

CITY OF BELLEVUE
CITY COUNCIL

Summary Minutes of Study Session

July 7, 2008
6:00 p.m.

Council Conference Room
Bellevue, Washington

PRESENT: Mayor Degginger, Deputy Mayor Balducci, and Councilmembers Bonincontri, Chelminiak, Lee and Noble

ABSENT: Councilmember Davidson

1. Executive Session

Mayor Degginger called the meeting to order at 6:09 p.m. There was no Executive Session.

2. Study Session

- (a) Update on Light Rail Best Practices Final Committee Report and Draft Comprehensive Plan Amendments

City Manager Steve Sarkozy opened staff's presentation of the Light Rail Best Practices Committee's work.

Jennifer Robertson, Co-Chair of the Light Rail Best Practices Committee, thanked the Council for appointing the committee and noted that in all of the research associated with this effort, no information was found indicating any similar type of citizen forum related to light rail planning. The committee had two members from the Planning Commission, including Ms. Robertson; two members from the Transportation Commission, including committee Co-Chair Joel Glass; as well as two members each from the Parks and Community Services Board and the Environmental Services Board.

Mr. Glass explained that public involvement was key to the process. The Surrey Downs community was highly involved with the committee's work and provided helpful feedback and perspective. Additional citizens commented throughout the process as well. Tours of light rail systems in other jurisdictions were critical to the committee's development of recommendations regarding best practices.

David Knowles, consultant with David Evans and Associates, reviewed the guiding principles of the report to: 1) Connect activity centers, 2) Complement, not diminish, the character and quality of Bellevue, 3) Anticipate impacts and needed mitigation, and 4) Tailor alignment profiles to fit with different areas of the community. The process identified early and ongoing public involvement as an important component. The study determined that to make light rail most effective, the City must follow through on the committee's recommendations in terms of both policy and infrastructure investments.

Ms. Robertson explained that in addition to the Comprehensive Plan amendments recommended by the committee, the committee recommends the creation of a citizen action committee. Studies indicate it was beneficial to have a mitigation contractor during construction to address construction impacts throughout the ongoing process. Mr. Glass commented that in San Jose, trees were planted from the beginning of construction, which resulted in more mature vegetation by the time the rail system was completed.

Mr. Knowles said it is important for the City and Sound Transit to be effective partners in this process. It is important to keep citizen stakeholders involved in the process, to understand the trade-offs associated with key decisions, and to focus on planning and development specifically tailored to Bellevue. He encouraged Councilmembers to tour light rail systems in other jurisdictions.

Michael Kattermann, Senior Planner, said the next steps in the process are for the Planning Commission to provide Comprehensive Plan Amendment (CPA) recommendations to the Council, which will be presented during the July 28 meeting. Council adoption of the CPAs is scheduled for August 4. Maria Koengeter, Senior Planner, said Council will review Sound Transit's draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) upon its release early this fall. The Sound Transit Board is expected to identify a preferred alternative during the first quarter of 2009.

Deputy Mayor Balducci thanked Committee members and staff for dedicating a great deal of time and thought into this effort. The resulting report is an important document that will guide planning going forward.

Councilmember Lee commended the Committee and the process associated with its work. He praised the consideration of neighborhood impacts, and expressed support for the recommendation to create a citizens action committee. He would like to see downtown residents involved in the process.

Councilmember Chelminiak thanked the committee and staff for the report. Responding to Mr. Chelminiak, Mr. Knowles described the San Jose case study, which involved a situation in which the addition of light rail was combined with the mission of revitalizing their downtown. He noted they did not anticipate the slow operating speeds, which was due in part to the state's regulations that treat light rail as a railroad. Mr. Knowles said San Jose officials now feel it would have made more sense to put the system underground, as they are now doing with the

BART system that is being extended from San Francisco. In further response, Mr. Knowles said Bellevue's land use situation is much different than San Jose's with our vibrant, growing, and more densely developed downtown. However, Bellevue's downtown is similar to Portland, which has an at-grade system.

Responding to Councilmember Bonincontri, Ms. Robertson said the recommendation for the creation of a citizen advisory committee envisions a joint effort with Sound Transit. Responsibilities of the committee were not detailed, but they could include evaluation of contractors' performance, recommendations for development bonuses, and monitoring of the construction on behalf of citizens.

Mr. Kattermann noted the study's findings that early and ongoing communication with residents, particularly those most affected by the construction, is key to a positive outcome and aids in the implementation of mitigation measures. Ms. Robertson said it is also important to involve residents in locating and designing stations within their neighborhoods.

Ms. Bonincontri strongly supports public involvement in the process. However, given Sound Transit's role in that area, she wondered how much a citizen committee can influence the process.

