

CITY OF BELLEVUE
SPECIAL EVENTS COMMITTEE
MEETING MINUTES

November 13, 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
Neal Christiansen – Community Representative - East
Bellevue
Mike Ogliore – Business Representative - Downtown
Bethany Kogut – Utilities
Eric Stewart – King County Metro
Meredith Langridge – Visit Bellevue

OTHERS PRESENT:

Emily Martella, Parks; Lizzette Flores, Community
Development; Hazel Phillips, Emergency Management;
Camilo Penuela, King County Metro; Tim Yaw, Fire; Tyler
Pendersen

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 Robert Spingler. The motion was seconded by Casiano Atienza and the motion carried unanimously.

4. APPROVAL OF MEETING MINUTES

A motion to approve the September 11, 2025, meeting minutes as submitted was made by Rick Bailey. The motion was seconded by Robert Spingler and the motion carried unanimously.

5. COMMITTEE REPORTS

❖ Routing and Location Subcommittee Report

Casiano Atienza reported that since the previous meeting the subcommittee had met regarding a

couple of events, with a primary focus on New Year's Eve Night Market where planning efforts are focused. The subcommittee did also discuss Snowflake Lane, planning for which is proceeding smoothly.

6. OLD BUSINESS - None

6. NEW BUSINESS

❖ Post-Event Evaluations

A. Live at Lunch

Mike Ogliore summarized the event as having been largely uneventful, which is a positive thing. There were no major issues encountered. The series had fewer venues than in previous years due to the loss of some locations, which resulted in a total show count in the mid-twenties. However, optimism is high for next year with the expectation that additional venues and new plazas will rejoin the program. The series shifted somewhat away from the Downtown Park Plaza, and new building plazas, such as the Eight, were utilized. There were no sound issues or operational concerns reported

B. Ganesh Ustav

Chair Freeburg said the Ganesh Ustav event was held at Crossroads Park. The written evaluation submitted by the organizers describes the festival as a grand cultural and spiritual celebration dedicated to Lord Ganesh. It was held in a central, family-friendly location with favorable weather that fostered a welcoming atmosphere. The pedestrian flow aligned with the projections; the permitting process was smooth; and no safety or security concerns were reported. The report from the organizers went on to suggest that additional guidance from the city on permit conditions, and the provision of overnight security, would be helpful. Also recommended were improvements to the pedestrian-flow flow, sustainability measures, and extended facility access for multi-day events. The organizers indicated in the report a desire to return the following year, for September 11, 12, 13.

Maggie Whittemore affirmed that the permitting process had not been smooth or straightforward given the number of items not disclosed.

Rick Bailey allowed that although clear guidance was given and multiple onsite meetings were held, the organizer was insufficiently transparent about event plans. Numerous issues arose during setup, throughout both event days and during breakdown. The most significant concern involved the organizer's failure to adhere to the permit, particularly regarding allowable park access times. If the event is to return to Crossroads Park, the city will need to enforce conditions more assertively to ensure compliance.

Robert Spingler added that the on-site officers observed the organizers participating in the event rather than actively managing it, which may have contributed to the operational problems noted by other departments. The officers also reported that event staff had used the adjacent fire station driveway as an informal drop-off and pick-up location for older adults and individuals with disabilities, a practice that will need to be corrected for any future event.

Casiano Atienza reported that transportation had not experienced significant issues. The only point of confusion involved the organizer's inconsistent statements regarding a parade. At one

meeting the organizer indicated there would be one, and at another stated there would not. Ultimately, the parade did not occur, so there was no operational impact.

Chair Freeburg explained that some administrative actions were taken following the event. A formal letter was issued to the organizer outlining multiple violations and notifying them that approval for future events may not be approved. A separate letter was directed to the stage vendor, who was central to several violations, stating that the vendor might not be approved for future events. Both letters were discussed with the City Manager's Office. It was the first time such measures had been deemed necessary, but the extent of documented non-compliance, including last-minute disclosures of trusses previously prohibited, required an administrative response. The organizer may apply in future years, but the city retains the authority to deny approval based on the lack of transparency, trust, and adherence to safety expectations.

