

CITY OF BELLEVUE
SPECIAL EVENTS COMMITTEE
MEETING MINUTES

September 11, 2025
8:30 a.m.

Bellevue City Hall
Virtual Meeting

MEMBERS PRESENT: Susan Freeburg – Parks
Rick Bailey – Parks
Andrew Oltman – Fire
Maggie Whittemore – Fire
Robert Spingler – Police
Casiano Atienza – Transportation
Laurie Scott – Community Representative - Downtown
Mike Ogliore – Business Representative - Downtown
Bethany Kogut – Utilities
Eric Stewart – King County Metro
Camilo Penuela – King County Metro

OTHERS PRESENT: Emily Martella, Parks; Councilmember Sumadiwirya;
Hazel Phillips, Emergency Management; Alex Clark,
FAM; Nathan Hasselblad, FAM; Ross Fryberg, Fire

RECORDING SECRETARY: Gerry Lindsay

1. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 8:31 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 Rob Spingler. The motion was seconded by Laurie Scott and the motion carried unanimously.

4. APPROVAL OF MEETING MINUTES

A motion to approve the August 14, 2025, meeting minutes as submitted was made by Laurie Scott. The motion was seconded by Rick Bailey and the motion carried unanimously.

5. COMMITTEE REPORTS

❖ Routing and Location Subcommittee Report

Casiano Atienza noted that since the last meeting, the Subcommittee had met regarding the Kelsey Creek Farm Fair and the Out of Darkness Walk. Out of Darkness is new to the calendar, while Kelsey Creek is a recurring event. Significant upcoming events include the Downtown Ice

Rink, Snowflake Lane, Garden Delights, and the New Year's Eve Night Market, each of which will be addressed in upcoming Routing and Location meetings.

6. **OLD BUSINESS** - None

6. **NEW BUSINESS**

❖ Post-Event Evaluations

A. Bellevue International Festival

Chair Freeburg said the event, held for the second year in a row at Crossroads Park, expanded in size compared to the first year. Attendance reached approximately 2000, a large increase from the 500 the previous year. The event featured twelve diverse performers, six food vendors, and nine artisanal vendors. It also included water stations, snacks, engaging arts and crafts, international board games, face painting, fire engine tours, self-defense demonstrations, and booths from five community organizations and six city departments. The weather was favorable, and attendance flowed steadily throughout the day. The successful aspects of the event included renting tents, the stage vendor's effectiveness, and the central placement of children's activities. Many attendees brought blankets and chairs to enjoy the performances. No significant problems arose, aside from a missing child who was quickly reunited with family, some children with minor scrapes, and one food truck that struck a basketball hoop. The new Eproval application system was described by the organizer as being efficient and easy to use.

The list of suggestions for next year included allocating more planning time, establishing a city core team for coordination, aligning with sponsorships and vendors earlier, and tightening up the organizational procedures.

Maggie Whittemore said Fire reported no issues.

Rick Baily praised the stage vendor as one of the best the city had ever used and recommended retaining them.

Casiano Atienza said Transportation encountered no issues.

Rob Spingler also reported no issues on behalf of Police.

Eric Stewart reported that King County Metro encountered no problems.

B. Bellevue Children's Business Fair

Chair Freeburg noted that the event has now run for three consecutive years. The fair featured 75 youth-owned businesses, and the participants ranging in age from six to 16. The event provided an opportunity for children to explore entrepreneurship. The event occurred on a very hot day but everything ran smoothly overall. Setup and takedown were efficient, and the rental companies had no problems entering or exiting. There were, however, some permitting challenges,

specifically in regard to a temporary special events license required from the Tax Office, which was only communicated to the organizers shortly before the event. Parking was an issue for some late-arriving families.

Chair Freeburg said one safety concern occurred when an individual entered the event shouting and asking for money, which made some child vendors feel unsafe. Providing security at the event next year will be considered.

In regard to what could be improved next year, the organizers suggested that more transparency and clear deadlines are needed in the permitting process.

Maggie Whittemore confirmed that there had been a fire inspection and that it went smoothly.

Chair Freeburg clarified that the Tax Office requirement was included in the new system and noted that many organizers had overlooked the detailed information. There is a learning curve involved for both staff and the participants.

C. Pakistan Independence Day

Chair Freeburg said the Pakistan Independence Day event on August 16 in Downtown Park enjoyed generally pleasant weather; there were some early morning showers but it caused no disruption to the program. Wet ground was an issue, and it was suggested by the organizer that sand or another method be used to prevent slippery areas in future years. The event proceeded according to plan, and collaboration between staff and the Parks team was noted as a success. The list of challenges included a shortage of power outlets, the need for King County health permits, and reserved parking stalls for garbage bins being occupied by park visitors.

Rick Bailey suggested that next year the organizers use volunteers to monitor the reserved parking. Park staff cannot manage that responsibility during the event. There were some individuals who attempted to drive personal vehicles into the park to drop off or pick up family members, something that will need to be addressed with the organizer in the future.

Rob Spingler added that the organizer had requested to have officers remove bollards so that vendors could drive trucks into the park for load-out, but the request was denied. There were some minor incidents reported, including lost property and one minor medical issue that Police assisted with.

Chair Freeburg commented that every year attendees are reminded not to drive personal vehicles into the park, yet the issue recurs annually. Parking remains a repeated concern, as staff can block spaces, but cannot provide personnel to enforce management, leaving that responsibility to the event organizers. Despite those recurring issues, the overall assessment of the event was positive.

