

CITY OF BELLEVUE
CITY COUNCIL

Summary Minutes of Study Session

February 4, 2008
6:00 p.m.

Council Conference Room
Bellevue, Washington

PRESENT: Mayor Degginger, Deputy Mayor Balducci, and Councilmembers Chelminiak, Davidson, and Noble

ABSENT: Councilmember Lee

1. Executive Session

The meeting was called to order at 6:02 p.m. with Mayor Degginger presiding.

2. Study Session

(a) Electrical System Reliability

City Manager Steve Sarkozy opened discussion regarding electrical system reliability. He recalled the windstorm in late 2006 that resulted in the loss of power throughout nearly 90 percent of the community.

Transportation Director Goran Sparrman introduced Scott Coburn with Lane Coburn & Associates, the consultants for the assessment of Bellevue's electrical system reliability.

Dave Berg, Deputy Director of Transportation, explained that the three interrelated dimensions of electric power supply and distribution are: 1) System reliability, 2) Ability to keep up with demand related to growth and development, and 3) Compatibility of new and expanded facilities within the community.

Scott Coburn said the primary causes of electrical outages are equipment failure, actions of birds and animals, and fallen trees and/or branches.

Mr. Berg noted residents' concerns regarding these outages and a desire for the undergrounding of utilities. Residents of Bridle Trails in particular are concerned about the existing system's reliability and planning for future growth and modernization of the electrical system.

Mr. Berg reviewed options for Council consideration for addressing electrical system reliability: 1) Rely on the Washington Utilities and Transportation Commission (WUTC) to ensure Puget Sound Energy meets Bellevue's needs, 2) Monitor SAIDI (duration of outage) and SAIFI (frequency of outage) data to identify trends and work with PSE for action, 3) Prepare an Electric Reliability Interest Statement, and/or 4) Prepare an Electric Reliability Strategic Initiative. A strategic initiative would expand the current assessment of the electrical system to fully analyze existing infrastructure and growth plans, develop a strategy to ensure future electric needs are met, and engage the community in the planning effort.

Councilmember Davidson expressed support for involving the community in a strategic effort. He noted that residents and the City will need to work with PSE to implement measures that will improve reliability, which in some cases will likely include tree trimming and/or removal.

Councilmember Noble concurred and suggested working with neighboring jurisdictions as well.

Responding to Councilmember Noble, Mr. Berg confirmed the opportunity for the City and the Council to address issues through the WUTC. Mr. Sparrman feels that cooperation between all entities will be most beneficial.

Responding to Councilmember Chelminiak, Mr. Coburn said undergrounding utilities does not solve all problems, and it makes it more difficult and time consuming to conduct repairs. The life span of overhead equipment is approximately 50 years compared to 30 years for underground lines.

Deputy Mayor Balducci agreed with Dr. Davidson that the City should not create a regulatory oversight body. She encouraged working with other jurisdictions as well as PSE.

Following additional brief questions of clarification, Mayor Degginger asked staff to come back to the Council with ideas for moving forward with a strategic initiative. He noted the critical link between electric system reliability and economic activities.

Moving on, Dr. Davidson expressed support for developing an Electric Reliability Interest Statement. Mr. Chelminiak concurred, stating that development of an interest statement is a logical step toward a strategic initiative. Deputy Mayor Balducci and Councilmember Noble agreed as well.

Ms. Balducci requested further information regarding current system reliability, the objectives of a strategic initiative, and the resources needed to accomplish those objectives.

Mr. Degginger suggested an assessment regarding the level of reliability needed to properly support Bellevue's role as a technology-based economy.

Dr. Davidson questioned whether the outages related to equipment failure indicate that PSE's equipment is in need of replacement.

Mayor Degginger noted Council interest in more information and in clearly identifying objectives and desired outcomes.

