

CITY OF BELLEVUE
BELLEVUE PLANNING COMMISSION
STUDY SESSION MINUTES

December 10, 2008
6:30 p.m.

Bellevue City Hall
City Council Conference Room 1E-113

COMMISSIONERS PRESENT: Chair Orrico, Commissioners Ferris, Hamlin, Mathews, Robertson, Sheffels

COMMISSIONERS ABSENT: Commissioner Lai

STAFF PRESENT: Paul Inghram, Department of Planning and Community Development; Alex O'Reilly, Department of Parks and Community Services

GUEST SPEAKERS: None

RECORDING SECRETARY: Gerry Lindsay

1. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 6:33 p.m. by Chair Orrico who presided.

2. ROLL CALL

Upon the call of the roll, all Commissioners were present with the exception of Commissioner Robertson who arrived at 6:35 p.m.

3. PUBLIC COMMENT – None

4. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

The agenda as submitted was approved by consensus.

5. COMMUNICATIONS FROM CITY COUNCIL, COMMUNITY COUNCILS, BOARDS AND COMMISSIONS – None

6. STAFF REPORTS

Comprehensive Planning Manager Paul Inghram reported that staff has prepared the transmittals for the Comprehensive Plan amendments acted on by the Commission on November 19. He said once the management review of the documents is complete they will be made available to the chair and the full Commission. The anticipation is that they will be in the hands of the Commissioners by December 15. The Commissioners were asked to complete their reviews of the transmittal memos by December 19. The package will be delivered to the City Council on January 5.

Mr. Inghram said the Draft Environmental Impact Statement for light rail will be officially released on December 15, though it is currently available to the public online. The official release begins the public comment period and review process for the East Link project. The City Council will be conducting two significant study sessions on the topic, one on January 12 and

one on January 26. The anticipation is that the Council will hold a public hearing on the light rail alignment in February.

7. STUDY SESSION

A. Human Services Needs Update

Human Services Planner Alex O'Reilly explained that the Human Services Needs Update document is updated every two years by the Human Services Commission. She said it typically takes a year to gather the data. The last update was published in January 2008 with data collected during 2007. Work has begun on the 2009-2010 update, which will be published in January 2010.

Ms. O'Reilly said a very systematic research is conducted to determine what Bellevue residents believe are the top health and human service needs. The phone survey, consumer surveys, provider surveys and informed interviews tap into an assemblage of data sources. In addition, staff reads through a variety of published reports, both local and national, to develop a snapshot of what is going on in health and human services. The Human Services Commission uses the document to inform its recommendations for funding agencies that serve Bellevue residents.

In 2007 it was found that a lot of Bellevue residents were tapping into emergency services, such as emergency rent assistance. Over 2800 sought help from Hopelink and other Eastside agencies, and many others were turned away; some 163 households were turned away from the Eastside Domestic Violence Program in 2007 because they did not have shelter space available. There was increasing demand for emergency financial assistance for utilities and food, and providers of mental, health and dental care for the uninsured saw a 30 percent increase in demand.

Answering a question asked by Commissioner Sheffels, Ms. O'Reilly explained that some agencies turn people away at the end of the month when more people are seeking services because their funds have run short. Food banks may not turn people away but choose to give people fewer items. In terms of housing, agencies turn people away when they have nothing to offer, and those who are turned away often are forced to live out of their cars or on the streets. Mental health counseling agencies put people on lists until a counselor is available. The fact is, when agencies run out of the subsidies they receive, they simply cannot provide additional services.

Ms. O'Reilly said affordable housing is an issue that played a large role in determining the recommendations of the Human Services Commission during the last funding cycle. Every update of the Needs Update has indicated the lack of affordable housing as the top problem among Bellevue residents, it was highlighted by 70 percent of the respondents in 2007.

Commissioner Ferris noted that the budget recently approved by the City Council allocated funding to transportation because a survey taken indicated that to be a top issue. Ms. O'Reilly said the survey that yielded that information was different from the survey used for the Needs Update. Commissioner Ferris asked why the human services needs survey is not combined with the general city needs survey. Ms. O'Reilly said the question is a good one. She said the Needs Update survey questions are coordinated by the Parks and Community Services department and is entirely about health and human services. The survey conducted for the City Council is very broad and includes many different aspects of need in the community, not just human services. Commissioner Ferris said he was struck by the fact that the general survey does not include any mention of affordable housing as a need; if it had, there may have been additional resources allocated to it by the City Council.

