep future light rail expansion in mind when evaluating alternatives for the South Downtown I-405 Access project. He said the best option will move traffic from I-405 without overwhelming a neighborhood. He thanked staff for their work.

Councilmember Barksdale asked how the NE 2nd Street to 116th Avenue option relates to the Wilburton study and planning efforts. Mr. Singelakis said the legislative priorities refer to connecting to 120th Avenue, and the Citizen Advisory Committee (CAC) process outcomes have not yet been implemented. The official policy is to connect to 120th Avenue.

Deputy Mayor Nieuwenhuis expressed concern that the NE 2nd Street extension to Wilburton does not provide access to I-405. He expressed support for prioritizing pedestrian, bike and transit facilities. Mr. Nieuwenhuis asked whether the same original stakeholders will be involved in the Tier 2 evaluation process. He suggested it would be beneficial to engage a broader range of residents and stakeholders.

Mayor Robinson expressed support for enhancing access to safe, multimodal transportation options. She wants to ensure that the I-405 access project does not negatively impact transit services. She said the project should prioritize and maintain the Pedestrian-Bicycle Program and support the Vision Zero objectives.

Responding to Mr. Yan, Barrett Hanson, Design Engineering Manager, WSDOT, commented regarding the SE 6th Street extension option. Mr. Hanson said the design process for the bridge into Bellevue project is well underway.

Mr. Yan thanked WSDOT for being flexible in working with the City, including for the previous NE 10th Street access to I-405 project. He said that 18 years ago, the I-405 Master Plan originally identified the NE 2nd Street extension. He said the South Downtown I-405 Access Study will reevaluate the project objectives and alternatives given the growth and changes in Bellevue over the past 20 years.

Councilmember Robertson thanked everyone for the presentation and discussion. She noted that Vision Zero is referenced in the meeting packet materials although it was not listed in the presentation. She said that stream and wetland impacts are listed as a cost consideration. However, she would prefer to avoid any environmental impacts if possible.

Ms. Robertson opined that I-405 access in the South Downtown area will be important for the vitality of redevelopment in the Wilburton area. She expressed strong support for pedestrian and bike facilities on Main Street, including across I-405.

Councilmember Zahn asked about the timing for a decision regarding the NE 2nd Street option, noting that it will be important to determine whether the design can accommodate the right-of-way for the highway ramps. Mr. Singelakis said the project is not funded and the timeline for funding remains to be seen. Ms. Zahn encouraged coordinating projects to minimize construction disruptions and expenses. She expressed an interest in understanding the long- and short-term environmental impacts of each alternative.

Responding to Councilmember Lee, Mr. Yan said that while the NE 2nd Street alternative does not access I-405, it increases connectivity between the Downtown and the Wilburton area.

Mayor Robinson said it is confusing to include the NE 2nd Street option in the study when it does not connect to I-405. Mr. Singelakis said the NE 2nd Street option was originally intended to be combined with other alternatives. He said he did not envision it as a standalone project.

Councilmember Stokes noted the limited benefit of the NE 2nd Street option when it does not connect to I-405. He expressed concern regarding the potential environmental impacts. He said residents have already expressed concern regarding the impacts of light rail construction through the Wilburton area.

Councilmember Barksdale said he supports evaluating the no build alternative along with the other alternatives. He said the NE 2nd Street option provides connectivity to transit services. He would be interested in considering it with the other alternative components.

Deputy Mayor Nieuwenhuis thanked staff for the presentation. Replying to Mr. Nieuwenhuis, Mr. Yan said the Tier 2 evaluation process will engage the same stakeholders who participated during the Tier 1 review. In further response, Mr. Yan said that, overall, the stakeholders have expressed early support for placing the project on the south end of the study area.

→ Deputy Mayor Nieuwenhuis moved to direct staff to proceed with the South Downtown I-405 Access Study to evaluate the five remaining alternatives, as proposed by staff. Councilmember Stokes seconded the motion.

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

(b) City of Bellevue Cross-Cultural Feasibility Study; Exploration of Public and Private Gathering Spaces

City Manager Miyake opened discussion regarding the Cross-Cultural Feasibility Study. He recalled the adoption of the Diversity Advantage Plan in 2014, which included recommendations to invest in third places for community connection and to increase opportunities for culture, interaction, and education. In 2018, the City conducted a cross-cultural programming public

outreach study. On May 6, 2019, the Council directed staff to conduct a feasibility study focusing on potential programming options and a review of existing spaces.

