

CITY OF BELLEVUE
CITY COUNCIL

Summary Minutes of Study Session

September 15, 2008
6:00 p.m.

Council Conference Room
Bellevue, Washington

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

ABSENT: Deputy Mayor Balducci

1. Executive Session

Councilmember Chelminiak called the meeting to order at 6:02 p.m. and declared recess to Executive Session for approximately 10 minutes to discuss one item of pending litigation.

The meeting resumed at 6:23 p.m., with Mayor Degginger presiding.

2. Study Session

- (a) Environmental Stewardship Initiative – Proposed Climate Action Plan for Municipal Operations

City Manager Steve Sarkozy explained that addressing greenhouse gas emissions is one component of the City's ongoing Environmental Stewardship Initiative, as directed by the City Council.

Sheida Sahandy, Assistant to the City Manager, recalled that the Council adopted Resolution No. 7517 in February 2007 and Resolution No. 7614 in August 2007, which establish objectives for reducing greenhouse gas emissions. Staff measured the community and municipal greenhouse gas emissions for 2001 and 2006, and presented this data to the Council in June of this year. The purpose of tonight's discussion is to review the Proposed Climate Action Plan for Municipal Operations and to discuss how to move forward.

Ms. Sahandy noted that language included in the Resolutions adopted by the Council refer to the Kyoto Protocol targets for reducing global warming pollution. Staff is seeking clarification on

whether the Council would like to proceed with the same or different targets for the community and municipal operations.

Amy Shatzkin, ICLEI-Local Governments for Sustainability, reviewed municipal targets adopted by Bellevue and other jurisdictions. She noted that typically a jurisdiction adopts the same targets for both the community and municipal operations. However, in some cases jurisdictions adopt more stringent targets for municipal operations because they have greater control in that area. Washington Executive Order 07-02 approved last year addresses reducing emissions through government policies, efficient market-based systems, allowance trading, and incentives. ICLEI recommends a minimum target of reducing municipal operations emissions to 7 percent below 1990 levels by 2012.

The Municipal Climate Action Plan provides order of magnitude information, and projections for energy and financial savings represent conservative estimates. The financial analysis focuses on new capital costs going forward. The MCAP analyzed emissions for three groups: 1) Business as usual, 2) New measures of lower complexity, and 3) New measures of higher complexity.

Responding to Councilmember Davidson, staff clarified that emissions data reported for 2001 and 2006 reflects actual measurements. Numbers presented for other years are either forecasts or backcast projections.

Ms. Sahandy said staff's recommended next steps are to confirm the municipal target, establish the decision process, and identify key performance indicators.

Responding to Councilmember Davidson, Ms. Shatzkin said emission projections are based on assumptions about future growth in municipal operations. Dr. Davidson wondered whether reducing emissions to 7 percent below 1990 levels is a realistic and achievable goal, given continued growth within urban areas as dictated by the State Growth Management Act.

Ms. Sahandy acknowledged that the plan is slightly biased against growing communities because the targets are based on aggregate emissions rather than a per capita basis. However, the intent of the Kyoto Protocol is to reduce aggregate world pollution despite population growth.

Councilmember Chelminiak opined that jurisdictions should receive investments that correlate with their activities to accept growth from regional sources.

Responding to Councilmember Bonincontri, Ms. Shatzkin noted that a number of cities including Portland, Boulder, and Austin have been successful in reducing greenhouse gas emissions while experiencing considerable growth.

Councilmember Bonincontri feels that Bellevue is capable of achieving the suggested reduction of emissions to 7 percent below 1990 levels by 2012, and that it is the right thing to do.

Councilmember Lee expressed support for the program, as well as reluctance to commit to targets without concrete information on the cost of achieving the goals and whether the City has the resources for such a program.

Responding to Mayor Degginger, Mr. Sarkozy explained that the initiative will be integrated into the City's budget process, based on Council's input tonight. The Council will establish the decision criteria to be used which may include cost effectiveness, the effectiveness of reducing emissions, and the feasibility of meeting targets, among other criteria.

Mr. Chelminiak is comfortable with the emissions target of 7 percent below 1990 levels. Councilmember Noble concurred.

Mayor Degginger endorsed the need to address greenhouse gas emissions.

Responding to Councilmember Bonincontri, Ms. Sahandy reviewed in greater detail the proposed decision criteria related to ways to reduce carbon dioxide. As one example, if cost is a top priority, purchasing green power is the most effective way to reduce emissions for the least cost.

Responding to Mayor Degginger, Ms. Shatzkin said the benefits of vegetation are recognized. ICLEI is working to quantify the benefit in reducing carbon dioxide emissions from activities such as planting trees.

Dr. Davidson commented that the 7 percent target appears to be arbitrary. He is concerned about whether Bellevue's past and ongoing practices, including those to preserve and create vegetation, will be given consideration. He supports the goal to reduce carbon dioxide emissions, but is unsure as to how that should and can be done.

