

**CITY OF BELLEVUE
PARKS & COMMUNITY SERVICES BOARD
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES**

Tuesday
February 9, 2021
6:00 p.m.

Via Zoom

BOARDMEMBERS PRESENT: Chair Trescases, Vice-Chair Hamilton, Boardmembers Clark, Heath, Synn, Unger

BOARDMEMBER ABSENT: Boardmember Kumar

COUNCILMEMBER PRESENT: Councilmember Zahn

PARKS STAFF PRESENT: Shelley Brittingham, Tony Esparza, Pam Fehrman, Yuriana Garcia Tellez (CMO), Nancy Harvey, Nancy Kartes, Shelley McVein, Camron Parker, Michael Shiosaki

OTHERS PRESENT: Heather Babik-Kane, Melanie Davies, Grant Keeney, Cleo Raulerson

MINUTES TAKER: Michelle Cash

1. **CALL TO ORDER:**

The meeting was called to order by Chair Trescases at 6:01 p.m.

Chair Trescases announced that there are a few procedural items that need to be addressed. She explained that because in-person meetings are prohibited by the Governor's emergency order concerning the Open Public Meetings Act, the Board will be holding its meetings remotely for an unknown period of time. Chair Trescases reminded Boardmembers that the Board's Bylaws regarding remote participation and the order of business have been suspended until such time as the Board is no longer holding its meetings remotely.

2. **APPROVAL OF AGENDA:**

Motion by Boardmember Unger and second by Boardmember Synn to approve the meeting agenda as presented. Motion carried unanimously (6-0).

3. **APPROVAL OF MINUTES:**

Motion by Boardmember Clark and second by Vice-Chair Hamilton to approve the January 12, 2021 meeting minutes as presented. Motion carried unanimously (6-0).

4. **WRITTEN/ORAL COMMUNICATIONS:**

None.

5. **COMMUNICATION FROM CITY COUNCIL:**

Councilmember Zahn provided the following report:

- Sadly, former Councilmember/Mayor Don Davidson passed away.
- Council reviewed the Parks Board's 4Q20 report.
- Council recently received a presentation on mini-City Hall, which has seen an increase in outreach due to COVID.
- The Lake Hills Community Association started a parks challenge walk. The Community and Councilmembers were invited to join the association at Kelsey Creek Park to take a socially distant walk.
- Bellevue Botanical Garden is starting to show more activity.

6. **DIRECTOR'S REPORT:**

Mr. Shiosaki reported that the Parks Board 4Q20 Report was sent to City Council in their Council Packet. He also called attention to the memos in the Board Packet, particularly the Newport Hills Neighborhood Park Naming – Background Research and NE 12th Street Multipurpose Path.

Mr. Shiosaki discussed the gradual reopening of Bellevue's recreational programs and facilities, while keeping in compliance with the Governor's Healthy Washington Roadmap to Recovery Plan. He recognized Shelley Brittingham and her team for being so responsive and nimble to all of the ongoing changes related to COVID. Mr. Shiosaki reminded Boardmembers that the Governor's previous plan was the Safe Washington Plan, which was a four phased approach. However, in January, the Governor's Office announced the new plan. This plan established eight regions—Bellevue is in the Puget Sound Region. The new plan consists of two phases. The Puget Sound region recently moved to Phase 2 of the new plan. The plan details occupancy and operational requirements for certain activities that are outlined in greater detail in the Governor's documents. Staff is focused on prioritizing the reopening of facilities and locations, when possible. Below is an update for some of the programs/facilities:

- Golf Course is open.
- Robinswood Tennis Center has reopened.
- Athletic fields are being scheduled.
- Bellevue Aquatic Center has reopened.
- SBCC recently reopened the fitness center under the Phase 1 guidelines.

- Kelsey Creek Farm is offering a self-guided barnyard tour along with some small group educational guided tours.
- Working on getting more youth programs online.
- Virtual programming continues to grow.
- Bellevue Youth Theatre is providing online, creative dramatics and theater production classes.

Boardmember Unger asked the following questions: 1) Are the programs offered only independent opportunities; 2) What is being planned for the remainder of the school year and summer to support youth. Mr. Shiosaki responded that the City is prepared to toggle between Phases 1 and 2. Boardmember Unger said that advanced notice for program expectations would be helpful for youth programming.

