

CITY OF BELLEVUE
BELLEVUE PLANNING COMMISSION
STUDY SESSION MINUTES

September 12, 2012
6:30 p.m.

Bellevue City Hall
City Council Conference Room 1E-113

COMMISSIONERS PRESENT: Chairman Carlson, Commissioners Ferris, Hamlin, Laing, Sheffels, Tebelius, Turner

COMMISSIONERS ABSENT: None

STAFF PRESENT: Paul Inghram, Nicholas Matz, Department of Planning and Community Development; Heidi Bedwell, Development Services Department; Franz Loewenherz, Department of Transportation

GUEST SPEAKERS: None

RECORDING SECRETARY: Gerry Lindsay

1. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 6:34 p.m. by Chairman Carlson who presided.

2. ROLL CALL

Upon the call of the roll, all Commissioners were present with the exception of Commissioner Hamlin who arrived at 6:36 p.m.

3. PUBLIC COMMENT – None

4. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

A motion to approve the agenda as printed was made by Commissioner Laing. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Tebelius and the motion carried unanimously.

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

6. STAFF REPORTS

Comprehensive Planning Manager Paul Inghram said the City Council reviewed the Comprehensive Plan amendments for threshold review. The Holy Cross Lutheran Church application had previously been withdrawn. The Commission had recommended not advancing the Leggate-Balwada application, and the Council concurred. The Council also concurred with the recommendation of the Commission to advance the Lorge-Benis application. The Council had expressed some concerns about the Banner Bank site, but the applicant withdrew his application before the Council met.

Deputy Mayor Robertson reported that Commissioner Laing did an excellent job of standing in for the Chairman in giving the Council a briefing on the Comprehensive Plan amendments.

Deputy Mayor Robertson also reported that in two weeks the Council is slated to establish

principles for the medical marijuana issue for the Commission to follow in its deliberations.

The Commissioners were informed that Sound Transit is looking for a place to locate a maintenance and operations facility, and they are including sites in Bellevue. The matter will not be coming before the Commission, but the Commission may want to track the issue as it is discussed by the Council.

7. STUDY SESSION

A. Horizon View Rezone Public Hearing

A motion to open the public hearing was made by Commissioner Sheffels. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Laing and the motion carried unanimously.

Associate Planner Heidi Bedwell said the proposed areawide rezone is focused on the C plat of the Horizon View development and seeks a change from R-3.5 to R-2.5. Review of the rezone involves a Process IV action, which is a legislative decision made by the City Council. After the public hearing, the Commission will be asked to develop and forward to the Council a recommendation.

Horizon View C is one of the recently annexed South Bellevue neighborhoods. One lot in the plat is vacant, otherwise all of the lots are developed with single family residences. During the course of the pre-annexation discussions, the community expressed the concern that the R-3.5 zoning designation does not accurately reflect the existing lot sizes; they felt an R-2.5 zoning designation would be more appropriate. Due to the timing of the annexation petition process, the city was unable to revise the pre-annexation zoning in response to the request of the community, so the proposed rezone is now being processed.

In the opinion of staff, the proposed rezone will protect the existing neighborhood by allowing development consistent with the existing pattern. All applicable Comprehensive Plan and subarea policies are highlighted in the staff report. The policies focus on maintaining compatible design and uses that can be accomplished through the proposed zoning designation. The infrastructure needed to accommodate growth under the proposed designation is in place. The existing lot sizes range from a little over 19,000 square feet to just over 47,000 square feet; the median is close to 26,000 square feet. The R-2.5 designation would allow lot sizes of 13,500 square feet. The proposed zoning is reflective of the existing lot sizes, and is consistent with the pre-annexation policy to establish appropriate designations in annexation areas.

Ms. Bedwell said the recommendation of staff was to forward to the Council a proposal to approve the rezone.

Commissioner Sheffels asked if the Horizon View C homes have septic systems. Senior Planner Nicholas Matz said only three of the homes in the subdivision are connected to the sewer; all of the other homes have septic systems. Commissioner Sheffels said that argues in favor of the R-2.5 designation and the larger lots.

Commissioner Laing asked if the annexation carried with it a requirement for the homes to connect to the city's sanitary sewer system. Mr. Matz said actions of that sort are not required as part of annexation actions.

