

CITY OF BELLEVUE
BELLEVUE PLANNING COMMISSION
MEETING MINUTES

February 11, 2004
7:00 p.m.

Bellevue City Hall
City Council Conference Room

COMMISSIONERS PRESENT: Vice-Chair Lynde, Commissioners Bach, Bonincontri, Chelminiak, Mathews, Robertson

COMMISSIONERS ABSENT: Chair Schiring

STAFF PRESENT: Kathleen Burgess, Nicholas Matz, Department of Planning and Community Development; Kevin McDonald, Department of Transportation; Pam Maloney, Utilities Department

GUEST SPEAKERS: None

RECORDING SECRETARY: Gerry Lindsay

1. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 7:00 p.m. by Vice-Chair Lynde who presided.

2. ROLL CALL

Upon the call of the roll, all Commissioners were present with the exception of Chair Schiring who was excused.

3. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

The agenda was approved by consensus.

4. STAFF REPORTS

Kathleen Burgess, Planning Manager, provided the Commission with answers raised during the review of the Parks, Open Space and Recreation Element. She said according to the Parks Department, the size of Bellevue is just over 31 square miles. About 11 percent of the total is parks and open space owned by the city. She added that the trail running along SR-520 highlighted by Commissioner Bach will also be added to the map.

As requested by the East Bellevue Community Council, Ms. Burgess provided the Commissioners with copies of a letter sent from the Community Council to the staff responsible for the Conditional Use Permit for the Sunset Village Shopping Center. She said a community meeting on the topic is scheduled for February 24, and a hearing examiner public hearing later in the spring.

5. PUBLIC COMMENT – None

6. COMMUNICATIONS FROM CITY COUNCIL, COMMUNITY COUNCIL, BOARDS AND COMMISSIONS - None

7. STUDY SESSION

A. 2004 Update to the Comprehensive Plan

Kevin McDonald, Senior Planner, announced that the Factoria Area Traffic Study (FATS) will begin its community involvement process with a March 2 meeting in the community room at Factoria Mall.

Mr. McDonald said there are two policy documents and two facilities plans documents that will need to be updated in conjunction with the Comprehensive Plan update of the transportation policies: the Transportation Element, the Downtown Transportation Plan, the East Bellevue Transportation Plan, and the Bel-Red/Overlake Transportation Plan (BROTS).

With respect to the Transportation Element, Mr. McDonald said there have been a number of planning endeavors and studies over the last several years that will be incorporated into new policy. Included are the Local Transportation Vision, the Bellevue Transit Plan, the Neighborhood Investment Strategy, the Downtown Implementation Plan, and the LOS for Regionally Significant State Highways. Some reorganization of the policies is needed, and the policy language needs to be updated to reflect the terminology in current use. Once the revisions and additions are completed, the policies will be renumbered and all references will be updated.

Mr. McDonald suggested that for a number of reasons it makes sense to merge the Downtown Transportation Plan and the Downtown Subarea Plan. During the Downtown Implementation Plan CAC process, land use and transportation were well integrated in the final report, and it makes sense to adopt a comprehensive planning document that reflects the reality of the mixed and intermingled uses within the Downtown. The Council wants to see the Downtown Subarea Plan included as part of the 2004 update. The Downtown Subarea Plan and the Downtown Transportation Plan share the exact same geography unlike all other transportation facilities plans; it makes sense from that standpoint to have a single document covering all policies and projects. There is logic to integrating land use and transportation.

The transportation facilities plans of the city are primarily composed of project lists and maps. Some of the facilities plans do have policies associated with them. For the 2004 update, the focus will be primarily on the project lists. The policies will be tweaked only where subtle changes have occurred, such as where the CBD is now called the Downtown. The sources from which the facilities plans will be updated are the Downtown Implementation Plan, the Eastgate/I-90 Corridor Study, the 148th Corridor Study, and the Bel-Red/Overlake Transportation Study.

Mr. McDonald highlighted a few projects for each transportation facilities plan. For the Downtown Plan, he called attention to two new overpasses, one at NE 10th and one at NE 2nd, both of which would extend the grid for the Downtown streets across I-405 and provide access to I-405 and SR-520; and to the conversion of 106th and 108th to a one-way couplet. For the BROTS plan, he highlighted a couple of short-term projects dealing with 124th and streamlining the access to SR-520 from 148th, and long-term projects dealing with new overpasses and access to SR-520. For the 148th corridor, he noted that the package of improvements includes intersection and ped/bike projects, as well as improved signal phasing. For the Eastgate/I-90 Corridor Study, he said the improvements are primarily focused on roadways but also include ped/bike improvements. When the FATS is completed, the transportation facilities plan for that area will be updated accordingly.

