

CITY OF BELLEVUE  
CITY COUNCIL

Summary Minutes of Study Session

May 19, 2008  
6:00 p.m.

Council Conference Room  
Bellevue, Washington

PRESENT: Deputy Mayor Balducci and Councilmembers Chelminiak, Davidson, Lee and Noble

ABSENT: Mayor Degginger and Councilmember Bonincontri

1. Executive Session

Deputy Mayor Balducci called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m. and declared recess to Executive Session for approximately 20 minutes to discuss two matters of potential litigation and one item of property acquisition/disposition.

The meeting resumed at 6:41 p.m. with Deputy Mayor Balducci presiding.

2. Study Session

(a) Surrey Downs Park Master Plan Review

City Manager Steve Sarkozy recalled that the Surrey Downs property was acquired from King County in 2005. Prior to that time the District Court occupied the former elementary school, and a portion of the property was used as a park based on an agreement between the County and the City. Last fall, City staff initiated master planning for the site and the public involvement process.

Parks and Community Services Director Patrick Foran explained that the Parks and Community Services Board approved the proposed Surrey Downs Park Master Plan at its May 13 meeting. The next step is to conduct the SEPA (State Environmental Policy Act) process and then to return to the City Council for final approval of the plan.

Glenn Kost, Parks Planning Manager, reviewed the project timeline and public involvement process to date. Public involvement activities have included community workshops, the creation of a City web page and questionnaire, and the consideration of alternatives by the Parks Board.

The first of three workshops focused on visions and values, and the second workshop reviewed concept plan alternatives. Priorities that emerged during the public involvement process included the retention of athletic fields (without lights), a diversity of park elements and activities (e.g., trails, children's play areas, retaining Hazelnut trees), and the creation of a community center.

The third workshop initially presented a preferred concept plan that did not include a community center. Instead staff proposed a development zone to act as a placeholder pending future discussions regarding the appropriate and desired building development. The development zone was designated as the north portion of the site along 112<sup>th</sup> Avenue SE, and limits for the size and scale of the development were established (i.e., maximum one-story building). The building should merge with adjacent park elements, and buffers along the north property line should be maintained. Additionally, the building should accommodate multi-generational interests.

During the third workshop, staff presented a small building concept (with or without structured parking) and a large building concept (with structured parking). The concept plans and parameters were well received. Primary issues discussed centered on increasing buffers along some boundaries of the park, particularly adjacent to the southeast ball field, and enlarging the basketball court and playground.

Mr. Kost reviewed the proposed master plan, which reflects the following changes from the preferred master plan: 1) Minor relocation of ball fields to increase buffer, 2) Addition of picnic shelter, 3) Elimination of water feature, and 4) Enlargement/relocation of basketball court. Elements of the proposed master plan include a lawn and playground, a half basketball court, climbing wall, small skate area, a discovery play area, loop trail, Hazelnut grove, and sports fields (Little League, softball, and soccer).

Mr. Kost said the Parks Board unanimously recommends Council approval of the master plan and the development zone parameters. Staff would like to complete the SEPA process and present the final plan for Council action before Council's August recess.

Responding to Councilmember Davidson, Mr. Kost said the plan is to provide at least 90 parking spaces for the park, and to add more parking spaces if a building is developed.

Councilmember Chelminiak reviewed his attendance at several of the planning meetings. He noted the community's interest in the potential development of a Boys and Girls Club of Bellevue facility. He feels the neighborhood is pleased with the plan and looks forward to the park's development. Mr. Chelminiak commended staff and residents for their work.

Responding to Councilmember Noble, Mr. Foran said boulders on the property will be retained. Staff clarified additional details for Mr. Noble and described design elements that will mitigate noise impacts.

Responding to Councilmembers Lee and Noble, Mr. Kost said residents have not expressed concerns about security. However, it is possible that a fence will be provided around the park.

Councilmember Lee supports a potential partnership in the park with the Boys and Girls Club of Bellevue.

Deputy Mayor Balducci described a recent walk through the park with residents. She feels the park will provide a strong public benefit. She suggested that the SEPA review consider potential re-grading on the site in areas in which it might improve the safety of the park's use. She encouraged flexibility throughout the process in terms of addressing potential impacts to adjacent residents, especially the house closest to the ball fields.

(b) Light Rail Best Practices Update

Mr. Sarkozy opened discussion regarding the Light Rail Best Practices Committee's draft report.

