

CITY OF BELLEVUE
SPECIAL EVENTS COMMITTEE
MEETING MINUTES

February 13, 2025
8:30 a.m.

Bellevue City Hall
Virtual Meeting

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Susan Freeburg – Chair
Rick Bailey – Parks
Kyle Nelson – Fire
Robert Spingler – Police
Casiano Atienza – Transportation
Eric Stewart – King County Metro
Neal Christiansen – Community Representative - East
Laurie Scott – Community Representative - Downtown
Mike Ogliore – Business Representative - Downtown
Meredith Langridge – Event Promoter, Position 1

OTHERS PRESENT: Emily Martella, Parks; Councilmember Stokes; Maggie Whittemore – Fire; Christopher Rivera – Transportation; Nathan Hasselblad – Finance and Asset Management; Bethany Kogut – Climate Justice Education; Brett Bernsten - Emergency Management; Lizzette Flores – Community Development

RECORDING SECRETARY: Gerry Lindsay

1. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 8:32 a.m. by Chair Freeburg who presided.

2. COMMUNICATIONS: Written and Oral - None

3. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

A motion to approve the agenda was made by Laurie Scott. The motion was seconded by Meredith Langridge and the motion carried unanimously.

4. APPROVAL OF MEETING MINUTES

A motion to approve the January 9, 2025, meeting minutes as submitted was made by Laurie Scott. The motion was seconded by Meredith Langridge and the motion carried unanimously.

5. COMMITTEE REPORTS

❖ Routing and Location Subcommittee Report

Casiano Atienza noted that a meeting was held with the Ukrainian festival event, and said there are meetings scheduled with CRY Holi and All In For Autism. The Valentine's Day Dash on February 8 was also acknowledged.

6. OLD BUSINESS

❖ Post-Event Evaluation

A. New Year's Eve Night Market 2024

Chair Freeburg said the New Year's Eve night market, which took place on New Year's Eve 2024., drew approximately 10,000 attendees and was held at the intersection of Old Main and 103rd Avenue NE. The evaluation noted positive aspects such as favorable weather, an increase in pedestrian flow starting at 3:00 p.m. Vendor load-in went well. The Bellevue Life Spring Hospitality tent was recognized for its complimentary cookies. The requirement for vendors to have flame-retardant booths was a challenge but the majority were in compliance. There were issues with traffic management throughout the event at the north end of 102nd Avenue NE, notably caused by vehicles driving down the road attempting to get to locations on Main Street. Additional signage and traffic deterrence was needed west of Bellevue Way and Main Street. Northbound traffic on Bellevue Way in the left-turn lane could not turn, thus the lane was blocked. Identifying local power sources was a challenge. Police were present and visible though vehicles were not precisely sited as part of the barricade as expected on the site plan. The eastbound part of Main Street at 103rd Avenue NE did have a police vehicle acting as a barricade. An earlier no-parking enforcement time would be beneficial along with an earlier closure of Main Street. Twenty-five percent of the vendors commented on needing more time to set up before the event opening, and the production team remarked on needing more time to set up lights. Some vendors canceled due to a lack of setup time.

Kyle Nelson shared concerns about the event making last minute changes to street closures. There was a hard closure that was not expected. There were communication delays, which were partly attributed to staff unavailability. The importance of prompt and clear communication from event organizers was stressed to avoid disruptions that might affect public safety and operational efficiency.

Robert Spingler said it is always challenging getting people to work the event on New Year's Eve. The feedback will be useful for making improvements. There were a lot of last-minute issues that are always challenging to address, and a lot of delay on the side of the organizer.

Casiano Atienza said transportation also received feedback in terms of closure start times. That will be reviewed for next year.

Neal Christiansen said the known last-minute issues encountered should be brought up early in the process for next year. Chair Freeburg said the last-minute issues have been a pattern for the organizers, and they have been brought up before. Hopefully under the new system where

approvals will not be issued until certain things are addressed will improve things.

Christopher Rivera allowed that there was a lot the organizer was trying to address at the last-minute, including getting vendors in and positioned. Police and transportation pitched a more open footprint which was helpful for everyone. Hopefully things will go smoother next time.

❖ Tabled Application(s) of Intent

A. 2025 New Year's Eve Night Market

Chair Freeburg said the application from Ascend Hospitality asks for New Year's Eve 2025 from 3:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m. on Old Main from Bellevue Way to 102nd Avenue NE and on 103rd Avenue NE to Main Street. The application indicates 6000 attendees, which likely is too low.

Neal Christiansen noted from the application that the organizer wants the road closure to begin at 9:00 a.m., which is a lot earlier. Chair Freeburg said the Committee could decide to allow the Routing and Location subcommittee to deliberate whether or not closing that early is feasible.