(b) 2007 Comprehensive Plan Amendments, including Wilburton and Utilities Element

Planning Director Dan Stroh introduced a continuation of Council's discussion during the January 28 meeting regarding the SRO Factoria Comprehensive Plan Amendment (CPA) proposal. The CPA requests the addition of a new subarea policy to allow office development up to 0.75 FAR (floor-area ratio) in OLB (Office Limited Business) and O (Office) designated districts north of Factoria Mall. Mr. Stroh reiterated staff's conclusion that a change in the tenancy of the former movie theatre does not constitute a significantly changed condition in terms of justifying a CPA.

Mr. Stroh referenced page SS-7 of the meeting packet, which summarizes land use incentives and design review elements that could be offered or required in exchange for granting the higher FAR. Staff suggests revising Factoria Subarea policies to encourage contributions to the pedestrian environment and to the area's gateway location. Also beginning on page SS-7 is a description of two alternatives for approaching the CPA request.

Mr. Stroh described the role of the longstanding FAR restriction in focusing growth in the downtown. Exceptions to the policy were made with the annexation of the Factoria area in 1993. Mr. Stroh noted that the current planning process for the Bel-Red corridor is considering changes in Office FAR limitations.

Mr. Stroh responded to additional questions of clarification related to the annexation of the Factoria area and the differing development regulations for King County and the City. He briefly reviewed the primary land use changes within the area including the 2005 Factoria Area Transportation Study (FATS) Update.

Councilmember Chelminiak feels that approval of the CPA will not set a dangerous precedent for the City because of the unique history and nature of the Factoria area.

Responding to Mr. Chelminiak, Mr. Stroh noted the option for Council to continue consideration of the SRO Factoria CPA into the 2008 CPA work plan.

Responding to Mayor Degginger, Mr. Stroh said if the Council would like to consider the potential for a CB (Community Business) designation, the issue should be remanded to the Planning Commission for a full discussion and public involvement process.

Mayor Degginger feels that the CPA is not supported by the changed condition criteria, and he does not see a public benefit to the change requested by the SRO Factoria CPA proposal.

Deputy Mayor Balducci reiterated her ongoing interest in deferring any changes until a comprehensive study of the Eastgate corridor can be completed.

Dr. Davidson and Councilmember Noble expressed support for the Planning Commission's recommendation to approve the CPA.

- Councilmember Davidson moved to direct staff to move forward with preparing an ordinance reflecting support of the Planning Commission's recommendation for approval of the SRO Factoria CPA, with the addition of language to Comprehensive Plan Policy S-FA-30.1 indicating that allowances for increased FAR are to be linked to design review elements including contributions to the area's pedestrian environment and its role as a gateway to the Factoria commercial center. Mr. Noble seconded the motion.
- The motion of support for the Planning Commission's recommendation for approval of the SRO Factoria CPA, with the addition of language to Comprehensive Plan Policy S-FA-30.1 regarding design review elements, carried by a vote of 5-0 with Councilmember Lee absent.

Mr. Stroh briefly reviewed the Capital Facilities CPA proposal to update the Capital Facilities Element to reference the adopted six-year 2007-2013 Capital Investment Program (CIP) Plan.

Mayor Degginger noted Council support for the CPA.

Mr. Stroh described the Downtown Mobility CPA, which adds future transportation improvement projects in and near the downtown and highlights the need to preserve right-of-way for these improvements now.

Transportation Director Goran Sparrman commented on transportation demands and the need to implement projects identified in the Downtown Implementation Plan (DIP) Update. He briefly reviewed a map showing seven locations targeted for downtown mobility projects.

Responding to Mr. Chelminiak, Mr. Sparrman acknowledged that widening streets and adding turn lanes has an impact on the pedestrian environment. He explained that the addition of right-turn lanes in key locations will enhance the traffic flow of vehicles that are going straight through the intersection.

Mr. Chelminiak expressed concern about the potential impact of the mobility improvements on downtown neighborhoods. Mr. Sparrman explained that the projects are designed to work together to balance objectives for an overall system improvement. While in some cases pedestrians will have a greater distance to walk to cross a street, they will have a shorter wait for the traffic signal to change.