Commissioner Lynde referred to the LOS for Highways of Statewide Significance and asked if the standards are in fact mandated by the state. Mr. McDonald allowed that they are. He said the city has no jurisdiction over the levels of service for state facilities but is required to adopt the standards as they have been handed down. The state is responsible for meeting the established standards.

Commissioner Bach asked if any consideration has been given to expanding the parking ratio for the Downtown core. Mr. McDonald said that would require a change to the Land Use Code applicable to new development. That specific item is not within the scope of work envisioned for the Comprehensive Plan update. The need to quantify the short-term parking needs of the Downtown area is well understood; the proposed policies address implementation of the issues. Creating a new parking supply is seen as a last resort only; better management and reducing the demands on the existing supply are paramount.

Commissioner Bach said he has heard from several parties, both landowners and leasing agents, who have said some potential tenants avoid the Downtown area because of the perception that parking is inadequate. Mr. McDonald said the proposed policy direction is focused on the short-term parking needs; there is nothing in the Downtown Implementation Plan that provides policy direction for changing the parking ratios for long-term parking within the Downtown.

Commissioner Mathews referred to Policy 27 and the projects shown on page 53 of the packet and asked if the focus will be on the priorities established by the West Lake Hills Citizen Advisory Committee (CAC). Mr. McDonald answered that the project recommendations of the CAC were largely based on guidance included in the adopted policies for the East Bellevue Transportation Plan. The recommendation of the CAC included a prioritization of the projects on the list; the proposed update will memorialize those priorities and details.

Commissioner Lynde asked for clarification of Project 461 on the Downtown Transportation Plan project list. Mr. McDonald said the called-for transit center has been completed for the most part. Still to be constructed, however, is a rider services building.

Referring to Project 464 on the same project list, Commissioner Lynde suggested that the phrase "...possibly to adjacent activity areas..." could be strengthened by striking the word "possibly." Mr. McDonald allowed that the CAC recommendation specifically included Overlake Hospital in the circulator route. He agreed that removing "possibly" would strengthen the policy while still not being overly area-specific.

On the topic of merging the Downtown Subarea Plan and the Downtown Transportation Plan, Ms. Burgess said there is a recognition that most of the subareas plans need to be reviewed over time. As that work progresses, there will likely be a desire to better integrate the subarea plans and the transportation projects. One problem, however, is that the various transportation facilities plans do not cover the same geographic areas as the subarea plans.

Commissioner Lynde said she could see the virtues of combining the Downtown Transportation Plan with the Downtown Subarea Plan because the two have the same geography, but voiced concern over having a different approach for just one subarea of the city.

Commissioner Robertson agreed that merging the two plans for the Downtown would make sense but asked if doing so would make it more difficult in the future to update plans and project lists. Ms. Burgess suggested that the primary challenge will be in merging the two plans in the first place. Commissioner Lynde pointed out that by its very nature the transportation system passes through geographic boundaries; it is possible that if all subarea and transportation

facilities plans were linked it could become necessary to update a lot of different plans instead of just one document. She said she would be curious to hear what the Transportation Commission thinks about the proposal.

Mr. McDonald said the material will be presented to the Transportation Commission on February 12. The comments of both Commissions will be folded into the final recommendation.

B. 2004 Update to the Comprehensive Plan

Nicholas Matz, Senior Planner, said both the Capital Facilities Element and the Utilities Element are consistent with the Growth Management Act (GMA). He said the local priority options are being used to focus on two aspects of the elements: first, the timeliness of the information each contains; and second, making them more transparent to help people understand how the elements work.

With regard to the Capital Facilities Element, Mr. Matz said eleven specific amendments have been identified by staff. The key piece involves the development of a schematic showing the roadmap GMA requires for facilities planning. The framework discussion text included on page 80 of the packet will essentially be converted to a drawing. A rewrite of the goal is proposed, not to break any new ground but to add timeliness. Most of the balance of the proposed revisions will involve taking text and turning it into tables, allowing for easier and more frequent updates.

The Commissioners were reminded that under the requirements of GMA jurisdictions can amend their Comprehensive Plans only once each year. The requirements for the Capital Facilities Element differs in that it can be amended more frequently or on a different timetable provided that it is tied to the Capital Investment Program. A proposed new policy spells that out and would allow for easier updating.

Another newly proposed policy addresses disaster recovery plan issues currently being worked on by the Fire Department and other departments.

