CITY OF BELLEVUE

SPECIAL EVENTS COMMITTEE
MEETING MINUTES

May 14, 2026 Bellevue City Hall
8:30 a.m. 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 Rep. - East Bellevue
Mike Ogliore – Business Rep. - Downtown
Eric Stewart – King County Metro
Camilo Penuela – King County Metro

OTHERS PRESENT: Emily Martella, Parks; Phyllis White, Julie White, Barbara Hughes, Loretta Lopez, Farmers Market; Lizzette Flores, Community Development; Nathan Hasselblad, Transportation; Claude Iosso, City Manager's Office; Tesslyn Matthes – Utilities; Ross Fryberg, Fire Prevention

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 April 9, 2026, meeting minutes as submitted was made by Maggie Whittemore. The motion was seconded by Rick Bailey and the motion carried unanimously.

5. COMMITTEE REPORTS

- ❖ Routing and Location Subcommittee Report

Casiano Atienza reported that the subcommittee has been focused on two upcoming significant events. The Ascend Procession event scheduled for May 16, and the Bellevue Family 4th celebration, which is expected to have substantial roadway and general operational impacts.

6. OLD BUSINESS – None

6. NEW BUSINESS

- 2026 Application of Intent: Bellevue Farmer's Market @ 106th

Chair Freeburg said the proposed event involves a pilot farmers market event near 106th Avenue NE and NE 6th Street.

Event organizer Barbara Hughes delivered a detailed presentation regarding the proposed event scheduled for Saturday, August 8, 2026. As envisioned, the event will feature Washington State farmers, food producers, craft artisans, food trucks, live non-amplified music, and children's activities. The market is intended to create a community gathering space in Downtown Bellevue centered around seasonal produce, sustainably raised meats, flowers, artisan foods, handmade goods, and prepared foods. Approximately 45 vendors are anticipated. An initial draft site plan had previously been submitted that included a proposal to partially close 106th Avenue NE and NE 6th Street. Vendor stalls will occupy portions of the roadway and sidewalks, with farmers parking their trucks directly behind their stalls while other vendors park off-site. Food trucks will be clustered toward the northern end of 106th Avenue NE. Washable chalk will be used to mark vendor locations. The event hours are proposed to be between 10:00 a.m. and 3:00 p.m., with setup beginning at 7:00 a.m. and takedown concluding by 5:00 p.m. The attendance projections were estimated at approximately 1800 participants throughout the day, with peak attendance of roughly 1000 people between 10:30 a.m. and 1:00 p.m. based on attendance figures from the organization's 2025 market operations on Bellevue Way NE.

Discussions are under way with PACCAR concerning parking accommodations for vendors, staff, volunteers, ADA parking, and shuttle drop-off locations. The organization has also contacted ONI regarding portable restroom placement, though that option reportedly is unavailable so alternative arrangements will need to be explored. Initial communications have been established with National Barricade of Seattle to develop barricade placement and a traffic control plan. The organization intends to hire Bellevue Police Department officers for traffic management. Pedestrians will not be permitted to pass through the market area during setup and takedown periods.

With regard to emergency access, 20-foot clearances will be maintained for fire vehicle access on both affected streets. Additional safety measures will include dedicated adult crowd-control volunteers, a first aid station, fire extinguishers placed every 75 feet in compliance with city requirements, and 20-foot spacing between food trucks, including a wood-fired pizza vendor. Cleanup responsibilities will be managed by staff, volunteers, and board members, all of whom are experienced in such operations. The organization is willing to comply with all post-event evaluations, meetings, permits, insurance requirements, hold harmless agreements, and city coordination procedures, including fire, police, noise, routing, right-of-way, and health permits.

Barbara White explained that the projected fees total $3197, including the anticipated King County health permit expenses. It is recognized that additional permit costs will likely arise as the planning progresses. The need to receive clear and predictable cost information from the city was stressed because the organization, which is a small non-profit, has limited financial reserves. All city fees will be paid electronically at least 30 days before the event. The organization also intends to notify nearby stakeholders and businesses in advance to maintain positive community relations, and plans to publicize the market through websites, newsletters, social media, and

partnerships with organizations such as the Bellevue Downtown Association and Visit Bellevue. All staff, board members, and volunteers will be present throughout the event to address any concerns. Operational staffing is expected to include four board members, one market manager, two market coordinators, and at least ten volunteers. The organization has already received notification of a $15,000 community programming fund grant from the city to support the event.