Boardmember Synn asked how the news is disseminated about the availability of community centers as the phases change. Mr. Shiosaki clarified that the City is strictly following the Governor's regulations based upon what is allowed in each phase. He will have Ms. Brittingham follow-up on the communication efforts of the City.

Vice-Chair Hamilton asked if some of the virtual programs will be kept in place post-COVID. Mr. Shiosaki said that COVID has made staff reevaluate programs to determine if there is a new way to conduct business. There are many opportunities.

Chair Trescases asked if the relationships in the community have been maintained during COVID (i.e., Boys and Girls Clubs of Bellevue, YMCA, etc.). Mr. Shiosaki provided an example at South Bellevue where the relationship has continued. Chair Trescases encouraged staff to evaluate programs on alternate options, rather than all or nothing.

Boardmember Synn asked if any of the City's facilities will be used for COVID testing/vaccination. Mr. Shiosaki summarized some of the conversations that have occurred regarding COVID (i.e., parking lots, quarantine facilities, etc.). He added that the City is open to discussions if facilities are needed. Boardmember Synn wanted organizers to be mindful of the language barriers throughout the community. Councilmember Zahn added that mini-City Hall has received many calls regarding vaccine sites. The City's language translation services are going through mini-City Hall at Crossroads. However, it is serving a much broader community than Crossroads. Councilmember Zahn also mentioned that the Fire Department was recently approved to have two mobile vaccine teams. Mr. Shiosaki added that all of Bellevue's community centers have been identified as potential mass vaccination sites.

7. **BOARD COMMUNICATIONS:**

Vice-Chair Hamilton has been enjoying the various park-related social media posts.

Chair Trescases reported that Boardmember Kumar is completing the class work for her Master Naturalist certification program.

Boardmember Synn enjoyed Downtown Park. Boardmember Clark also enjoyed Downtown Park.

Boardmember Unger spent a significant amount of time in the mountains enjoying the snow. She also enjoyed the covered sheltered areas throughout the parks for distant social gatherings. Boardmember Unger also participated in the Neighborhood Enhancement Program Zoom. She suggested that dial-in/Zoom options continue post-pandemic.

8. **CHAIR COMMUNICATION & DISCUSSION:**

Chair Trescases enjoyed many parks over the past month. She also asked for an update on Surrey Downs Park.

Councilmember Zahn noted that the South Bellevue Park and Ride is scheduled to open in September, 2021. She asked for an update on the trails in this area and their anticipated reopening date(s).

9. **BOARDMEMBER/COMMITTEE/LIAISON REPORTS:**

No reports.

10. **DISCUSSION/ACTION ITEMS:**

A. **Bellevue Botanical Garden Success**

Ms. Kartes explained that 10 community organizations partner with the Bellevue Botanical Garden (BBG). Together, the challenge of responding to the pandemic has been shared, leading to greater resilience.

Once the reality set in that the pandemic was long-term, BBG staff had a discussion to determine how the Garden could thrive in the new environment. The health guidelines were applied to operations, which led to the limited return of the horticulture volunteers. Thanks to their efforts, along with the frontline ground staff, the Garden has remained a safe and beautiful place of respite for the community.

The Bellevue Botanical Garden Society is the BBG's primary partner organization. Ms. Kartes introduced Cleo Raulerson and Heather Babiak-Kane to share how the Society met the challenges of running a small non-profit, while innovatively serving their mission and ultimately strengthening and deepening community engagement.

Ms. Raulerson, Co-President of the BBGS Board and Co-Chair of Garden d'Lights, said that the Society has met the challenges of the pandemic and has proven that with innovation, creativity and technology, goals can be exceeded. The staff and volunteers have become Zoom experts and the City's IT Department has greatly helped the staff.

Ms. Raulerson explained that the adult education programs were offered via webinars reaching a larger audience than possible through in-person programs. Between April 30, 2020 and January 31, 2021, the Society offered 36 webinars and served over 3,600 people. Since Living Lab, the onsite fieldtrip learning program for elementary youth, cannot take place, the Society is providing resources for educators and parents on the website. These resources are considered extensions of the Living Lab program. The Society is also reaching out to underserved populations and groups that normally cannot visit the Garden. Through the schools, the Society connects a teacher with a student on their virtual platform. Teachers also provide a fun, science activity on Facebook each week. In addition, the Trillium store has shifted to an online storefront with curbside pick-up. It is now open with limited hours following all COVID protocol for retail operations in King County.

