

CITY OF BELLEVUE
CITY COUNCIL

Summary Minutes of Special Meeting
Legislative Breakfast

January 5, 2009
7:30 a.m.

Council Conference Room
Bellevue, Washington

PRESENT: Mayor Degginger, Deputy Mayor Balducci, and Councilmembers Bonincontri, Chelminiak, Davidson, and Lee

ABSENT: Councilmember Noble

1. Welcome and Introductions

Mayor Degginger called the meeting to order at 7:47 a.m. and welcomed the following state legislators in attendance:

41st District

Senator Fred Jarrett
Representative Judy Clibborn
Representative Marcy Maxwell

48th District

Senator Rodney Tom
Representative Deb Eddy
Representative Ross Hunter

Also present was Mike Doubleday, lobbyist for the City.

2. 2009 State Legislative Priorities

Mayor Degginger referenced the Legislative Agenda in the meeting packet for a full summary of the City's priorities.

SR 520/I-90 Tolling – Mayor Degginger commented on his participation in the mitigation discussions, noting that Eastside cities are adhering to the mitigation principles that have been established. He is hoping this will be the case on the west side of the lake as well, and that this will keep tolls as low as possible.

Senator Tom would like construction to be initiated on the Eastside, while the west side continues to secure more funding. He is concerned that funding will be diverted to replacing the Alaskan Way viaduct in Seattle.

Representative Clibborn concurred with moving forward on the Eastside, noting that this is a more favorable bidding climate than in recent years. Representative Eddy would like construction costs and mitigation costs to be considered separately.

Mayor Degginger commented on the potential for funding from the pending federal economic stimulus package. Ms. Clibborn said it will be important to identify and prioritize projects that are ready to move forward. Mr. Jarrett suggested that I-405 projects will be identified as well as candidates for federal stimulus funding.

Deputy Mayor Balducci described Bellevue's position that the purpose of tolling on SR 520 should be to generate revenue to help fund construction of a new bridge. Tolling will be acceptable if its implementation will accelerate completion of the project, and if tolls can begin in 2010 in order to maintain lower toll rates that would be more acceptable to the public.

Councilmembers Chelminiak and Davidson commented on an alternate view that tolling should not be implemented until the bridge is completed.

Ms. Balducci noted a reluctance to toll I-90 as well, and suggested that if tolls are used they must be tied to specific I-90 improvements.

Representative Clibborn encouraged ongoing monitoring of the early tolling and I-90 tolling issues. She said it is unlikely that early tolling will be implemented for I-90.

Ms. Balducci said tolls should be structured to avoid directing more traffic to local streets. Councilmember Lee concurred that tolling should be considered within the larger framework of traffic and congestion management.

Sound Transit

Deputy Mayor Balducci said she is pleased with voter approval of funding for Sound Transit's East Link light rail project, which will help stimulate redevelopment and growth in the Bel-Red corridor.

Senator Tom commented that the bridge is equally important to Seattle and the Eastside, and that project cost overruns should be shared. Representative Clibborn agreed that the I-90 bridge segment of the light rail project could cost more than what is currently budgeted.

Mayor Degginger said light rail is needed to complement land uses in Downtown Bellevue, the Bel-Red corridor, and the overall Eastside. He is interested in the best strategy for resolving issues associated with the bridge segment.

Legislators reported that an expert panel is working to resolve technical issues related to the project.

Councilmember Chelminiak said it will be challenging and expensive to build light rail through Bellevue, given the level of existing development. It would not be acceptable to him to build a viaduct-style structure from I-90 to the Overlake area.

Representative Clibborn commented that increased costs for the I-90 bridge would reduce the amount of funding available for addressing issues related to constructing the system through Downtown Bellevue.

Councilmember Davidson expressed concern that Sound Transit is designing a 2030 solution based on a 1990's plan, and that Sound Transit has not yet completed Phase I of its original plan. He opined that bridge issues have not been adequately addressed. He feels construction should start on the Eastside and move west.

The group discussed the challenge of identifying additional funding sources for transportation projects, as tolling will not provide sufficient financing. Representative Clibborn noted that Oregon has announced it will implement a vehicle miles traveled (VMT) fee to generate transportation funding. Mr. Chelminiak said other states are adopting similar strategies.

Bel-Red Corridor and Downtown Infrastructure Needs

Councilmember Bonincontri described Bellevue's planning efforts to develop a compact community incorporating transit and environmental projects in the Bel-Red area. This will demand a high level of infrastructure investment, and the City will be seeking state and federal funding to help facilitate the redevelopment.

Responding to Representative Eddy, Mr. Chelminiak said the 2040 plan envisions 5,000 housing units in the Bel-Red corridor.

Representative Hunter commented that job creation is outpacing housing development, which contributes to increased transportation demands. He feels the regional growth plan should include a higher emphasis on increasing development density.

Representative Clibborn feels that Bellevue is well positioned to benefit from incentives related to transit-oriented development.

County Funding

Councilmember Chelminiak spoke to the importance of maintaining and enhancing public health funding, including through the use of state funds. The City supports greater flexibility in the County's use of REET (Real estate excise tax) collections for operations and maintenance. Mr. Chelminiak said if greater flexibility is granted, the County should be expected to maintain services benefitting from the funds.

Representative Hunter said it is likely that some county flexibility will be granted, with conditions placed on the use of the funds. He commented that King County's role and functions will change as remaining unincorporated areas are annexed. He noted the importance of resolving issues related to annexation and the use of incentives, improving efficiency in the delivery of human and public health services, flexibility in the use of REET revenue, and preventing the creation of any new countywide taxing authority.

Mayor Degginger said Bellevue supports enhanced annexation. Cities should be relieved from paying for ferry services and other programs and services from which they receive no direct benefit.

At 9:08 a.m., Mayor Degginger thanked everyone for attending and declared the meeting adjourned.

Myrna L. Basich
City Clerk

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