Mr. Matz said the reassessment requirement of the GMA is fairly sophisticated with regard to the city. Reassessment tools used should be spelled out in the Capital Facilities Element, however, for purposes of clarity and to ensure that capital facilities programming and implementation is consistent with the vision of growth found in the Comprehensive Plan.

The maps contained in the Capital Facilities Element will be updated as part of the process as well. Staff has had a number of discussions regarding issues of post-9/11 security. Pam Maloney, Facilities Planning Manager, Utilities Department, said her department in particular is sensitive to such issues. When the update of the maps is completed, the level of proposed detail will be such that the security of the systems will be maintained.

Mr. Matz said the Environmental Services Commission will be provided with an opportunity to review the amendments, and their comments will be shared with the Planning Commission by the time of the May draft Plan rollout and public hearing.

Commissioner Mathews referred to the last sentence of the second paragraph under the heading "Level of Service" on page 87 and asked if the text could be interpreted to mean that if funding is not available the city may dial back the level of service. Mr. Matz said the text has been in the element since last adopted in 1993 and applies to concurrency. To the extent that funding considerations preclude the city from reaching a desired level of service, there could be a scaling

back. Ms. Maloney said from a Utilities perspective it could become necessary to scale back level of service based on costs.

Mr. Matz commented that as Bellevue continues to mature it will naturally move more in the direction of maintaining current facilities rather than seeking to build new facilities.

Mr. Matz noted that the Capital Facilities Element has only been amended twice since 1993, once for school impact fees and once for Essential Public Facilities. The changes to the Utilities Element during that same time period have been focused solely on telecommunications issues. The current Update offers the first general opportunity for the city to identify how well the element are working and what fixes might be in order.

Ms. Maloney observed that jurisdictions within the area are generally moving toward regional watershed planning. She said it does not make sense to look at Bellevue streams without including the rest of the Lake Washington watershed, but there is nothing in the current Comprehensive Plan that speaks to regional watershed planning. There also are no real policy statements calling for the provision of drinking water that meets all federal drinking water quality standards.

Continuing, Ms. Maloney said the policies need to be updated with regard to hazardous waste, solid waste, sewer, and storm and surface water. The current policies indicate a big push to remove underground storage tanks; that project has been completed, making the policy language dated. The sewer policies focus heavily on septic systems in the city, but that is a King County public health issue over which the city has no particular authority. Similarly, some of the policies suggest participation on the part of the city in managing and maintaining the regional waste water system, an issue that is under the control of King County Metro. The city should have a voice in what is done, but Metro likely would object to the thought of Bellevue managing and maintaining the system.

Commissioner Mathews asked how many septic systems are still in place in Bellevue. Ms. Maloney said in 1993 there were some 1200. That number has been reduced to about 900. So long as they operate properly, they do not pose a problem. For the most part, the King County health regulations do not allow for the construction of new septic systems if there is sanitary sewer service available.

Ms. Maloney said the Environmental Services Commission will be involved in the process of updating the Utilities Element and their comments will be passed on to the Planning Commission.

8. OLD BUSINESS

Ms. Burgess reviewed the calendar of upcoming meetings and events with the Commission. She reminded them of the housing tour slated for February 21 and noted that the February 25 regular meeting of the Commission may need to be cancelled. She said the annual Commission retreat could be scheduled for March.

Mr. Matz announced that the city received only one privately initiated Comprehensive Plan Amendment in the 2004 Annual CPA Docket. The proposal is from the owner of the West Ravine property who this time is seeking an LI designation in order to build storage units. The amendments continued from 2003 will again be on the agenda for 2004.

9. NEW BUSINESS

Commissioner Bach said he has been contacted by some citizens wanting to know if the Commission would be interested in putting together an advisory group made up of building owners, leasing brokers, tenants and citizens to focus on certain issues around which the Commission may not have a lot of knowledge. Such a committee would likely not need to meet more than once or twice a year. Some who own property in Bellevue but do not live in Bellevue feel they do not have much of a say in what goes on. The group could serve as a source of information for the Commission.

Commissioner Lynde said she could see such a group being useful to the Commission if it got together on its own and provided reports to the Commission under Public Comment. It would have to be a business association and not staffed by the city.

Ms. Burgess pointed out that the city and the Commission has a very good rapport with the community and all are free to attend Commission meetings and provide comment. The Bellevue Downtown Association, the Chamber of Commerce and others regularly are in contact with the city and the Department of Planning and Community Development.

10. PUBLIC COMMENT – None

11. ADJOURNMENT

Commissioner Lynde adjourned the meeting at 8:19 p.m.