

CITY OF BELLEVUE  
CITY COUNCIL

Summary Minutes of Study Session

December 1, 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 Davidson opened the meeting at 6:01 p.m. and declared recess to Executive Session for approximately 20 minutes to discuss one item of labor negotiations.

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

2. Study Session

(a) Update on Downtown Circulator and Rapid Ride Programs

City Manager Steve Sarkozy opened staff's report on the Downtown Circulator and Rapid Ride programs.

Bernard van de Kamp, Transportation Regional Projects Manager, recalled Council direction provided to staff in January regarding the Downtown Circulator service. Staff has worked with King County Metro to refine the service proposal and to update cost estimates incorporating Council's requested changes. Staff is seeking to determine whether the Council would like to enter into a partnership with King County Metro for both the Downtown Circulator project and the Rapid Ride program, which provides service between downtown Bellevue, the Crossroads and Overlake areas, and downtown Redmond.

Maria Koengeter, Senior Planner, recalled that in October 2007, the City submitted a Downtown Circulator proposal based on three vehicles, fare-free service, and 10-minute service intervals. The estimated cost for five years was \$1.8 million. Service is to start in 2010 and estimated ridership is 550 riders per day, or 175,500 annually. In January 2008, Metro's response indicated that three vehicles would provide 12- to 15-minute headways. The cost of adding a fourth vehicle was estimated at \$654,000 over five years.

The November 2008 updated total cost estimate, based on annual five percent cost increases, is \$9 million over five years. Of this, the City's cost is \$3 million, and Metro's share is \$6 million. The City's payments would not begin until 2011, after the service has been implemented. The City's cost is based on 550 daily riders. However, the final cost will be determined by actual ridership.

Ms. Koengeter described plans for branding the vehicles, bus stops and signage. She reviewed route options, performance requirements, and the terms of the agreement. Either party may terminate the agreement if the other party fails to fulfill its obligations. Metro may terminate the program after three years if the service does not meet expected performance requirements and if modifications for an alternate service cannot be agreed upon by the parties.

Ms. Koengeter reviewed plans for the Rapid Ride service, which would connect downtown Bellevue and downtown Redmond via the Crossroads and Overlake areas. Next steps are to finalize facilities designs for stations and shelters in 2009. In 2010, the program will fabricate and install facilities and power connections to stations, finalize the traffic operations plan, and install transit signal priority (TSP) equipment.

Responding to Councilmember Noble, staff described Metro's calculation of revenue hours as a measurement tool for projecting ridership and generating fare estimates.

Responding to Councilmember Bonincontri, Ms. Koengeter explained that the performance measures are an average for all routes within the East Subarea.

Responding to Mayor Degginger, Mr. Koengeter said Metro anticipates that the Downtown Circulator service will perform similar to the ride-free service in Issaquah. The performance of Bellevue's system will be evaluated after three years to determine whether it is meeting the performance requirements outlined in the agreement.

Responding to Dr. Davidson, Ms. Koengeter said Metro proposes extending the Rapid Ride route throughout downtown Bellevue as an alternative to the separate Downtown Circulator project, which will be relatively more costly to implement. The Rapid Ride extended service would not be fare-free but would provide a longer span of service.

Mayor Degginger recalled that the Council has been considering a Downtown Circulator for some time now. He would like to give it a try, and is pleased that Metro will cover a majority of the costs. Mr. Degginger feels this type of service will benefit downtown users.

Mr. Noble expressed support for the Downtown Circulator proposal. Responding to Mr. Noble, Mr. van de Kamp said the larger buses are to be used for the Rapid Ride service because of the higher ridership levels that are expected. This service extends throughout Seattle as well as the Eastside.

Ms. Bonincontri expressed a preference for the Downtown Circulator program, which could be implemented sooner (2010) than the Rapid Ride option. She encouraged greater flexibility in the performance requirements in that they be based more closely on the performance of the Issaquah downtown service than on Metro's overall system standards for the East Subarea.

