CITY OF BELLEVUE
JOINT BOARDS & COMMISSIONS
MEETING MINUTES

February 25, 2015
6:30 p.m.

Bellevue City Hall
City Council Conference Room 1E-113

PLANNING COMMISSIONERS PRESENT:	Chair Laing, Commissioners Carlson, Hamlin, Hilhorst, Tebelius, deVadoss, Walter
TRANSPORTATION COMMISSIONERS PRESENT:	Chair Lampe, Commissioners Bishop, Chirls, Larrivee, Simas, Tanaka, Zahn
HUMAN SERVICES COMMISSIONERS PRESENT:	Chair McEachran, Commissioners Beighle, Bruels, Kline, Perelman, Plaskon, Villar
ARTS COMMISSIONERS PRESENT:	Chair Jackson, Commissioners Fateeva, Lewis, Ludeña, Madan, Malkin, Mandredi, Wolftechi
ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES COMMISSIONERS PRESENT:	Chair Helland, Commissioners Howe, March, Morin, Pauley, Swenson, Wang
PARKS AND COMMUNITY SERVICES BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT:	Chair Grindeland, Members Evans, George, Heath, Hollenbeke, Kumar, Powell
COUNCILMEMBERS PRESENT:	Councilmember Robertson

RECORDING SECRETARY: Gerry Lindsay

1. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 7:08 p.m. by Chair Laing who presided.

2. ROLL CALL

Upon the call of the roll, all Commissioners were present

3. WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

Chair Laing explained that the Comprehensive Plan belongs to the community, not to any one board or commission. He thanked the public for participating in the open house prior to the meeting and for attending the joint meeting.

4. STAFF PRESENTATION

Planning Director Dan Stroh said the act of planning is something that must be done in order to deliver the future everyone wants. Planning is a uniquely human activity and involves multiple

facets. Along the way choices must be made in charting a course that will yield the preferred future. Bellevue has a long history of planning and over the years has delivered some great results, things like a dynamic city center with a strong sense of place; maintaining and nurturing diverse and healthy neighborhoods; and a park system that interfaces with the natural environment and blends with the built environment. The Comprehensive Plan plays a unique role. It is the city's foundational document that sets the groundwork for a whole array of decisions across a wide range of topics. It speaks to the whole organization and influences everything from land use and zoning decisions to city services and budget priorities. The Comprehensive Plan comes in at the high level but is specific enough to be directive and add value in informing the decisions the city faces.

Mr. Stroh said the state Growth Management Act requires jurisdictions to periodically update their individual comprehensive plans. Bellevue goes beyond merely meeting the state requirement and seeks to understand what choices will need to be made in terms of local needs and values, all with the intent of having a Comprehensive Plan that is meaningful and relevant to the future of the city.

Each of the city's boards and commissions have been looking at the elements that are relevant to their work on behalf of the city. Those various pieces have since been folded into an integrated document and the focus of the joint meeting is to look at the document as a whole and to address the question of whether or not it captures the direction the city wants to chart for the future.

Comprehensive Planning Manager Paul Inghram pointed out that over the last two years more than 60 board and commission meetings have been spent focused on reviewing the existing Comprehensive Plan, receiving updates regarding data and projections, working through policy tables and drafting new policies. Additionally, the boards and commissions have met jointly three times previously. With work on the individual elements completed, the focus now shifts to looking at the document in total to see if it hits the mark.

Mr. Inghram briefly reviewed the schedule, noting that a second open house was planned for February 26 at Interlake High School. The Comprehensive Plan will also be discussed at the Neighborhood Leadership gathering on February 26, and an online open house has been activated which allows the public to offer comments electronically. The schedule is geared toward allowing the City Council time to review the document in detail ahead of the state deadline in June. The schedule calls for the Planning Commission to hold a public hearing and conduct its final deliberations ahead of crafting a recommendation to the Council by March 25.

The work to update the Comprehensive Plan has included inserting current data and has focused on making the document more usable and accessible for the general reader. The community has changed a lot in the ten years since the Comprehensive Plan was last updated. In many ways that is obvious in the growth that has occurred in the city and regionally. The Vision 2040 plan has been adopted at the regional level; light rail is planned to come to and through the city; the city's demographics are changing; there have been technology advances; infrastructure demands are changing; there is a new focus on sustainability; a dramatic new plan for the future of the Bel-Red corridor has been adopted; and there has been a focus on downtown livability. The Comprehensive Plan needs to respond to all of those changes.

