

CITY OF BELLEVUE  
SPECIAL EVENTS COMMITTEE  
MEETING MINUTES

October 10, 2024  
8:30 a.m.

Bellevue City Hall  
Virtual Meeting

**MEMBERS PRESENT:** Susan Freeburg – Parks  
Andrew Oltman – Fire  
Vincent Stroud – Fire  
Robert Spingler – Police  
Casiano Atienza – Transportation  
Christopher Rivera – Transportation  
Lisa Siegman – Development Services  
Jonathan Rose – King County Metro  
Neal Christiansen – Community Representative - East  
Laurie Scott – Community Representative - Downtown  
Mike Ogliore – Business Representative - Downtown

**OTHERS PRESENT:** Councilmember Stokes; Eric Stewart, King County Metro;  
Lizzette Flores, Community Development; Claude Iosso,  
City Manager’s Office; Hazel Phillips, Office of  
Emergency Management

**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 Laurie Scott. The motion was seconded by Jonathan Rose and the motion carried unanimously.

**4. APPROVAL OF MEETING MINUTES**

A motion to approve the September 12, 2024, meeting minutes as submitted was made by Laurie Scott. The motion was seconded by Casiano Atienza and the motion carried unanimously.

**5. COMMITTEE REPORTS**

❖ Routing and Location Subcommittee Report

Casiano Atienza reported that the subcommittee is continuing to focus on all upcoming events, including Snowflake Lane and the Downtown ice rink.

**6. OLD BUSINESS - None**

**6. NEW BUSINESS**

❖ Post-Event Evaluations

A. Crossroads Movies in the Park

Chair Freeburg noted from the post-event review that the August event hosted between 1000 and 1500 persons for each movie. All went smoothly and for the most part the weather was good. The layout used sought to minimize blocking the path and that worked well. Parking, setup and takedown all went well, though there was an issue in the men's restroom regarding which the police had to be called. There were some equipment issues with the trailer; a contingency plan is being developed for next year. New to the event was the inclusion of vendors selling food.

B. Indian Independence Day Parade

Chair Freeburg said the event took place on the City Hall plaza. According to the post-event review, the weather conditions were good, allowing the event to showcase diverse programming, cultural performances, music, dance and vendors. The site plan was well organized with designated areas for performances, food stalls and vendor booths. The layout allowed for a smooth flow of people. There was ample parking. Load-in/load-out went well.

According to the event organizer, there were some delays in getting approval from the transportation department, and that affected the timeline for receiving final approval. The requirements were challenging, including the placement of water barriers, grandstand locations and parking access to City Hall. A different venue might be considered for next year, possibly Downtown Park. Earlier event approval is needed, along with a longer parade route.

Christopher Rivera allowed that the timeline for approval was somewhat compressed. All city departments were working from the same page in regard to the event, and messaging was consistent. However, requests made to Beats of Redmond were not always fulfilled, possibly because the organizer did not agree with the direction provided by the Special Events Committee. The organizer did on occasion seek approvals elsewhere, which meant transportation simply was informed what was going to happen. That led to longer timeframes in getting things approved, making things challenging. It was not clear what all would be happening with the parade up to the day of the event. The application said there were more than 800 people attending the event, but on the day of it was possibly closer to 3000 or 4000, and there were some people out in the travel lanes of NE 4th Street. There were, thankfully, no injuries. Better direction could have been provided by the organizer in terms of informing spectators where to go; there were drop-offs occurring at the intersection, which stopped traffic. There were even cars parking three deep within the intersection of NE 6th Street and 110<sup>th</sup> Avenue NE along with the box trucks that were allowed to be there.

Chair Freeburg allowed that clearly there had been major communication issues. The location was also not conducive to what the event end up being, which is not what the Committee was told it would be.

Andrew Oltman noted having no specific feedback as far as operations was concerned. Next year they will need the list of dignitaries well in advance to assist coordination efforts with police and

the development of action plans.

Robert Spingler echoed the concerns regarding a lack of communication. On some level it was lucky that there were no major safety issues. A change of location would be appropriate for next year. Some of the last-minute changes were not helpful. It is important to know as far out as possible which dignitaries will be attending. There are solid reasons for having set timelines in regard to the application period.

Chair Freeburg said there was an issue with a drone at the event for which the organizer claimed to have received approval from the Committee, which was not true. The organizer also claimed the city manager had given permission to use the drone. The drone was used even though it was against the regulations. Information about the attendance of dignitaries was still being received up to an hour before the event. On the plus side, the attendees had a good time.

Jonathan Rose said the King County Metro supervisors on scene reported that the event would have benefited from having more active traffic control. It is recognized that the police are spread thin and there are other reasons as well, but it was a concern to see the traffic control component left up to traffic signals. If the event is held in the same location again, which hopefully it will not be, there should be more active traffic control if possible.

Councilmember Stokes agreed that the event was a good one, but it was also frustrating for the department staff. Councilmember Stokes offered to talk to folks up the line to see what can be done to help make sure there is ample planning time and resources. Clearly there were issues, including with the venue; having it in a different location might help.

