

CITY OF BELLEVUE
BELLEVUE TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION
MINUTES

December 10, 2009
6:30 p.m.

Bellevue City Hall
City Council Conference Room 1E-113

COMMISSIONERS PRESENT: Chair Northey, Commissioners Glass, Larrivee, Simas, Tanaka

COMMISSIONERS ABSENT: Commissioner Jokinen, Kiel

STAFF PRESENT: Paul Krawczyk, Drew Redman, Eric Miller, Dave Berg, Department of Transportation; Camron Parker, Department of Parks and Community Services

GUEST SPEAKERS: None

RECORDING SECRETARY: Gerry Lindsay

1. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 6:35 p.m. by Chair Tanaka who presided.

2. ROLL CALL

Upon the call of the roll, all Commissioners were present with the exception of Commissioner Larrivee, who arrived at 6:37 p.m., and Commissioners Kiel and Jokinen, who were excused.

3. STAFF REPORTS

Senior Planner Paul Krawczyk reported that Commissioner Kiel had submitted her resignation.

Associate Planner Drew Redman sought clarification from the Commission regarding one of the ten motions passed on November 5 concerning the TMP menu of options. He noted that one of the motions concerned a comment made by Kemper Development Company in which the staff recommendation was approved by the Commission. Subsequently staff identified an issue with the second sentence of the staff recommendation which if implemented would require a property owner to add five points plus an additional three points for not attaining a drive-alone performance target. Staff did not intend to impose a double penalty.

Mr. Redman said the issue could be resolved either by passing a motion to set aside the second sentence from the original staff recommendation and the corresponding motion made and

approved by the Commission, or by taking no action given that the tool is an administrative one that will be under the authority of the Director.

Capital Programming Implementation Manager Eric Miller said in the opinion of staff the Commission should act to clarify its position. He noted that the issue had been scheduled for City Council discussion on December 7 but was bumped to allow for additional time to discuss the budget. The matter will be before the Council again in January.

It was agreed to address the matter during Old Business.

4. COMMUNICATIONS FROM CITY COUNCIL, COMMUNITY COUNCILS, BOARDS AND COMMISSIONS – None
5. REPORTS FROM COMMISSIONERS

Commissioner Simas said he participated in the Parks and Community Service Department blog aimed at soliciting information from different city boards and commissions as well as from citizens. He said for a week he blogged on subjects such as how parks should be viewed in the future and what changes should be made in the coming years. Most of the participants talked about memories of their childhoods that centered on parks. The information will be turned over to researchers from the University of Washington for analysis.

6. PETITIONS AND COMMUNICATIONS – None
7. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

It was agreed to add a discussion of Meydenbauer Bay Park under New Business.

Motion to approve the agenda was made by Commissioner Glass. Second was by Commissioner Simas and the motion carried unanimously.

8. STUDY SESSION
 - A. Parks and Open Space System Plan Update

Senior Planner Camron Parker said the Parks and Community Services Department is working to update the city's Parks and Open Space System Plan that was last updated in 2003. The work to update the plan is undertaken every six to seven years. The department is nationally accredited and having an up-to-date long-range capital plan is part of the accreditation standard; it is also part of a grant requirement from the Washington state Recreation and Conservation Office. The plan also informs the Parks, Recreation and Open Space element of the Comprehensive Plan.

Mr. Parker said there are three general tasks to the update: collecting public opinion; referencing the planning work done by the various city departments since 2003; and developing a 20-year projected list of capital project recommendations.

A variety of methods have been utilized to gain public opinion. A random selection survey was conducted in September. The survey included a telephone component as well as mail and web-based elements. The survey work was structured so as to return statistically valid results. A shorter version of the survey was posted to the Parks webpage to generate input from any interested party living, working or going to school in Bellevue. To date there have been some 1200 responses to the online survey.

Mr. Parker said other surveys conducted by the city, including the annual budget and performance measure survey, the survey conducted to revise the Needs Update, and the survey focused on updating the Shoreline Master Plan, included questions about parks. The responses to those surveys have been tapped to inform the Parks and Open Space System Plan update.

Seven city boards and commissions were invited to participate in the blog and web dialog. There was good representation obtained for the experimental approach to gathering information. Facilitated by a University of Washington student team, the project will include a final written report. Presentations have been made to most if not all of the city's boards and commissions as well as some community groups over the past couple of months to highlight the update process.

Mr. Parker said one question asked was how people use the park system currently. The top answer given relative to frequency of use was the trail system, followed by playgrounds and open, unstructured play and picnicking areas, waterfront parks, and outdoor sports fields and courts. The answers generally line up with the city's inventory of park and recreation facilities. The city has an extensive system of trails but only one public swimming pool and only one off-leash dog area, so it is not surprising that the facilities the city has the most of are used most often.

