

CITY OF BELLEVUE  
BELLEVUE PLANNING COMMISSION  
STUDY SESSION MINUTES

April 24, 2013  
6:30 p.m.

Bellevue City Hall  
City Council Conference Room 1E-113

COMMISSIONERS PRESENT: Commissioners Ferris, Hamlin, Laing, Sheffels, and Vice Chair Tebelius

COMMISSIONERS ABSENT: Chairman Carlson, Commissioner Turner

STAFF PRESENT: Paul Inghram, Andrew Kidde, Nicholas Matz, Department of Planning and Community Development

GUEST SPEAKERS: Karissa Stay, Kevin Kincaid, Mackenzie Young, Elizabeth Tran, Zach Wall, Clement Mooc, Manvir Singh, T.J. Egbejimba, Gilbert Predente, Brenda Rosales, Vyla Phavong, Caetlyn Conklin, Theo Mordaunt, Kauthar Salum, Emma Rasmussen, Daniel Yabuki, Clariz Tecson, Silvana Camino, Guillemette Labrec, Sim Badyal, Maria Smith, Yodae Lim, Ian Vaughn, Sammamish High School

RECORDING SECRETARY: Gerry Lindsay

SAMMAMISH HIGH SCHOOL SPECIAL PRESENTATION ON PLANNING BELLEVUE NEIGHBORHOODS

Vice Chair Tebelius welcomed the presenters from Sammamish High School.

Andrew Kidde, Mediation Program Manager, highlighted the collaboration between the Department of Planning and Community Development and Sammamish High School. He said the students making the presentations were ninth graders from the AP Human Geography class. He also informed the Commissioners that three teachers were also present, including Mackenzie Young, Kevin Kincaid and Karissa Stay. Three different scenarios were placed before the students for consideration: Lake Hills Shopping Center, Newport Shopping Center, and the Eastgate Park and Ride.

Ms. Stay explained that the students were required to visit each area studied, look at the demographics of each area, and then put down on paper what they would like to see happen in each area.

Newport High School students, Emma Rasmussen, Silvana Camino, Daniel Yabuki, Clariz Tecson, Manvir Singh, Clement Mooc, Elizabeth Tran, Zach Wall, Caetlyn Conklin, Kauthar Salum, Theo Mordaunt, Guillemette Lebrech, Maria Smith, Sim Badyal, Vyla Phavong, Brenda Rosales, T.J. Egbejimba and Gilbert Predente, Ian Vaughn and Yodae Lim gave well researched presentations, including suggested improvements to help those communities become gathering places. They included creative ideas for retail, recreation and entertainment and responded to various Commissioners inquires with intelligent comments.

Vice Chair Tebelius thanked the students for their presentations. She also congratulated the teachers for the efforts they put into working with their students.

Comprehensive Planning Manager Paul Inghram also thanked the students for their presentations. The students were encouraged to stay involved and to continue to influence those who are working to shape the Bellevue of the future.

Commissioner Ferris encouraged the students to pay attention to the planning efforts that are always going on in the individual neighborhoods. He assured them that their voices will be heard and will make a difference.

The Planning Commission serves to advise and to give reasoned opinions to the City Council, primarily about land use. The opinions of decision makers are heavily influenced by the citizens they serve. Students, though not yet able to vote, nonetheless have a voice and can influence the future.

Commissioner Laing praised the students for their presentations and encouraged them to stay involved.

Commissioner Hamlin thanked the students for their presentations and said he really enjoyed them.

**\*\* Break \*\***

1. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 8:02 p.m. by Vice Chair Tebelius who presided.

2. ROLL CALL

Upon the call of the roll, all commissioners were present with the exception of Chairman Carlson and Commissioner Turner, both of whom were excused.

3. PUBLIC COMMENT – None

4. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

A motion to approve the agenda was made by Commissioner Ferris. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Hamlin and it carried unanimously.