Mr. Miyake said staff is seeking Council feedback and questions to help inform the development of the final report to be completed by the consultants.

Kyle Stannert, Assistant City Manager, thanked the staff and consultant team for their work on the Cross-Cultural Feasibility Study. He said the consultants have met with a number of stakeholders and now they want to hear from the Council. Staff is seeking direction to further refine the Council's vision for a cross-cultural center.

Yuriana Garcia Tellez, Diversity Outreach and Engagement Administrator, said the Cross-Cultural Programming Public Outreach Study was conducted in 2018. The City received feedback from 443 survey participants and 125 workshop attendees. The study was presented to the Council in May 2019. At that time, the Council directed staff to pursue a feasibility study to conduct: 1) a supply and demand analysis, 2) an assessment of current public and private gathering spaces, and 3) the exploration of a cross-cultural facility in Bellevue. Ms. Garcia said the consultants have done a great job and have taken the study farther than originally envisioned.

Linda Cheu, AECOM Economics, said it was a pleasure to work with City staff and the community. She noted AECOM's broad experience, including with projects that have a cultural diversity and/or equity focus.

The scope of work for the Cross-Cultural Feasibility Study addressed four questions: 1) What is a cross-cultural center and why is it needed?, 2) What facilities are currently used for cross-cultural activities?, 3) What site opportunities are possible?, and 4) What is the operating and financial model? Ms. Cheu said a cross-cultural facility could be a community center, performing arts center, cultural center, or cross-cultural/multicultural centers. She said the latter are typically found on college campuses.

Ms. Cheu highlighted demographic and economic factors in Bellevue, noting the increasing diversity in terms of race and/or ethnicity. She said the younger demographic group tends to be more diverse. She noted the highly educated population and the strong economy fueled by the technology industry. She said that retail businesses will continue to face pre- and post-COVID challenges.

Ms. Cheu said the City has done a significant amount of planning related to parks and open spaces, recreation, arts and culture, and the creative economy. She summarized the responses to the outreach and planning studies, noting that 86 percent of the survey respondents said they believe there is a need for a multicultural community center. They described it as a place for people outside of their ethnic or cultural community to learn about values, customs, arts, culture, and history. There was a significant interest in the community retaining control of the programming with the support and partnership of the City. Other priorities identified by the public included multi-generational activities, gathering spaces, festivals and celebrations, and social services. Ms. Cheu said the City's Parks and Open Space Plan previously identified the need for an additional community center.

The consultants held more than 40 stakeholder interviews with City staff, nonprofit organizations, Bellevue School District staff, cultural groups, religious organizations, disability organizations, and community members engaged in diversity, equity, and disability advocacy. The stakeholders indicated a strong interest and enthusiasm for a center focused on diversity and equity issues. Multiple concepts were discussed including performing arts space, community center with a multicultural focus, and/or a “third place” where people of underrepresented groups in the community would feel welcome. The interviews addressed community programming, staffing, partnerships, and public support for capacity building in nonprofit cultural organizations.

Ms. Cheu described the potential components of a cross-cultural center including a multipurpose room, flexible performance space, exhibit/multimedia experience, kitchen, community rooms/classrooms, and offices. She said the project team envisions a 20,000-30,000 square foot building. The City’s existing facilities that support cross-cultural activities are Crossroads Community Center, Highland Community Center, North Bellevue Community Center, Northwest Arts Center, and South Bellevue Community Center. Additional public and private facilities in Bellevue include performing arts facilities, churches, school auditoriums, nonprofit organizations, and future arts facilities (e.g., Tateuchi Center). Ms. Cheu highlighted a table providing information about facility size, programming, utilization, and financial performance for the five community centers.

The criteria for evaluating a possible site for a cross-cultural center include access to transit services, the ability to leverage and support other community and economic development goals and investments, space for an adequate facility and parking, programmable outdoor space, visibility, and complementary surrounding uses (e.g., restaurants, retail, parks). Ms. Cheu said there are potential site opportunities in the Downtown, Wilburton area, BelRed corridor, and other performing arts and retail centers.