Maggie Whittemore added that during the Fire inspection it was discovered that the stage had not been set up according to the map. In the future the organizer should be clearer in regard to what

they have on their site plans, and Fire can improve by asking more questions in advance.

D. Arts in the Garden

Chair Freeburg said the event, hosted by the Bellevue Botanical Garden Society, ran from August 22 through August 24. The event proceeded smoothly with no major changes, except that the high heat required additional support. The staff and volunteers provided water and guided attendees to refill stations and indoor cooling areas. One food truck canceled on Sunday due to the heat, but the second truck was alerted in advance to handle the increased demand. Overall the event went smoothly. The positive elements included the continued partnership with LAZ Parking, which helped manage traffic flow on Main Street and into the gardens. The artist setup and takedown went well, though some vendors requested more time to prepare their booths. A post-event survey is planned to gather additional feedback.

The organizer reported they valued time spent connecting with the Special Events Committee to address issues such as the first aid station and accessibility planning. However, the garden society was not informed in advance of a temporary special events license fee of five dollars per vendor per day. The unexpected cost was covered by the society, but future planning will incorporate the fee into artist registration costs. No safety or security concerns were reported.

With regard to improvement for next year, the organizer plans to adjust the Friday opening hours to reduce peak congestion, possibly shifting the public opening from noon to 1:00 p.m. to give vendors more setup time. The organizer is also considering how to better communicate with the artists regarding pre-sales and informing visitors through “know before you go” materials about peak visitation times. The plan is to also highlight passenger drop-off zones to alleviate accessible parking shortages.

Rick Bailey remarked that on Friday the overflow lot at Wilburton Park was full; it was made worse by some contractor work at the park that closed some stalls. Cars parked illegally in no parking zones, which obstructed the maintenance staff. The importance of having an improved parking management plan next year was stressed.

E. Jubilee REACH Celebration in the Park

Chair Freeburg said the event was held at Downtown Park on August 24. The weather was favorable and setup went smoothly. The organizers praised the meetings held in advance with city staff, noting that the assistance was very helpful. While the new online form was challenging to use initially, the organizer anticipates that future submissions before the December 15 deadline will be easier. There were some challenges that arose due to the form, including requirements for two police officers instead of one and for five staff members with crowd control training. The requirements created difficulties but were resolved. During the event a woman disrupted proceedings by announcing another event and distributing flyers, but the police officer on site handled the situation effectively.

With regard to future planning, the organizer expressed concern about loading heavy equipment

with personal vehicles, which raises questions of insurance coverage. Despite the issues, the organizer expressed gratitude for the city's support and especially highlighted Emily Martella for exceptional responsiveness.

Chair Freeburg said some complaints were lodged regarding sound at the event. Some residents said the volume exceeded that of even larger events at the park. While the event has a history of occasional sound issues, last year's sound was managed well, but this year the problem resurfaced. Staff has reached out to the organizer regarding the issue and has communicated what will need to happen moving forward.

❖ Comments / Follow-up

Chair Freeburg remarked that the post-event evaluation for the Ganesh Festival held at Crossroads Park had not yet been received. There were some definite issues and concerns regarding the event.

Rick Bailey said the biggest problem was the absence of organizers on site to manage the vendors. That resulted in preventable damage to the park. Multiple written and oral conditions were ignored. Some vendors acted independently without oversight. Parks staff emphasized that future events will require organizers to play a much stronger management role.

Maggie Whittemore said one stage had not been disclosed in the permit process and it included prohibited flammable tarps hanging around the truss system. The event also featured an LED wall that had been explicitly denied. Staff invested considerable effort in reviewing the plans, but they were subsequently disregarded.

Casiano Atienza reported that the organizers had proposed a parade only weeks before the event, which did not allow time for review and was therefore denied. After that decision, no further communication was received by Transportation.

Rob Spingler said officers on site observed the use of a fire station driveway as a drop-off point for elderly and mobility-challenged attendees, an arrangement that had not been discussed prior to the event. The event started late and ended late each evening, extending beyond the approved hours. Officers on site also noted that the organizers were more focused on participating than managing, which worsened the situation.

Chair Freeburg added that on Friday before the official start of the event the organizers hosted an unpermitted gathering of more than 300 people that included amplified sound and continued until almost 11:00 p.m.. The event extended past midnight every day of the event, even though the approved end time was 8:00 p.m. The stage vendor tore down in the stage in the middle of the night in opposition to explicit instructions. The stage submitted in the permitting documents by the organizers had no trellises, and in fact all of their documents said they would not have any such thing, which was reiterated in in-person meetings. What they actually erected was two very large stages, one of which had not been permitted for the weight placed on it. The organizers disregarded conditions repeatedly and were rude to staff.

Chair Freeburg confirmed that leadership discussions were underway and added that sanctions will be applied. The organizers more than likely will be suspended from holding events in Bellevue for one or two years due to repeated violations and safety risks.

Maggie Whittemore asked if the sanctions would apply only to the specific event or to the organizer overall. Chair Freeburg clarified that the sanctions will apply to the organizer, not just to the event.

7. NEXT MEETING

❖ October 9, 2025

8. ADJOURNMENT

Chair Freeburg adjourned the meeting at 9:05 a.m.