

**CITY OF BELLEVUE  
ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES COMMISSION  
MEETING MINUTES**

Thursday  
March 19, 2015  
6:30 p.m.

Conference Room 1E-112  
Bellevue City Hall  
Bellevue, Washington

**COMMISSIONERS PRESENT:** Chair Helland, Vice Chair Swenson, Commissioners, Howe, Mach, Pauley<sup>1</sup> and Wang

**COMMISSIONERS ABSENT:** Commissioners Morin

**OTHERS PRESENT:** Andrew Lee, Deputy Director; Don McQuilliams, Storm & Surface Water Superintendent- O&M; Tony Marcum, Operations Manager Deputy Director; Martin Chaw, Fiscal Manager – Resource Management & Customer Service; Lucy Liu, Assistant Director – Resource Management & Customer Service

**MINUTES TAKER:** Laurie Hugdahl

**1. CALL TO ORDER – BRAD HELLAND, CHAIR**

Chair Helland called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m.

**2. ORAL COMMUNICATIONS**

None

**3. APPROVAL OF AGENDA**

Chair Helland asked to add consideration of some comments regarding the Comprehensive Plan that he submitted to the Planning Commission under New Business.

**Motion made by Vice Chair Swenson, seconded by Commissioner Mach, to approve the agenda as amended. Motion passed unanimously (5-0).**

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<sup>1</sup> Commissioner Pauley arrived at 6:45 p.m.

#### 4. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

- February 19, 2015 Regular Meeting Minutes

**Motion made by Commissioner Howe, seconded by Commissioner Mach, to approve the minutes as presented. Motion passed unanimously (5-0).**

#### 5. FOLLOW-UP QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

- Cascade Water Alliance projects  
*Andrew Lee, Deputy Director - Utilities*

Deputy Director Lee reviewed information he had received from Cascade Water Alliance regarding the White River-Lake Tapps project. He explained that the project consists mainly of rehabilitation activities related to very aged infrastructure. He displayed pictures of the timber flume project from the Cascade Water Alliance website ([www.cascadewater.org](http://www.cascadewater.org)) and explained that the old timber flume has been replaced with a concrete flume. There is regular removal of sediment from the flume. Other current projects include improvements to the conveyance system, the dike, and the power plant.

Commissioner Wang asked if the flume is where the City of Bellevue, would get its supply. Deputy Director Lee replied that the upstream end of the flume is where water could be collected from the White River. Commissioner Wang asked if the City gets any power from the power plant. Deputy Director Lee said the power plant is not being used for power right now. There have been discussions about potentially bringing it online, but there are no plans at the present time. Significant improvements would be required before the power plant could be used.

#### 6. REPORTS & SUMMARIES

- ESC Calendar/Council Calendar

Deputy Director Lee reviewed some reshuffling of the calendar that had taken place.

- Conservation & Outreach Events & Volunteer Opportunities
- ESC Comment Letter to the Planning Commission re: the Comprehensive Plan Update

Deputy Director Lee explained that a signed version of the letter on page 18 of the packet was sent to the Planning Commission.

## 7. NEW BUSINESS

- Stormwater Detention Ponds Legacy Loading Project(s)  
*Don McQuilliams, Storm & Surface Water Superintendent- O&M*

Supt. McQuilliams reviewed staff efforts regarding the legacy loading project and the success and lessons learned since it began in 2012. There were 72 ponds in the study. Interns from the University of Washington School of Engineering were hired to help collect information about the ponds which were in various states of condition. Based on the Ecology Manual, for dry ponds sediment removal is required when accumulated sediment exceeds 10% of the designed pond depth. For wet ponds the Ecology requirements were not so clear, but staff advised that if the sediment accumulations were within six inches of the invert out elevation then the pond should be drained and sediment should be removed.