Mike Ogliore suggested seeking consensus with the Old Bellevue Merchants Association group in regard to the earlier closure time. Chair Freeburg said there have been ongoing conversations with that group and things moved from requiring 100 percent approval to just a notification. Mike Ogliore agreed to give preliminary approval and allowing the details to be worked out in subsequent meetings.

Robert Spingler said the earlier closure time would actually be better for the police.

Kyle Nelson said fire had no concerns with the earlier closure.

Christopher Rivera said transportation would prefer some continued discussions regarding timing.

There was agreement to let the Routing and Location subcommittee discuss the issue in order to assure proper coordination before final approval.

Laurie Scott voiced concern over the potential attendance growth for the event, considering that attendance had doubled the previous year. The question asked was if the current application was able to accommodate more than 10,000 attendees.

Kyle Nelson said an increased attendance may equate to more on-site staffing from fire.

Robert Spingler said the same was true for police. The 2024 event had four officers assigned and for 2025 there will need to be five or six.

Christopher Rivera stressed the need to take another look at the area and how it could be impacted by unforeseen growth. Historic footage could be used to assess traffic impacts.

A motion to approve the 2025 New Year's Eve Night Market was made by Kyle Nelson. The motion was seconded by Neal Christiansen and the motion carried unanimously.

It was confirmed that the time of road closure will be discussed further and decided at a later time.

B. Northwest Ukrainian International Festival

Chair Freeburg noted that the application seeks a return to Downtown Park. The organizers submitted a paper application which has brought them into the new system. Each department is expected to provide information based on discussions from a recent Routing and Location subcommittee meeting that was held because additional details were needed before approval could be granted. The festival is scheduled for September 6, 2025, from 10:00 a.m. to 9:00 p.m.

Neal Christiansen noted from the application that setup is slated to occur on the two days prior to the event and questioned whether that much setup time is needed. Emily Martella confirmed that the application indicates setup from 5:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m. on September 4.

Kyle Nelson noted that the extended setup period would provide additional business days for pre-event inspections by police, fire, and transportation personnel, although it could also result in some disruption to normal park users and neighboring residents.

Chair Freeburg allowed that food vendors has been a recurring issue. Proof and signoff from the vendors about having the proper cooking equipment will be required.

Kyle Nelson commented on having communicated with the vendors about the permitting requirements and having set a deadline, which was July 3, 60 days before the event. The discussion with the organizer include not using improvised flame heating devices in the grass. The previous use of such equipment did not comply with the fire code, and it was made clear to the organizer that vendors must follow the approved guidelines. Rick Bailey added that parks will provide the organizer with an example of an acceptable cooking apparatus.

Rick Bailey said the additional setup time will not be an issue for parks given that it is after hours.

Chair Freeburg said the main impact from the additional setup time could be disruption to normal park users. Concern was voiced about exactly what will be set up early. Certainly three days of sound will not be allowed. It will need to be made clear to the organizer that the early setup will not include sound. Previously, the event began sound early on the setup day and operated in a manner that resembled a party, creating significant disruption for nearby residents. The guidelines will need to be clearly outlined along with an emphasis on strictly enforcing the guidelines and conditions that are established.

No additional comments were offered from police or transportation.

Laurie Scott pointed out that in the past there were numerous issues encountered and promises from the organizer that certain things would be done, but then they were not done. The Committee had called for having a person who could be held responsible during the event for issues that arise. It is likely that the pattern of agreeing to follow the rules and not following the rules will continue. Chair Freeburg said a contact person was identified for the 2024 event. They are looking to hire an event professional for 2025, but that person has not been hired yet. It is hoped the event will follow through with having a professional event person to work with.

Laurie Scott asked if approval of the event could be made contingent on hiring a professional organizer. Chair Freeburg said the Committee is only able to recommend. Laurie Scott suggested the Committee should decide on the number of opportunities allowed to make corrections. Although the event is valued, it has presented more challenges than any other event in recent memory. The expectation is that the organizers will demonstrate accountability by honoring their commitments and addressing issues promptly.

Sharing a comment from Chief Oltman, Kyle Nelson said the Ukrainian Festival should anticipate additional staffing requirements. Part of the agreement in 2024 was that the festival would be responsible for the full cost, though a discount was provided because of the significant increase in fees. The Ukrainian festival did fulfill all its financial obligations for 2024, which was regarded as an excellent outcome.

Chair Freeburg said the event paid SEC and parks permit fees.

A motion to approve the Northwest Ukrainian International Festival with contingencies discussed was made by Neal Christiansen. The motion was seconded by Laurie Scott and the motion carried unanimously.

