

CITY OF BELLEVUE
SPECIAL EVENTS COMMITTEE
MEETING MINUTES

February 10, 2022
8:30 a.m.

Bellevue City Hall
Virtual Meeting

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Susan Freeburg – Parks
Andy Heider – Parks
Mark Anderson – Fire
Mike Shovlin – Police
Dave Sanabria – Police
Weijun Zhu – Transportation
Rick Logwood – Transportation
Reilly Pittman – Development Services
Claude Iosso - City Manager’s Office
Neal Christiansen – Community Representative East
Mike Ogliore – Business Representative Downtown
Chris Dunham – Business Representative West
Laurie Scott – Downtown Resident Representative
Jonathan Rose – King County Metro

OTHERS PRESENT:

Brad Bennett, Imane Elmesbahi, Parks; Councilmember Lee; Michelle Kinberg, Office of Emergency Management; Casiano Atienza, Transportation; Kyle Nelson, Fire; Priya Srinivasa, Kuhjan Kapor, Rajee Melcote, Lalita Uppala, Indian American Community Services; Jeff Orswill, Cory Fehlberg, Rock’n’Roll; Mpiima Mugambe, BantuFest

RECORDING SECRETARY: Gerry Lindsay

1. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 8:33 a.m. by Chair Freeburg who presided.

2. COMMUNICATIONS: Written and Oral

Chair Freeburg welcomed Councilmember Lee, new liaison to the Special Events Committee.

Councilmember Lee thanked the Committee members for their dedicated efforts and collaboration. He noted that as the city grows there has been an increased demand on the part of many groups to hold special events, and of course they need to be done right, which is where the Committee comes in. He urged the Committee to keep the lines of communication open with the City Council through him.

3. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

A motion to approve the agenda was made by Captain Sanabria. The motion was seconded by Mr. Heider and the motion carried unanimously.

4. APPROVAL OF MEETING MINUTES

A motion to approve the January 20, 2022, meeting minutes as submitted was made by Mr. Christiansen. The motion was seconded by Captain Sanabria and the motion carried unanimously.

5. COMMITTEE REPORTS

❖ Routing and Location Subcommittee Report

Mr. Zhu reported that the subcommittee met on February 2 with the event organizers and sponsors for the All In for Autism 5K and 10K run. He noted that there will be a change to the 10K route due to the fact that the I-405 main bridge demolition project will likely block 114th Avenue. He also reported that an initial route has been established for the Rock'n'Roll marathon though there are details yet to be worked out.

6. OLD BUSINESS

❖ Tabled Event: Indian American Community Services Summer MELA

Priya Srinivasa with Indian American Community Services (Indian American Community Services) explained that a MELA is a fair-like gathering of people to enjoy their culture. She said the event is new to Bellevue.

Chair Freeburg commented that the event is slated for June 25 at Crossroads Park, with a start time of 11:00 a.m. and an end time of 6:00 p.m.

Ms. Srinivasa said the idea is to bring about 30 vendors into the community, 60 percent of which are vendors that need a boost to bring in more customers.

Lalita Uppala, executive director of Indian American Community Services, said the organization has been in the community for the last 33 years working to connect, serve and empower the community. Over the last two years during Covid, businesses, and especially small businesses, have been significantly impacted. The goal for the event is to create a small business MELA during a warm month in Crossroads Park, which is in the heart of where the Indian American community lives, which many can attend. The intent is to empower small businesses to bring in vendors who are creating materials locally, and things that are culturally connected to the Indian American community. The hope is that the event will be intergenerational. A first aid table will be set up to provide Covid PPEs for the attendees. The heart and soul of the India American community is connecting through food so food trucks will be brought in, but only one at a time, changing out every three hours. There will be music and cultural performances as well to lift the spirit that has been downtrodden during the isolation and lack of business activity associated with the pandemic.

Continuing, Ms. Uppala said 60 percent of the vendors will be those that have been struggling, including businesses that are being run by single mothers. The other 40 percent of the vendors will be well established with a thriving clientele and which will be able to mentor the struggling businesses and share clients. The list of vendors will include artists, lifestyle professionals, wellbeing instructors and yoga instructors.

Ms. Shrinivasa said the plan is to use the Crossroads Park parking areas for attendees, and to use the side roads for any overflow parking. Security will be on site to make sure the roads are not blocked. Ms. Uppala said the anticipated attendance is 2000, but throughout the day and not all at once. Some people will park at Crossroads Mall to do business and then walk over to the park for the event. Others will simply walk to the event or carpool. Traffic cones will be set up by event staff and an electrician will be on standby. Security will be hired to manage the inflow and outflow of traffic. The breakdown and cleanup crew will make sure everything is removed from the park.

