CITY OF BELLEVUE
BELLEVUE PLANNING COMMISSION
STUDY SESSION MINUTES

April 10, 2013
6:30 p.m.

Bellevue City Hall
City Council Conference Room 1E-113

COMMISSIONERS PRESENT: Commissioners Hamlin, Laing, Sheffels, Tebelius, Turner

COMMISSIONERS ABSENT: Chairman Carlson, Commissioner Ferris

STAFF PRESENT: Paul Inghram, Department of Planning and Community Development;

GUEST SPEAKERS: None

RECORDING SECRETARY: Gerry Lindsay

1. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 6:35 p.m. by Vice Chairman Tebelius who presided.

2. ROLL CALL

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

3. PUBLIC COMMENT

Mr. Norm Hansen, 3851 136th Avenue NE, said the Bridle Trails subarea is very interested in the Comprehensive Plan update as it regards the vision for the future of Bellevue. He said the community intends to work closely and cooperatively with the staff, beginning with a meeting with Comprehensive Planning Manager Paul Inghram on April 23 to go over some of the elements and scoping. Bellevue is a first-class city, but its plans need to be first-class as well for all areas of the city. Bridle Trails is always interested in transportation issues, as well as utilities, including city managed utilities.

4. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

A motion to approve the agenda, which was revised to include a discussion of the Shoreline Master Program transmittal memo, was made by Commissioner Laing. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Turner and it carried unanimously.

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

6. STAFF REPORTS

Mr. Inghram said the two open house meetings with Sound Transit conducted recently were well attended, including the one focused on cost-saving options. The City Council intends to conduct a hearing on April 15 on the cost-saving options and is scheduled to take action on the alignment and station alternatives on April 22. The Sound Transit board may take action later that same

week.

Mr. Inghram informed the Commissioners that the Council also has a hearing scheduled for April 15 on the topic of extending the interim zoning for medical marijuana. The item will be before the Commission beginning on May 8.

A presentation by high school students highlighting their planning ideas for the future of Newport Hills, Eastgate and Lake Hills has been scheduled for April 24. A citywide open house is planned for that same day at City Hall from 4:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m.

Asked to comment on the news that City Manager Steve Sarkozy had resigned, Mr. Inghram said Mr. Sarkozy has been with the city for 12 years, which is a testament to his talent of working closely with the community and the City Council. It is not known what Mr. Sarkozy will do next. Deputy City Manager Brad Miyake will serve as interim City Manager.

Commissioner Tebelius expressed an interest in having Mr. Miyake stop by a Commission meeting to be introduced.

7. STUDY SESSION

A. Shoreline Master Program Transmittal Memo

Mr. Inghram reminded the Commissioners that the vote to recommend approval of the Shoreline Master Program was unanimous. The work of drafting the transmittal memo was undertaken while the Council was focused on light rail and other issues. Currently the schedule calls for presentation of the transmittal memo to the Council in early May. Written comments from Commissioners on the draft have been received by staff and have been used to make changes.

Answering a question asked by Commissioner Laing about process. Mr. Inghram explained that the memo does not in any way change the Commission's recommendation, rather it simply conveys what the recommendation contains.

Commissioner Turner said he saw nothing in the draft that gave him concern. He said there were some paragraphs he would have worded differently, but it is not worth taking the time to try and say it differently.

Commissioner Tebelius noted that the transmittal memo in its draft form has six attachments but does not include Dr. Pauley's information, which was previously recommended. Mr. Inghram said the six attachments listed on the front are in fact the Shoreline Master Program itself. The last page of the memo references the communications from the Environmental Services Commission and the Parks and Community Services Board. The Shoreline Master Program itself includes reference to the science documents reviewed by the Commission as part of the update; those documents are not in fact included as attachments even though they are part of the record.

Commissioner Sheffels commented that the various documents reviewed by the Commission are not in fact part of the Commission's work product and as such do not need to be included as attachments.

Commissioner Laing said the work to update the Shoreline Master Program took over four years. While the final vote was unanimous, a variety of Commissioners contributed to the effort over the years and helped to move the ball forward. There are, however, places in the transmittal

memo that appear to ~~transmute~~ impute motives to the Commission as a whole relative to the overall direction taken by the document; those depictions are inappropriate and misleading however unintentional. He said one such instance occurs early in the memo and implies that the Commission elected not to follow the direction given by the Council to use the 2006 critical areas ordinance as a starting point; the fact is the Commission heard from the public that far-reaching changes to the Shoreline Master Program were desired, and in 2011 the state legislature amended the Growth Management Act and the Shoreline Management Act to say that shorelines cannot be regulated as critical areas in and of themselves. Mr. Inghram agreed that some tweaks would be in order.

