

CITY OF BELLEVUE
BELLEVUE PLANNING COMMISSION
MEETING MINUTES

February 2, 2005
7:00 p.m.

Bellevue City Hall
City Council Conference Room

COMMISSIONERS PRESENT: Chair Lynde, Vice-Chair Bonincontri, Commissioners Bach, Maggi, Mathews, Orrico, Robertson

COMMISSIONERS ABSENT: None

STAFF PRESENT: Kathleen Burgess, Carol Saari, Carol Helland, Department of Planning and Community Development; Kim Becklund, Department of Transportation

GUEST SPEAKERS: Denise Cieri, Brian Elrod, Washington State Department of Transportation

RECORDING SECRETARY: Gerry Lindsay

1. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 7:02 p.m. by Chair Lynde who presided.

2. ROLL CALL

Upon the call of the roll, all Commissioners were present with the exception of Commissioner Orrico, who arrived at 7:10 p.m.

3. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

The agenda was approved by consensus.

4. STAFF REPORTS

Comprehensive Planning Manager Kathleen Burgess reported that five proposed Comprehensive Plan amendments have been submitted for docketing consideration in 2005. Four of the amendments are site specific, and one involves a proposed policy amendment. The five proposed amendments were briefly outlined for the Commissioners.

Ms. Burgess informed the Commissioners that the deadline for appealing the Comprehensive Plan update action was February 1. Late in the afternoon 1000 Friends of Washington filed an appeal based on the premise that Bellevue allows residential densities in Bellevue of less than four units per acre. The appeal process will not involve the Planning Commission.

5. PUBLIC COMMENT – None

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

7. STUDY SESSION

A. Comprehensive Plan Amendment and Land Use Code Amendment
– Medical Institution District

Associate Planner Carol Saari said materials concerning the proposed amendments concerning the Medical Institution District were presented to the East Bellevue Community Council on February 1. The East Bellevue Community Council indicated its support for the amendments, though they did raise possible security issues for the skybridges. There was a discussion of the proposed site plan and the alignment and design of NE 10th Street, the number of driveways accessing the site, and the number of signals along 116th Avenue NE. There were no recommendations for change.

Because there were no recommendations for change on the part of the East Bellevue Community Council, Land Use Director Carol Helland said the record of recommendations taken by the Commission on January 19 will be carried forward to the City Council on February 28. The Council is slated to take action on March 7.

B. I-405 Presentation

Transportation Policy Advisor Kim Becklund introduced Denise Cieri and Brian Elrod of the Washington State Department of Transportation. Ms. Cieri explained that the I-405 corridor Final Environmental Impact Statement record of decision was signed in October 2002. The established master plan involves a number of individual jurisdiction projects up and down the corridor as well as the interest of the state in widening the freeway, improving the HOV facilities, and providing direct access ramps such as those at NE 6th Street in Bellevue. The vision calls for two additional general purpose lanes running in each direction and improvements to the system of ramps. In all, the Master Plan has some \$10.8 billion worth of projects.

The Implementation Plan is a subset of the Master Plan focused on projects that can be built over the next 10 to 15 years; projects in the Implementation Plan total in the neighborhood of \$4.7 billion.

The Phase I nickel projects were funded by the legislature in 2003; the projects total \$485 million and include work in Bellevue, Renton and Kirkland. The Bellevue portion of the Phase I nickel project is bordered by I-90 and SE 8th Street and involves the addition of one lane southbound and one lane northbound. Part of the Wilburton Tunnel will be reconstructed as part of the project to accommodate future Master Plan widening. The HOV lane will be extended possibly as far north as SE 8th Street to help reduce weave movements. Construction of the Bellevue nickel project will not begin until 2007 at the earliest.

Ms. Cieri explained that a context-sensitive solutions (CSS) approach is being used in regard to the I-405 corridor. The approach focuses on aesthetics and working with local communities to make sure designs are compatible with local uses and styles. The advisory committee members from Bellevue include Transportation Commission Chair Ted Bell, Transportation Commission member Jim Young, Bellevue staffers Kim Becklund and Franz Lowenherz, Vic Bishop from the Bellevue Chamber of Commerce, and a number of neighborhood representatives. Each jurisdiction along the corridor has its own advisory committee to provide input to the process.

Mr. Elrod said the CSS process is a means for generating consensus within a community with regard to design and aesthetic issues. In addition to the six local advisory committees, there is an overall aesthetics advisory group that has been formed to take the corridor-wide view. There is also a technical advisory group that is taking the concepts and making sure they are feasible.

The six local advisory committees all are charged with taking the “view to,” or the view from areas surrounding the freeway looking toward the freeway. They started by viewing architectural images to get a feel for what they like and do not like. In all cases the baseline was the approach typically used by WSDOT with regard to overpass and underpass pedestrian linkages, abutment walls, retaining walls, open spaces and landscaping associated with interchanges, and storm water treatment associated with the open spaces. The committees also focused down to specific elements such as lighting standards, wall textures, railings, paving materials, soundwall textures, and gateway treatments. All of the advisory groups were unified in desiring to see the freeway made as green and natural as possible.

The feedback comments were taken to the drawing board and integrated into concepts for overpass, underpass and noise wall components. The groups concluded that the landscaping patterns along the corridor should tie naturally to the street trees and landscaping patterns used by the various jurisdictions along the corridor. Native plants should be used wherever possible.

Mr. Elrod said the comments and suggestions made by the aesthetics committee focused on the “view from” along the entire corridor also were taken to the drawing board to be melded into design concepts. The concepts build on the natural world using color and form, and evoke an image of progress and efficiency.

Ms. Cieri said the various concepts will see their first implementation in the nickel projects. As the interchanges are reconstructed, the elements will be included. There will also be opportunities to bring in the elements via retrofitting by replacing handrails on overpasses and utilizing the color and landscape schemes. When the NE 10th Street extension overpass finds funding and gets constructed, it will include all of the concepts.

Ms. Cieri said WSDOT is currently working through a costing exercise focused on the concepts. Responsibility for implementation of the concepts will fall to WSDOT, though any custom art, designs or colors will lie with the individual jurisdictions. Landscaping and lighting functions could be subject to a shared funding arrangement.

Answering a question asked by Chair Lynde, Ms. Cieri said all projects for which environmental documentation is required include a noise study. The nickel projects will involve the taking of noise readings. The public meetings have been very valuable in identifying people with a particular interest in having noise readings taken on their properties. The readings are always taken on dry, minimal wind days to get the very best readings. The baseline readings are added to projections based on future traffic counts and other factors. Noise walls are considered primarily to protect residential areas, not commercial areas. There is a noise threshold minimum which must be met, the wall must benefit a certain number of residences, and the cost per household must not exceed a set limit. Noise mitigation must occur on right-of-way owned by the state. Studies continue to seek quiet pavement options, though those options would have to be coupled with a ban on studded tires.

8. OLD BUSINESS

Ms. Burgess briefly reviewed the schedule of upcoming meetings with the Commission.

9. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

A. December 1, 2004

Motion to approve the minutes as submitted was made by Commissioner Bonincontri. Second was by Commissioner Mathews and the motion carried without dissent; Commissioner Orrico abstained from voting.

10. NEW BUSINESS – None

11. PETITIONS AND COMMUNICATIONS – None

12. ADJOURNMENT

Chair Lynde adjourned the meeting at 8:13 p.m.

Staff to the Planning Commission

Date

Chair of the Planning Commission

Date