5. COMMUNICATIONS FROM CITY COUNCIL, COMMUNITY COUNCILS, BOARDS AND COMMISSIONS

Commissioner Hamlin reported that he attended the April 11 Transportation Commission meeting at which the transit master plan was on the agenda. He said the idea of maximizing the transit system without spreading routes too thinly across the city was raised and discussed; residents of areas that are expensive to serve because they have low ridership should understand they have chosen to live there and that they will not have buses serving their neighborhood with any degree of frequency. The idea is to put transit resources into the areas where the people want transit.

Vice Chair Tebelius commented that a recent report states downtown Seattle currently has 11 percent less traffic than it had in 2007. Traffic has not increased there even with improvements in the economy, unlike some other areas of the country. Mr. Inghram said a similar trend has

been noticed in downtown Bellevue where the traffic counts have essentially remained flat even in the face of new high-rise buildings having been constructed.

Commissioner Hamlin said he has started riding the bus into Seattle and has found it to be a time saver.

## 6. STAFF REPORTS

Mr. Inghram reported that the Council took action on April 22 regarding East Link light rail. He said the Sound Transit board would meet on April 25 to consider the recommendation of the Council, which is for a lidded trench on the east side of Bellevue Way passing in front of Winters House; light rail at grade at the intersection with 112th Avenue SE with the roadway passing over the top of the rail in the vicinity of Bellefield Office Park and the Bellefield Condominiums; an at-grade entrance at SE 4th Street for emergency access only; a tunnel just south of Main Street continuing to an above-ground station in the area of City Hall; crossing I-405 at NE 6th Street and running up the Burlington Northern-Sante Fe rail corridor to NE 12th Street and from there into the Bel-Red corridor and on to Redmond.

Answering a question asked by Commissioner Ferris, Mr. Inghram said there has been a lot of discussion about what to do with the property adjacent to City Hall that King County at one time considered as the location for a layover area. King County owns the property and the city has for several years been in negotiations to purchase the site. The land needed for light rail would be allocated to that use and the balance would be repurposed, possibly for a hotel use and expansion of Meydenbauer Center. Commissioner Ferris said if there is a vision for how the property should be used, the city should act on it sooner rather than later.

Mr. Inghram noted that the city has begun advertising the Commission position that will become available at the end of May.

## 7. STUDY SESSION

### A. Comprehensive Plan Update Work Program

Mr. Inghram noted that the city has been engaged in outreach efforts concerning the Comprehensive Plan update process for several months. He noted that in addition to meeting with various groups and individuals, holding a joint forum with six boards and commissions in January as well as a public discussion event hosted by the East Bellevue Community Council, the 2014 update was featured at the Spring Forward Expo open house event conducted earlier in the day. Through it all there has been a consistent theme voiced, that people like Bellevue the way it is and needs only relatively minor improvements.

Mr. Inghram provided the commissioners with copies of a summary of the comments from the joint board and commission forum on each of four topic areas: community, environment, business and family. Included in the summary was a table of all comments recorded at the joint forum, as well as the comments from the public event. Beyond the general idea of keeping what is special about Bellevue while looking for some improvements, a lot of comments focused on a range of economic development activities in areas outside of the downtown. Many asked where incubator businesses can locate, where small businesses can survive, and even about home businesses. Comments were made about housing affordability as an issue for businesses. Some mentioned businesses as a place to hang out while others generally talked about the need for places to gather in their communities, both of which are classic planning issues under the topic heading of healthy communities.

Continuing, Mr. Inghram said Bellevue residents recognize the fact that the city is becoming more diverse. There is, however, no real consensus as to what that means from a planning standpoint. It could be an economic opportunity by being better able to relate globally as opposed to only locally. Comments have been made on the need for improved mobility in all forms as an economic issue, and about the need to form strong and healthy partnerships and act collaboratively with organizations such as Bellevue College, the Bellevue School District and community associations.

Commissioner Ferris voiced support for the notion of emphasizing higher education in the Comprehensive Plan. The current plan does not have a section for education, and in nearly every land use category it is necessary to obtain a special permit in order to be allowed to site an educational use. An opportunity category or area should be created that would make it easier to site a higher education facility in Bellevue. Education is important and will be even more so in the future, but the Comprehensive Plan does not reflect that fact.

