

CITY OF BELLEVUE
CITY COUNCIL

Summary Minutes of Study Session

November 20, 2006
6:00 p.m.

Council Conference Room
Bellevue, Washington

PRESENT: Deputy Mayor Chelminiak, and Councilmembers Balducci, Davidson, Lee, Marshall, and Noble

ABSENT: Mayor Degginger

1. Executive Session

Deputy Mayor Chelminiak called the meeting to order at 6:01 p.m. There was no Executive Session.

2. Study Session

(a) Issaquah School District Impact Fees

Deputy City Manager Brad Miyake opened discussion regarding Issaquah School District impact fees. Council action on impact fees is scheduled for December 4.

Legal Planner Lesa Hutnak recalled that the Issaquah School District impact fee ordinance requires that the impact fee schedule be reviewed and updated annually by Council based on the District's Capital Facilities Plan. Because the District does not have permitting authority, jurisdictions within the District's boundaries contribute funds through impact fees. In July, staff received a copy of the Capital Facilities Plan and a request from the District to modify the fee schedule, which reflects increases in both single-family and multifamily impact fees. The fees increase from \$5,115 to \$6,136 for single-family units and from \$804 to \$1,264 for multifamily units. The increase is due in part to the high cost of land needed for the construction of new schools as well as increasing construction costs.

Staff recommends Council adoption of the ordinance modifying the fee schedule to collect the impact fees proposed for 2007. Ms. Hutnak introduced Steve Crawford from Issaquah School

District to answer any questions. Mr. Crawford noted that the proposed impact fees are lower than they were in 1998.

Responding to Dr. Davidson, Mr. Crawford said the lowest impact fees were in 2002 with a rate of \$3,924 for a single-family unit. Dr. Davidson noted his longstanding reluctance to support impact fees.

Responding to Councilmember Balducci, Mr. Crawford said the capital plan includes a new elementary school and a new middle school. Ms. Balducci noted that Bellevue residents attend Issaquah schools. She will support the proposed impact fees.

Councilmember Lee said he is uncomfortable with impact fees, how they are calculated, and the fact that the City essentially has no choice in the matter.

Responding to Mr. Lee, Mr. Crawford said the formula used to set impact fees was established by King County. The Issaquah School District does not qualify for state matching funds. The recent addition to Sunset Elementary School, which is in Bellevue, was completed at a cost of \$3.1 million.

Councilmember Marshall said she lives in the Issaquah School District, which often had unsuccessful bond measures before moving to the impact fee approach.

Councilmember Noble, a former Bellevue School Board Member, expressed support for the impact fee schedule.

(b) Response to Sound Transit East Link Initial Route and Station Location Evaluation

Transportation Director Goran Sparrman said staff is seeking final Council direction regarding the draft letter to Sound Transit commenting on East Link project alternatives to be studied as part of the DEIS (Draft Environmental Impact Statement) process. [The letter is provided in Council's desk packet.] Council action is scheduled for December, and the Sound Transit Board is scheduled to take action on December 12. Mr. Sparrman noted the letter is intended to incorporate Council's direction and comments during ongoing discussions of the project. He said Transportation staff is beginning to work more closely with Land Use/Planning staff to evaluate proposed alignments.

Bernard van de Kamp, Transportation Regional Projects Manager, recalled that Council's High Capacity Interest Statement adopted in July 2005 reflects an interest in maximizing the benefit of a HCT system, protecting neighborhoods, enhancing mobility, contributing to economic development, and maintaining consistency with the City's land use and transportation plans. In July 2006, Council expressed a technology preference for light rail serving the Eastside. In September, Council sent a letter to Sound Transit commenting on the project scope, benefits, and potential adverse impacts.

Mr. van de Kamp reviewed Council's interest in evaluating for Segment B the options using Bellevue Way (B1), Bellevue Way/112th Avenue SE at-grade (B2-A), and BNSF Railroad ROW/114th Avenue SE (B7). Bellevue would like no further consideration of alternatives B4 and B5 (118th Avenue SE), B2-E (Bellevue Way aerial system), and B3 and B6 (SE 8th Street crossovers).

For Segment C, Bellevue supports further evaluation of tunnel options using Bellevue Way (C1-T), 106th Avenue NE (C2-T), and 108th Avenue NE (C3-T) as well as the elevated option using 112th Avenue NE (C7-E). Bellevue would like no further consideration of at-grade option C4-A (110th and 108th Avenues NE) and elevated option C8-E (112th Avenue to 4th Street with a station outside City Hall).

For Segment D, Bellevue supports further evaluation of alignments along NE 16th Street (D2-A, D2-E, D3). Bellevue wants no further consideration of options D5 (SR 520 alignment) and D1/D4 (Bel-Red Road alignment). Alternatives using Bel-Red Road restrict redevelopment potential as well as the option for more than one station in the area.

Bellevue supports extending the initial East Link line to downtown Redmond. In terms of a maintenance base location, Bellevue favors further evaluation of options M5 (Redmond), M1 (116th Street), and M2 (BNSF ROW). Bellevue would like no further consideration of options M3 (SR 520) and M4 (136th Street), which conflict with potential redevelopment of the Bel-Red corridor.

The Sound Transit Board is having a workshop on November 30 to discuss Sound Transit Phase 2 planning. Council action to finalize the comment letter to Sound Transit is scheduled for December 4, and the Sound Transit Board is scheduled to select alternatives for EIS study on December 14. Completion of the draft EIS is anticipated in Spring 2008.