Mr. Chelminiak wants to be sure that emission-reducing measures are not implemented without first determining their benefit, as well as whether their implementation might have unintended consequences or conflicts with other priorities. Acknowledging that purchasing green power is effective at reducing greenhouse gases, he questioned what the total cost could be to the City of Bellevue, as well as the feasibility and effectiveness of that and other measures.

Mr. Noble shares Mr. Lee's concern about whether emissions can be reduced in a cost effective manner. Mr. Noble said that the certainty and magnitude of carbon dioxide reduction should be a high priority in determining a course of action. He feels that reducing emissions to desirable levels is important. He is less concerned, however, about meeting a goal by a specific date.

Mr. Lee clarified his position that he is supportive of reducing emissions only if the measures are effective and the cost is reasonable.

Responding to Dr. Davidson, Ms. Sahandy said the effectiveness of actions will be measured through periodic inventories of carbon dioxide emissions. She proposes that the Council develop additional performance indicators as well.

(b) Light Rail Best Practices

Mr. Sarkozy explained that staff is asking the Council to authorize the Mayor to sign the letter to Sound Transit transmitting the Light Rail Best Practices Committee's report, including the list of the City's expectations of Sound Transit and the Council-adopted Comprehensive Plan light rail transit policy amendments.

Planning Director Dan Stroh noted revisions to the draft letter following previous discussions with the Council.

Councilmember Noble spoke in favor of a suggested revision to the letter to indicate that the input is from both the City Council and the community.

Mayor Degginger noted Council consensus in support of the letter to Sound Transit, as revised by Council's discussion.

Mr. Sarkozy thanked the community for their involvement in this process.

(c) SR 520 Tolling and Pricing Activities and Early Travel Analysis

Kim Becklund, Transportation Policy Advisor, requested Council input regarding the proposed letter to the SR 520 Tolling Committee, provided in the desk packet.

Councilmember Davidson said he disagrees with tolling prior to construction of the bridge. He questioned the certainty of whether the SR 520 replacement bridge will be completed, and if so, when.

Mayor Degginger noted that the letter expresses support for early tolling only if it will result in earlier completion of the bridge and if it will allow for lower toll rates.

Ms. Becklund said the bridge is scheduled for partial completion and use by 2014, and to be fully completed by 2016.

Councilmember Chelminiak feels that tolls should be focused on funding the bridge and not on congestion management, which should be approached on a regional level.

Councilmember Noble agrees that the primary purpose of tolls should be construction of the new bridge. However, it is inevitable that tolls will influence congestion management indirectly by altering traffic patterns.

Councilmember Lee commented that if the purpose of the tolls is to fund replacement of the bridge, early tolling should be implemented to expedite the collection of revenue.

Councilmember Bonincontri suggested clarifying Item 4 regarding the future use of tolling revenues or congestion pricing. She feels the two issues should be analyzed and considered separately.

Mr. Noble said early tolling makes sense, rather than borrowing money now to construct the bridge and then using future tolling collections to repay the loan and its interest. He noted that the state legislature has decided that tolls will be used.

Mr. Chelminiak shares Dr. Davidson's concerns about early tolling. He suggested revising the draft letter to state that early tolling is acceptable only if it will result in significantly earlier completion of the project.

Mayor Degginger commented that the state legislature is firm in its position that delaying tolls until the bridge is completed will result in unreasonably high tolls, due to the enormous cost of the bridge replacement project.

Mr. Degginger noted Council consensus supporting the changes suggested in this discussion.

Ms. Becklund referred the Council to additional information provided in the desk packet regarding the tolling committee's efforts to solicit public input on a number of scenarios, including six new scenarios to be released. A number of public forums are scheduled for October, and release of the final analysis on the six added scenarios is slated for November 10.

Councilmember Lee stated that in general he does not support tolling as a measure for generating revenue. However, he understands that this is a necessary pragmatic approach given the need for the project and the lack of funding.

3. Council Business [Regular Session Agenda Item 6]

Councilmember Lee traveled to Dalian, China with the Mayor to sign an agreement related to economic development principles.

Councilmember Chelminiak attended meetings of the State Building Code Council and the Economic Development District (King, Kitsap, Pierce and Snohomish Counties).

Councilmember Bonincontri attended the Growth Management Policy Board meeting and the Muslim-Americans of Puget Sound celebration in Redmond.

Dr. Davidson attended an event at the Eastside Torah Center.

Mayor Degginger commented on his trip to China, and noted that two key issues for the City of Dalian are intellectual property protection and environmental stewardship. Dalian has a population of approximately 6 million residents. It is a major port that is interested in attracting cruise ship business as well.

At 7:52 p.m., Mayor Degginger declared recess to the Regular Session.

Myrna L. Basich
City Clerk

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