Responding to Dr. Davidson, Mr. van de Kamp indicated that the proposed agreement allows for future changes in the routing structure of the services.

Mayor Degginger noted a Council consensus to proceed with action on agreements for both the Downtown Circulator project and Rapid Ride service on the December 8 Consent Calendar.

(b) Neighborhood Livability Action Agenda

Planning Director Dan Stroh opened staff's presentation regarding the Neighborhood Fitness program and Neighborhood Character Phase Two activities.

Cheryl Kuhn, Neighborhood Outreach Manager, reviewed the Neighborhood Livability Action Agenda approved by the Council in 2006 to address property neglect, redevelopment and its impacts on neighborhood character, and neighborhood pedestrian infrastructure. Activities included a survey of homes, proactive Code Compliance enforcement, rodent control, community building and education, and enhanced partnerships and volunteerism. The efforts have resulted in improved neighborhood appearance, an expanded understanding of codes and standards, and stronger relationships within neighborhoods and between residents and the City.

Staff proposes continued neighborhood fitness events and partnerships, monitoring of initial target areas reflecting property neglect and vacant properties, and developing mechanisms for addressing neighborhood quality of life issues (e.g., graffiti).

Mayor Degginger recalled Council's ongoing concerns regarding shopping carts abandoned along streets, especially along 156<sup>th</sup> Avenue in the Crossroads area.

Ms. Kuhn explained that the Council's \$25,000 allocation will allow staff to continue to work with neighborhoods to boost community building activities as well as events and celebrations.

Councilmembers expressed support for staff's work with the community.

Responding to Councilmember Chelminiak, Ms. Kuhn said the City received requests from residents in Surrey Downs and Woodridge this summer. Staff was unable to conduct a full fitness effort in these instances, but they were able to help residents plan and implement their own clean-up efforts. In further response, Ms. Kuhn said funding for the program falls under the Neighborhood Investment Strategy, which targets but is not limited to pre-1970 constructed neighborhoods.

Mr. Chelminiak would like to continue to focus on areas identified with property neglect issues in the initial survey of the community. However, he thinks it is equally important to engage residents in neighborhood building and involvement activities.

Mayor Degginger concurred and encouraged an enhanced focus on neighborhood building activities with the recent \$25,000 annual allocation to the program. He is pleased with the efforts and outcomes of this program.

Ms. Kuhn moved to a presentation on the Neighborhood Character component of the Neighborhood Livability Action Agenda. Phase One of this initiative was conducted in 2007, and staff is ready to implement Phase Two. Both phases are designed to address major impacts of neighborhood redevelopment including: 1) Loss of trees and greenscape, 2) Redeveloped houses of incompatible size and scale, and 3) Construction impacts.

Vicki Orrico, Planning Commission Chair, described the three guiding principles followed in reviewing the issue of neighborhood redevelopment:

- Balancing the interests of all property owners.
- Developing targeted solutions that will resolve specific issues of concern without impeding redevelopment.
- Maintaining flexibility to meet a wide variety of situations and to provide reasonable alternatives when special circumstances arise.

Ms. Kuhn reviewed that Phase One Code amendments were adopted in December 2007 and included a 30-percent tree retention requirement for redeveloped lots, 50-percent greenscape requirement in the front yard setback, a change in the building height measurement method, screening or removing construction debris, complying with temporary lodging regulations, posting information signs, and ensuring that portable carports are not visible from the street.

Ms. Kuhn said the purpose of tonight's presentation is to review recommendations for Phase Two, and to request Council direction on proceeding to develop additional Code amendments.

Ms. Kuhn said the Planning Commission recommends that redevelopment issues be considered within the context of the Environmental Stewardship Initiative. In July, the Commission expressed concerns regarding Planned Unit Developments (PUDs) including setback issues and neighborhood compatibility, and proposed an accessory structure proportional requirement. An additional recommendation was to establish minimum setback requirements from all property lines for guest cottages. At that time, the City Council directed the Commission to refer the PUD and accessory structure issues to the Innovative Housing Initiative.