Supt. McQuilliams explained that Pond A at Phantom Lake was also taken on as a project. Staff planned to clear and dewater it, but ran into some issues with dewatering. Excavation was extremely slow, and twice the material that was estimated was removed due to suspended sediment. The total project cost was \$190,242 while original removal costs were estimated at \$95,000. The project ended up costing \$203/cubic yard of sediment removed. Overall, the neighborhood was happy, and it turned out well.

Commissioner Wang asked about the contaminated water referenced by Supt. McQuilliams, *particularly why the water was being discharged to the sewer if the water itself did not contain contaminants.* Supt. McQuilliams explained that the water was considered contaminated because the work the City was doing was stirring it up *resulting in the sediment to become suspended within the water, mixing the sediment that has oils trapped in it with the water itself.* Supt. McQuilliams said that after the pond was finished, water quality studies were done which did not come back with any high levels of contaminants in the pond.

Legacy loading analysis measured pond type, depth, sediment, and proximity to receiving waters. \$100/cubic yard was estimated as a starting point. 26 ponds were initially identified (under \$25,000). 32 ponds have been completed with 7 more scheduled for summer 2015. Mr. McQuilliams reviewed the results of several ponds as contained in the PowerPoint presentation.

Vice Chair Swenson asked if all of the sediment and brush from other ponds had to be taken offsite to a special landfill as was done with the sediment from Pond A. Supt. McQuilliams replied that it varies from pond to pond depending on its location and what goes into it, but each one is tested. Commissioner Pauley asked about toxicity. Supt. McQuilliams explained that staff uses a 1 to 4 scale for pollutants, but it's not tested for toxicity. Staff samples sediments after they are removed from the ponds for disposal purposes. Chair Helland said he would be interested in the data from Pond A. Commissioner Wang asked how this relates to the Phantom Lake issues. (Tony Marcum, Operations Manager, explained that the Phantom Lake discussions related to the water quality of the water leaving the ponds.) He commented that water sits in the ponds for quite a long time before it outfalls. What Supt. McQuilliams is referring to is oils that attach to the sediments at the bottom. Those oils leave when the sediment removal is done. Water quality samples would be a different matter.

Commissioner Mach asked for confirmation that all of the material taken for disposal is profiled so it can be processed correctly. He asked about material going to Pacific Topsoil. Supt. McQuilliams explained there is a 1 through 4 scale for measuring the quality. If the analysis comes back a 1 it is considered clean, and Pacific Topsoils will accept it. If it is a 2 it can be used for road grade and that type of material which will not come into contact with humans. If it is a 3 or 4 it is automatically sent off to an approved facility for disposal.

Costs for the three years were reviewed. The average cost for 32 ponds from 2012 to 2014 was \$297.22/cubic yard for contract work and \$146.74/cubic yard for in-house work. Going forward staff estimates projects will cost \$196.58/cubic yard.

Lessons learned from these three years:

- Utilizing contractor vs. in-house resources. Staff determines which portions to do in-house and which ones should be contracted.
- Utilizing different types of contractors who can do the job most efficiently.
- Setting up on-call contracts makes it much easier.
- Assign a project manager. It is important to have one person in charge from start to finish.
- Permitting. There are a lot of permits involved. The process has been streamlined over the years.
- Get the word out.
- Dewater early (about a month in advance).
- Testing the material to know where it will be taken for disposal.

Commissioner Pauley asked how large the ponds are. Supt. McQuilliams explained that they are mostly under a quarter-acre.

Vice Chair Swenson asked about the number of ponds the City owns. Supt. McQuilliams replied that there are 72 residential detention ponds. Vice Chair Swenson asked how many private ponds there are. Supt. McQuilliams replied that it is a much bigger number. Those are handled under the private drainage inspection program.

Commissioner Wang expressed concern about the maintenance costs of the ponds. Supt. McQuilliams stated that when the City takes on a plat it is specified who owns and maintains the ponds. If ponds are on private property the property owners have to take care of the maintenance.