C. Northwest Ukrainian International Festival

The Pacific Ukrainian Society's International Ukrainian Festival, held on September 6, 2025, at Downtown Park, saw an attendance of about 25,000, slightly higher than organizers' reported figure of 20,000. The report from the organizers described dramatic weather changes, with smoke the night before, morning rain, wind that cleared the air, and eventually sunshine which ultimately was favorable for the event. The programming was described in the report as the most organized in the festival's history, aided by having five stage hosts and volunteers working in two structured shifts. The parking operations at Sacred Heart School, the Wilburton Park-and-Ride, and the South Bellevue Station all functioned smoothly, with attendee arrivals increasing around 1:00 p.m. The shuttles circulated throughout the day, and the vendor training from prior years contributed to an orderly load-in, setup, and breakdown. The stage microphone turned off at 9:00 p.m., and several food vendors remained slightly past closing time to finish customer orders, but were done by 9:15 p.m. The pedestrian flow remained manageable even during the busiest period between 5:00 p.m. and 6:00 p.m. There were some minor unforeseen issues, including two food vendors for which additional fencing was required, and one vendor who was lacking a fire extinguisher. Several inflatables needed additional sandbags, one of which was temporarily deflated until more sandbags arrived. There were only minor safety conditions in terms of wind, which saw maximum speeds of around five miles per hour. There was a unique safety incident involved an individual known informally as "Roman with the horse," who was also a concern in previous years. After being observed on the upper parking lot, staff approached and held a short, peaceful conversation with the person during which the individual apologized for attending with the horse and left without further issue. The organizer's report included an expression of gratitude toward city staff, the events committee, parks personnel, fire and police staff, and specifically the coordinator who managed much of the communication. The festival's atmosphere was praised as well. The vendors were satisfied, there were joyful children and elders, and the cultural performances included older community members singing about village traditions. Approximately 1300 children received gifts, and the crafts and rides were free. As far as potential improvements going forward, the organizers acknowledged delays in submitting paperwork and expressed a commitment to timely completion of the permit requirements in the future.

Maggie Whittemore said Fire officials reported that the festival proceeded far more smoothly than it has in past years. The vendor tents were compliant with the NFPA 701 standards, which greatly simplified the inspection process. The coordination with the fire permitting staff was effective, and only minor onsite accommodations were needed.

Rick Bailey concurred, noting that the event was the smoothest in the event's history. The

organizers fully complied with all agreed-upon conditions. No park damage occurred. The only operational adjustment involved granting the organizers access to a power cabinet earlier than originally planned, which staff accommodated. Overall, the event went very well.

D. Washington State Martial Arts Festival

Chair Freeburg said the Washington State Martial Arts Festival was held on September 20 at Crossroads Park. According to the organizer's report, the anticipated attendance of 3000 was not met when only about 2000 ultimately participated. Ideal weather conditions contributed to the overall success of the event. While the program generally followed the schedule, execution lacked consistent control, the result of which were minor site-plan adjustments that resulted in a more consolidated layout than originally intended. The event was fantastic overall but parking capacity is an area in need of improvement. Additional parking spaces or a shuttle service could increase participation. One highlight of the event was a "little journalist" program that allowed young attendees to practice reporting skills. There were no unforeseen problems or safety concerns reported. For future iterations, the organizers recommended installation of two permanent poles behind the park's ground stage to support higher backdrops, and more uniform flag displays without additional permit requirements. A shuttle service will be implemented in future years if the budget permits it. The event intends to return in 2026.

Robert Spingler reported that the night before the event it was learned that one of the vendors wanted to do some target shooting using pellet-type devices. The department rejected the notion immediately, emphasizing that such an activity had not been reviewed or approved. The prohibition was reiterated the following morning when it appeared the vendor still believed it might proceed. The activity ultimately did not occur, but the situation highlighted that the city may not always receive full information about vendor activities in advance. The department believes the application or review process should include clearer descriptions of all vendor plans.

Chair Freeburg acknowledged the concern and agreed to discuss possible additional questions or processes after the meeting.

Rick Bailey added that parks had not been informed of the pellet-gun activity during the walkthrough; the disclosure was new information when it came to light. Regarding the request for permanent poles for stage backdrops, parks staff plans to discuss the proposal internally. No other event has made a similar request, but such an installation might benefit multiple events if it is deemed feasible. Apart from those issues, the event went very well.

E. Bellevue Schools Foundation Block Party

Chair Freeburg said the Bellevue Schools Foundation Block Party event was held on September 27 in Downtown Park and saw an attendance of approximately 500. The report indicates the weather conditions were sunny and mild, and the event flow followed the approved site plan. There was smooth access between the plaza and the adjacent parking areas. There were few issues. The main issue involved the tent and inflatable vendor not supplying sufficient weights to meet the fire code requirements, necessitating calls for additional sandbags. There were no safety concerns reported. The organizer intends to return again next September.

Maggie Whittemore said the primary concern involved the bouncy house and making sure it was properly attended and weighted. The tent bracing and weight deficiencies were initially problematic, but the issues were corrected onsite. With those adjustments, the event proceeded smoothly.