Ms. Cheu highlighted the elements of a financial model for a cross-cultural facility with an annual operating budget of \$1 million to \$1.5 million. She said the income can be a mix of City funding, corporate donations, foundation grants, and individual contributions. The range of possible operating models include a City-owned and operated facility, nonprofit-operated facility, or a hybrid model. Ms. Cheu compared the strengths, challenges and risks of the three models. The potential development models for a cross-cultural facility are publicly financed and developed, community/nonprofit developed, public-private partnerships, and a rental model. Ms. Cheu briefly recapped some of the key findings and recommendations of the study.

Mayor Robinson thanked Ms. Cheu and staff for the presentation.

Councilmember Lee thanked staff and the consultant for helping the Council to understand the potential for a cross-cultural center. He said there is strong community support for the project. Mr. Lee said he is surprised that there are not more cross-cultural centers in other cities. He expressed support for continuing to work with community stakeholders and to refine the analysis.

Councilmember Barksdale thanked staff and the consultants for their hard work. He wondered how one cross-cultural center compares to having multiple cultural facilities throughout the community.

Mr. Stannert said that is a good strategic question as the City considers investing in capital facilities. He acknowledged that there are likely to be opportunities for partnerships with organizations and facilities throughout the community. He concurred with the suggestion to explore the benefits and drawbacks of one center versus multiple activity sites. Mr. Barksdale said that establishing multiple centers throughout Bellevue would be consistent with the 15-minute city concept regarding quick access to services and community assets.

Deputy Mayor Nieuwenhuis thanked Councilmember Lee for his longtime advocacy of this project. He thanked staff and Ms. Cheu for their work. Responding to Mr. Nieuwenhuis, Ms. Cheu said she had not been involved in a project for a cross-cultural/multicultural center. She said that cultural centers typically focus on a specific ethnic group. She said multicultural centers and cross-cultural centers are more often found on college campuses. Ms. Cheu noted the challenge of building a sense of ownership and stakeholders for multicultural centers.

Responding to Mr. Nieuwenhuis, Ms. Cheu said that a new facility with well-designed space would help cultural organizations and nonprofits to develop and expand their audiences and to become financially stable. She confirmed that a cross-cultural center would aid in the development and support of cultural organizations.

Responding to Councilmember Stokes, Ms. Garcia said that 443 individuals participated in a survey during the first phase of the study, and approximately 125 individuals participated in an online community forum.

Mr. Stokes observed that there are a number of existing facilities that might be able to accommodate cross-cultural activities and events. He noted that he is the Council liaison to the Arts Commission, and he has been involved with the longtime community efforts related to the Performing Arts Center Eastside (PACE), also known as the Tateuchi Center. Mr. Stokes encouraged a concept of multiple centers, large and small, throughout the community versus one dedicated facility. He noted current efforts to develop a regional aquatic center as well.

Councilmember Robertson said the City wants to have all of its public facilities host multicultural populations and events. She said there could be one main facility with smaller centers throughout Bellevue. She said Bellevue has needed to add a community center for a long time. Responding to Ms. Robertson, Mr. Stannert said Parks Department staff could provide more information regarding plans for more community centers.

Ms. Robertson opined that there is a need for two new community centers in Bellevue. She suggested that the cross-cultural center and the aquatic center could be those two centers. Councilmember Robertson asked whether the cross-cultural center could be combined with another type of City facility (e.g., aquatic center). She suggested the Lincoln Center site in the Wilburton area or Ashwood Park in the Downtown as potential locations for a cross-cultural center. The latter location is also near the library and the KidsQuest Children's Museum.

Councilmember Robertson suggested exploring partnerships as well as incentives in the Land Use Code to support the center.

Councilmember Zahn thanked Councilmember Lee for his diligence in encouraging this project. Ms. Zahn expressed support for the goals of creating space for shared immersive experience and welcoming all people. She concurred with the concept of having multiple centers citywide. She noted that there is no community center in East Bellevue between the Crossroads area and the South Bellevue Community Center. Ms. Zahn suggested considering a gathering place in East Bellevue. She encouraged partnerships in cross-cultural programming and facilities, as well as exploring whether there are opportunities to work with Eastside for All.