Ms. Raulerson reported that the 2020 Garden d'Lights event was offered virtually. This annual community event is almost entirely powered by volunteers. Unfortunately, the volunteers could not install the lights or work at the event in 2020 due to COVID restrictions. Virtually, through a video of past Garden d'Lights images, the Society connected with Garden d'Lights attendees through the years. Sponsors were recognized on the Society website and the Garden d'Lights web page. The video was viewed 3,900 times with almost 39,000 impressions. Ms. Raulerson highlighted the 2020 Garden d'Lights sponsors.

Heather Babiak-Kane, Co-President of the BBGS Board, said that the Society membership is growing. This is a testament to the value and importance of BBG and the programming that the Society offers. Approximately 430 new members were added over the past 10 months. New members frequently share how much they appreciate the Garden staying open during COVID, how much they enjoy the educational webinars, and how they are most grateful to have a peaceful respite from the daily challenges of the pandemic.

Ms. Babiak-Kane said that Garden visitation has increased during the pandemic with visitors following social distancing guidelines. She added that the year-end appeal in 2020 raised just over \$165K, which was largely a response to the Society not being able to hold the beloved annual event, Garden d'Lights.

Looking forward, Ms. Babiak-Kane said that the Society will work with City staff to adapt and adjust as the pandemic transitions in the year ahead. In addition, the Garden is moving forward with an update to the Garden's interpretive plan. The Society is working with City staff to update the Garden's plant collection software and database—both critical to the long-term success of the BBG. Ms. Babiak-Kane added that some degree of virtual programming may be included, even after the community is able to gather safely in person. Virtual offerings have broadened the reach and reduced barriers to inclusion for those unable to attend programs in person for reasons unrelated to the pandemic.

On behalf of the Society, Ms. Babiak-Kane expressed her appreciation for the Board's support with advocacy on behalf of parks. Boardmembers expressed their appreciation for the beautiful Garden and the work of the staff and Society at the Garden.

Councilmember Zahn encouraged Boardmembers to attend the BBG virtual Chinese New Year event on February 13, 2021.

Chair Trescases asked if some of the school programming at the Garden has been offered virtually. Ms. Raulerson explained that some extensions that teachers can utilize from the website have been added. Staff is also experimenting with some of the underserved populations with various interactions and Facebook Live.

B. Cross-Cultural Feasibility Study

Yuriana Garcia Tellez, Diversity Outreach and Engagement Administrator, City Manager's Office, provided an update on the Cross-Cultural Feasibility Study.

Ms. Tellez explained that the Diversity Advantage Plan was adopted in 2014. Extensive research was conducted to explore the charter and establish a Bellevue Diversity Institute. The recommendation was to "Convene a community advisory group to explore a charter to establish a 'Bellevue Diversity Institute...'" its mission would be to educate, celebrate, challenge and inspire Bellevue to be a welcoming and inclusive community that embraces diversity.

Ms. Tellez noted that in 2018, a Cross-Cultural Programming Public Outreach Study was conducted. This was a wide ranging study that engaged many of the diverse communities in Bellevue. Community feedback was obtained from 443 survey participants and 125 workshop attendees. This outreach helped identify barriers to participating and increasing demand for cross cultural gathering spaces.

In May, 2019, Ms. Tellez said that the results of the 2018 Cross-Cultural Programming Public Outreach Study were presented to Council. Council provided additional direction to pursue a feasibility study, specifically: supply and demand analysis; assessment of current public and private gathering spaces; and exploration of a cross-cultural facility in Bellevue.

Ms. Tellez provided an overview of Bellevue's changing race and ethnicity demographic trends from 2000 to 2020.

Phase 1 of the Cross-Cultural Programming Public Outreach Study evaluated the following:

- Does increased cross-cultural engagement enhance the overall quality of life for long term and new residents in Bellevue?
- What is the interest level of organizations and community members to participate, attend, and support cross-cultural programming?

- What are resources and program needs of community groups to be engaged and support their ability to thrive in the city?
- What opportunities and ideas can be leveraged to create an environment for increased cross-cultural exchange and engagement that helps build community?