Deputy Mayor Balducci observed that TriMet's (Portland) public involvement process was exceptional. It was initiated early in the process, and a citizen committee was involved in reviewing technical findings and designing station locations, among other roles throughout the project. Ms. Balducci would like to see Sound Transit conduct a similar approach but is not certain this will be the case.

Councilmember Noble commended the well written report and said he appreciates the committee addressing issues involving safety and security, as well as station location and design.

Mayor Degginger thanked staff, the Committee, and the Council for embarking on this effort. He thanked Ms. Balducci and Dr. Davidson for their participation with the committee. Mr. Degginger noted that the introduction of light rail will be a significant project for the community. He is pleased with the committee's effectiveness and staff's hard work. Referring to comments regarding a citizen advisory committee, Mr. Degginger said the concept sounds similar to what was done with the Access Downtown project, in which the committee monitored the project along the way. He feels the report is full of valuable information, and that resources devoted toward this effort have been well spent.

Mr. Chelminiak said he is hesitant to form a citizen committee without first clarifying its role and responsibilities. He noted that construction would not begin until 2018. Mr. Chelminiak suggested that neighborhood committees would be a more effective approach for public involvement.

Mr. Lee feels a citizen committee would be beneficial, particularly to plan neighborhood stations and alignment.

Mr. Noble concurs with Ms. Balducci's perspective on the role of a citizen committee. He feels it will be most effective for Bellevue citizens to work directly with Sound Transit, rather than communicating through the City Council.

Ms. Balducci thanked Mr. Knowles for his work.

(b) Potential Parks Voter Initiative

City Manager Steve Sarkozy recalled previous discussions with the Council in consideration of developing a parks ballot measure. On April 7, Council endorsed a preliminary voter initiative package for the 2008 election.

Parks and Community Services Director Patrick Foran said staff is seeking Council direction to confirm the final package and to select a funding mechanism (bond vs. levy lid lift) in order to prepare the necessary ordinance for inclusion on the November 4 ballot. Projects and estimated costs contained in the package have not changed since the last discussion with Council. The package assumes that the voter initiative is a supplement to ongoing Capital Investment Program (CIP) funding. The package emphasizes park development but includes a component for property acquisition. It includes maintenance and operations funding for the capital projects.

Doug Sanner, Parks Fiscal and Quality Control Manager, recalled that the funding package can be achieved through either a bond or levy lid lift. The differences between the two relate to election requirements as well as the timing of the proceeds and the ability to complete projects. Pursuant to previous discussions, the Council asked staff for information on how the two different mechanisms would affect project delivery.

Specific project timing will be determined by Council during a regular budget cycle. However, in general, bonds would achieve the full \$83 million package over the 2009-2015 CIP Plan. With an aggressive project development schedule, the projects could be completed within the seven-year timeframe. With a levy, approximately \$57 million (70 percent) of the package is available within the first seven years. Significant progress could be made on all of the development projects during the 2009-2015 period. The balance of the funding would become available throughout the life of the levy.

Mr. Sanner noted that staff and the Council have studied the funding options for a number of years. Staff recommends a levy lid lift which would include a 20-year time-constrained capital levy that would create a present value equivalent of \$40.5 million, with ongoing M&O costs of \$660,000. The estimated property tax impact for the first year is 12 cents per \$1,000 assessed valuation, or \$71 annually for a typical home. The City's property tax rate is currently \$.93 per \$1,000 AV. A levy lid lift will increase it temporarily to \$1.05 for the first year. However, with regular growth in assessed valuation, the property tax rate will decrease.

A copy of the ballot measure package is included in the meeting packet. The City's banked capacity has grown as the Council chose to not increase property taxes for several years. If the City does not take action to raise the highest lawful levy lid lift from \$1.21 per \$1,000 AV, its banked capacity will begin to diminish. The City currently has approximately \$9 million in general property tax banked capacity, and this levy would consume \$4 million of that amount unless it is protected by lifting the lid.

Staff's recommendation for a levy lid lift is based on: 1) Produces the same package as a bond measure for almost the same cost to citizens, 2) A single issue ballot combining capital and operations funding eliminates confusion, 3) Levy funding works well with the identified project mix, and 4) Levy lid lift allows a majority of citizens to approve the measure and provides the highest probability of success at the polls.

Mr. Sanner reviewed the next steps for preparing a ballot measure. Council will be asked to approve an election ordinance on July 21, in order to meet King County's August 12 deadline for the submission of materials.

Responding to Councilmember Noble, Mr. Sanner confirmed that the current parks bond was passed in 1988, and it was a \$68 million acquisition and development package. The City made its last payment this year. The proposed measure would replace this expiring tax with a lower tax rate.

Responding to Deputy Mayor Balducci, Mr. Foran said current City staff could not complete all of the projects over the next CIP Plan. However, the balance of funding is largely related to acquisitions, which could occur at any time.

