

CITY OF BELLEVUE  
BELLEVUE PLANNING COMMISSION  
STUDY SESSION MINUTES

January 12, 2022  
6:30 p.m.

Bellevue City Hall  
Virtual Meeting

COMMISSIONERS PRESENT: Chair Malakoutian, Vice Chair Ferris, Commissioners Bhargava, Brown, Goepple

COMMISSIONERS ABSENT: Commissioners Morisseau, Moolgavkar

STAFF PRESENT: Thara Johnson, Emil King, Elizabeth de Regt, Department of Community Development; Matt McFarland, City Attorney's Office

COUNCIL LIAISON: Not Present

GUEST SPEAKERS: None

RECORDING SECRETARY: Gerry Lindsay

1. CALL TO ORDER  
(6:30 p.m.)

The meeting was called to order at 6:30 p.m. by Chair Malakoutian who presided.

Chair Malakoutian stated that the meeting was being held remotely via zoom in order to comply with the Governor's emergency order concerning the Open Public Meetings Act, which prohibits in-person meetings.

2. ROLL CALL  
(6:31 p.m.)

Upon the call of the roll, all Commissioners were present with the exception of Commissioners Morisseau and Moolgavkar.

3. APPROVAL OF AGENDA  
(6:32 p.m.)

A motion to approve the agenda was made by Commissioner Goepple. The motion was seconded by Vice Chair Ferris and the motion carried unanimously.

4. REPORTS OF CITY COUNCIL, BOARDS AND COMMISSIONS – None  
(6:33 p.m.)

5. STAFF REPORTS  
(6:33 p.m.)

A. Planning Commission Meeting Schedule

Comprehensive Planning Manager Thara Johnson took a few minutes to review the Commission's schedule of upcoming meeting dates and agenda items.

Commissioner Goepple asked if the issue of standing previously raised in regard to a privately initiated Comprehensive Plan amendment will be determined before the Commission begins the threshold review. Ms. Johnson answered that staff met with the Lochleven Community on January 10 to walk through with them the CPA process. Their specific questions were addressed. She said it was her understanding that documentation has been provided that shows the applicant is the property owner of record, giving the applicant legal standing.

Assistant City Attorney Matt McFarland stressed the importance of the Commission focusing on the merits under both the threshold and final decision criteria. The staff report will include detailed responses to all public comments received.

6. ORAL AND WRITTEN COMMUNICATIONS  
(6:40 p.m.)

Mr. Mark Walters, a member of the board of the Lochleven Community Association, voiced his appreciation for the Commission raising the issue of standing. On September 15, 2021, the applicant submitted his application for a Comprehensive Plan amendment. The applicant did not own the property until December 17, roughly three months later. It would be a dangerous precedent for the city to allow non-property owners to file Comprehensive Plan amendments. There is nothing to show the applicant was authorized by the prior property owner to request an amendment to the Comprehensive Plan. The city attorney was asked to explain how a non-owner and non-authorized agent can submit a CPA and trigger the review process, and the answer given was that the issue fell under attorney/client privilege. The conclusions on which the city attorney concluded that the applicant has standing should be made part of the record.

Mr. Craig Speizle said the issue of legal standing is very important. Specifically, the CPA application states that an applicant must be a legal owner or the legal owner's authorized agent. Neither of those conditions have been met. The lack of transparency is concerning. It makes no sense that the Lochleven Community Association should have to retain an attorney in order to find out more information from the city attorney. The city staff and the Planning Commission exist to protect the rights of the residents of the city. The process lacks transparency and tarnishes the concept of trust and integrity in the city's planning processes to the benefit of a single developer who does not reside in the city. The Commission should not continue with the process, and the issue of standing should be investigated.

Ms. Johnson noted that staff had provided the Commissioners with all written correspondence received.

7. PUBLIC HEARING – None  
(6:49 p.m.)

8. STUDY SESSION  
(6:49 p.m.)

A. Introduction and Overview of the Comprehensive Plan Periodic Update Process

Senior Planner Elizabeth de Regt outlined the periodic update process schedule. She described

the upcoming January 26 briefing for the Planning Commission on the Countywide Planning Policies. She noted that on February 28 the Council is anticipated to initiate the Comprehensive Plan periodic update process, then on March 9 the Commission will be briefed more fully on the scope and schedule. Staff will work closely with the Commission over the course of the next two years leading up to the June 2024 deadline for adopting the periodic update.

Ms. De Regt noted that the Comprehensive Plan includes goals and policies that lead to citywide regulations, plans and programs. The Planning Commission plays a key role in amending the Comprehensive Plan, including particularly the policies and Land Use Map. Other boards and commissions weigh in with their specific area insights.

A layered framework is in place to govern the comprehensive planning process. Each layer provides the framework for the next layer and as such must be in coordination with the previous layers. The Growth Management Act is the state framework, and within it are Vision 2050 and the Multicounty Planning Policies. Within that framework are the King County Countywide Planning Policies, under which fall local comprehensive plans.

The GMA lays out the specific framework for the goals of distributing growth towards urban areas and employment centers; protecting rural, critical and natural resources areas; and creating public processes. The periodic update of the Comprehensive Plan is required to be undertaken every eight years. Smaller scale, individual amendments to the Comprehensive Plan are allowed to occur once per year. The Comprehensive Plan was last updated in 2015 and the deadline for updating it again was extended to 2024. The plan looks out 20 years so this update will have as its horizon year 2024.