The survey questions were followed with a focus on what the priorities should be for developing the system in the future. The top five frequency of use categories were listed as the categories that should continue to be developed.

The survey respondents were asked which they thought would be more important, developing current park properties or acquiring new park and open space land. A slight favor was noted toward developing current properties, but for the most part the split was even. Past surveys had the same results to the question.

The transportation-related issues in the Parks and Open Space Plan include the system of trails, street trees and arterial landscaping, and walkable access to parks.

Mr. Parker said a study is under way regarding walkable access to parks. The study includes some GIS work and relies to some degree on questions of perception asked in the survey. The GIS program was programmed to follow the street centerline for a quarter of a mile from each park entrance, and those distances were used as the radius for circles to show how many residences are contained within what has been called the walkable access buffer. When compared with how residents actually get from their homes to the access points, the walkable access buffers actually shrink considerably, especially where the street networks include several loops, dead-ends and non-connecting segments. The goal over time is to create a system that will allow anyone living anywhere in the city the ability to easily walk to a park, park facility or trailhead.

Commissioner Glass asked if trails that might connect streets to park entrances are included in the GIS mapping work to determine the walkable access buffers. Mr. Parker said one layer was done for the parks themselves. Another layer, which is currently being developed, focuses solely on the trail system. Once that layer is added to the mix, it could be that the walkable access buffers will be more encompassing. The exercise may show where simple trail connections could be added to improve overall access.

Mr. Parker said the survey asked respondents to indicate whether or not from their homes they are within a ten minute walk of a park or trail facility. Those living in the western portion of the city had the highest number of respondents living within ten minutes of a park facility; the central core ranked lowest in terms of access, followed by south Bellevue and then east Bellevue. Citywide, 86 percent felt they lived within that range of a park facility. All of the respondents who indicated they are within a ten-minute walk of a park facility also indicated they can get there safely.

Mr. Parker said the work to update the draft should be completed by late December or early January. The Parks and Community Services Board will host a public hearing in January, will discuss the plan again in February, and then will forward a final draft to the City Council in April. The final Council-approved plan must be submitted to the state granting office by June.

Mr. Parker informed the Commissioners that a photography and poetry contest is currently under way representing the cultural aspects of the department. Photos of Bellevue parks submitted may be used in illustrating the final report. Poetry inspired by the park system may be used in the same way.

Commissioner Larrivee asked if the overall 64 percent level of support shown by the survey relative to street landscaping can be interpreted as strong support for the direction the city is taking in that regard. Mr. Parker said staff has interpreted the data as meaning the public does favor the direction being taken by the department.

Commissioner Simas suggested that few city residents understand that street trees and landscaping are paid for by both Parks and Transportation. He proposed that some might be

inclined to rethink the issue if asked if landscaping and maintenance should be paid for by Parks at the expense of some other park project.

Commissioner Glass said he has heard a lot of talk in the community about the construction of a new city swimming pool and he asked where the plan update comes down on that issue. Mr. Parker said the current 2003 plan includes an aquatic center in the long-range project list. Pools are expensive to construct, and they do not pay for themselves so an operating subsidy is required. The city conducted an aquatic center feasibility analysis that looked at everything from a small community pool to a full-service facility with Olympic size features. Everyone agrees that there is a need for such a facility, but there is no agreement yet with how much priority it should be given.

Commissioner Simas asked if other park facilities raise enough revenues to pay for themselves. Mr. Parker said within the Parks and Community Services Department there is an enterprise division tasked with generating revenue through programming. All of the programs overseen by the division do pay for themselves. For example, the golf course is profitable, and its profits are used to underwrite operations of the pool. The cost of constructing park facilities has historically been a combination of voter-approved levies and general fund/CIP dollars. Each new facility includes ongoing maintenance and operations costs, which are drawn from CIP and general fund resources.

Commissioner Larrivee asked if Bellevue is engaged in talks with neighboring jurisdictions about construction a regional or subregional facility. Mr. Parker said interjurisdictional cooperation is much more common than it used to be. The Mercer Slough Environmental Education Center has a strong partnership with the Pacific Science Center and included a great deal of private funding. The Bellevue Botanical Garden similarly has partnerships that are aimed at helping to build that facility. The approach could in time translate to a new aquatic center, though specific talks on that front are not currently under way.

Commissioner Northey asked if the city has contemplated acquisition of any neighborhood pool. Mr. Parker said those considerations would be given on a case-by-case basis. The city did inherit the Odle Pool from King County, so there is precedence for that. He said he did not know if the city has ever been offered a community pool.

Commissioner Glass asked if the plan gets into any specifics regarding park facilities for the Bel-Red area. Mr. Parker said the system plan takes the wider view; the subarea plans zero in a bit more, and each significant park has its own master plan developed in conjunction with a public process. The updated plan will highlight a need to acquire land for park facilities in the Bel-Red subarea, but it will not list specific properties or sites.