Responding to Dr. Davidson, Mr. van de Kamp explained that Mercer Slough is the largest wetland on Lake Washington and proposed alignment of light rail over the slough triggers critical areas and shoreline regulatory issues. Due to the sensitivity of the area, construction would be more complicated and lengthy as well. Private parcels and non-wetlands strips along Bellevue Way provide a better opportunity for placing light rail.

Councilmember Noble suggested retaining the 118th Avenue SE options (B4 and B5) for environmental evaluation. Mrs. Marshall concurred. She noted the complexities surrounding the future of the BNSF ROW and feels 118th Avenue SE provides another alternative in that general area for study.

Referring to the draft letter, Ms. Balducci suggested organizing the letter by issues and/or principles and then listing the benefits and impacts to be avoided for each. She further suggested a separate paragraph reiterating Bellevue's concerns about specific neighborhood impacts (e.g., noise, quality of life, property takings). She expressed concern that private property impacts are considered along with environmental impacts.

Responding to Mr. Lee, Mr. van de Kamp clarified that Sound Transit follows specific criteria dictating when tunneling is appropriate. Mr. Lee expressed concern about the importance of mitigating neighborhood impacts and utilizing Bellevue's criteria as well as Sound Transit's criteria for such decisions. Councilmember Noble feels tunneling would help to mitigate noise impacts and should be encouraged along any of the western alignment options.

Mrs. Marshall agreed with Ms. Balducci's suggestion to organize the letter by issues instead of providing a chronological summary of Bellevue's involvement in Sound Transit planning. She suggested attaching the March 8 letter from Bellevue and Redmond to the Sound Transit Board rather than summarizing it. Mrs. Marshall further noted that while tunnels would be a strong asset upon completion, the construction of tunnels would be extremely disruptive to the community.

Deputy Mayor Chelminiak concurred with Mr. Noble's logic to retain consideration of a 118th Avenue SE alignment given the uncertainty of the BNSF ROW. He is interested in further consideration of a tunnel north into downtown from the Y at Bellevue Way and 112th Avenue SE, although he understands the higher expense associated with this option. Mr. Chelminiak expressed support for a station south of Main Street, if the alignment is along Bellevue Way.

Mr. Lee feels it is important to maintain and enhance pedestrian mobility in the downtown, and to avoid pedestrian impacts with the placement of a light rail system.

Mr. Chelminiak summarized Council's input regarding Segment B, which indicates an interest in evaluating options involving east, central, and west alternative routes. Council is not interested in the SE 8th Street crossover. Council would like further evaluation of a tunnel option beginning at the Y (Bellevue Way and 112th Avenue SE) and continuing north into downtown. Mr. Sparrman said staff will add Mr. Chelminiak's suggestion for a station south of Main Street as well.

Moving to discussion of Segment C, Mr. Noble said the possibility of one station in downtown Bellevue is not practical and not conducive to encouraging ridership. He favors keeping option C1 for EIS evaluation because it is the only one with the potential for at least two downtown stations. Mr. Noble does not see a reason for considering option C2 because it provides a longer ride with no station. He also suggests no further study of option C7 (112th Avenue NE) because it is not centrally located within the downtown.

Responding to Mr. Lee, Mr. van de Kamp said most people are willing to walk 2,000 feet (roughly four city blocks) to a transit station.

Mrs. Marshall agrees with Mr. Noble about the need for two downtown stations and the suggestion to eliminate options C2 and C7 from further consideration. She feels it is important to place a station near or at the existing Transit Center to expedite transfers between buses and light rail.

Mr. Chelminiak agrees with eliminating C7 from EIS study because it does not serve the downtown. He favors keeping C2 for further study because it provides the turn that allows the system to exit to the BNSF ROW. He also favors further study of C3 because it provides the option for traveling north to NE 12th Street.

Ms. Balducci supports further evaluation of C2 if one or two downtown stations could be provided. She suggested advocating for studying the alternatives that make the most sense for Bellevue, without being influenced by costs at this point.

Staff responded to additional questions of clarification.

Deputy Mayor Chelminiak summarized Council's interest in eliminating further study of option C7, as well as agreement with staff to eliminate option C8-E.

Responding to Ms. Balducci regarding Segment D, Mr. Chelminiak said the Bel-Red Corridor Study Committee received a presentation regarding potential routes through the area. Mr. Sparman said the three primary land use alternatives currently being analyzed as part of the DEIS process contemplate an alignment roughly along NE 16th Street. However the study committee has not taken an official position regarding a preferred alignment.

Staff responded to brief questions of clarification.

Regarding the letter to Sound Transit, Deputy Mayor Chelminiak would like to include a summary of the volume of public comments received by the City and the nature of their comments and concerns.

Deputy Mayor Chelminiak expressed support for Segment A, west of Lake Washington, and stated his position that the Seattle Subarea should pay for that segment.

- (c) North East King County Regional Public Safety Communications Center (NORCOM) Initiative Update – Review of Estimated Budget and User Fees

[Moved to Regular Session, Agenda Item 12(a).]

At 7:55 p.m., Deputy Mayor Chelminiak declared recess to the Regular Session following a five-minute break.

Myrna L. Basich
City Clerk

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