Casiano Atienza explained that the proposed site configuration closely resembles the layout used annually for the Bellevue Downtown Arts Fair and Bellevue Arts Museum events. There is substantial behind-the-scenes logistical work associated with those events. A concern was expressed regarding the operational impacts of implementing a similar closure configuration for a single-day pilot market. The extensive traffic control measures typically include detour planning, staff involvement, relocation of Amazon shuttle layover areas, portable changeable message signs, and detailed traffic control plans. Beyond the street closures used during the arts fair, the proposed farmer's market event will likely need to include the closure of additional portions of NE 6th Street to accommodate traffic detours and maintain access routes.

While expressing support for the concept of the event overall, Casiano Atienza voiced a concern about the practicality of the proposed setup from a transportation standpoint and suggested exploring the relocation of the market event footprint to NE 6th Street instead of the proposed configuration, adding that additional coordination with police and fire officials will be necessary to determine feasible adjustments that will balance the operational impacts and event goals.

Answering a question asked by Phyllis White, Casiano Atienza said the proposed layout effectively creates a sideways "T-shape" street closure involving portions of 106th Avenue NE and NE 6th Street. From a transportation perspective, the preferred maximum closure area should be limited primarily to NE 6th Street rather than the broader configuration shown in the proposal. Even under the proposal, the closure of NE 6th Street will likely be unavoidable because of traffic circulation concerns. Vehicles traveling toward NE 6th Street will encounter dead-end conditions, and without authorization from Kemper Properties, city staff cannot redirect traffic through private property exits that serve as the only available egress points in the area. The issue necessitates broader road closures and directional traffic restrictions. Numerous traffic-control considerations remain unresolved, including the need for detailed traffic-control plans to be developed, submitted, and reviewed by a qualified vendor within the next three months. The complexity of the traffic-control requirements represents a significant challenge associated with the proposal.

Barbara Hughes pointed out that the proposed site had originally been suggested by the city and it forms the basis upon which the organization received its grant funding. Three potential locations were initially proposed, including Plaza Main Street and the current Downtown site. The purpose of considering the Downtown location was to explore opportunities for long-term market growth. The organization's current site imposes operational and financial limitations, particularly given the challenge of balancing vendor fees against sponsorship requirements. Farmers markets nationwide often struggle financially in small locations. Limiting the event solely to NE 6th Street could restrict the organization's ability to expand. Nevertheless, the organization is willing to meet with city staff and continue the discussions regarding possible adjustments.

Barbara Hughes noted having been informed that Amazon shuttle operations do not run on Saturdays, which is relevant because the proposed event will occur only on a Saturday. Additionally, the organization had contacts with Kemper Properties and is willing to communicate with them directly if necessary. The organization's primary goal is to determine

whether the Downtown location can become a viable long-term home for the market as Bellevue continues to grow. The ultimate decisions regarding relocation will depend on the market's operational viability.

Chair Freeburg acknowledged the concerns voiced by Barbara Hughes regarding costs and noted that limiting the event footprint to a smaller roadway area will substantially reduce the initial expenses for a first-time event. Traffic control alone represents a significant financial burden. The city is facing constrained resources because of an unusually busy summer event season involving a major sporting event. With regard to the city's economic development staff and grant support, it was clarified that the proposed route represents only one possible configuration. Utilizing a portion of the proposed area will still align with the city's intended scope for the project. The organizer was advised to consider the implications of long-term growth plans, particularly if the market eventually intends to operate weekly, because regular closure of 106th Avenue NE might not ultimately prove feasible. Additional conversations and planning discussions will be necessary as the proposal evolves.

Neal Christiansen asked about the transportation concerns given that the annual Bellevue Arts Fair which already utilizes similar street closures on 106th Avenue NE. While the Arts Fair operates over three days rather than one, the proposed farmers market appears to be conceptually similar and therefore the concerns expressed by transportation staff are not immediately clear. Casiano Atienza clarified that the primary issue is not the concept of the closure itself but rather the significant staffing, coordination, and setup resources required to support such an operation. The Bellevue Arts Fair relies on extensive city support, including police-provided barriers, established agreements, and substantial logistical coordination that will not automatically exist for a new pilot event. Additional there are complications relative to coordinating with King County Metro regarding bus reroutes and the broader involvement of multiple agencies and stakeholders. The cumulative logistical and traffic-control requirements form the basis of the reservations expressed, particularly if the market wants to eventually continue on a recurring basis.