Mr. Inghram said the vision statement in the Comprehensive Plan has been comprehensively updated. It incorporates the visioning work the Council has done. The growth strategy has also been updated to focus growth in the downtown area. An entirely new neighborhoods element

has been created; it provides a way for people to see how neighborhood issues are addressed and it reinforces the fact that Bellevue is a city of neighborhoods, both new and traditional.

One thing new about the Comprehensive Plan is the fact that after each policy there is a section that points to other areas of the plan to assist the reader in finding all relevant policies. Implementation steps have also been added to the end of each element. In Volume 2 of the Comprehensive Plan one of the key changes is related to the Eastgate/I-90 project.

Mr. Inghram briefly touched on ways in which the city is growing and is projected to grow in the future. Up to 52,000 jobs will be added in the next 23 years along with almost 16,000 housing units. Most of the growth is expected to occur in the downtown, though about a third of it will occur in the Bel-Red area. The Eastgate and Factoria areas can expect take some of that growth as well. The represents a different pattern of growth from what has been experienced in years past.

The group was shown the new land use map and it was noted that it is very nearly the same as the current one. Mr. Inghram pointed out that the map was revised to include changes in the Eastgate/I-90 area and a small change along the edge of the downtown.

5. UPDATE HIGHLIGHTS

The chair of each board and commission was invited to share their observations.

Chair Helland explained that the Environmental Services Commission is charged with reviewing the city's utility policies, budgets and rates. He said the Commission reviewed the Utilities Element, the Environmental Element and the Capital Facilities Element, as well as the low-impact development principles that are located throughout the Comprehensive Plan. The focus was on a holistic approach; encouraging the use of emerging technologies; links to functional systems plans and the Capital Investment Program; life-cycle materials management; habitat improvement where it will provide the most benefit; recognition of the value of the city's tree canopy; and green buildings and infrastructure. He said the Commission supports the draft document.

Chair Grindeland said the Parks and Community Services Board reviewed and discussed the Parks, Recreation and Open Space Element over the course of several meetings. The initial focus was on high-level discussions about the park and recreation system serves Bellevue residents currently and into the future. The Board talked about the growth in Bellevue, particularly in the downtown, Bel-Red and Eastgate, and the park and trail system facilities those areas will need as they urbanize. There was much talk about Bellevue's increasing diversity and how the city's parks facilities serve as important places to make connections with neighbors. There are parks and recreation policies that overlap with other policies, including the transportation policies around sidewalks and trails that contribute to the vision of Bellevue as a city in a park and to the provision of green space within a walking distance of every resident. The list of new policies proposed by the Board includes the acquisition and development of more parks; links between transportation and park policies; the need for new signage and wayfinding tools to direct people to the parks; the use of parks to celebrate, promote and preserve local heritage; and monitoring the provision of evolving recreation and service needs throughout the city.

Chair McEachran said the Human Services Commission has learned about human services and

housing as a collaborative impact. The Commission proposed the inclusion of three new policies aimed at improving accessibility to human services through geographic distribution and siting services close to public transit; supporting a local response to homelessness; and spotlighting the city's role in protecting the civil rights of residents through regulatory means. The Commission can be thought of as the hyphenation commission given that nearly all elements have something to do with human services.

Chair Laing shared that the Planning Commission focused primarily on land use and housing. There was discussion of where growth will occur and a focus on policies aimed at removing any barriers to additional growth in the downtown, the Bel-Red corridor and the Eastgate/I-90 area. The Commission also zeroed in on policies that will ensure a multimodal transportation network to serve growth where it will occur. The predominant land use in Bellevue is single family and by targeting growth to the three main growth areas, the integrity, health and vitality of the neighborhoods can be preserved. The Commission was very excited about adding the new Neighborhood Element; while not required by the Growth Management Act, Bellevue is a community of neighborhoods and the new element will add greatly to the Comprehensive Plan. The Commission spent more time over the last two years focused on affordable housing than on any other topic and worked to assure that there are policies that speak to a variety of housing needs across all income and diversity ranges. The document also includes general land use policies that address what can be done from a regulatory perspective to remove barriers to providing affordable housing. The multifamily tax exemption program, which the Council has taken up, is a tool that proved to be very effective in providing inclusionary affordable housing units. The Commission also included policies aimed at emphasizing the importance of education at all levels in the community, and touched on the need for student housing options. With regard to homelessness, policies are also included that seek to remove regulatory barriers to things like siting shelters.