Commissioner Sheffels agreed. She noted that several Commissioners chose to change positions they had previously taken as the update work progressed, and they did so for a variety of reasons. To try and reflect all of that would be overwhelming. What the Council needs to know is that the final vote was unanimous. Overall, the memo is acceptable.

Commissioner Tebelius asked if the Department of Ecology will have access to all of the documents the Commission reviewed. Mr. Inghram said that will depend on the discretion of the Council. The memo as drafted assumes the Council will take the document and send it to the Department of Ecology for comment and review before the Council takes action on it, but there are a number of different steps the Council could take instead. For instance, the Council could elect to conduct a number of study sessions and review the document in detail before sending it on to the state. In any event, the staff will recommend that the Department of Ecology be informed regarding all of the materials used by the Commission in putting together the final Shoreline Master Program.

Commissioner Turner said he would prefer to see the memo simplified to the extent possible but would not object to simply making small changes to it.

B. Comprehensive Plan Update

Mr. Inghram reminded the Commissioners that the Comprehensive Plan update work was formally launched by the Council in October 2012. A joint meeting with seven city boards and commissions was held in January. In February the Commission look a quick look at the Land Use Element, and in a joint meeting with the Human Services Commission in March the focus was on the Housing Element. All of the work done to date has been by way of background, and the same approach will be taken to introduce all of the other elements.

Mr. Inghram said the Introduction is the first chapter in the Comprehensive Plan and as such is the first thing people see. It gives some background about what the Comprehensive Plan is and its role, but it also includes a historical perspective of how far the city has come since its incorporation, what the community is like currently, and what the vision is for the future. One concern that has been identified is that the vision itself is some 22 pages into the Introduction, which makes it cumbersome to quickly point out; the update should include making the vision stand out a little better, possibly by giving it its own tab in the document. Another idea would be to include right up front an executive or strategic summary of the Comprehensive Plan.

Commissioner Hamlin said he favored the notion of crafting a short summary that could stand alone. Commissioner Tebelius concurred, adding that it should not be necessary to read through a voluminous document in order to know what the city's plan is. Commissioner Sheffels said it also would be interesting to create a document that outlines what was in the original Comprehensive Plan and what was included in every subsequent update, showing what has been accomplished.

Mr. Inghram said the Citizen Participation Element, which follows the Introduction, is unique to Bellevue. The Growth Management Act does not require a separate chapter addressing citizen participation. The city has a long history of engaging the public and has enjoyed a number of successes. However, the community is getting harder and harder to reach for a variety of reasons. The Meydenbauer Bay park discussions highlighted the way in which the city does master planning and the possible need for a policy framework making it clear when people should engage in order to have a say.

Answering a question asked by Commissioner Turner, Mr. Inghram said when the city conducts an open house or other meetings, those attending generally are over the age of 40 and are not reflective of the city's mix of ethnic minorities. The city has not met with much success in reaching out to the youth or even young families. Commissioner Turner allowed that the city has a good handle on all the ways there are to contact people, but if the people choose not to respond, there is little the city can do about it.

Commissioner Sheffels pointed out that people will show up if they are opposed to a proposal. Absent a large public outcry it can be assumed that things are heading generally in the right direction.

Commissioner Laing agreed with both Commissioner Turner and Commissioner Sheffels. He said he personally is a joiner and willingly attends meetings to learn about what is going on. He said he has noted that at the meetings he attends he sees many of the same people over and over, most of whom are also joiners. However, an open house slated to occur between 4:00 p.m. and 7:00 p.m. is very difficult for families with both parents working and small children in school. He said he would support looking for ways that would provide a better variety of ways in which people can engage in city processes.

Mr. Inghram agreed that the city does a good job of getting the word out about planning processes, but allowed that it does not always communicate in an accessible voice and a non-planners language the people can understand. The fact is there is always a group of people that would be interested in participating and who are available, but the city is just not making the right connection. Knowing where people are and going to them may be the key to unlocking the puzzle.

Commissioner Turner reiterated that regardless of how well the city gets the word out, if the people do not want to respond or participate, they will choose not to.

Mr. Inghram agreed. He said one of the objectives going forward is to get solid input regarding the Comprehensive Plan. Two other objectives are to build a better relationship to the community, and to build a stronger connection within the community.

Commissioner Laing said in soliciting community input the message that goes out from the city too often is that the Growth Management Act requires citizen involvement, but nothing is said about having to actually listen to the comments made. One problem the city has with its planning processes is that it first hires a consultant to draw up a plan, which is subsequently shared with the public in the hope of getting some useful comments. The fact is changes may or may not be made as a result of the comments, and the plan will then work its way through the rest of the planning steps and ultimately gets adopted. A better approach would be to start with the community and with a blank slate, solicit ideas from them, and then draft a plan that reflects the ideas of the community.