Neal Christiansen asked for clarification regarding the intended frequency of the proposed market. Barbara Hughes explained that farmers markets generally cannot survive financially based solely on vendor stall fees, which are approximately $40 per vendor space. Grants and sponsorships are critical to supporting the staffing and operational expenses. The organization's current location is limited to approximately 45 vendor stalls, which constrains the revenue opportunities. The organization is interested in exploring Downtown Bellevue as a potentially larger and more financially sustainable site because the Downtown area represents the city's fastest-growing district. The proposal should be viewed primarily as a learning opportunity and pilot project. The organization might consider operating the Downtown market once per month in 2027. Another possibility that has been discussed with city staff involves maintaining the current Thursday market while establishing an additional Saturday market Downtown. Comparable regional markets in Issaquah and Mercer Island are substantially larger than Bellevue's current market, which reinforces the organization's belief that expansion opportunities exist.

Phyllis White commented that a successful market location needs to provide an attractive environment for visitors, including seating areas and shaded gathering spaces, which Downtown Bellevue could better accommodate than the organization's current site. The market breaks even at approximately 43 vendors and therefore needs increased vendor capacity to remain sustainable without imposing higher fees on participating small businesses. Greater vendor variety and participation will improve the organization's long-term self-sufficiency and operational

sustainability.

Chair Freeburg said if the intent for the future is to hold the farmer's market on a weekly basis, the closure of the roadway will become a weekly occurrence. Barbara Hughes confirmed that statement.

Neal Christiansen asked if consideration had been given to locating the event in Downtown Park. Chair Freeburg responded that Downtown Park is not currently an option. Barbara Hughes added that the organization would welcome the opportunity to hold the event there, but is aware that many groups have similarly requested access to the space.

Robert Spingler thanked the presenters and expressed appreciation for the concept of a farmers market, while also echoing many of the concerns previously raised by transportation staff. Whenever the city permits closure of public streets for an event, there is a responsibility to ensure the event area remains protected from vehicle intrusion. Referencing incidents seen nationally in which vehicles have entered closed roadway areas, it was explained that the city has purchased specialized vehicle barriers designed to secure street closures and improve public safety. While the barriers are highly effective, their installation and removal requires substantial time and labor. Setup and takedown each consumes several hours, and the labor costs must ultimately be borne by the event organizer. In addition to barrier installation, police staffing will be required at multiple closure points, including both ends of 106th Avenue NE and along NE 6th Street. From both a policing and budgetary perspective, the cost implications for a single-day event will be considerable. The offer was made to compile estimated cost figures and provide them to the organizers, while reiterating that the amount of preparation required for a five-hour event is substantial. The Bellevue Arts Fair, by contrast, benefits from a multi-day schedule that allows the extensive setup work to remain in place for several days before final removal.

Casiano Atienza added further advice, recommending that the organizers directly contact a professional traffic-control company such as National Barricade to obtain preliminary cost estimates for the proposed closures and determine whether those expenses will be manageable within the organization's budget. Such vendors are very familiar with similar Downtown Bellevue closures associated with major city events.

Mike Ogliore referenced the comments made about discussions with PACCAR about parking arrangements and suggested that an alternative approach might involve the use of portions of the Park Plaza parking lot located near NE 6th Street. Because of nearby development impacts, portions of that area are already being used for Bellevue Arts Fair booths with PACCAR's support during weekends. A similar arrangement might allow some vendor booths to be placed within the parking lot rather than directly on 106th Avenue NE, potentially reducing the need for extensive roadway closures while still accommodating event expansion goals. The parking lot contains access points that connect directly to the sidewalks along NE 6th Street. The idea should be explored further with PACCAR. Barbara Hughes confirmed having already communicated extensively with Gustavo Shimizu regarding potential coordination with PACCAR. Further discussions were intentionally postponed until after the Committee meeting. The organization intends to continue those conversations. PACCAR has been willing and helpful throughout the planning process.

