

CITY OF BELLEVUE
BELLEVUE PLANNING COMMISSION
ANNUAL RETREAT MINUTES

October 30, 2013
5:45 p.m.

Lewis Creek Park Visitor Center
5808 Lakemont Boulevard SE, Bellevue, WA

COMMISSIONERS PRESENT: Chair Tebelius, Commissioners Carlson, Ferris, Hamlin, Hilhorst

COMMISSIONERS ABSENT: Commissioner Laing

STAFF PRESENT: Paul Inghram, Dan Stroh, Carol Helland, Mike Brennan, Department of Planning and Community Development

GUEST SPEAKERS: Mayor Conrad Lee, Deputy Mayor Jennifer Robertson

RECORDING SECRETARY: Gerry Lindsay

1. WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION

The meeting was called to order at 5:55 p.m. by Chair Tebelius who presided. All Commissioners were present with the exception of Commissioner Ferris, who arrived at 6:10 p.m., and Commissioner Laing, who was excused.

2. PAST YEAR'S ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Immediate past-chair Carlson briefly reviewed the Commission's major accomplishments of the last year. He suggested the list signifies the changing dynamics of the Commission toward seeking unanimous agreement.

Chair Tebelius thanked Commissioner Carlson for his leadership. She also took a moment to thank the staff for their dedicated hard work on behalf of the Commission and the city. In particular she praised the efforts of Comprehensive Planning Manager Paul Inghram and Land Use Director Carol Helland.

3. COUNCIL REMARKS

Chair Tebelius informed Mayor Lee that the Commission will be conducting some outreach meetings ~~out~~ in the community, beginning with a meeting on November 13 at Bellevue College, in an effort to be fully apprised as to what is happening in the city's neighborhoods.

Mayor Lee stressed the important of the city's boards and commissions and noted how heavily the Council relies on them for solid advice and recommendations. The work of the Council is better informed and on the right track because of the excellent work of the boards and commissions.

Deputy Mayor Robertson added her appreciation for the work of the Commission which she noted covers a wide range of issues. She also highlighted the long list of issues on the Commission's plate for the coming year and said the work of the Commission is both difficult

and satisfying. The excellent recommendations that flow from the Commission are truly the result of dedicated and fully engaged Commissioners.

4. PLANNING AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

Planning Director Dan Stroh spoke for a few minutes about the millenials, the generation born in the 1980s and 1990s that is larger than the Baby Boomer generation. By 2020, projections are that millenials will make up almost a third of all workers. In planning for the future, the wants and needs of the millenials will have to be taken into account: they are showing a strong preference for living in urban environments; they are less inclined to own their own cars; they are tech savvy; they are generally optimistic; they are entrepreneurial and enjoy working as a team; and a large percentage are professional women.

Bellevue's demographics continue to change. The Baby Boomers are moving into retirement but as they do so they are enjoying better health, they are remaining active, are generally more physically fit, and they have an interest in aging in place. The needs and wants of the growing percentage of seniors in the population must be taken into account in planning everything from housing to transportation systems and city services.

Mr. Stroh explained that the term "walkable urbanism" was coined to refer to the idea of an increasing desire to live in compact urban communities with lots of amenities. Downtowns are part of the concept, but not the only part; the term can also apply to transit-oriented developments in otherwise suburban areas. Walkable urbanism is big in the national literature.

Over time Bellevue's economy has been evolving. The information/technology jobs, or what has been termed the "innovation economy," are leading the way. Determining where the workers with the technology talents want to be is driving decisions around where to locate tech firms. Of the 140,000 jobs in the city, 25,000 are in the information/technology cluster, and the sector is demonstrating a much faster growth rate. Bellevue is well positioned in the innovation economy. The labor pool is mobile so the focus needs to be on quality of life and community attractiveness.

Sustainability is a term that has reached the mainstream. It is often captured as people, prosperity and plant. While it involves buildings that are super energy efficient, it also involves sustainable foods sold in grocery stores, economies, and far more. Incentivizing buildings at the LEEDS Silver rating is no longer seen as necessary as developers build to that standard without the incentives.

Civic engagement is becoming increasingly challenging across the country and locally. People are busy with their jobs and their lives, so a variety of different methods are needed to keep people informed, in touch, and participating, including the use of social media, crowd sourcing, which is seeking input from people who are attending community events.

Mr. Stroh allowed that Bellevue is facing an increasing challenge in terms of funding capital facilities. In addition to needing new facilities to keep up with growth, maintaining what already exists is of critical importance. Local jurisdictions are no longer able to rely on the federal government as a solid funding source. Regional and local solutions must be found instead.