Commissioner Sheffels commented that along that same line there could be meeting places for online classes, which many schools are starting to offer. Bellevue lies in the middle of high tech country and something like improving access to online courses should be highlighted.

Commissioner Laing said Commissioner Ferris's point was well taken. He commented that the zoning in and around Bellevue College is basically Single Family-High. Any institution faces challenges in developing or expanding a campus because of zoning, but a single family designation is clearly the worst to apply to an educational campus.

Commissioner Ferris pointed out that older versions of the Comprehensive Plan did not include environmental as a category, but the current one does. He suggested adding education as a category in the update and leave it to others to determine what that should mean.

Mr. Inghram commented that in addition to Bellevue College, the city has been home to at least two universities, City University and Seattle University, both of which are located in office buildings. Bellevue College is a state facility and as a state entity it has what amounts to a land use exemption. Locating an educational facility in an office building would be far less problematic than trying to site one in a residential area. However, at the time the Bel-Red corridor study was under way the City Council did not want to allow dormitories, so a zoning change would be required to permit a campus having dormitories in Bel-Red. He agreed that it would be interesting to pursue a policy that would create special opportunity areas in the city in which the city would attract, streamline and facilitate permitting for higher education uses.

Commissioner Laing pointed out that the current Medical Institution designation offers a precedent for permitting a specialized set of land uses in a specific area.

Mr. Inghram said he met recently with the Chamber of Commerce and the Bridle Trails Community Club regarding the 2014 Comprehensive Plan update, and similar meetings with neighborhood groups are being scheduled. The notion of holding Planning Commission meetings away from City Hall has been raised as one way to reach out for community engagement. Behind the scenes staff have been active in reviewing the state and regional requirements. The horizon year for the Comprehensive Plan will be extended to 2035 so it will be necessary to bring data in the document up to date, and much of that work is being undertaken by staff.

The Commissioners reviewed the proposed update schedule and the topics and components the

update will include. Mr. Inghram noted that the general updates will be focused on consistency and out-of-date facts and figures. Usability is something planners always struggle with. The current plan was well written, but much has changed in the last ten years to where documents are far more digital than they were, and more will need to be done to make the document more readable and readily accessible digitally.

Vice Chair Tebelius asked how the Downtown Livability study will mesh with the Comprehensive Plan update process. Mr. Inghram said Downtown Livability is primarily a zoning project; it will focus on the zoning system, the dimensional standards and the incentive system. It is anticipated that some of what comes out of the study will be incorporated into the Comprehensive Plan update, particularly policy and land use map issues.

Vice Chair Tebelius asked if changes to the Comprehensive Plan will be required to accommodate light rail. Mr. Inghram said for the most part no changes to the Comprehensive Plan will be needed in that regard. The light rail best practices study undertaken several years ago resulted in the adoption of a number of policies that are guiding the process that is currently under way concerning route selection and the like. However, once a final route map has been determined, the old map will need to be swapped out for the new map. The current Comprehensive Plan has four different sections that cover transit: bus transit, regional transit, high-capacity transit and light rail. Similarly, the four different transportation project lists in the current Comprehensive Plan overlap with each other in an uncoordinated manner. There is no current plan to reassess the city's long-term transportation plan, but the current coordination will be addressed. The Growth Management Act requires concurrency relative to land use and transportation, and some time and resources will be spent learning about the current state of the art and determining where the city should be headed.

Commissioner Sheffels asked if there are still areas to be annexed into the city. Mr. Inghram said there remain a few parcels that have not yet been annexed, totaling in all about 47 acres located on Cougar Mountain. Staff discussed making annexation a small part of the land use chapter rather than having it be a standalone chapter.