The Puget Sound Regional Council is the body that plans for the four-county region that includes Bellevue. Their planning document, currently called Vision 2050, is updated periodically. It includes the Multicounty Planning Policies that provide a framework for the four counties. The counties build on those policies but are also free to add their own specific and more local policies. Vision 2050 has an emphasis on the relationship between housing and jobs. It speaks to the need to locate housing near jobs. King County has its own Countywide Planning Policies and they directly impact Bellevue's Comprehensive Plan. King County included some major changes to the Countywide Planning Policies, including in the areas of housing, equity and climate, the details of which will be shared with the Commission on January 26. Bellevue's growth targets for 2044 are to add 35,000 housing units and 70,000 jobs.

Vice Chair Ferris asked if the jobs/housing ratio of 2:1 is common in the GMA or if it is specific to Bellevue, and if it is specific to Bellevue, if it can be changed. Ms. Johnson explained that the Multicounty Planning Policies direct each county to develop growth targets and to address the jobs/housing balance. Staff from Bellevue and all the jurisdictions within King County worked over the last year and a half to determine what the jobs/housing balance should be. Every jurisdiction assesses what it wants to achieve in terms of balance. Bellevue's previous ratio was 2.5:1, and the new ratio is 2:1.

Vice Chair Ferris asked if the Commission has any way to suggest changes to the ratio and Ms. Johnson said once the negotiation process is completed, the recommendation is passed on to the King County Growth Management Policy Council which makes a recommendation to the King County Council. The King County Council has adopted the targets and the Bellevue City Council is tentatively set to ratify them along with the Countywide Planning Policies on February 7. Vice Chair Ferris said she would be interested in knowing how the specific targets were determined.

Commissioner Goepple noted that during the Commission's recent annual retreat it was stated that Bellevue has a housing deficit numbers in the tens of thousands of units. He asked if that was taken into account in setting the ratio for Bellevue. He said he was very concerned that Bellevue could end up repeating some of the mistakes that have been made by other cities in the region in not providing adequate numbers of housing units. The 2:1 ratio may not be enough. He said he also would like more information on how the numbers were set and if staff thinks the ratio will achieve the longer-term objective. Ms. Johnson said the methodology for setting the growth targets is very in-depth. One of the requirements of the Comprehensive Plan update is to update the Housing Element, and that process will involve updating the housing needs assessment which is where the true housing needs will be analyzed.

Commissioner Bhargava asked if the Comprehensive Plan update will include any significant changes, additions or deletions relative to specific sections of the plan. Ms. de Regt said the March 9 session with the Commission will go into quite a lot of detail. She said in addition to the structured framework of the Countywide Planning Policies, there are things that are important to Bellevue that are not necessarily required. Some of those may need changes since the last update. Additionally, it will be important to carefully review the Council vision and incorporate their high-priority issues. Housing is an important topic both for Bellevue specifically and for the region so it will be given particular attention. Climate and equity are other important topics both to the county and the city. Light rail operations will begin soon in Bellevue and that is something the current Comprehensive Plan does not fully address.

Commissioner Brown commented that the process of updating the Comprehensive Plan offers a unique opportunity to shape the future of the city. She said she was eager to begin the process. Ms. de Regt said the city is at a turning point and there are a number of changing pieces and a number of levers the Comprehensive Plan process can pull. The housing related to growth targets involve more than just numbers, they also address housing unit types, affordability levels and location.

Vice Chair Ferris said it seemed to her that the target of 70,000 jobs was on the low side, particularly in light of the fact that Amazon alone will be bringing in 25,000 jobs. Ms. de Regt said she would bring back more specific information at a future study session. She added that it will be helpful for the Commission to review at that time the trajectory graphs showing past growth and projected future growth to better understand how they relate.

Chair Malakoutian asked if staff would be going to the East Bellevue Community Council as part of this project. Ms. de Regt noted that staff is planning to interact with the East Bellevue Community Council about the work to update the Comprehensive Plan. The Commission's briefing in March will include a review of the larger schedule showing how all the city's boards and commissions, and the EBCC, will fit together.

9. OTHER BUSINESS – None

10. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

A. December 1, 2021

A motion to approve the minutes was made by Commissioner Ferris. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Brown.

Commissioner Goepple referred to the last paragraph on page 2 of the minutes and noted that “assistance” should read “assistant.” He said the same revision was needed in the fifth paragraph on page 3 of the minutes.

The motion to approve the minutes as corrected carried unanimously.

B. December 8, 2021

A motion to approve the minutes as submitted was made by Commissioner Goepple. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Bhargava and the motion carried unanimously.

- 11. CONTINUED ORAL COMMUNICATIONS – None
- 12. EXECUTIVE SESSION – None
- 13. ADJOURNMENT

Chair Malakoutian adjourned the meeting at 7:26 p.m.



1/27/2022

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Thara Johnson  
Staff to the Planning Commission

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Date



1/27/2022

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Mohammad Malakoutian  
Chair of the Planning Commission

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Date