Staff responded to additional brief questions of clarification.

Mayor Degginger noted Council consensus to proceed with the levy lid lift approach.

→ Councilmember Chelminiak moved to initiate the voter pamphlet process at this time, prior to adopting the election ordinance. Ms. Balducci seconded the motion.

→ The motion to initiate the process of selecting committees to write the Pro and Con statements for the voter pamphlet carried by a vote of 6-0.

(c) Results of North/East Cities Committee (NECC) Jail Feasibility Study - Phase 1 Recommendations

Deputy Mayor Balducci noted her employment with the King County jail system and recused herself from participating in the discussion of the jail study. She left the table at 7:27 p.m.

Diane Carlson, Director of Intergovernmental Relations, recalled that the King County jail contract expires in 2012, highlighting the need to plan for meeting jail bed needs. Cities have been working together over the past three years to evaluate projected bed needs. North/East cities, including Seattle, need approximately 640 beds within the next 20 years. South cities are also working together, and they collectively need 600-800 beds. South cities are moving forward with a feasibility analysis to plan for a new jail facility in the south end.

Ms. Carlson noted a summary of the feasibility study's Phase I recommendations included in the meeting packet. Carter Goble Lee, the consultants, evaluated the basic spatial program that would be needed to accommodate three jail sizes (200, 440, and 640 beds). The study includes site assumptions, site selection criteria, basic construction costs, basic operating costs, and per diem costs based on facility size. Per diem costs for the three options are summarized on page SS 2-49 of the meeting packet and are as follows: 1) 200-bed scenario provides a per diem cost of \$317.28, 2) 440-bed scenario provides \$216.37 per diem cost, and 3) 640-bed jail results in \$185.23 per diem rate. Ms. Carlson said Phase II work will develop a more detailed cost estimate and preliminary architectural drawings for the 640-bed option.

Responding to Councilmember Noble, Ms. Carlson said the Phase II review will look at potential sites for a 640-bed facility. Seattle has identified four sites under consideration, and other cities will be asked to identify potential sites as well. Phase II work could result in the identification of alternatives to be analyzed for an environmental impact statement.

Responding to Councilmember Chelminiak, Ms. Carlson said per diem costs are driven primarily by required staffing levels.

Mayor Degginger said he attended the consultants' presentation and had a number of questions, some still remaining, about the study's assumptions and cost estimates.

Responding to Councilmember Lee, Ms. Carlson said the 640 bed estimate represents a 20-year need for the 22 North/East King County cities. The 200-bed scenario excludes Seattle. Mr. Lee expressed support for the larger facility.

Mr. Chelminiak favors the larger facility as well.

Mayor Degginger commented that all alternatives for a regional jail facility must be identified soon in order to meet cities' planning demands.

Mayor Degginger noted general consensus to move forward with further analysis of the 640-bed facility option.

Deputy Mayor Balducci returned to the table at 7:42 p.m.

3. Council Business and New Initiatives [Regular Session Agenda Item 6]

Councilmember Lee noted that Parky Forrester, who among other activities was involved with the Bellevue Sister Cities Association, passed away recently just shy of her 103rd birthday. The Council concurred with sending a letter of condolence to her family.

Councilmember Noble attended a conference hosted by the Eastside Human Services Alliance and its north-county counterpart. He noted that King County is again talking about decreasing its role in providing human services. As a new initiative, Mr. Noble proposed directing staff to review the Council's interest statement on human services and to identify any changes related to King County's position.

Mayor Degginger suggested scheduling a Study Session discussion to receive a presentation of King County's proposed direction. The Council concurred with this request to staff.

Councilmember Lee met with the president of the Bellevue Sister Cities Association to follow up on the recent trip to Hualien and Yao.

Deputy Mayor Balducci attended the 24-Hour Relay Challenge event, in which 170 teams participated this year, and the 4th of July celebration at Downtown Park.

Councilmember Bonincontri attended the opening of the Kensington Square transitional housing project. Bellevue provided support for the project through its involvement with A Regional Coalition for Housing (ARCH). She attended the 24-Hour Relay Challenge event and the 4th of July celebration. Ms. Bonincontri attended the JAG (Jail Advisory Group) meeting, as well as the dinner for the visiting Dubai delegation along with Councilmembers Chelminiak and Lee.

Councilmember Chelminiak attended a Prosperity Partnership meeting in Vancouver, Washington, and the 4th of July celebration in Downtown Park.

Mayor Degginger attended the U.S. Conference of Mayors meeting. He and Councilmember Bonincontri attended the Planning Commission's retreat. Mr. Degginger attended the Cascade Water Alliance Board meeting.

At 8:00 p.m., Mayor Degginger declared recess to the Regular Session.

Myrna L. Basich
City Clerk

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