Maria Koengeter, Senior Transportation Planner, explained that the Light Rail Best Practices Committee will continue to review the draft report during its May and June meetings. Tonight staff is seeking Council feedback on the draft report. Sounds Transit is expected to release its draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) for the East Like project in the fall.

Ms. Koengeter recalled that the Committee was appointed to review the light rail experiences of other cities, engage the community in a review of the findings, and to develop Bellevue best practices and policy recommendations for Council consideration. As previously presented to Council, topics addressed by the Committee include neighborhood impacts, connecting people to light rail, station security, land use, street design and operations, construction impacts, and the desirable type of system (e.g., elevated, at-grade, tunnels). The Committee reviewed reports of other light rail projects and toured systems in Portland, San Diego, and San Jose, as well as the system under construction in Seattle.

Ms. Koengeter explained that an action plan for this work will address: 1) Comprehensive Plan policies, 2) Codes and standards, 3) Other City policies and procedures, 4) Related City capital investments, and 5) Expectations/responsibilities of Sound Transit.

David Knowles, a consultant with David Evans and Associates, noted that this is the first example he has heard of in the country in which a local government conducted a comprehensive review to fully understand the best way to design and implement a light rail system. He reviewed the five principal findings of the Committee's work: 1) The system should be deliberately designed to connect high-use locations, 2) Light rail should be developed in a manner that complements, not diminishes, the character and quality of Bellevue, 3) Potential impacts should be identified so that Bellevue can advocate for mitigation, 4) The alignment profile should consider the unique qualities of each part of the community, and 5) Early, ongoing public involvement is essential for the success of light rail in Bellevue.

Mr. Knowles explained that safe and convenient connections to light rail services are critical to the success of a system. Stations should be designed as an extension of the immediate neighborhood, and investments in light rail can be a foundation for other community enhancements. Station security can be addressed through design elements and by fostering a sense of ownership among neighbors and users of the system.

Mr. Knowles described the importance of developing a comprehensive strategy for limiting and mitigating the negative impacts of light rail construction and implementation. This involves engaging the residential and business communities in developing approaches to minimize impacts and to provide support during construction.

Mr. Knowles reviewed the pros and cons of elevated, at-grade, and tunnel-based systems. The Committee concluded that any given alignment profile might be appropriate in one area but not in another. The type of profile used should provide safe connections, support the land use plan, minimize impacts on street operations, and optimize ridership. Urban design features can enhance safety and the integration of the system into the community.

Mr. Knowles commended the City for establishing a public involvement process to complement system planning. The Light Rail Best Practices Committee recommends continued community involvement in the planning and design of the system, as well as the creation of a citizen advisory committee for the East Link project.

Bernard van de Kamp, Regional Projects Manager, recalled that work on the draft EIS began approximately 18 months ago. Sound Transit is expected to release initial findings of the DEIS in June, and the full draft report is to be issued in the fall. Sections that are more complete than others at this time address cost, ridership, travel time, displacements, and I-90 performance.

Michael Katterman, Senior Land Use Planner, reviewed the remaining project schedule. Staff anticipates requesting Council action on related Comprehensive Plan amendments (CPAs) before Council's August recess. The Planning Commission is required to hold a public hearing on the CPAs, while the Council is not. Mr. Katterman noted the possibility of a joint public hearing before the Planning Commission and the City Council, with a target date of July 14.

Responding to Councilmember Lee, Mr. Knowles said that most light rail systems on the West Coast have been developed as at-grade profiles. A major benefit of grade separation is enhanced travel speed.

Councilmember Noble emphasized the importance of providing adequate park and ride lots to support the light rail system.

Councilmember Chelminiak commented that a joint-city committee of elected officials would be beneficial in addressing light rail issues. He suggested integrating related City investments into the Capital Investment Program (CIP) plan.

Deputy Mayor Balducci stated her preference that the Planning Commission hold the public hearing. Councilmembers Chelminiak and Noble were open to a joint hearing. Ms. Balducci suggested the Council address the issue next week.

(c) Financial Management Policies – Fund Balance

[Moved to Regular Session, Agenda Item 5(c).]

3. Discussion

- (a) Consideration of application of the Investment Group of Kirkland to rezone a 4.79-acre parcel at 12627 SE Coal Creek Parkway from R-2.5 to R-20, known as the Coal Creek Rezone. File No. 07-142729 LQ.

[Moved to Regular Session, Agenda Item 5 (b).]

At 8:04 p.m., Mayor Degginger declared recess to the Regular Session.

Myrna L. Basich  
City Clerk

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