6. NEW BUSINESS

❖ Post-Event Evaluation(s)

A. Bellevue Downtown Ice Rink

Mike Ogliore thanked all the departments for their support of the event. It is a big lift and is appreciated. Despite an increase in activity for the overnight security team, the event attracted between 50,000 and 60,000 attendees over a seven-week period. The event dates for the next will be tweaked; experience has shown that beginning on the Friday before Thanksgiving and continuing through Martin Luther King Day resulted in better outcomes. Attendance was slightly lower due to the return of a competing event in Seattle.

Kyle Nelson, Rick Bailey and Casiano Atienza remarked on everything having gone well for their respective departments.

B. Washington State Martial Arts Association

Chair Freeburg read the post event evaluation that stated the event in Crossroads Park enjoyed thorough preparation during the months preceding the event. Volunteers were instrumental in setting up vendor booths and managing exhibitors, and the event day was marked by pleasant weather and positive participant feedback. The overall planning was deemed essential to the success of the festival. Programming was outstanding, with twenty martial arts groups performing, and parking was managed effectively. There were no unforeseen issues or safety concerns, and their only suggestion was to begin marketing efforts earlier in the planning process.

No additional comments were offered from any of the department representatives regarding the event.

C. Snowflake Lane

Chair Freeburg read the post event evaluation which stated, the opening the inside Lincoln Square lane had a very positive overall impact, and the mild weather during most of the event contributed to its success. The removal of the fence was highlighted as a beneficial change that will be maintained in future events. Additional staffing from Kemper Development Company for the lane viewing and increased security provided by police contributed to smooth operations, including effective road closures, chain line management, and overall safety. The prohibition of street vendors from the permit zone was well received as it enhanced crowd safety. The clear and accurate information provided to guests was considered to be immensely helpful. The organizers modified their messaging regarding how guests should proceed to the street viewing area, particularly to accommodate guests with disabilities, after the first night of the event. The only safety concerns involved the presence of protesters and the need to continue monitoring any encroachment by street vendors. Many of the positive changes implemented during the previous year were beneficial and will be continued going forward, including additional staffing, an expanded viewing area, enhanced vendor monitoring, the removal of the fence, and the continued presence of police and security personnel.

Neal Christiansen remarked on having attended the event with family and said the placement of ropes a little way into the street allowed for safe access and helped to manage the crowds effectively along the sidewalks.

Kyle Nelson said clearing the curb lane for the crowd worked well. An additional fourteen to sixteen security personnel were needed to properly set up the chains and cones. Expanding operations to the opposite side of the street was not possible because there was no buffer between the crowd and parade vehicles. The practice was recommended for continuation in the following year. Kemper Development Company acknowledged a discrepancy in the budgeted amount and indicated that full upstaffing on weekends would be anticipated and billed accordingly. I

Robert Spingler said communications were improved and said the command post performed much better during the event.

Kyle Nelson highlighted the effectiveness of the campaign to reduce weekend crowds while increasing weekday management, with total attendance reaching 315,000. Kemper Development Company Security plans to continue using drone antenna systems to determine the location of drone pilots and the origin of drone flights. In one instance, a drone originating from Factoria was observed operating above Snowflake. The police were unable to contact the operator, and plans were made to pre-deploy an officer next year to the apartment from which the drone was believed to have been launched. Kemper Development Company will not be changing the Christmas Eve start time next year. Although the mall will be open, the stores inside will remain closed. Any inconsistency in start time could lead to confusion.

Robert Spingler said there are ongoing conversations throughout the year concerning the event. Police was pleased with the outcome.

Christopher Rivera reported that overall transportation did not hear any complaints. Some footage was received showing the intersection of Bellevue Way and NE 8th Street that showed the crowd was spilling into the outside eastbound lane. Although it was not clear whether that occurred every night, the transportation team believes the issue might be managed by employing additional volunteers or by setting up rope barriers to prevent the crowd from extending into the travel lanes. The footage showed individuals walking beyond the crosswalk within the intersection. The police were present and were controlling the area by placing cones to direct vehicles into a single through lane. Next year efforts should be made to ensure that people do not come too close to the travel lanes, possibly by stationing volunteers at the curb.

Chair Freeburg commented that December 23 is always a big night with a large crowd. It was encouraging that many of the issues from the previous year were resolved with only minor adjustments.

❖ 2025 Applications of Intent

A. Washington State Martial Arts Festival

Chair Freeburg noted that the 2024 event had proceeded smoothly without any real concerns. The 2025 event is planned for September 20 in Crossroads Park, running from 10:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., with an anticipated participation of approximately 3,000 individuals.

Neal Christiansen asked how that number matches to the number of attendees for the 2024 event. Chair Freeburg noted the 2024 event drew about 1,000. The projection of 3000 may be wishful thinking.

There was agreement that the requirements for the event would not need to change significantly regardless of whether attendance reaches 1000 or 3000.