### C. Flavors of India

Chair Freeburg said the annual event at Crossroads on Labor Day weekend also included a parade. The post-event review indicated that the two-day event enjoyed good weather and all programming went as scheduled. The shuttle service alleviated parking issues. Load-in/load-out went as planned. The portable water spout was moved to improve accessibility in the park. There were two police officers assigned to the event and there were no safety concerns encountered.

Casiano Atienza voiced no concerns regarding transportation.

Robert Spingler allowed that the crowd was bigger than anticipated. That should be taken into account for next year.

### D. Northwest Ukrainian International Festival

Reading from the organizer's post-event review, Chair Freeburg said the event as a whole was successful. There were no injuries, accidents or damage. The weather was good and the programming was good. Parking was a challenge as always, but it was mastered by use of the shuttles. Setup and take down went well though there were struggles with the stage setup and the sound company. Paperwork from the sound company was not submitted on time. Besides the information booth, which had a first aid kit and volunteers, the hospital tent was staffed by two RNs. The organizer noted that every year more is learned about how to prepare ahead of time and how to be more competent. There are always issues that arise that must be addressed. It would be helpful to have a book from the city outlining all necessary steps and permits.

Chair Freeburg said parks staff reported that there were definite improvements over past years,

though there still were issues. Cooking apparatuses that were not approved were used anyway. There were issues with food vendors. The tent company hit the parks sign, which had to be replaced. There were no dead fish in the fountain this year, or sand in the grass.

Robert Spingler said the biggest issue was parking in the neighborhoods. Parking enforcement officers should be staffed up for next year. A lot of complaints were received from the neighborhoods that surround the park concerning illegal parking and disregarding the no parking signs. The organizer could do a much better job of communication with attendees about using public transportation and the shuttles.

Chair Freeburg said fire reported some major issues with the stage. The organizer was informed well in advance of the need to obtain temporary structure permits. When reached out to four days before the event, the organizer claimed never having been told permits were needed. The resulting time period meant not everything could be secured. On the day of the event, fire informed the organizer that the tall poles on which lights and the like are hung could not be erected, nor could they put in place the large canopy that covers the stage. Permission was given to put up the stage itself, but the poles and the canopy was put up anyway. The organizer was asked to present the manufacturer's specifications that the stage had been approved, but the certification offered was from 2012. When asked to have a Washington state inspector sign off on it, the organizer presented a several years old sign-off from a California inspector. A lot of effort was put into trying to make things work for the organizer. The fact that the poles and canopy were installed in direct contradiction to what was allowed was both a safety concern and a violation of the agreement.

Continuing, Chair Freeburg said a meeting was held with the organizer to share the challenges. The feedback from the organizer was that different problems were faced this year. It was pointed out to the organizer that the issues faced every year stem from policies and conditions that are communicated by the city that are not met. Even if the policies change, the fact remains that they are not fulfilling their obligations. The organizer apologized and admitted making the choice to approve the cooking apparatus, but also claimed not having understood that the poles and canopy could not be used, though there was ample documentation stating exactly what they were not allowed to do. A propane-powered torch, such as those used to burn weeds, was even used to heat food. Fire had to intervene due to safety concerns and shut that down.

Chair Freeburg said the organizer was informed last year that unless all requirements were complied with, the event may need to take a year off. That message was consistent repeated throughout the year. While some good strides have been made in some areas, it is concerning that there were clear violations of safety concerns.

Robert Spingler allowed that the organizer has been given multiple last-chance warnings. At some point, there have to be consequences; otherwise, it sends the message that it does not matter. It could be that a full discussion will need to be had at the time application for next year's event is submitted.

Chair Freeburg agreed that consequences, if any, will need to be discussed, along with how to move forward. The event itself is great, and people enjoy it, but safety has to come first. If the structure they put up had failed, there could have been harm. That is why the city puts guidelines in place. With regard to the torch that was used, there is a lot of greenery in the park that could have easily caught fire. Once the organizer submits an application for next year, the Committee will need to have a more robust conversation about how to move forward.

Councilmember Stokes agreed with the need to have conversations sooner rather than later to avoid being in a rush as the event approaches. It puts the city in a difficult position when these issues arise, and it is about their safety as well as that of the public. The event has grown, and as the city grows, it is becoming more complex to manage. Councilmember Stokes noted being glad to help with the discussions and to involve the city manager to find ways to address the challenges before they arise. The city wants the event to be successful, and does not want anyone to get hurt.

Chair Freeburg indicated having informed the organizer that it may be time to seek help in the form of a professional event organizer given how fast the event is growing. The Routing and Location Subcommittee holds more meetings regarding the event than for other events, even including the Fourth of July, because of the struggles that have been encountered. The question is whether they are willing to commit to following the guidelines.

#### E. Bellevue Schools Foundation Block Party

Chair Freeburg reported that everything went according to plan. The Downtown Park event raised about \$35,000 for the foundation. The weather was good. There were 14 tents set up. Parking and load-in/load-out went well. There were no safety concerns.

No feedback was offered by any of the department representatives.

#### ❖ Comments/Follow-up – None

Chair Freeburg reported that work to update the planning guide is under way. The Eproval process is officially underway and will soon be online. Meetings will soon be slated with each department for input.

### 7. NEXT MEETING

❖ November 14, 2024

### 8. ADJOURNMENT

Chair Freeburg adjourned the meeting at 9:19 a.m.