Answering a question asked by Commissioner Laing, Ms. Bedwell said there were no written comments submitted as part of the SEPA review or on the staff recommendation.

Commissioner Laing asked if there are any restrictive covenants in place in Horizon View C that

address minimum lot size. Mr. Matz said the subdivision is fairly old but does have in place a general requirement about not being able to subdivide lots.

Commissioner Laing asked if there are any critical areas in Horizon View C and he was informed by staff that there are some steep slopes near the northern edge.

Commissioner Laing asked if the proposal to step the zoning down from R-3.5 to R-2.5 would have any impact on the city's buildable lands inventory. Mr. Matz said the Comprehensive Plan designation is Single Family Medium and both the R-2.5 and R-3.5 zones are consistent with that designation. The proposed action would not detract from the city's buildable lands targets or inventory.

Mr. Kent Baumgarner, past president of the Horizon View C homeowners association, said he served as the annexation committee chair. He concurred with the presentation made by staff and added that the subdivision was platted in 1955 with very restrictive covenants that run with the land. The covenants renew automatically every ten years unless the citizens choose to change them in whole or in part, which has not been done to date. The setbacks in the subdivision are more restrictive than those in place under King County and include 15-foot sideline setbacks and 20-foot front yard setbacks; in most cases the homes are far back from the required setbacks. Lots cannot be subdivided unless by two adjacent properties which then split it between them to become part of the existing lots. The R-2.5 zoning designation fits the subdivision much better than the R-3.5 zoning designation.

Answering a question asked by Commissioner Ferris, Mr. Baumgarner said Horizon View A was the first plan accomplished on the hilltop. The lots in that subdivision are smaller and are more appropriately zoned R-3.5. Horizon View A was connected to sewer quite some time ago, but the larger lots in Horizon View C argue in favor of retaining the septic systems that are in place. Oddly enough, there is no Horizon View B.

Several members of the audience that supported Mr. Baumgarner's comments raised their hands. There were no opposing viewpoints offered.

A motion to close the public hearing was made by Commissioner Tebelius. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Sheffels and the motion carried unanimously.

A motion to recommend to the City Council approval of the rezone for Horizon View C file number 12-116644-LQ, as proposed in draft ordinance Attachment B, was made by Commissioner Sheffels. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Ferris and the motion carried unanimously.

B. Transit Master Plan Briefing

Senior transportation planner Franz Loewenherz explained that the purpose of the planning process will be to look at fixed-route bus service. The plan will, however, consider how the bus system interrelates with the light rail system in the out years of the plan time horizon, which is 2030, and will also include consideration of alternative service delivery methods for areas of lower productivity where a fixed-route service may not be appropriate.

Mr. Loewenherz said the study timeline anticipates a 2013 completion, with periodic briefings to the Transportation Commission. At those meetings, the proposal is to have representatives from other city boards and commissions present.

The current transit master plan was adopted by Council resolution in 2003. The plan has been useful in working with the transit partners and informing them of the city's transit service priorities.

Numerous changes have occurred since adoption of the plan, including significant capital investments, particularly those made in Bellevue. Hundreds of millions of dollars have been invested in transit facilities in the city. There have also been significant service improvements effected locally, and cross-lake service improvements. The investments have yielded an increase in ridership; between 2003 and 2011, Bellevue ridership has increased by 84 percent. The greatest percentage increase has occurred in the Eastgate area with the expansion of the park and ride and the increasing role of Bellevue College, but increases have occurred in all activity centers.

The transit system has had to face revenue shortfalls. In 2011 the King County Council approved a temporary \$20 vehicle license fee to help fund transit services for a two-year period. Without the additional fee, the system would have faced having to make service cuts totaling some 600,000 service hours annually. Difficult decisions are yet to be made to identify a reliable funding stream to kick in once the temporary fees age out. The plan that will be prepared through the update will respond to different timelines, including the near-, mid- and long-terms, and will also consider revenue reduction, status quo and aspirational visions.

Mr. Loewenherz said another development that plays into the need for the planning effort is the fact that the King County Council made a change in policy framework. Prior to 2011 service adds and reductions were apportioned based on a percent allocation deemed to be equitable from a subarea perspective. That resulted in some inefficiencies in service and decision-making. Through a lengthy process, the King County Council adopted a new framework that is driven by three guiding principles: productivity, geographic value, and social equity.