Commissioner Hamlin agreed. He pointed out that the Crossroads session took the latter approach. Ideas were sought without first spoon-feeding the participants any preconceived plan.

Commissioner Tebelius said no city does a better job of getting the word out about planning processes and public meetings than Bellevue does. It could be, however, that even with all the high-tech approaches used to inform everyone, the simplest measures work the best, like word of mouth and putting up a signboard on the sidewalk. She fully agreed with the need to obtain public input before spending time drafting a plan. She also espoused the notion of holding Planning Commission meetings in the community instead of at City Hall.

Mr. Inghram explained that the Annexation Element policies have been used historically to manage the city's growth through annexation. He noted that while in the past the element has been significant, with the list of possible annexations nearly exhausted, the element will have less relevance in the future and an entire chapter in the Comprehensive Plan addressing annexation may not be necessary.

The Commissioners were shown a video depicting the growth of the city through annexations over the years, and were shown a map that indicated the handful of areas yet to be annexed.

Commissioner Hamlin noted that the areas yet to be annexed are all currently part of King County and he asked if there is any possibility that annexations could involve areas that are currently part of another jurisdiction. Mr. Inghram answered that the city has interlocal agreements with a number of the points communities to provide water and other services and some have asked why those areas are not part of the city. It would, however, be nothing more than speculation to suggest that might happen. There have been questions raised relative to the financial viability of Newcastle, and if something were to happen to that city the possibility of annexation might be raised. The boundaries with the cities of Issaquah, Renton, Kirkland and Redmond are unlikely to change.

Mr. Inghram called attention to the table included in the Commission's agenda packet that outlined the main chapters of the Comprehensive Plan. He noted that the chapters and elements not yet preliminarily addressed by the Commission are Capital Facilities, Utilities, Transportation, Economic Development, Environmental, Parks and Urban Design. Some of the remaining chapters and elements will involve working jointly with other boards or commissions.

The Commissioners were shown a draft of the current write-up intended to communicate to the Council and the public what the Comprehensive Plan update is all about, specifically addressing things that must be done, addressing things that should be done, extending out the horizon year, and addressing things suggested by the public.

8. OTHER BUSINESS

Commissioner Laing reported that on April 11 the Transportation Commission will be given an update regarding the Transit Master Plan. He encouraged Commissioners to attend.

9. PUBLIC COMMENT

Mr. Martin Seelig, 3203 165th Place NE, said he and his wife have been residents of Bellevue since 1971. He concurred with the proposal of Commissioner Tebelius to bring Planning Commission meetings out of City Hall and into the community. That will portray the idea that the Commission is trying to be a real part of the community. While the move would require some effort, it would result in increased citizen participation, particularly if the Commission

meetings in one community for three or four months and then meets in another community for the next three or four months.

Commissioner Sheffels commented that recently the Commission had a discussion about possibly locating an auto dealership in the Eastgate area. She asked Mr. Seelig if, had that meeting been held in the Bridle Trails community, local residents would have even bothered to attend. She added that most of the time the work of the Commission involves citywide issues. Mr. Seelig said he could not speak for the Bridle Trails community, but suggested that citywide issues are indeed relevant to every community and may draw some attendees.

10. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

A. February 27, 2013

The Commissioners offered some revisions to the draft minutes.

A motion to approve the minutes as amended was made by Commissioner Hamlin. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Turner and it carried unanimously.

11. NEXT PLANNING COMMISSION MEETING

A. April 24, 2013

After reviewing the list of upcoming agenda items, Commissioner Tebelius questioned whether the Commission should begin its review of marijuana for medical and recreational use, particularly where marijuana plants should be allowed to be grown, ahead of the Liquor Control Board reaching decisions on the issues before it, and given the potential changes that are before the legislature in the current session. Mr. Inghram said there are two different current laws the city has an obligation to comply with, one addressing the use of medical marijuana and one addressing the recreational use of marijuana. If the legislature changes the game board, the city will need to respond accordingly. Bellevue currently has an interim ordinance in place that will need to be renewed every six months until permanent regulations are adopted. Hopefully the state will choose to provide some more guidance, particularly in regard to medical marijuana.

12. ADJOURN

Commissioner Tebelius adjourned the meeting at 8:02 p.m.

Paul Inghram
Staff to the Planning Commission

7-24-2013
Date

Diane Tebelius
Chair of the Planning Commission

7-24-13
Date

* Approved and corrected June 26, 2013