Also at that time, the Commission recommended: 1) Taking no action on lot assembly, 2) Amending the Code to increase the tree retention requirement for subdivisions from 15 percent to 30 percent, 3) Revising remodeling construction hours, 4) Addressing the impacts of vacant properties, and 5) Addressing the impacts of mechanical equipment. Council provided no

additional direction on these issues but did inquire about the placement of heating and air conditioning equipment on corner lots. The Commission responded that HVAC equipment would be placed in the back yard or in the only side yard with sound screening. Also in July, the Commission recommended that the Council adopt development standards for large residential buildings pertaining to the calculation of floor-area ratios (FAR) for new single family homes, minimum setbacks, and incorporating either daylight plane or second story step-back requirements.

Ms. Kuhn said the Planning Commission is seeking Council direction on tree retention requirements for subdivisions, construction hours, vacant properties, the placement of HVAC equipment for new homes and large additions, reducing the lifespan of building permits to two years, and adopting development standards for homes exceeding 0.5 FAR.

Responding to Dr. Davidson, City Manager Steve Sarkozy said there is no specific timeline for addressing these issues and adopting Code amendments. However, staff recommends moving forward as quickly as possible. Dr. Davidson noted comments received from developers and said he would like sufficient time to review and consider this input.

Mr. Stroh said any regulatory changes will go through the normal comprehensive Land Use Code amendment process. A public hearing on the issues will be held before the Planning Commission before returning to the Council with final recommendations.

Mr. Chelminiak wants to ensure that HVAC equipment is placed so that it has minimal impact on a neighbor and primary impact on the homeowner installing the equipment. Ms. Orrico confirmed the Commission's intent of minimizing the adverse effects on neighbors as well.

Mr. Chelminiak would like additional review and consideration of the 30-percent tree retention issue, as well as the implications of building height and FAR regulations.

Responding to Mr. Degginger, Ms. Orrico said the Planning Commission spent considerable time discussing the roof height and FAR issues. She noted that the Commission focused on FAR requirements versus building heights because complaints from residents were related to the loss of light and privacy due to the size and scale of redeveloped structures. Addressing FAR implications appeared to be the best way to resolve residents' concerns. An approach focused on building heights affects a relatively small number of properties presenting a problem, while penalizing a number of other properties that are not causing a problem.

Mr. Chelminiak said he does not understand how building height requirements would not have a greater impact in addressing the issue of blocking daylight for homes adjacent to redeveloped properties. He noted that surrounding cities have 30-foot height requirements for single-family homes. He suggested that homes wanting to exceed this height should consider building a portion of the square footage underground.

Mr. Stroh explained that Bellevue measures building height differently from some jurisdictions which set a maximum height for the roof ridge instead of the roof peak. The other component discussed by the Planning Commission was whether an absolute building height should be established, or whether FAR should be used as a threshold that would trigger additional consideration of the structural bulk and daylight blocking issues.

Mayor Degginger suggested that the Planning Commission present a number of alternatives regarding height and FAR for public comment at its public hearing.

Councilmember Noble agreed with the suggestion for further study and the development of alternatives on these issues.

Mayor Degginger noted Council consensus regarding tree retention requirements, the placement of HVAC equipment, reducing the term of building permits, and the majority of the recommendations with the exception of the building height/FAR dilemma.

Ms. Orrico commented that the Planning Commission has conducted a number of public meetings on all of the issues and has received a considerable amount of public input.

Councilmember Chelminiak clarified that the Council is committed to encouraging redevelopment in neighborhoods, and is also interested in reducing adverse impacts for existing residents. Mr. Chelminiak feels it is not the role of the Council to make judgments regarding the appropriate size for an individual's home, which is why he favors a focus on building heights and their impacts on neighbors, rather than on the size of redeveloped structures.

Ms. Orrico said a public hearing will help in the additional review and development of a final recommendation on building height and the approach to FAR requirements.

At 7:58 p.m., Mayor Degginger declared recess to the Regular Session.

Myrna L. Basich  
City Clerk

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