

CITY OF BELLEVUE
CITY COUNCIL

Summary Minutes of Special Joint Meeting
with Seattle City Council

July 31, 2008
11:30 a.m.

Maggiano's Restaurant
Bellevue, Washington

City of Bellevue

PRESENT: Mayor Degginger and Councilmembers Bonincontri, Chelminiak, Davidson, Lee and Noble

ABSENT: Deputy Mayor Balducci

STAFF: City Manager Steve Sarkozy
Myrna Basich, City Clerk/Assistant City Manager
Diane Carlson, Director of Intergovernmental Relations

City of Seattle

PRESENT: Council President Richard Conlin and Councilmembers Burgess, Clark, Drago, Harrell, Licata and Rasmussen

ABSENT: None.

STAFF: Emelie East, Office of Intergovernmental Relations Director
Mian Rice, Regional Affairs Manager

Mayor Degginger called the meeting to order at 12:35 p.m. [Meeting was delayed due to temporary closure of I-90 bridge for Blue Angels performance.]

Mayor Degginger welcomed the group to Bellevue, and everyone introduced themselves.

Transportation

Council President Conlin spoke to regional transportation priorities including replacement of the SR 520 bridge and Sound Transit projects. He noted the Seattle City Council's interest in enhancing connectivity while keeping neighborhoods intact. Mr. Conlin joined the Sound Transit Board this year. Seattle's priorities for Sound Transit light rail continue to be getting residents to their destinations, including service to Northgate as well as across Lake Washington.

Councilmember Drago concurred that Sound Transit service to Northgate is Seattle's highest priority, while recognizing the importance of the overall regional system. Light rail is needed to ease congestion and to carry people in and out of downtown Seattle. Ms. Drago said SR 520 must provide increased capacity in terms of the number of people versus vehicles. She commented on plans to replace the Alaskan Way viaduct, noting that a decision is still needed regarding the center section of the viaduct which will require legislative action.

Mayor Degginger commented on Bellevue's longstanding interest in replacing and improving the SR 520 bridge. He has been involved in the ongoing mediation process. He noted Sound Transit's decision regarding a ballot measure. Mr. Degginger described the work of Bellevue's Light Rail Best Practices Committee and the extensive public involvement in this planning effort.

Mayor Degginger introduced the issue of tolling to finance the SR 520 bridge, which will be an important ongoing discussion. Bellevue will officially comment on tolling in September.

Councilmember Davidson expressed concern regarding a relatively heavy focus on traffic mobility and a lesser focus on land use. He noted that light rail and replacement of the SR520 bridge have been needed for some time now.

Responding to Councilmember Harrell, Ms. Drago said the PSRC tolling committee is currently collecting data and developing options for analysis. The committee functions in an advisory role to the Governor, State Transportation Commission, and the state legislature.

Mayor Degginger noted the issue of tolling equity given that tolls on SR 520 will divert some traffic to I-90. Councilmember Chelminiak opined that public opinion, which so far has been minimal, will have a significant impact on the tolling decision. Councilmember Lee noted a lack of clarity in discussions regarding the objective and possible impacts of tolling.

Mr. Conlin commented on the need to prevent negative impacts on neighborhoods while maintaining maximum traffic flows.

Councilmember Davidson said it is important to optimize traffic flows on the overall I-405, SR 520, and I-5 system.

Councilmember Bonincontri stated her understanding that the purpose of tolls is to pay for the SR 520 bridge. However, the PSRC (Puget Sound Regional Council) report cites the goal of managing congestion. Ms. Bonincontri noted that the implementation of tolls in the Netherlands resulted in people changing their behavior, including efforts to consolidate trips.

Growth and Infrastructure Needs

Mayor Degginger noted the infrastructure challenges for Bellevue in light of significant growth, particularly in the downtown.

Councilmember Clark spoke to facilitating desirable growth patterns. Land use changes that Seattle made in 2006 implemented height maximums and encourage affordable housing. However, data is not yet available to analyze the impact. Rezone development is focused on South Lake Union, South Pioneer Square, China/Japan Town, Little Saigon, and the Northlake area. Neighborhoods are attempting to balance the goals of economic development and preserving quality of life. Seattle is reviewing the feasibility of incentive zoning in some areas of the city.

Councilmember Chelminiak commented on Bellevue's planning efforts for the Bel-Red Corridor and Overlake area. The City is not proposing to change light industrial and community business uses, but to add residential and retail development as well as transit service. Bellevue is studying the possible impacts of incentive bonuses for developers in the area. Redevelopment plans include enhancing four stream corridors, providing open space and recreational facilities, and potentially creating an arts/cultural district.

Councilmember Licata commented on the dynamics in Seattle in areas where some do not want to mix residential development with light industrial and commercial uses.

King County Budget

Mayor Degginger referred to King County's budget struggles and commented that Bellevue and other cities have taken over County services and/or facilities during recent years.

Councilmember Burgess noted that King County and the cities have common interests including jail planning and general public safety (e.g., mutual aid response networks).

Councilmember Noble described King County's proposal for funding human services. He noted that recommendations from a finance task force in recent years regarding how to address the budget deficit have not moved forward. King County has implemented a tax to help fund additional mental illness drug dependency (MIDD) services, and now wants to change the statute to allow the use of funds to supplement the original budget. Councilmember Burgess suggested that Bellevue and Seattle work together to prevent the change in statute. Council President Conlin noted King County's desire to implement a utilities tax as a source of revenue.

Councilmember Rasmussen questioned how demographics have changed and how this is affecting human services. Mayor Degginger said one in three Bellevue residents were born outside of the United States. Other trends include higher education levels and older citizens.

Councilmember Lee spoke to the issue of diversity. He noted the importance of public safety and strong schools to attract people to the community. One program is Bellevue's community policing offices at Factoria Mall and Crossroads Mall.

Responding to Mayor Degginger, Mr. Sarkozy briefly described Bellevue's Wrap-Around Services program in partnership with schools and human services providers.

Cooperation on Legislative Agenda

Mr. Conlin reviewed preliminary state legislative priorities including King County problem resolution, regional jail planning, MIDD program implementation, and regional transportation.

Councilmember Drago said there is a need for the Bellevue and Seattle City Councils to review Sound Transit's and King County's legislative agendas. She expressed concern regarding transit funding and services.

Mayor Degginger noted Bellevue's concerns regarding equity in the deployment of transit services and transit's cost structure. He would like to work with Seattle to address these issues.

Councilmember Drago expressed frustration with King County's ongoing efforts to reduce mental health and substance abuse services.

Mayor Degginger thanked everyone for coming and encouraged the development of a joint-city interest statement. Council President Conlin said he looks forward to hosting the Bellevue City Council in Seattle in the future.

Mayor Degginger declared the meeting adjourned at 2:07 p.m..

Myrna L. Basich
City Clerk

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