F. Fiesta del Maiz

Chair Freeburg said the Fiesta del Maíz event, held on September 27 at Crossroads Park, saw attendance of approximately 600 exceeded the expectations. The organizer's report described the festival as a definitive success and emphasized that the content honored the importance of maize and Mesoamerican Indigenous cultures through cultural education, empowerment, artistic expression, and acknowledgment of ancestral traditions. The program included educational workshops, six food vendors offering traditional maize-based dishes, ten art vendors showcasing pre-colonial-inspired work, and numerous cultural performances such as Aztec dance. The community engagement was supported by six resource tables sharing local information. The report highlighted the suitability of Crossroads Park as a venue and praised its accessibility, mobility, and ease of accommodating food, art, and performance areas. The favorable weather contributed to the high turnout and an overall positive atmosphere. The operational planning and reserved off-site parking helped in managing the large crowd. The layout successfully supported the pedestrian flow, attendee safety, and comfortable seating, while the expansive lawn and shelters facilitated rest areas and gathering points. Load-in and load-out for the 22 vendors was managed efficiently due to the site's configuration and volunteer coordination, and the reserved church parking mitigated longstanding capacity challenges.

Continuing, Chair Freeburg said the report indicated that no unforeseen logistical issues were encountered. The report credited prior festival experience and established communication channels with preventing late-stage complications. The primary safety concern related not to onsite hazards but to the broader political climate, which generated significant fear of immigration enforcement within the community. The event planning committee had even considered canceling the festival due to risks faced by similar regional events. In response, the organizers coordinated closely with the police, sought guidance from immigrant rights groups, and posted safety observers throughout the grounds. However, limitations in communication infrastructure prevented the assurances from reaching all community members, which likely suppressed attendance despite the growth over the prior year.

The report identified communication, marketing, and cultural education as priority areas for improvement. The list of suggestions included securing dedicated funding for marketing efforts, establishing a comprehensive promotional strategy, and utilizing City of Bellevue channels such as newsletters, calendars, and social media. Plans were outlined to develop improved communication systems to mitigate safety fears, create a performer waitlist to maintain a full entertainment schedule, expand youth engagement, and strengthen cultural education. The event intends to return again in 2026.

Rick Bailey reported that the festival ran smoothly with only one operational issue: a portable toilet delivered the day before had been knocked over during the night. The staff quickly restored, sanitized, and restocked the unit before the event. Aside from that incident, all park operations proceeded without difficulty.

❖ 2026 Applications of Intent

A. Paws & Pride Dog Walk

Chair Freeburg said the returning event is proposed for June 6 from 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. at Downtown Park. The circle is used for the walk and the park is used for the festivities. The event is sponsored by the Bellevue Downtown Association.

A motion to approve the date, time and location was made by Casiano Atienza. The motion was seconded by Rick Bailey and the motion carried unanimously.

B. Live at Lunch Concert Series

Chair Freeburg said the application for the Live at Lunch concert series proposes a start date of July 7 and continuing through the summer. The midday event utilizes various city locations, and is sponsored by the Bellevue Downtown Association.

A motion to approve the date, time, and location was made by Casiano Atienza. The motion was seconded by Robert Spingler and the motion carried unanimously.

Chair Freeburg remarked that if no public space locations will be used, a Special Event Permit likely will not be needed.

C. Bellevue Downtown Arts Market

Chair Freeburg said the Bellevue Downtown Arts Market application is a long-standing event that is seeking July 24 to 26 along 106th Avenue NE. The format will remain the same as in previous years.

A motion to approve the date, time, and location was made by Meredith Langridge. The motion was seconded by Neal Christiansen and the motion carried unanimously.

D. All In for Autism 5k Run/Walk

Chair Freeburg noted that the All in for Autism 5K Run/Walk event is seeking April 26 from 8:00 a.m. to 10:00 a.m. It was noted that the organizer had submitted a modification seeking the use of the Downtown Park plaza to accommodate vendor tents in addition to the traditional parking-lot footprint.

A motion to approve the date, time and location was made by Rick Bailey. The motion was seconded by Robert Spingler and the motion carried unanimously.

E. Holi: The Colors Fest 2026

Chair Freeburg said the returning event is planned for Crossroads Park from 11:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. on March 14. The projected attendance is about 4000.

A motion to approve the date, time and location was made by Neal Christiansen. The motion was seconded by Robert Spingler and the motion carried unanimously.

7. NEXT MEETING

❖ December 11, 2025

8. ADJOURNMENT

Chair Freeburg adjourned the meeting at 9:18 a.m.