Ms. Tellez explained that the study helped identify: what I want others to understand and learn about my identity and culture; what can prevent me from participating in diversity and multicultural activities.

Based upon the survey, Ms. Tellez reported that approximately 86% of the respondents agreed that a physical space to anchor the community is desired.

Ms. Tellez reviewed the various resources that might be offered through a multicultural center.

At the end of Phase 1 of the study, the following recommendations were made:

- Conduct an assessment of access and inclusion of existing City-directed cross-cultural activities and programs.
- Strengthen the marketing and communications about City of Bellevue cross-cultural programming.
- Explore options to form community-centered program models that will work in partnership with the City.
- Strengthen the use of Bellevue community liaisons as they conduct culturally relevant outreach, education, and technical assistance.
- Implement Phase 2 of the Council's approach that would analyze the effectiveness and adequacy of the places of cross-cultural programming and gatherings.

Ms. Tellez said that Phase 2 of the study was completed in 2020. This phase built upon Phase 1 and focused on spaces and the current programs that exist within Bellevue (public and private). The questions that were asked in Phase 2 included:

- What are the key needs, aspirations and desired elements of cross-cultural programming?
- What facilities, city-owned, public and private, are currently used for cross-cultural activities?
- What site opportunities are possible?
- What is the operating and financial model?

Ms. Tellez said that over 40 stakeholders were interviewed during Phase 2. She reviewed the key findings from this phase of the study. She also reviewed some of the existing facilities that support cross-cultural activities with the key operating and financial characteristics of the existing community centers.

Based upon the research conducted, Ms. Tellez explained how this translates into building a program and the key program elements for a site. She also highlighted some of the criteria that should be considered when evaluating possible site opportunities (i.e., accessibility, programmable outdoor space, visibility and centrally located, etc.).

Ms. Tellez discussed the three opportunities for a site including Downtown, Wilburton, and BelRed. She also reviewed the financial model for a cross-cultural facility.

There are various possible operating models for the cross-cultural facility. Ms. Tellez noted that the study determined that the most viable solution is a hybrid model. Below is a list of the final findings and recommendations:

- Cultivate project champions, consider organizing a small group of leaders, with representatives from the City, community stakeholders, and the corporate sector.
- Integrate this work into existing community and economic development efforts that will help illuminate the economic viability and market potential for a cross-cultural facility.
- Conduct additional demand analysis to confirm and refine desired physical program spaces, completing additional detailed potential site evaluation, prioritizing and applying the evaluation criteria.
- Develop shared marketing and collaboration resources for existing programs, as well as the development of additional cross-cultural programs to be held at existing spaces.
- Work to build additional capacity building resources for nonprofit cultural organizations, consider working with partners from private or foundation sectors.

Since the study was conducted in 2020, Ms. Tellez discussed some of the items that should be considered due to the pandemic, including:

- COVID has restricted community building efforts.
- Past and current benchmarking indicates that there will be significant demand for “high touch” in addition to “high tech” experiences post-COVID.
- National and local conversation on social and racial equity.
- Need for shared experiences that allow diverse communities to develop mutual understanding.

Ms. Tellez discussed the next phase in the project, which is Phase 3. Council will assist in defining the scope of this phase.

Boardmember Clark asked if there was any additional data to understand the intensity of the desire for technology. He noted that in the 2018 study (page 26) the technology rating wasn't a particularly high ranked item in the community survey. However, it was ranked a little higher in the community forum live response survey. Ms. Tellez discussed the many barriers that are involved with technology, which is an ongoing conversation. Once the phases advance, the needs will be reassessed to determine how the technology issues surface.

Boardmember Clark called attention to Crossroads Mall, which provides a compelling cross-cultural site. Its proximity to the Crossroads Community Center is beneficial. He asked if it would be possible to make a similar center in Factoria. Ms. Tellez explained that Community Development is already in communication with Factoria Mall.

Boardmember Clark said that one of the items out of the 2018 report was the insufficient signage and wayfinding for Crossroads Community Center. Although hidden, Mr. Shiosaki said that the Crossroads Community Center is a well utilized facility.