Mr. Christiansen voiced concern with the assumption that attendees would not stay at the event all that long. He said his experience with other events in Crossroads Park has been that people tend to stay for a while. Ms. Uppala said similar events have been held in Redmond and Bothell. Families typically stay for a period of two to two and a half hours, often to watch their children perform.

Captain Sanabria suggested the event organizers should meet with the routing and location subcommittee to flush out the details of the parking plan and the potential security considerations. He suggested the Committee had plenty to go on in approving the date, time and location. Ms. Uppala voiced her appreciation for the support and guidance of the Committee.

Captain Sanabria asked if the intent was to have cultural displays on the stage throughout the duration of the event. Ms. Uppala said the stage events will start off with laughing yoga and from there will go on to performances by children that last about three minutes each. There will be two or three groups in the afternoon and another two or three groups in the evening.

Mr. Heider stated that following the routing and location subcommittee meeting parks would schedule a time to meet with the event organizers at Crossroads Park to discuss the proposed plan. He said his initial impression was that the plan was good, though he remarked that the location of the food truck will likely need to be moved.

Councilmember Lee noted that the city is becoming a very diverse community and said the event will be good and important for the community.

Chair Freeburg thanked the event organizers for their presentation.

Mr. Christiansen suggested the parking plan as presented is weak, but added that the subcommittee will deal with it. He said he also questioned the statement that attendees will only stay for two hours or so. Chair Freeburg agreed with the need to strengthen the parking plan and to keep folks from parking at the mall.

A motion to approve the date, time and location for the IACS Summer MELA event was made by Mr. Heider. The motion was seconded by Mr. Anderson and the motion carried unanimously.

❖ Tabled Event: Northwest Ukrainian International Festival

Chair Freeburg noted that the festival is a recurring event at Crossroads Park. She noted that the event organizer was not present for the meeting to provide clarification with regard to the request to use Downtown Park, adding that the organizer indicated that if the Downtown Park location is not feasible, the event will be held at Crossroads Park.

Captain Sanabria asked Mr. Heider to comment on having back-to-back large-scale events,

noting that the last Ukrainian Festival drew some 15,000 attendees, and as scheduled the event will occur back-to-back with the Rock'n'Roll festival in Downtown Park. Mr. Heider said the Festival will be back-to-back with either the marathon in Downtown Park or Flavors of India in Crossroads Park. He said the recommendation of parks, based on the uncertainty of what wear and tear the Rock'n'Roll will have on Downtown Park, is to keep the Festival at Crossroads Park.

Mr. Anderson said the main concern of fire is the number of attendees. The application indicates 7000 participants, but the event has drawn upwards of 15,000 in the past all while skirting the city's requirements for additional staffing. Both fire and police need an accurate attendance number, and neither is willing to budge on the policy set for additional staffing.

Captain Sanabria said his department would plan on what has been experienced in the past in terms of attendance and would staff accordingly, regardless of whether the event is at Crossroads Park or Downtown Park. He allowed that the Strawberry Festival has in the past seen as many as 20,000 participants, which is proof Crossroads Park can handle that many. He urged the Committee to keep the event at Crossroads Park.

Mr. Christiansen asked what the difference in staffing numbers would be between the 7000 listed on the application and the possible 15,000. Captain Sanabria said some of the need for increased staffing was based on behaviors that came into play during the last Festival event, issues that have not been seen at other events. Police was not adequately staffed to address the issues. Between two and four additional officers dedicated to the event will need to be added to manage the parking and traffic around the event as well as the activities inside the park. All of those issues will be flushed out by the routing and location subcommittee.

Mr. Anderson explained that for any crowd exceeding 5000 fire must staff an aid car on site. The numbers experienced by the event in the past trigger the need to add a staff battalion chief on scene.

Councilmember Lee noted that he has for some time been aware that the event organizer wants to see the event moved to Downtown Park. The concerns that have been expressed are valid. Wherever the event lands, similar issues will have to be addressed. The organizer should be asked to share what changes, if any, are planned for the event. He suggested the Committee should talk with the organizer before making a decision.

Captain Sanabria said he had no concerns taking action to approve the date, time and location for the event based on the application. He reiterated that all of the issues and concerns will be flushed out by the routing and location subcommittee. Mr. Anderson concurred.

A motion to approve the date, time and location for the Ukrainian Festival at Crossroads Park On September 10 from 10:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. was made by Captain Sanabria. The motion was seconded by Mr. Anderson and the motion carried unanimously.