East Link was an unknown in 2003 when the current plan was adopted. The alignment now envisioned will dramatically influence where service improvements and additional investments in supportive infrastructure are made.

The transit master plan update project is also intended to respond to significant public support for transit in Bellevue. The city conducts a budget survey every other year, and consistently transportation gets high billing. Within the transportation category transit specifically receives high marks, most notably relative to the need to work with regional agencies to improve local and regional transportation serving the city. The update will also respond to the reality that businesses have choices about where they locate. In most cases locating decisions are predicated on where the amenities are. Areas that have amenities like transit are compelling to companies seeking a place to locate. Expedia relocated from the Eastgate area to the downtown largely because of the amenities, in particular transit.

A lot of good work has been done relative to refining the city's land use vision, and the update of the transit plan will tie into the fact that transit plays a vital role in supporting the land use vision.

Mr. Loewenherz said leading up to the Council meeting on July 9 at which the project principles and scope were adopted, a robust public outreach process was undertaken. One thing done was the posting of an online questionnaire. The questionnaire, which took between 10 and 15 minutes to complete, was live for six weeks and generated 4252 responses. There was a good distribution between Bellevue residents and non-Bellevue residents; between those who are current transit users, former transit users, and non riders; and relative to trip purpose.

Commissioner Tebelius said she worked to complete the online survey and felt that the questions were somewhat slanted toward certain answers. She said she found it difficult to answer the

questions well and eventually gave up in frustration. Mr. Loewenherz allowed that there were multiple permutations. People use transit for a variety of trip purposes, and respondents had to cycle through the questionnaire multiple times if they use transit for more than just commuting.

Commissioner Laing asked who put the questionnaire together. Mr. Loewenherz responded that it was done in-house. He said he did not mean to suggest that the questionnaire results are statistically reliable; the respondents were self-selected rather than being randomly selected. Some with professional expertise did, however, reviewed the survey and found it to be satisfactory. The survey is only one of a number of tools that will be used during the update. On the project page there is a document outlining detailed technical information on route performance.

Mr. Loewenherz noted that a total of 1545 respondents indicated they use transit to commute to and from work; of those, 882 indicated they have to stand while riding because every seat on the bus is occupied, and 595 indicated that service, speed and reliability improvements are needed.

The outreach effort included business and corporate interests. The recurring message from them was that transit is critical to Bellevue's economic vitality and must be considered. A number of institutions provided supportive comments as well, including Friends of Youth, the Bellevue School District, Hopelink, AtWork!, Bellevue College, and Senior Services. Targeted outreach was also done relative to non native-English speakers; more than a hundred comment cards came in from those communities, including those speaking Chinese, Spanish and Russian.

Commissioner Laing asked how the term "social equity" is defined relative to the transit master plan update project. Mr. Loewenherz said if the focus were to be on productivity and geographic value alone, there are large areas of the county that would be without service; that, of course, would not fly politically. The term "social equity" is used to mean being sensitive to the fact that large numbers of people rely on transit for most if not all of their travel.

Mr. Loewenherz noted that on July 9 the City Council approved the project principles, the scope of the work, and provided additional direction relative to engaging the city's boards and commissions. The project principles deal with supporting the planned growth and development in Bellevue with a bold transit vision in order to encourage long-term growth; engaging community stakeholders in setting priorities for transit delivery; determining where and how transit investments can deliver the greatest degree of mobility and access for all populations; incorporating other transit-related efforts under way in Bellevue and within the region; identifying partnership opportunities to further extend transit service and infrastructure; and developing measures of effectiveness to evaluate transit investments and to track plan progress.

There are three elements that make up the transit master plan. The service element identifies the city's transit service priorities that are responsive to different financial scenarios and which are attuned to different time horizons. The capital element assesses roadways, the signal system, and rights-of-way improvements that could be made to support the transit vision outlined in the service element. Finally, the policy element articulates the city's interests and they respond to regional transit policy changes and financial uncertainties, and coordinates with the partner agencies.

Chairman Carlson asked how many bus routes will be eliminated because of light rail. Mr. Loewenherz said the 550 route will be outright replaced by light rail. How bus transit will be affected by light rail overall is still largely up in the air.