Ms. Zahn said it would be helpful to review information about similar facilities in other cities. She asked if staff could provide information on multicultural and cross-cultural centers on college campuses. She expressed support for having both indoor and outdoor gathering spaces in a cross-cultural center.

Mayor Robinson thanked Councilmember Lee for initiating this project. Ms. Robinson suggested placing the cross-cultural center on the Grand Connection. She expressed support for the concept of a center to increase the public's understanding of different cultures, including Bellevue's history dating back to Native American settlements on Meydenbauer Bay. Mayor Robinson said this will be a great opportunity to provide more culturally diverse education and information for the public. She said Bellevue should have a unique facility. She asked whether there are international examples of a similar type of facility. Mayor Robinson expressed support for moving forward for further study.

Councilmember Lee said the emphasis of the cross-cultural center is on capacity building and connecting people. He said the center provides the space for gatherings and other activities. He thanked staff and the consultant for their good work. He said it has been helpful to learn more about cross-cultural centers and how it might be developed.

Councilmember Barksdale suggested looking at MOHAI (Museum of History and Industry) in Seattle. He said they do a good job of hosting multicultural events. He suggested exploring partnerships to support family owned retail shops and diverse small businesses.

Deputy Mayor Nieuwenhuis said he was ready to move forward with continued study. He expressed an interest in more details regarding facility development, ownership, operating model, partnerships, and financial model. He said he looks forward to the next report.

Councilmember Stokes concurred that it is time to move forward. He reiterated his interest in multiple facilities and activity centers, as well as potentially a new central facility in the future. He suggested being more flexible and nimble and focusing on the objective underlying the development of a cross-cultural center. He acknowledged that financing will likely be challenging. Councilmember Stokes said he is interested in reviewing parks projects and how they might be used to pursue the objectives of a cross-cultural center.

Councilmember Robertson said she appreciates that the Council is always looking forward to the future and working to build community in a diverse and vibrant city. She acknowledged that funding will be a challenge and suggested considering an arts and parks levy or some other approach. She suggested that the cross-cultural center could be located next to City Hall upon the completion of the light rail project. She said it would be possible to place a requirement for building a community center with any development of the site. Councilmember Robertson said she is pleased to hear that there is community support and momentum. She said Bellevue needs more community centers and gathering places. She suggested that the City can be more innovative in looking at City-owned properties, revenue options, development incentives, and development requirements.

Councilmember Zahn said she is enthusiastic about the project and agrees that this is about connecting people. She said it would be great to have a multicultural incubator kitchen for gatherings and possibly for people to sell their food. She acknowledged that financing will be difficult. However, Ms. Zahn suggested it will be easier to find project partners after more decisions are made about the facility or facilities and their components (e.g., meeting spaces, outdoor spaces, etc.).

Mayor Robinson thanked staff for the presentation and the Council for the thorough discussion.

Mr. Stannert said the next steps include reaching out to more stakeholders to obtain more feedback regarding a cross-cultural center. He said the original objective of the study was to determine the community's current capacity and to study programming needs versus programming concepts. He suggested refining the vision and moving from considering what the center could be to what it will be. He suggested involving City staff from multiple departments in the planning process. He said that, as the Council and staff assess what could be done with the City's current facilities and programs, everyone should continue to look for more ways to establish connections that build community. Mr. Stannert said staff would compile and review the Council's comments tonight. He noted that Councilmembers may request individual briefings with staff if desired.

Councilmember Lee concurred with Mr. Stannert about the need to clarify and narrow the vision, purpose, and objectives for a cross-cultural center. Mr. Lee said the information discussed this evening demonstrates that the City's current facilities and programming are not adequate. He expressed a preference for establishing a dedicated center to move beyond changes in programming and to support capacity building for cultural organizations. Mr. Lee encouraged moving forward to gather more information, including examples of similar facilities in other cities and on college campuses.

(c) Regional Issues [*Written update in meeting packet.*]

11. Land Use: None.
12. Other Ordinances, Resolutions, and Motions: None.
13. Unfinished Business: None.

14. New Business: None.
15. Executive Session: None.
16. Adjournment

At 9:24 p.m., Mayor Robinson declared the meeting adjourned.

Charmaine Arredondo, CMC
City Clerk

/kaw