Commissioner Robertson noted from the report that the One Night Count was 153 homeless in 2008 and that there were 132 transitional housing beds and 82 shelter beds funded by Bellevue. She asked if the figure of 1800 beds needed is for Bellevue or for the region. Ms. O'Reilly said the figure represents the Eastside need and was calculated by talking to providers that work with the homeless, victims of domestic violence and youth. The One Night Count is conducted annually and counts only those homeless who can be found. The population is a very difficult one to count.

Commissioner Robertson suggested that while there is a clear need for affordable housing options, the report is unclear as to exactly what the need is. She asked if the 4192 apartments lost by conversion to condominiums between 2004 and 2007 represents the net loss. Ms. O'Reilly allowed that it does. She added that the full report has more of the data.

Ms. O'Reilly informed the Commissioners that healthcare is another issue highlighted as a large concern in the survey. In 2007 the lack of affordability of medical insurance or medical care was the number two problem identified.

Commissioner Sheffels asked if the figure of nine percent of Eastside residents who do not have health insurance includes children. Ms. O'Reilly said the figure is for adults only and the data came from a King County health department telephone survey. The nine percent number is for the Eastside only.

Answering a question asked by Commissioner Robertson about the number of people suffering from a mental illness, Ms. O'Reilly said there is an incidence rate that is applied to the total population. She said the same approach is taken to calculating the number of persons with disabilities and certain illnesses.

Ms. O'Reilly said Bellevue's population is aging, and fact is ushering in new issues that must be addressed. Many are living longer but finding that their retirement savings are not keeping pace with day-to-day living expenses. The lack of transportation is an issue that comes up frequently in talking with older adults and with providers.

Commissioner Robertson noted that the older adults section of the report indicates that 6.3 percent of older adults are living below the poverty line, and that in 2006 13.9 percent of the Bellevue population was an older adult. Ms. O'Reilly explained that the 6.3 percent figure came from the 2000 census.

Ms. O'Reilly said the 2000 census also yielded important information about the diversity of the Bellevue population. Information is also drawn from the school district. In 2007 there were 70 different languages spoke in the Bellevue School District. The data translates into a need for more and continued ESL classes, more citizenship classes, and additional interpreters. Access to legal services, employment, child care and healthcare are all complicated by a lack of culturally or linguistically appropriate services.

The Commissioners were informed that about a year ago when gas prices were reaching new highs, those involved with human services were seeing increases in the number of people seeking help from food banks and in need of financial assistance. People were spending money on gas to get to work and found they did not have enough to buy food. Fuel prices have fallen, which is helping, but the economic downturn is triggering an even greater increase in the number of people seeking help from social service agencies. The food banks are being overwhelmed; the Hopelink food bank recently reported a 70 percent increase for emergency food bags over the

same period a year ago. The bags are intended to serve as a stopgap measure, but they are being used routinely by people who do not have enough food. The Salvation Army meal program held in the Crossroads area is reporting a 50 percent increase in the number of participants.

Job layoffs translate into people needing emergency rent assistance. The agencies that have funding available are finding themselves overwhelmed with requests, so only a percentage of those seeking assistance are being helped. Hopelink has reported a 67 percent increase in requests for housing assistance. Non-profit agencies are also reporting decreases in donations as people find they need to use the funds they have to meet their own needs.

The fact that King County finds itself with a budget shortfall is not helping the situation. Many of the budget cuts to date have involved discretionary dollars, much of which funds human service agencies. The jury is still out with regard to what the cuts will mean per agency. The state budget is also facing a shortfall; what the impact of that will be on human service agencies is still an unknown.

Ms. O'Reilly said the Bellevue City Council continues to be very supportive of human services needs and understands the need to have an infrastructure in place in order to maintain a sound and healthy community. In passing the budget, the City Council earmarked \$2.4 million from the General Fund for human service agencies, which is a four percent increase over the last budget. The city also receives Community Development Block Grant funds from the federal government every year; the last allocation totaled about \$900,000.