❖ Tabled Event: Rock'n'Roll Running

Race director Jeff Orswell noted that the half marathon event is on the calendar for September 4. He said the Rock'n'Roll Marathon inaugural happened in San Diego in 1998. The event was first held in Seattle in 2009. In 2018 the Rock'n'Roll Marathon was acquired by Ironman and is now a global series. The challenges faced in Seattle meant there was no event there in 2020 or 2021. Discussions began with Bellevue in the fall of 2021 and there has been nothing but

overwhelming excitement about the event coming to the city. He noted that several members of the Committee attended the Rock'n'Roll Marathon in Arizona recently to see the event firsthand. It is a big event and a lot of work for everyone involved.

Continuing, Mr. Orswell said he met with the routing and location subcommittee and presented the initial thoughts on a half marathon course as well as an initial venue layout for the start and finish at Downtown Park. As outlined, the event team will be on the ground Wednesday, August 31 to begin setting up the operations compound in a large surface lot immediately north of Meydenbauer Center. The 15 to 20 Penske trucks filled with gear will assemble at that location. Load-in at the Hyatt Regency Bellevue will begin that same day for the packet pickup expo and health and fitness event. Load-in and initial setup will begin on September 1 at Downtown Park and ready to go on September 2. Race participants will be able to pick up their packets on September 2 and 3. The 5K event will occur on Saturday at 9:00 a.m. with an estimated 2000 participants on a course yet to be created. That will immediately be followed by Kids Rock, a kids run with a couple of hundred kids, all self-contained within the park on the gravel trail starting at approximately 10:00 a.m.

The Sunday morning half marathon start time will be 6:30 a.m. for an estimated 8000 to 10,000 runners. The start line will be at Bellevue Way and NE 4th Street and the runners will be queued in the northbound lanes of Bellevue Way between NE 4th Street and NE 2nd Street. The course will not lie primarily be within the Downtown core, rather it will be on the streets between Bellevue Way and I-405. The finish line will be on 100th Avenue NE on the west side of Downtown Park to the north of NE 1st Street. He stressed that the actual course has yet to be finalized.

Mr. Orswell said along the course the event sports a band every mile, which means there will be 13 strategically placed stages along the course. A dedicated team recruits the bands and identifies the locations for the stages. The team is very aware of the impacts on quiet residential areas on a Sunday morning, so accordingly not all of the bands will be loud. There will be a water station set up on approximately every mile and a half along the course. There will also be medical stations about every three miles with EMTs with AEDs and BLS kits, along with roving personnel following the race on Gators and golf carts. There will be a command post set up and staffed with police, fire, parks, transportation and Metro personnel with the authority to make difficult decisions. There is a four-hour time limit on the half marathon and a significant trail vehicle process is implemented that includes shuttles and minivans. Those who fall behind are shuttled forward so they can continue to participate while also assuring that the event will end on time. The trail caravan includes street sweepers and trash crews. Everything put up on the roadway will be picked up within 15 minutes of the last participant passing through and the streets will be reopened.

The event clearly has an impact on the community, not only residents but also churches, businesses, and fire stations. Accordingly, there is a very robust community notification plan that will be implemented. It involves electronic outreach as well as door-to-door flyers, full color brochures with timelines and maps, as well as contact information.

Mr. Pittman said the department he represents deals with any permits that might be required for stages, electrical connections, and noise. He asked if it would be possible to know in advance the location of the band stages along the route and what equipment each will be using in terms of amplifiers and the like. He said he also would like to have a timeline for when people will be at each location along the route. Mr. Orswell said Entertainment Solutions, Inc. is the company contracted to find the bands and identify the locations. He said he would put the company owner

in touch to talk through all of the specifics and obtaining the required permits. He stressed that not all of the bands use amplified sound.

Mr. Bennett asked if the event's promotional materials will bill the event as a Bellevue event or as a Seattle event. Mr. Orswell said very little will be tied to Seattle. The event title is the Rock'n'Roll Marathon Washington Half Marathon and the City of Bellevue will be promoted. All of the images on the event website are of Bellevue. He said he was optimistic that all of the participants will be staying in Bellevue. The Downtown, the Spring District and Old Bellevue will specifically be highlighted. Cory Fehlberg added that the focus has from the start been on showcasing Bellevue.

Councilmember Lee asked if the city's economic development folks are involved in the discussions and Mr. Orswell assured him that they are. Chair Freeburg said it was the economic development folks who brought forward the possibility of bringing the event to Bellevue and they are very involved in the process. Mr. Orswell added that the team is working closely with Mac Cummins and Brad Jones as well as with Wright Runstad.