Continuing, Chair Laing said the Commission had several briefings that touched on Bellevue's economy. He said Bellevue is unique in that it has more jobs than residents. Policy language has been included around what Bellevue does well in terms of creating job growth and what can be done to make sure that trajectory will be continued.

One of the most popular ideas that came out of the Bellevue's Best Ideas campaign was high-speed internet access. The campaign generated input from all around the community and was clever in that people could see ideas posted and could vote for them. Chair Laing said the Commission made an effort to incorporate policies to the extent possible that push toward the implementation of some of the ideas that were suggested.

In looking at infrastructure needs, the Commission heard from several communities opposed to having an abundance of overhead utility lines. The Commission worked with the community on draft policy language aimed at moving the city appropriately toward seeing utilities undergrounded.

Finally, Chair Laing said the Eastgate/I-90 citizen advisory committee met for over a year. Their thoughtful and thorough process envisioned what should occur in that part of the city. The committee recognized that some day the existing transit center may be served by light rail as well and as such there are opportunities for creating a dense urban community in the core of the Eastgate/I-90 area.

Chair Lampe said the Transportation Commission has been very busy over the past year. The

work has included the development of a new Transit Master Plan for the city which in the East Link era will be very important. The next major task for the Commission will be to update the pedestrian/bicycle plan that was initiated in 2009. The Commission has recommended policies, programs and investments that broadly address a wide range of mobility needs to address the rapidly changing community. Mobility in Bellevue is increasingly about providing travel options for all types of trips, including commute, errands and recreation. The Commission's recommendation relative to the Transportation Element is for a multimodal approach that can provide access to jobs, housing, services and recreation in order to improve public health, support economic development, sustain environmental values, enhance livability, protect neighborhoods and promote equity among all members of the community. The Commission is recommending policies that will define level of service standards for all modes of travel, including walking, bicycling, transit and auto travel. Implementation of the policies will require the development of measures and careful monitoring for each mode of travel to allow for the making of data-based investment decisions. Policies have been incorporated into the Transportation Element from the adopted Transit Master Plan; the policies will help Bellevue work with transit providers to ensure receipt of the transit services needed to support the anticipated growth. The recommended policies refine and update strategies to help manage the growth of traffic through programs and services in the transportation demand management program.

Chair Jackson with the Arts Commission said the arts influence everything. She said for the update the Commission honed in on what is facing the arts currently and for the foreseeable future. The addition of new policies allows for addressing critical ongoing issues and dealing with relatively new ones. Bellevue supports the arts in a variety of forms ranging from financial support for arts events to the provision of guidance for artists and arts groups to commissioning permanent public art. The city supports the arts as a way of defining the city's character and building community. Diversity will always be one of Bellevue's greatest strengths; the arts provide unique access into the city's many cultures and bring opportunities for greater understanding and appreciation. The arts also offer a chance for new residents to feel welcome and at home. Events featuring new and existing cultural traditions help to form the needed link.

Continuing, Chair Jackson observed that lack of space for the arts is a chronic and serious issue. Affordable space for office, studio, rehearsal, storage, exhibits, performance and event artist living space are all in short supply. The Commission sees the lack of space as the largest single barrier to growth in the arts community in Bellevue and on the Eastside. The new arts policy calls out for local and regional solutions to the facilities problem. Lifelong arts education for all skill levels provides broad community benefits. The arts operate within an ecosystem in which it is necessary to both learning artists and professional artists. Arts education helps significantly with the intellectual and social development of youth, and arts participation for seniors can counteract isolation while boosting mental and physical well being, all of which translates into the building of a stronger community and lessening impacts on the healthcare system. Studies show a strong correlation between arts participation and civic engagement. Lifelong arts education also fosters a greater pool of art teachers and arts professionals within the community and strengthens Bellevue's image and livability.

Public art is integral to the city's physical character and builds on its authenticity. Providing community landmarks, and expressing the character of the city and its unique neighborhoods, and giving residents free access to quality art are three of the many benefits that public art provides.