Senior Planner Nicholas Matz clarified that annexation is accomplished largely through state statutes—there are no local regulations. The policies in place in the Annexation Element have, however, guided the city's use of the statutes to annex areas and to address issues in special districts. Policies are not needed in order to effect annexations, but they do provide a sense of stability and guidance.

With regard to the Land Use Element, Mr. Inghram said the sense of direction from the community is that there is no push to reevaluate the underlying land use plan. That means single family neighborhoods should generally be preserved, and growth should be focused in the Downtown and other commercial centers. The current plan does, however, focus primarily on the Downtown, but over the last ten years there has been more interest in other commercial areas throughout the city; that fact should be recognized in the broad land use strategy. There is also an interest in the neighborhood shopping centers and providing opportunities for mixed use development in those areas.

There is a lot of interest in the Housing Element. Housing is always a topic of interest, but the general assessment is that the city already meets most of the requirements from a policy standpoint. Some updating is needed, and some new policies are needed, particularly the growth requirements under the Countywide Planning Policies and the requirements involving fair housing that have been handed down by the federal government, but no major overhaul is required.

Mr. Matz said on average the state has added 100 new people every day from the 1960s to the present. A large percentage of that has occurred in King County, and under the Countywide Planning Policies every jurisdiction is assigned to handle its share of the total growth. The four county area anticipates 1.5 million new residents by 2040. Bellevue currently has the capacity for an additional 12,000 housing units under the present zoning.

Commissioner Sheffels said she has for many years been calling for a dedicated park land zoning in Bellevue instead of using single family as the underlying zoning. By 2040 Bellevue will not be a city in a park but rather a city in an urban concentration, and every effort should be put into giving park land its own zone. Mr. Inghram said the Comprehensive Plan update process would be the time to considering doing that.

Mr. Matz explained that the city has deliberately zoned park and school facilities for residential so as to assure the conditional use process through which impacts to residential neighborhoods are examined and mitigated. He added that even though residentially-zoned, park and school land is not included in the city's housing capacity.

Mr. Inghram said stormwater policies need to incorporate the NPDES-related policies that emphasize low-impact development (LID). Additionally, there is a need to update stormwater policy discussion to better integrate with land use, transportation and other policy areas.

Commissioner Ferris said the stormwater regulations add significant cost to development.

Commissioner Laing said it was his understanding that Bellevue has joined with other jurisdictions in an appeal that focuses on the impacts on development on private property. Mr. Inghram confirmed that Bellevue is a party to the appeal but said he did not have any information regarding the status of the appeal.

Mr. Inghram then said light rail station area planning efforts are under way, particularly with regard to the hospital district/Wilburton station and the South Bellevue station in addition to the 130th Avenue NE station. Those efforts will go forward as independent processes, but if they result in land use amendments they may be incorporated into the Comprehensive Plan update process. Mr. Inghram stressed, however, that there is established policy which prevents land use changes at the South Bellevue Park and Ride in adjacent residentially-zoned areas, but there may be land use changes needed for the Wilburton station area. Altogether there will be six light rail stations in Bellevue.

Commissioner Hamlin asked why station area planning is called out as its own grouping. He suggested it would be an appropriate item under transportation. Mr. Inghram explained that the left-hand column in the matrix included in the packet calls out topics as well as components of the Comprehensive Plan. Station area planning will not be a chapter on its own in the Comprehensive Plan. Education could be added to the matrix as a topic area, leaving open the notion of whether or not to have an education element.

Mr. Inghram said the city has been working on updating its economic development strategy. The Economic Element in the Comprehensive Plan needs to be revised to reflect updated economic data and to recognize significant and growing economic areas. The work will include addressing ways to attract and retain knowledge workers, connections to higher education, and improving "nimbleness" in responding to situational instances that are linked to land use.

Commissioner Ferris said the economic development category should include a look over the

fences at the city's competitors in the region. Redmond recently completed a large upzone in the Overlake area, and Issaquah just completed creation of an urban area in its downtown, and those efforts will compete with Bellevue in attracting new businesses.