Chair Freeburg asked if the recurring closure of NE 6th Street on a weekly basis would be manageable, and if the main challenge lies with the closure of 106th Avenue NE.

Robert Spingler responded that a closure limited solely to NE 6th Street between 105th and

106th Avenues would be substantially easier to manage operationally. Under that scenario, barriers could potentially remain in place more efficiently, making setup and takedown significantly less complicated.

Chair Freeburg reminded the Committee members that the current discussion is focused only on a one-time pilot event for 2026. The broader conversations about future growth are relevant to understanding the organization's long-term vision.

Maggie Whittemore agreed with the comments from transportation and police that additional review will be appropriate once a revised plan is developed. The organizers were commended for incorporating a 20-foot emergency access corridor into the proposed layout, but noted one correction regarding the tent spacing requirements. If the organizers wish to avoid triggering certain operational permits for tents, groups of seven 10-by-10 canopies will require 12 feet of spacing between them rather than the 10 feet shown on the preliminary site map. The fire prevention inspection fees for 2026 are expected to be $228, with operational permit fees estimated at $166. The recommendation was made that the organization should include those expenses in its planning calculations.

Barbara Hughes asked for clarification regarding the fire permit requirements for tents that do not include cooking operations. Maggie Whittemore explained that operational permits become necessary once aggregate canopy coverage exceeds 700 square feet where tents lack sidewalls. Once the permit threshold is reached, total canopy coverage may then increase up to a cap of 15,000 square feet. Spacing tent clusters with 12-foot separations effectively resets the aggregate volume calculation, allowing organizers to avoid triggering the operational permit requirement under certain configurations.

Andrew Oltman stated that based on the preliminary site map, fire had no immediate operational concerns. Because the anticipated attendance remains below the threshold requiring standby emergency medical services personnel, Fire Operations does not foresee the need for additional EMS staffing.

Chair Freeburg thanked the presenters for attending and explained that the next steps in the review process were for the committee to deliberate and vote on the date, time and location and any associated conditions. If approved, the proposal will proceed into routing and location meetings, where detailed operational issues such as permits, traffic-control requirements, route adjustments, and event conditions will be worked out collaboratively among city departments and organizers.

Following the departure of the event organizers, Chair Freeburg asked if the members wished to approve the proposal outright, approve it with conditions, or postpone approval pending further review.

Neal Christiansen suggested that because significant uncertainty remains regarding the final location and site configuration, the Committee should limit any approval of the proposed event to date only. Full approval should wait until the Committee has a clearer understanding of the eventual site plan and operational details.

Casiano Atienza agreed that approving the proposed date and time appeared to be a reasonable action. While a traffic-control plan could still technically be completed within the remaining three-month timeframe, the organizers will need to move quickly and remain proactive. The principal unresolved issue remains the event location. A preference was expressed for limiting

the footprint primarily to NE 6th Street.

Chair Freeburg suggested the Committee could elect to approve the date and time while conditioning final approval on the exact location after additional review and refinement of the site plan. The chair added that the event will likely remain within the same general area regardless of whether 106th Avenue NE ultimately remains part of the closure footprint. Also available to the Committee is the option of tabling the proposal entirely to allow police, transportation and other departments to conduct additional discussions with the organizers before the matter returns for a future vote. If the proposal is tabled, active engagement between staff and the organizers will be expected in order to resolve the outstanding concerns.

Robert Spingler stated that from the police department's perspective the proposal should not be approved in its current form because of the anticipated operational and financial impacts. The organizers might experience significant "sticker shock" once the true costs of traffic control and public safety measures become clear.

Andrew Oltman asked if the Committee's hesitation stemmed from concerns about the location itself, or concerns that the associated costs might prove too expensive for the organizers. If the issue is solely the financial costs, it should be left to the event organizers to decide. If the concern is that staffing shortages or logistical limitations will prevent the city from safely supporting the event, that will represent a different and more substantive issue for committee consideration. The Committee was cautioned against projecting assumptions about the organizers' financial tolerance onto the Committee's approval decision. The Committee could approve the proposal and allow the organizers to determine for themselves whether the costs are manageable after receiving full estimates.