A motion to approve the 2025 Martial Arts Festival in Crossroads Park was made by Rick Bailey. The motion was seconded by Meredith Langridge and the motion carried unanimously.

B. Garden d'Lights

Chair Freeburg said the Garden Delights event for the 2025 holiday season at the Bellevue Botanical Gardens runs from after Thanksgiving through the holiday period. No changes are anticipated to the event. A daily attendance of 4,000 is projected which will calculate out to some 70,000 visitors overall.

A motion to approve Garden Delights for 2025 was made by Rick Bailey. The motion was seconded by Robert Spingler and the motion carried unanimously.

C. Revel Revolution Ride

Chair Freeburg Revel Revolution Ride is a new bicycle ride event. The event is scheduled to begin and end in the Bellevue College parking lot. The Cascade Bicycle Club has organized similar events in the past without the need for a permit given that rules of the road were followed. The event organizer submitted an application for review to ensure that there are no changes to the event footprint and that any potential impacts will be considered. The event is expected to have approximately 300 participants.

Neal Christiansen asked if there are any congestion points that become problems owing to the event. Robert Spingler the main issue occurs right at the start of the event as the participants are bunched up. However, based on past experience so long as the rules of the road are followed by the projected 300 participants, things work themselves out quickly.

Christopher Rivera suggested a full special event permit is not necessary. A simple street use permit would suffice to include conditions regarding sign placement and other safety measures.

Kyle Nelson said those staffing the route should be aware of their positions and know how to report their location if they needed to call for assistance.

Robert Spingler asked if police could charge the event for officers should they be deemed necessary, even if no Special Event Permit is required. Chair Freeburg said the police department can charge for their services.

A motion to not require a Special Event Permit for Revel Revolution Ride was made by Laurie Scott. The motion was seconded by Neal Christiansen and the motion carried unanimously.

D. Fred Hutch Obliteride

Chair Freeburg said the bike ride event occurs annually and passes through a portion of Bellevue.

Christopher Rivera asked why the event is not classified as a Special Events Committee event, noting that each year traffic control and police support are requested at specific intersections, and given that the number of participants exceeds 500. The application does not specifically identify any signalized intersections where police support is needed. The event should have a Special

Event Permit with specific provisions spelled out. Chair Freeburg remarked that in previous years the ride has been a continuous route without distinct stopping points. The participants are spread out over a large period of time and there is no need for full coordination or permitting with the Special Events Committee.

Kyle Nelson shared comments from Chief Oltman indicating that the organizers had mentioned a 5K route without being clear as to whether or not it is inside Bellevue. The organizers did indicate that three emergency medical services units would be involved, one from Seattle and two that were to be determined. Such units could be provided by Bellevue, Eastside Fire or Redmond, and that should be clarified.

It was agreed that the organizers should be invited to attend the next meeting to address the outstanding questions, including what the application stated in regard to street closures in Bellevue where no actual streets are anticipated to be closed.

E. Bellevue Arts Fair

Chair Freeburg said the returning event is scheduled for July 25, 26 and 27. The event will run from 10:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m. on the first two days and from 10:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. on Sunday. The is organized by the Bellevue Arts Museum.

Kyle Nelson pointed out that the Bellevue Arts Museum had not yet paid its outstanding bill from 2024. Mike Ogliore acknowledged the issue as being part of the museum's ongoing financial challenges. The Bellevue Downtown Arts Market and the Bellevue Art Museum Fair will be marketing and promoting a generic arts fair weekend, more so than has been done in the past. The museum is well aware of the need to have a financial plan to cover its unpaid bills. The event is a core revenue tenant for the museum.

Kyle Nelson also shared a comment from Chief Oltman regarding the fact that historically the event has included staffing one aid car. The size of the crowd, however, necessitates increasing the number of personnel from two to seven. It was suggested that a representative from the museum meet with Chief Oltman to discuss the issues. Mike Ogliore agreed that would be a smart thing to do.

A motion to approve the Bellevue Arts Fair for 2025 was made by Kyle Nelson. The motion was seconded by Laurie Scott and the motion carried unanimously.

F. Elevate Shade the Brilliance

Chair Freeburg said the event occurred in 2024 in Downtown Park. Although the event experienced a rainy day, no major concerns were reported. The event is scheduled for June 8 and is expected to attract approximately 500 participants, with setup arranged around the circle.

Rick Bailey pointed out an error in the application regarding the setup date and time, which was indicated as occurring on the weekend before the event. Chair Freeburg acknowledged the error

and said the organizers would be instructed to adjust the application accordingly.

A motion to approve the Shade the Brilliance event for 2025 was made by Rick Bailey. The motion was seconded by Robert Spingler and the motion carried unanimously.

7. NEXT MEETING

❖ March 13, 2025

8. ADJOURNMENT

Chair Freeburg adjourned the meeting at 9:41a.m.