Mr. Inghram said the Human Services Element needs to be updated to reflect changes in the city's demographics. The document should also address the needs of seniors and the homeless, as well as the topic of public health.

Diversity and culture will not be a standalone chapter in the Comprehensive Plan but rather is a topic that needs to be addressed to better understand how the city's changing demographics affect the plans and policies that are in place.

Mr. Inghram said the city recently established an environmental stewardship initiative which has looked at things like tree canopy and organizational objectives for greenhouse gas emissions, switching to electric vehicles, and other ways the city can save energy as an organization.

The Parks Department recently updated its Parks and Open Space System Plan, and the Comprehensive Plan needs to be brought up to date with regard to that functional system plan.

Some issues that will come out of the Downtown Livability project will likely be incorporated into the Urban Design Element of the Comprehensive Plan.

The draft work plan proposal to the Council does not proposed to update the subarea plans as part of the Comprehensive Plan update process. While it is true that some of the subarea plans are out of date and in need of some updates and boundary adjustments, those review actions can be taken once the Comprehensive Plan update process is completed.

Vice Chair Tebelius asked what the Commission's work schedule is projected to look like and if Comprehensive Plan update issues will be discussed once a month or at every meeting until the work is done. Mr. Inghram said he still has a lot of work to do in sorting out what the schedule will look like.

Commissioner Laing said engaging the community and stakeholders will be the most important aspect. One way to do that would be to meet in the part of the city that is being discussed, particularly if the discussion is focused on a neighborhood area. At a minimum the areas for which it will be absolutely critical to get stakeholder input should be identified up front.

Mr. Inghram said if the proposed schedule holds staff will present to the Council on May 13 to provide an update regarding the Comprehensive Plan process.

The Commissioners were informed that one of the outreach tools the staff are experimenting with is a Web-based social media tool called IdeaScale. The tool allows the public to provide ideas in eight different categories, and to agree or disagree with ideas others have posted. The tool will be advertised in different ways.

## 8. OTHER BUSINESS

Mr. Inghram provided the Commissioners with most recent draft of the Shoreline Master Program transmittal memo and asked them to review it and get back to him with any comments or concerns. The memo is slated to be delivered to the Council on May 13.

Vice Chair Tebelius said Chairman Carlson mentioned to her his desire to have all of the

Commissioners present at the meeting where the Shoreline Master Program is handed to the Council.

9. PUBLIC COMMENT

Ms. Nellie Jie, 3660 163rd Avenue SE, voiced support for the IdeaScale website allowing for citizen input. She asked that the website be called to the attention of Sunset Community Association. She said she came to Bellevue from Beijing and has fallen in love with the city because of its parks, safety, higher education, and nice people. Some improvements can, of course, still be made. She mentioned that it is good to have I-90, but because of the tolling on the SR-520 bridge a lot of traffic is diverting to I-90, and much of it uses 148th Avenue. It would be a good idea to improve 156th Avenue to have two lanes in each direction. The city also needs to balance the needs of commercial and residential areas. Many people are continuing to move to the area and more density in the residential areas is needed to accommodate them. Bellevue's identity needs to be better defined, and Bellevue College should be part of it, concluded Ms. Gee.

10. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

A. March 27, 2013

The Commissioners offered some revisions to the draft minutes.

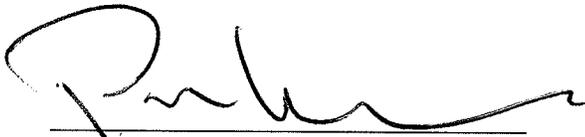
A motion to approve the minutes as amended was made by Commissioner Ferris. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Laing and it carried without dissent; Commissioner Hamlin abstained from voting.

11. NEXT PLANNING COMMISSION MEETING

A. May 8, 2013

12. ADJOURN

Vice Chair Tebelius adjourned the meeting at 9:57 p.m.



Paul Inghram  
Staff to the Planning Commission

9/25/2013  
Date



Diane Tebelius  
Chair of the Planning Commission

9/25/13  
Date

\* Approved June 26, 2013