Chair Jackson said policies related to the arts and culture are involved in many of the Comprehensive Plan elements, including the Economic Development Element, the Human Services Element, the Parks, Recreation and Open Space Element, and the new Neighborhood Element. The arts have been used as a tool to support the goals of many elements. Bellevue has enjoyed several arts and transportation projects, and had a memorable partnership with the Utilities Department.

6. DISCUSSION & COMMENTS

The board and commission members participated in a roundtable discussion focused on the interconnectedness of topics across the entire plan, as well as general observations as to whether or not the disparate elements hold together as an integrated document.

7. CLOSING COMMENTS

Parks and Community Services Board vice chair Dallas Evans said his table discussed the subject of human services and what is being done about affordable housing. He said it is an oxymoron to call for beautifying the city by putting more parks and open space in while taking away land that could be used for housing. Regardless of what approach is taken, it will not be possible to achieve truly affordable housing in Bellevue given the land costs. Questions were asked about what someone living outside of but wanting to live in Bellevue would think of the plan. Every day 30,000 people go in and out of the city and that number will only grow over time. Absent effective transportation, Bellevue as a city in a park will no longer work. One missing component is the view of those who would like to live in Bellevue but who cannot afford to.

Planning Commissioner Jay Hamlin said the members at his table were generally pleased with the Comprehensive Plan. There was also agreement that some tweaks are still needed.

Planning Commissioner John DeVadoss commented that the process used to update the Comprehensive Plan was a good forum for pulling in and harmonizing the perspectives of many people. There are a variety of ways in which the document could be refined in that it will never be perfect. It is, however, a very good product overall.

Parks and Community Services Board Chair Grindeland said her table addressed the issues of affordable housing and tree canopy as well as how to enhance the city's neighborhoods by getting more people involved. The group discussed transportation as well. The conclusion reached was that the plan is a good one and that there is much work to do in Bellevue.

Planning Commissioner Stephanie Walter reported that those at her table covered a number of areas. The question of how prescriptive the document should be was raised along with the issue of how the plan gets implemented. Questions were raised about how to add into the document things that are not currently included. Questions were also asked about the unintended consequences that may result, such as the displacement of artists from the Bel-Red corridor as that area redevelops over time. The document is aspirational but every attempt should be made to keep from throwing the baby out with the bathwater.

Environmental Services Commission Chair Helland said his group talked a lot about undergrounding powerlines. The discussion also covered the usability of the document. The conclusion reached that the document is generally sound.

Human Services Commission Chair McEachran said his table also talked about affordable housing as well as accessibility for seniors wanting to retire in place. There also was discussion about the challenges and opportunities the city will face as the Spring District and the Bellevue College areas develop.

Transportation Commissioner Janice Zahn said the discussion at her table included the fact that mixed use zoning results in more expensive housing units. There was agreement that the city will need to intentionally look at the issue of inclusionary housing going forward. The group also discussed the tie between neighborhoods and art and the need to use programs already in place to create more art in the neighborhoods.

Transportation Commission Chair Lampe allowed that affordable housing is a huge issue that transcends a number of lines.

Planning Commission Chair Laing stressed the need for the document to be aspirational. Implementation occurs at an entirely different level, so the snapshot the Comprehensive Plan represents needs to be purposely somewhat out of focus. The plan represents a very solid roadmap for the city to follow going forward.

Arts Commission Chair Jackson said the Commission spends a lot of time thinking about neighborhood art projects as well getting art along transportation rights-of-way. Getting it going in both directions is an exciting idea. There is a need to make every area of the city livable, both by having green space and by providing art.

7. CLOSING COMMENTS

Councilmember Robertson said she was a member of the Planning Commission the last time the Comprehensive Plan was updated. She said the discussion at her table included a focus on how the document will be used and how to make sure what is aspirational will come to pass. Once the document is approved by the Council, the work of implementation will begin. That will involve amending the codes to be consistent with the Comprehensive Plan. Hopefully all of the boards and commissions will be invited to weigh in on that process. She said the forum generated a great deal of energy and sharing and is something that should be scheduled at least annually.

9. ADJOURN

The meeting was adjourned at 8:36 p.m.

Paul Inghram
Staff to the Planning Commission

5/13/2015
Date

Aaron Laing
Chair of the Planning Commission

5/13/15
Date

* Approved April 8, 2015