Chair Trescases explained that the multi-cultural community at Crossroads was intentional. She thinks that the concept of making Factoria a similar community is feasible. Chair Trescases added that Crossroads Community Center is on a private road that the City does not own. This causes logistical challenges for the center.

Vice-Chair Hamilton asked Ms. Tellez to identify the Board's role with the Cross-Cultural Feasibility Study. Ms. Tellez said that the first step is to get Council direction in March, 2021. She encouraged the Parks Board to assess the current programs to identify improvements for accessibility, reducing barriers, adding programs to bring the diverse communities to the centers, etc.—it is the initial vision of educating, celebrating, and bringing together different cultures.

Boardmember Unger asked if there are any concerns about making plans based upon the information gathered during COVID and/or if this has been considered. Ms. Tellez explained that the study was conducted in 2020. However, a lot of the data reviewed was from 2018 and 2019. The data from the community centers was collected just prior to COVID. Ms. Tellez added that many considerations will be evaluated as the project transitions to Phase 3 and beyond. Because of the nature of Bellevue's demographics throughout the City, Ms. Tellez said that there will be a need for the work to continue. Mr. Shiosaki clarified that Phase 3 was a budget addition by Council, so it is a Council priority. He added that COVID potentially created other opportunities like virtual programming at community centers. It will be a different way of looking at programming.

Boardmember Synn asked for clarification on what types of programs would be found in a multi-cultural center versus a community center. Ms. Tellez said that the programs would include festivals, cultural celebrations, cross-cultural engagement, community kitchen, social services, etc. Mr. Synn asked if there is a way to delineate outdoor space versus indoor—he wondered if this was part of the feedback from the community that everything be tied together. Ms. Tellez said that the community wants a multi-cultural center that is multifunctional. Phase 3 will help clarify any additional areas that the community might need.

Chair Trescases expressed her enthusiasm for the project and creating a space for Bellevue's diverse community groups. She cautioned that one building will not solve all of the problems yet she sees tremendous success and demand for the facility. Mr. Shiosaki clarified that Parks staff has been involved with the cultural center discussions so they will keep Boardmembers informed of developments.

11. **NEW BUSINESS:**

None.

12. **PROPOSED AGENDA FOR NEXT MEETING:**

Mr. Parker said that there are a few presentations that are potentially on the agenda for next month, including:

- Update on Eastlink project and alignment.
- Choices Plan for individuals with disabilities.

Boardmember Unger asked for an update on youth summer camps.

Vice-Chair Hamilton requested that preparation of the 1Q21 letter to Council be included in the March agenda. Boardmember Clark suggested that a draft of the letter be prepared for Boardmembers to review in the March packet. He also suggested that a policy discussion be included in the March agenda to fill in some gaps in the letter.

Boardmember Synn asked for clarification on the difference between a cultural center and a community center. Mr. Shiosaki explained that the physical space may be similar; however, the intent and programming is different.

Chair Trescases requested that the Board's work plan be evaluated. Councilmember Zahn added that the work plan evaluation should include the accomplishments with the current levy. She also clarified that the consultant's report for the multi-cultural center delineates the difference between a community center and cultural center. She suggested that staff evaluate the report to help the Parks Board understand the difference.

Boardmember Clark asked if there is a way to engage the community about the levy accomplishments. Mr. Shiosaki clarified that the levy accomplishments are listed in the Board packet. In regards to a future levy, staff has been asked to develop a financing plan as part of the Parks & Open Space System Plan update. The Board will be involved in this major planning document.

Boardmember Unger wants to be sure that the quarterly communication to Council is value added and concise. She feels that the quarterly letter may not be a great use of the Board's time to debate past accomplishments. She suggested that the subcommittee prepare the quarterly letter to Council and include this in the March Board packet with limited discussion. Vice-Chair Hamilton clarified that the quarterly communication to Council is part of the Board's bylaws and City Code. Therefore, the quarterly report would require a motion/approval of the Board.

13. **OTHER COMMUNICATIONS:**

- A. Parks CIP Project Status Report
- B. Newport Hills Neighborhood Park Naming – Background Research
- C. NE 12th Street Multipurpose Path
- D. Email re Bellevue Trees

14. **ADJOURNMENT:**

Motion by Boardmember Unger and second by Boardmember Clark to adjourn the meeting at 8:10 p.m. Motion carried unanimously (6-0).