Chair Tanaka said he is always interested in new ways to conduct public outreach. He asked how staff views the web-based data gathering elements, including the blogging. Mr. Parker said the web survey has been the most successful. The blogs have not generated the same level

of participation in the form of comments, but they have been widely read. The blog has not shown itself to be a great tool for collecting comments, but it has been a good tool for reaching audiences. The comments offered, however, have been excellent and very helpful. The web-based dialog was by invitation only and had 17 participants. Some indicated they were not comfortable with the approach, but it was able to delve deeper into the subjects.

B. Eastlink Project Update

Commissioner Simas noted that he had recently attended a meeting at which an Eastlink representative talked about the alternatives and mentioned the vision line proposal. He suggested that there are some pros to the vision line proposal along with some cons. One of the pros is that it is far less expensive, by hundreds of millions. It certainly is one option for a reasonable solution.

Deputy Director Dave Berg said Eastlink continues to present a number of challenges, and the final solution continues to be a moving target. New alternatives are constantly being developed and brought forward for discussion. Sound Transit is slated to narrow down the list of alternatives in January, though the word is that action probably will not occur until February.

Commissioner Glass said it was his impression that city staff would be following the response and actions of Sound Transit on the noise complaints filed on the system in south Seattle. He said he would also like to have an update with regard to the possible sources of funding for the Eastlink project. Mr. Berg agreed that a full update from staff in January would be helpful.

9. OLD BUSINESS

Motion to set aside approval of the second sentence of the original recommendation of staff for the Kemper Development Company comment number five was made by Commissioner Glass; second was by Commissioner Simas and the motion carried unanimously.

10. NEW BUSINESS

Commissioner Glass said the City Council discussion at its December 7 meeting was very interesting. One of the issues raised was in regard to the Meydenbauer Bay Park plan. He noted that both the Park Board and the Planning Commission will be offering comment on the proposed plan, something the Transportation Commission was not asked to do.

Chair Tanaka said neither of those bodies will offer their comments until the proposal has been presented to the Council and they have parceled out the various tasks. He allowed that the Parks Board will be given the lead. The earliest it could come to the Transportation Commission for discussion would be February. Whether or not the Commission will be asked to take action is not yet known.

Chair Tanaka said there has been a lot of misunderstanding by some members of the public about what the task of the steering committee was. Some are under the impression that things have progressed to the point of sending bulldozers out to tear up the streets and start creating the park, but things have not progressed to the point by any stretch of the imagination. The steering committee was tasked with identifying design alternatives for what the park may look like. The committee had representatives of many city boards and commissions as well as neighborhoods and certain interest groups. The work of the committee was guided by ten specific principles established and handed down by the Council. The steering committee sought to balance all of the competing interests in working toward a park design proposal and in the process had to work through a number of contentious issues. It will take many more years before anything concrete happens to bring the park to fruition.

Chair Tanaka said two issues rose to the top during the process: the closure of 100th Avenue NE, and elimination of the boat moorage. With respect to the closure of 100th Avenue NE, there was a detailed traffic study done by Perteet Engineering. The study seemed credible to the members of the committee, and in the end the vote to close the roadway was very nearly unanimous; there was only one vote against the motion. The matter will undoubtedly end up on the Commission's plate at some point. Bellevue has a lot of waterfront, but very little of it is developed for public use. The opportunity to develop a park so close to the downtown is phenomenal; the vision is for something iconic that will serve all the people of the city, and the closure of 100th Avenue NE will be key to achieving the vision.

Commissioner Glass asked what consideration was given to mitigating the closure of 100th Avenue NE. Chair Tanaka said to some degree there are tradeoffs associated with how to deal with Main Street. Main Street has a certain character and the tradeoffs will focus on how much change should be allowed on that street. There was discussion of adding traffic lights, creating one-way couplets, and widening the street. No one wants to fix one problem at the expense of creating another problem.

Commissioner Glass said his fear is that once tolls are imposed on SR-520 drivers will seek other routes, and the streets in that part of the city could suffer, particularly if 100th Avenue NE is closed. Chair Tanaka said that particular point was raised frequently by the public and was recognized as an issue in the Perteet study.

Commissioner Northey suggested that the Commission should certainly have a role in deciding the outcome of the proposed road closure.

11. PETITIONS AND COMMUNICATIONS – None
12. APPROVAL OF MINUTES – None
13. REVIEW CALENDAR AND AGENDA

The Commission reviewed the items scheduled for discussion at upcoming meetings.

14. ADJOURNMENT

Chair Tanaka adjourned the meeting at 7:57 p.m.

Secretary to the Transportation Commission

Date

Chairperson of the Transportation Commission

Date