❖ Tabled Event: BantuFest

Chair Freeburg noted that the application for the new event lists Downtown Park, but the event organizer has indicated approval for using Crossroads Park instead. She stated that in the past the event has been held at indoor venues. It has not previously been held outdoors, and it is a new event to Bellevue. 1.12.40.0

Mpiima Mugambe with Immigrant Guide, an organization that works with immigrants in Washington and California. He said the BantuFest has for the last four years been held in Los Angeles. The annual cultural event has gained recognition and has become a significant event in immigrant communities, especially those of African descent. The event was first held in 2018 and was held again in 2019 and 2021, all in Los Angeles. Covid caused the event to be canceled in 2020, and the proposal is to hold the event in Bellevue in 2022. The event is not only for adults; it gives space to children to showcase their talents ranging from poetry, singing, dancing and drawing or painting. The international stage has hosted performances from around the world in 40 languages and cultures. The event is all about culture and community; everyone dances together, sings together, and sometimes they compose together as a community. There are few other activities that bring immigrants together in one space to appreciate each other's cultures. In addition to music and dancing, the event also involves sharing food and recipes. The food is good and is aligned with the various cultures, just as the entertainment is.

Immigrant Guide started in 2018 as a mobile phone application that provides access to resources for refugees and immigrants. It is based on Washington state. The non-profit organization works with immigrants in Snohomish, King and Pierce counties with the mission of helping them become stronger and independent.

BantuFest is an event for the community and by the community. The organization does not dictate what the community presents in terms of art. The organization fundraises and facilitates, but it does not charge the participants any fees. Vendors and small businesses are booked to showcase their wares. He said the intent is to hold BantuFest on Saturday, August 6, at Crossroads Park.

Councilmember Lee asked what Bantu means. Mr. Mugambe said the term comes from Africa, a continent that has many countries and many cultures. The term specifically refers to the Bantu-

speaking people, including those who live outside of Africa, such as in the Caribbean. In the language, when referring to a person the sound “ntu” is used. Widely defined, the word means “people.” BantuFest is thus the people’s festival.

A motion to approve the date, time and location for BantuFest on August 6 at Crossroads Park from 10:00 a.m. to 9:00 p.m. was made by Ms. Scott. The motion was seconded by Mr. Christiansen and the motion carried unanimously.

7. NEW BUSINESS

❖ Application of Intent: Movies in the Park

Chair Freeburg said she was not aware of any changes to the event from previous years.

A motion to approve the event was made by Mr. Heider. The motion was seconded by Captain Sanabria and the motion carried unanimously.

❖ Application of Intent: Bellevue Family 4th

Mr. Ogliore allowed that there was a public safety concern after the event in 2021 owing to the overly large crowd. Bellevue was the only such show that year and drew attendees from all over the region. It has been confirmed that the SeaFair Lake Union event will happen in 2022, as will the shows in Tacoma, Kirkland and other cities, which should help to reduce attendance at the Bellevue event. Consideration is being given to opening more space for folks to sit and view the fireworks by shrinking the size of the family fun zone and moving it to another area. The main stage will also be condensed and possibly moved to the plaza area by the pond to accommodate more viewing space.

Sgt. Shovlin stated that one of the problems in 2021 was having the show at the end. Returning to a full-day event will keep people from all coming right at the end.

A motion to approve the annual Bellevue Family 4th at Downtown Park on July 4 from 2:00 p.m. to 11:00 p.m., based on current conditions and the routing and location subcommittee requirements, was made by Mr. Christiansen. The motion was seconded by Mr. Nelson and the motion carried unanimously.

❖ Post-Event Evaluations – None

❖ Comments/Follow-up

Mr. Heider pointed out that the Committee voted to approve the date, time and location for the Rock’n’Roll half marathon before seeing any setup plans for Downtown Park. He noted that the plans include a beer garden. Alcohol is not permitted in city parks and he said had he known they intended to include a beer garden he may not have voted in favor of approving the event. Chair Freeburg said that issue is in the hands of the City Manager’s Office and the parks director. She said the issue is being addressed but it is not yet clear what the outcome will be. Mr. Heider said his concern was that someone from another festival could participate in the Rock’n’Roll marathon, see the beer garden, and wonder why their event was not permitted to have alcohol. Chair Freeburg said a criteria is being developed to determine what events can and cannot have alcohol.

Captain Sanabria said it is necessary to have a permit from the Liquor Control Board to be allowed to serve alcohol at an event. The process for obtaining the permit is laborious, time-consuming and expensive. There is a requirement to bring on additional security to control access. At the San Diego event, most who visited the beer garden were drinking the sponsors near-beer products, though in the VIP section there was regular beer and champagne. It was not the more traditional party beer garden.

8. NEXT MEETING

❖ March 10, 2022

8. ADJOURNMENT

Chair Freeburg adjourned the meeting at 10:07 a.m.