Commissioner Ferris noted the Commission has commented on the fact that there is little emphasis in the Comprehensive Plan and Land Use Code regarding higher education. The community certainly could benefit from having more of a higher education presence. Mr. Stroh

said there have been discussions about that issue as part of the city's economic development strategy. The city certainly has the necessary space in Bel-Red, Wilburton, and even possibly in the downtown. Deputy Mayor Robertson added that she would like to see the issue highlighted in the Comprehensive Plan.

5. MAJOR PLANNING INITIATIVES

Mr. Stroh briefly reviewed the major planning initiatives facing the Commission. The list included the Comprehensive Plan update; the Downtown Livability Initiative; the economic development strategy; East Link maintenance facility and station area planning; and the Eastgate/I-90 corridor.

6. UPCOMING WORK PROGRAM

Development Services Director Mike Brennan said the work under way and yet to be addressed will refresh and reshape the long-term future of the city. He said the Council will ultimately determine priorities and direction, but discussion by the Commission will help to inform their conversation.

Ms. Helland said the code amendment work program is traditionally brought before the Council in the fall of the year when it is known what is coming with respect to Comprehensive Plan amendments, changes to the code needed to maintain consistency with the policies, and any state mandates. She called attention to the October 25, 2013, memo and noted that all of the items in Attachment A had been completed already and that the items in Attachment B had yet to be addressed.

Chair Tebelius said it was her understanding that ~~recommendations have been made to the the legislature to look~~ is looking at reconciling the medical marijuana and recreational marijuana rules. Some have proposed getting rid of the medical marijuana regulations altogether and just leaving the recreational marijuana provisions in place with its taxing structure. She asked if it is possible the issue will once again be on the Commission's plate. Ms. Helland said that is possible, though she stressed that with the upcoming short session something would have to happen very rapidly. The Council has added the issue to the city's legislative agenda.

Ms. Helland noted that the Shoreline Master Program conformance amendments are in process before the Commission. Many of the code amendments have a connection to the key planning initiatives.

Commissioner Ferris said the phenomenon of what is happening with regard to housing around Bellevue College is an outcome of the facility becoming a four-year collect. The demand for student housing is being met in ways that are not very respectable to the surrounding neighborhoods. The solution is not a permanent redefining of what constitutes a family, it will be found in seeking opportunities on campus to locate high-density student housing that involves supervision. While the college is a state entity, to the extent the city can work with them to see student housing developed, the pressures can largely be removed from the neighborhoods. Deputy Mayor Robertson said there are two approaches that could be taken. One is tied to implementation of the Eastgate/I-90 study where there is a property owner that wants to build student housing adjacent to the transit center where there are good connections to the college. The other is to recognize that houses being shared by unrelated individuals is an issue citywide that will require permanent zoning regulations and possibly some new housing policies.

Commissioner Ferris pointed out that Bellevue College has a sea of asphalt on which student housing could be constructed, with parking below and housing above. Leadership from the college should sit down together with leadership from the city to seek solutions. Mr. Brennan said those conversations are already happening. Growth of the college is inevitable and desirable, but the impacts will need to be addressed, including the need for housing.

Mr. Stroh said the college representatives have been very interested in housing in the areas immediately surrounding their campus, though there have also been conversations about developing housing on site and about the Spiritwood situation.

Ms. Helland added that house sharing extends beyond the college campus. In some areas of the city there are multiple families that are sharing houses for various reasons. The broader issue of housing affordability will be discussed as part of the Comprehensive Plan update.

Ms. Helland said the fact that the Commission's plate is full means for anything to be added something will need to fall off. She reiterated that the items in Attachment B are the items currently on the Commission's plate, while the items in Attachment C are items waiting in the wings. She noted that the staff had sorted the list into three tiers: things identified as having high priority based on feedback from the Council and the community; things that are not yet ripe for review; and things for which there is currently no external pressure to get them done.

~~Chair Tebelius said in a conversation with~~ relayed Commissioner Laing's concern about ~~he highlighted~~ simplifying the Council quasi-judicial permit appeal process by limiting types of appeals available to the Council as being very high on his list of priorities. Deputy Mayor Robertson said she wants to see the issue addressed as well and sooner rather than later.

Chair Tebelius said Commissioner Laing also ~~held up the~~ noted the electrical reliability study as a is a very important issue. Ms. Helland said the specific issue will have groups on both sides. It involves specifically providing flexibility to prune or remove vegetation around electrical substations to reduce outage incidents and outage duration. Deputy Mayor Robertson added that certain uses require more electricity and improved reliability. Puget Sound Energy is planning to build a new high-power line through Bellevue to create redundancy and improved reliability. To the extent possible, the electrical reliability study work should true up with the new power line work.