Mr. Loewenherz said the agenda for the forum on September 18 is fairly ambitious. Because it will not be possible to provide full transit services to everyone under any financial scenario, much of the focus will be on making tradeoffs. As the work to update the transit master plan progresses, it will rely on the outreach report, feedback from the city's boards and commissions, and other data.

Commissioner Sheffels asked if Rapid Ride has met or exceeded its expectations. Mr. Loewenherz said King County Metro has said they have experienced a 17 percent increase over the ridership on the routes that were eliminated in that corridor. He said he did not know what the specific projections for Rapid Ride were.

Commissioner Ferris said it would be useful to know the transit ridership percentages for cities similar in size and nature to Bellevue. He also stressed the need to develop a plan that will be responsive to what Bellevue is projected to be in the out years, not just what Bellevue is currently. He noted that in his work that focuses on mixed use in-fill development, the most attractive properties are in areas best served by transit. The parking demand for such developments is down to half a stall per unit in actual demand.

Commissioner Laing commented that Bellevue has more jobs than residents and thus on a daily basis more people are coming to Bellevue to get to work than are going from Bellevue to get to work. He asked to what degree data is gathered relative where people are coming from in coming to work in Bellevue. He also asked how much the city's planning influences what the transit agencies do in terms of providing service. Mr. Loewenherz said the market segregation data that is regularly collected geocodes where trips to Bellevue begin, but that information is not statistically valid. The Bellevue/Kirkland/Redmond (BKR) model is regarded in the industry as being a best practice, and that dataset allows for projections of the prevailing vehicle person trips out to 2030 throughout the city; that information will play a big role in helping to inform the city's transit vision. City plans are considered by King County Metro and Sound Transit during their service planning.

8. OTHER BUSINESS

Mr. Inghram reminded the Commissioners that a specific date for the Commission's annual retreat had not yet been chosen. He noted that the event traditionally has been held away from City Hall. The Commissioners tentatively concluded the retreat should be slated for October 24 at the Bellevue Botanical Gardens and should begin at 4:30 p.m.

With regard to the Shoreline Master Program update, Chairman Carlson noted that at the July 25 Commission meeting the suggestion was strongly made that members of the Washington Sensible Shorelines Association (WSSA) should meet directly with the staff to work out their differences. An initial session was held during which a great deal of common ground was established. At the request of WSSA and the staff, the Commission's next study session on the topic was moved to September 26, prior to which the WSSA representatives and staff will meet for a second time.

Commissioner Laing pointed out that the Shoreline Master Program document cannot be presented to the Department of Ecology in piecemeal fashion, so until the Council is in a position to hold a public hearing on the light rail component, the document will not be going anywhere.

9. PUBLIC COMMENT – None

10. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

A. June 27, 2012

The Commissioners offered some edits to the draft minutes and a motion to approve the minutes as amended was made by Commissioner Tebelius. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Laing and the motion carried without dissent; Commissioners Ferris and Sheffels abstained from voting.

B. July 11, 2012

The Commissioners offered some edits to the draft minutes and a motion to approve the minutes as amended was made by Commissioner Tebelius. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Laing and the motion carried unanimously.

11. NEXT PLANNING COMMISSION MEETING

A. September 26, 2012

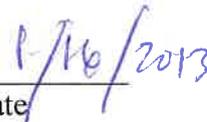
12. ADJOURN

A motion to adjourn was made by Commissioner Laing and was seconded by Commissioner Turner and the motion carried unanimously.

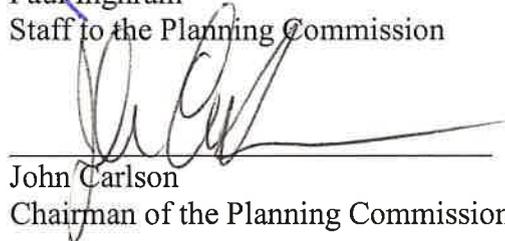
Chairman Carlson adjourned the meeting at 8:14 p.m.



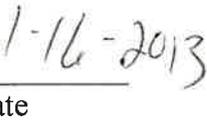
Paul Inghram
Staff to the Planning Commission



Date



John Carlson
Chairman of the Planning Commission



Date

* Approved October 10, 2012