Robert Spingler agreed that the distinction is valid and clarified that an additional operational concern remains regarding whether transportation personnel responsible for deploying the vehicle barriers will actually be available on the proposed event date. The police department itself will not be handling deployment because of existing workload commitments, and therefore coordination with transportation staff will be necessary to confirm resource availability before final approval can responsibly be granted.

Neal Christiansen agreed with Andy Oltman's comments that the focus for the Committee must be logistics and operational feasibility and not on the costs for the event organizers.

Neal Christiansen asked if the use of the specialized vehicle barriers has effectively become mandatory for roadway closure events in Bellevue. Robert Spingler replied that while the issue might not be codified as a strict rule, the barriers are viewed as essential from a public safety standpoint. If the city possessed protective barriers but chose not to deploy them at an event where thousands of people occupied public roadways, the city could face substantial liability and safety concerns if an incident occurred. The barriers should be considered necessary whenever streets are closed for large public events.

Casiano Atienza stated that Bellevue takes special pride in maintaining rigorous public safety standards and working closely with the police department to harden event sites against potential vehicle intrusions. Although practices in other jurisdictions might differ, Bellevue intentionally pursues a more cautious approach to event safety. In addition to safety considerations, the proposed use of 106th Avenue NE continues to present significant logistical concerns from a transportation standpoint.

Chair Freeburg proposed formally tabling the proposal until the next meeting to allow police and transportation staff to gather the additional information necessary to make an informed recommendation. The Committee members agreed and Chair Freeburg formally tabled the event pending further information gathering and future review. All of the participating departments were encouraged to proactively contact the event organizers rather than waiting until future Committee meetings to raise issues. The event organizers face significant planning deadlines and earlier communication could help to avoid delays and repeat Committee reconsideration.

- ❖ 2026 Post-Event Evaluation: All In For Autism

Chair Freeburg said the Breakfast Rotary "All-In for Autism" run was held on April 26. According to the evaluation report, the event benefited from favorable weather conditions and everything generally proceeded smoothly. There was full collaboration with police and fire, and the permitting process reportedly worked well. There were no major safety concerns identified. The only significant issue raised in the report involved the organizers' unfamiliarity with the city's approval procedures. The event was one of the city's earliest seasonal events the prior year and had therefore not undergone the same approval process previously. The organizers requesting additional guidance for future approval procedures.

Robert Spingler allowed that the event had gone well from the police department's perspective, although a last-minute complication arose involving an unrelated church event on Bellevue Way that had not been previously communicated to the event coordinators. Police had to make quick adjustments to traffic operations in response, but the situation was successfully managed. Chair Freeburg stressed the need to document the issue to ensure that future event organizers improve communication and outreach regarding nearby activities.

Rick Bailey said garbage management presented some challenges during the event weekend because the favorable weather attracted unusually large crowds to Downtown Park on the preceding Saturday, stretching waste-management resources to its limits. The question asked was if the Rotary Club had provided all the garbage receptacles they had committed to. It was noted that parks staff intends to follow up with the organizers regarding that issue. Additionally, the organizers have expressed ambitious plans to expand the event substantially in future years. Based on discussions during the pre-event meetings and email communications, parks staff believe the event might soon outgrow its current footprint near the parking lot area. Preliminary discussions are already underway about relocating the event further into the park or potentially toward the plaza area in future years to accommodate the anticipated growth.

Chair Freeburg agreed with the observations and stated that the current event footprint has indeed already effectively exceeded the capacity of the parking lot area. As a result, the event will likely be moved into the park itself in 2027. Future planning will need to account for the possibility of continued growth in participant numbers and event size.

Maggie Whittemore reported that the pre-event inspection for the event had gone very smoothly. The organizers had all required safety equipment be in place, including fire extinguishers, properly weighted tents, and an appropriately rated larger tent structure. The organizers were commended for having all required elements prepared and compliant during inspection.

Chair Freeburg said the event was generally successful aside from the garbage concerns and the unanticipated church event conflict.

Emily Martella noted that a nearby resident had submitted a noise complaint at approximately

4:00 a.m. on the day of the event. After contacting the organizers, staff learned that event personnel had arrived at the park as early as 3:00 a.m., despite the permit not authorizing park access until 5:00 a.m. It needs to be made clear to the organizer when they can start their setup work in the park.

7. NEXT MEETING

- June 11, 2026

8. ADJOURNMENT

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