Chair Tebelius stressed the importance of the Bel-Red area five-year review and proposed moving it to the top of the list of items shown on page 2 of Attachment C. Ms. Helland pointed out that the Council has given direction to start that work in the third quarter of 2014. Any necessary code development in response to the review would need to be completed in 2015.

Commissioner Hamlin asked if the parking stall dimension and ratio requirements issue will rise in importance as more development comes in. Ms. Helland said the issue first came up during the Bel-Red study and was addressed by changing some of the parking dimensional and ratio requirements and provided for some flexibility in anticipation of transit coming to the corridor. The parking issue will also be discussed as part of the Downtown Livability Initiative. Commissioner Ferris added that as transit use increases, the demand for parking in the market goes down.

Chair Tebelius said Commissioner Laing ~~also highlighted~~ mentioned the Comprehensive Plan

amendment criteria to clarify the meaning of "changed circumstance" as being very important. Commissioner Ferris concurred; he said it has always been a bit fuzzy and suggested it would not take long to address it.

Commissioner Hamlin commented that the term may have been left a bit vague for a reason. He allowed, however, that it triggers confusion and should be looked at both in terms of rezones and Comprehensive Plan amendments.

Chair Tebelius asked how important is the Wilburton and Community Retail Design District update issue. ~~is~~ Commissioner Hamlin suggested the issue will be very important. It will be a while, however, before NE 4th Street is extended. The update will be needed, but it is not a pressing issue currently. Deputy Mayor Robertson added that depending on how things work out relative to the right-of-way acquisition the Council may move the issue higher on the list.

Chair Tebelius suggested the Phase II NPDES stormwater regulations issue should not be tackled until the pending appeal has run its course. Mr. Brennan agreed. He said staff are engaged in some of the technical background work, but the issue is not yet ripe to come forward. There is a mandate, however, to do whatever is necessary by the end of 2016.

Ms. Helland said there also is pending litigation regarding the FEMA new minimum requirements for participation in the National Flood Insurance Program which is not expected to be resolved until 2014. The outcome of the legislation may change the target the cities must hit in order to remain in the National Flood Insurance Program, so it would not make sense to address local regulations until knowing how the litigation plays out. When briefed in 2012, the Council directed waiting until the litigation is resolved. There was at the time also consensus on the part of the Council to continue requiring site specific biological opinions as opposed to trying to develop regulations to address the issue ahead of resolving the litigation. Deputy Mayor Robertson suggested that even if the litigation was wrapped up, it would be wise to wait until the Shoreline Master Program is completed and blessed by the Council.

Chair Tebelius wanted the record to reflect that she had not seen the amendments proposed by WSSA prior to the October 23 Commission meeting. She said she agreed it would be inappropriate to engage in any wholesale critical areas ordinance changes, ~~only as they relate to the shoreline.~~

Ms. Helland said the staff remains focused on finishing the Shoreline Master Program work. The stakeholders impacted by the National Flood Insurance Program have not been notified yet. She said the program actually applies to about one thousand properties in the city, only a quarter or third of which are located on Lake Sammamish. She added that the state will in the next couple of years mandate updates to the critical areas ordinance. Phase II of NPDES will probably need to get under way first.

There was agreement that as soon as there is time on the Commission's schedule, the issues that should be tackled first are simplification on the Council quasi-judicial permit appeal process; the electrical reliability study; the Land Use Code clean-up; and rezone criteria to clarify "changed circumstances."

The Commissioners spent a few minutes discussing with staff the schedule for completing the Shoreline Master Program issue.

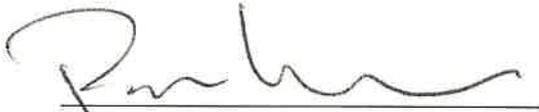
7. MEETINGS AND STAFF SUPPORT FEEDBACK

Chair Tebelius commented that the exercise led by Rhonda Hilger at the 2012 Commission retreat proved to be very valuable and she suggested repeating it once the new Commissioners are onboard.

There was agreement to continue having the Commission meetings begin at 6:30 p.m.

8. ADJOURN

Chair Tebelius adjourned the meeting at 8:46 p.m.



Paul Inghram
Staff to the Planning Commission

4/4/2014
Date



Diane Tebelius
Chair of the Planning Commission

4/7/14
Date

* Approved and corrected December 11, 2013