Altogether, the recommendation of the Human Services Commission, which the Council approved, is to fund some 80 programs, including ten new programs. The allocations are aimed at the most pressing needs in the community. Staff are working diligently to find new funds to address needs on the Eastside.

B. Land Use Code Amendments Briefing

Mr. Inghram said staff has started to develop a backlog of Land Use Code amendments that will need to be addressed during 2009. There will also be Land Use Code amendments associated with some of the projects that will be worked on over the next year, including the Meydenbauer Park and Shoreline Master Program projects. Some of the amendments will be fairly straightforward, while others will be more complicated to address.

Two amendments reviewed by the Commission in 2007, Courter Enterprises and Factoria SRO, will again be on the plate. The action taken on each by the Council requires results in a need for Land Use Code amendments for implementation. For Courter an amendment is needed to the land use charts to permit retail auto sales at that location, and for SRO an amendment is needed to increase the FAR to 0.75 and enable the design review process. Mr. Inghram said the recommendation of staff was to schedule a public hearing on both matters for January 28.

8. OTHER BUSINESS

Chair Orrico said she made her report to the City Council on neighborhood livability. She said the Council wanted to know why the Commission had not addressed the issue of height. The Council has directed the Commission to conduct a public hearing to hear what the public has to say about the issue of height. Accordingly, a public hearing has been scheduled to occur prior to the public hearing on the Land Use Code amendments.

Commissioner Ferris commented that the Commission approved the neighborhood livability

package in two pieces. In the first part there was a section dealing only with height and included a focus on how height is calculated. The Council approved that part of the recommendation. Mr. Inghram explained that the Council seemed to have concerns about the heights of specific façades rather than the overall or average height of a building. The Council recognized that a design could meet the maximum height limit of 30 feet and still on one side have a height of 40 feet because of the way the averaging is calculated. Any neighbor facing the 40-foot side could certainly be impacted.

Commissioner Mathews said that issue was addressed by the Commission as well in recognizing that some homes will be constructed on slopes. In such cases there will always need to be exceptions.

Commissioner Robertson asked if the daylight plane/FAR option is completely off the table or if can be sent back to the Council in relation to height. She allowed that the Commission gave a great deal of consideration to the issue of height in formulating a recommendation.

Chair Orrico said it was very clear that the City Council wants the Planning Commission to hold a pre-Land Use Code public hearing. If the public raises the issue of bulk and scale, which is what the public has commented on all along, the Commission should simply go back to the Council and make that clear. If on the other hand something different is heard about concerns with height, then another approach will need to be taken.

Mr. Inghram suggested neither staff or the Commission should redo something that already been done. He noted that Neighborhood Outreach Manager Cheryl Kuhn and her team spent a great deal of time working with individuals and focus groups, and then made a concerted effort to address all of the issues that arose through that process. It appears, however, that the Council has an interest in a slightly broader issue, and they want the Commission to address and provide some options for addressing it through the public hearing.

Chair Orrico noted that there has been a lot of buzz recently about fabricated homes and housing units that are small but really top of the line. She said she would be traveling to Skamania on December 12 to see how they are being used there.

9. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

A. September 20, 2008

Motion to approve the minutes as submitted was made by Commissioner Robertson. Second was by Commissioner Hamlin and the motion carried unanimously.

B. November 19, 2008

Commissioner Robertson referred to the sixth paragraph on page 13 of the minutes and asked that it be revised to read "Commissioner Robertson said she was not opposed to having the camp and conference center designation be different from other districts in the city.

Motion to approve the minutes as amended was made by Commissioner Robertson. Second was by Commissioner Mathews and the motion carried unanimously.

10. PUBLIC COMMENT – None

11. NEXT PLANNING COMMISSION MEETING

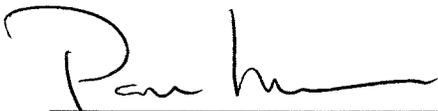
A. January 7, 2008

Mr. Inghram briefly reviewed the items on the agenda.

Commissioner Ferris noted that the Governor has put forth a carbon measurement challenge for future growth and development. He suggested the Commission could benefit from having a briefing regarding the Governor's proposal.

12. ADJOURN

Chair Orrico adjourned the meeting at 7:35 p.m.



Paul Inghram
Staff to the Planning Commission

1/28/09

Date



Vicki Orrico
Chair of the Planning Commission

1/28/09

Date