Mr. Sparrman responded to additional questions of clarification.

Mayor Degginger noted general Council support of the Downtown Mobility CPA proposal.

Moving on, Mr. Stroh explained that the Utilities Element CPA and Land Use Code Amendment (LUCA) include policies and text regarding the siting and expansion of electrical facilities, related land use regulations, and a map update for natural gas facilities. These amendments will improve electrical system reliability and provide clearer direction regarding the City's preferences for siting expanded facilities.

Pursuant to the amendments, staff would identify within the Comprehensive Plan any facilities proposed for sensitive locations. The amendments require an alternate siting analysis for sensitive facilities, support the development of regulations that address site-specific mitigation, and recognize the importance of meeting community needs through highly reliable service for Bellevue customers. The CPA stemmed from Council Resolution No. 7107 which protects residential neighborhoods from incompatible facilities and recognizes Puget Sound Energy's need to provide sufficient electrical energy to meet the growing demand. The resolution responded to residents' concerns about the proposed expansion of the Lochleven Substation.

Mr. Stroh noted that amendments to the CPA policy framework will be accompanied by Land Use Code Amendments. He briefly reviewed maps showing existing electrical facilities, new and expanded electrical facilities, and proposed natural gas facilities. Mr. Stroh explained that sites designated as sensitive will be required to undergo alternative siting analysis in accordance with Comprehensive Plan Policy UT-73. If Council directs staff to move forward with this CPA proposal, staff will refine the identification of sensitive sites.

Deputy Mayor Balducci commended staff's progress on the issue of siting and expanding electrical facilities. She feels this will help the Lake Hills neighborhood with the siting of a transmission line when needed. Ms. Balducci encouraged adoption of the proposed CPA and LUCAs.

Mayor Degginger requested additional information and clarification regarding the location of sensitive sites as identified on PSE's maps.

Councilmember Chelminiak stated that electrical reliability is not important strictly for home-based businesses and office employment, but it is increasingly important in our knowledge-based culture that relies on computers and technology.

Mayor Degginger noted Council consensus to proceed with the Utilities Element CPA.

Mr. Stroh briefly reviewed the associated Land Use Code Amendment (LUCA), which requires an alternative siting process for sensitive site facilities. A sensitive site would go through the Conditional Use Permit process, and a non-sensitive site would be subject to the Administrative Conditional Use Permit process. The applicant, in this case Puget Sound Energy, would have to demonstrate that the technology selected addresses system reliability and best mitigates impacts to surrounding properties. The proposed LUCA provides the framework for siting facilities in neighborhoods including the transmission line planned for Lake Hills.

Responding to Mr. Degginger, Mr. Stroh explained that the recommended process provides a level of formality and openness that the public understands. It is similar to the process used for siting telecommunications facilities.

Mayor Degginger noted Council consensus to direct staff to proceed with the Utilities Element CPA and associated LUCA.

Paul Inghram, Comprehensive Planning Manager, summarized the Wilburton/NE 8th Street CPA proposal to implement the Wilburton study. The proposal addresses the future rezone of the area from General Commercial (GC) to GC and Community Business (CB). Transportation improvements include the extension of NE 4th Street. This CPA was previously considered by the Council in March 2007, at which time it was remanded to the Planning Commission to conduct an additional public hearing and to allow for additional public input.

Mr. Inghram reviewed the study's recommendations creating a mixed use retail village east of the railroad right-of-way and continuing the mix of commercial and auto uses on 116th Avenue. The CPA includes a policy encouraging affordable/work force housing.

Staff responded to questions of clarification.

Deputy Mayor Balducci expressed an interest in moving forward with establishing policies that will provide incentives for developing affordable housing throughout the community.

Mayor Degginger noted Council consensus to move the Wilburton CPA forward. Dr. Davidson said he would like more discussion about designating a special opportunity area within the Wilburton corridor.

At 8:00 p.m., Mayor Degginger declared recess to the Regular Session.

Myrna L. Basich
City Clerk

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