- 2014 Year-End Fiscal Reports for Water, Sewer, and Storm & Surface Water Utilities

*Lucy Liu, Assistant Director – Resource Mgmt. & Customer Svc.*

*Martin Chaw, Fiscal Manager – Resource Mgmt. & Customer Svc.*

Asst. Director Liu reported that Water, Sewer, and Storm & Surface Water Utilities ended the year in positive financial conditions with ending fund balances above budget levels. As a result of that, one-time transfers to the Renewal & Replacement accounts will be made to provide funding for future capital facility needs as part of the City's long-term financial strategy.

Fiscal Manager Chaw reviewed foundational policies that guide the City's work. Each utility is treated as a self-supporting enterprise. Staff recognizes the needs of the utilities are long term; therefore long-term financial planning is utilized. Thirdly, reserves are put aside to achieve financial stability and ensure rate changes are smooth and gradual.

There are three different types of reserves - Operational, Infrastructure Renewal and Replacement, and Asset Replacement. Operational reserves are designed to address the daily capital needs of the utility; they provide for an operating contingency as well as a contingency for emergencies. Any reserves above target levels are transferred to the Renewal and Replacement (R&R) Fund. R&R reserves are designed to address the future replacement needs of aging infrastructure. Asset Replacement reserves are designed to replace utility vehicles, major software systems, etc.

Mr. Chaw then reviewed highlights for 2014. Over the last three years water sales have gradually increased. This is important because water sales drive revenues for the Water and Sewer utility. For the Water Utility actual revenues were higher than budgeted. The Water Utility ended the year with \$16.6 million. \$2.4 million will be retained within the operating fund, but will be used for equipment replacement in 2015 and carryforwards to 2015. \$5.7 million will be transferred to the R&R account and will be used to replenish that account. The Sewer Utility ended the year with operating revenues sufficient to meet operating expenses. Service revenues were up, reflecting higher water sales. This utility ended with a \$9.1 million ending fund balance. \$4.7 million will be retained in the fund for financial reserve purposes. \$2.4 million will be retained to address equipment replacement as well as carryforward needs in 2015. About \$2 million will be transferred to the R&R account consistent with financial policies. The Storm and Surface Water Utility finished the year with \$5.4 million ending fund balance. \$2.7 million will be used for carryforwards to 2015 and equipment replacement. \$1.1 million will be transferred to R&R account. Revenues were pretty much on target with budgeted revenues; expenses were slightly below budgeted expenses. \$1.6 million will be retained for operating reserves.

Mr. Chaw concluded that all three utilities ended on a positive note with operating revenues sufficient to meet operating expenses. Fund balances for each utility are in compliance with the City's financial policies with transfers to the R&R account as per those policies. Reserves will also be used for equipment replacement and carryforwards. Each utility will begin 2015 in strong financial condition. Staff will continue to closely monitor each utility's 2015-2016 financial performance against the budget. There will be continued focus on operational efficiency; cost containment measures are in place.

Commissioner Wang asked how the costs for the pond maintenance were covered. Deputy Director Lee explained that the costs are already incorporated in the budget process.

## 8. COMMISSION REPORT

Chair Helland highlighted and discussed relevant parts of a letter he had drafted as an individual and sent to the Planning Commission (in addition to the one that was sent on behalf of the ESC) regarding potential concerns he had about the Comprehensive Plan.

*EN-X10 – Why is this limited to transportation and infrastructure projects? Shouldn't the policy apply more broadly to all construction and maintenance projects?*

Vice Chair Swenson concurred.

*EN-37 - Is it possible to “incentivize” (or add similar language) the use of low impact development (e.g., “utilize and incentivize low impact development techniques”)?*

Vice Chair Swenson concurred with this item also. He stated a number of jurisdictions have been incentivizing substantially. In some cases money is being used to subsidize the cost of design of rain gardens. Deputy Director Lee explained that LID is already required for newer redevelopment projects. He discussed Seattle’s Rain Wise program which is not related to development, but incentivizes existing properties to utilize low impact practices.

*AN-3: Doesn’t the Utilities Department’s service area include areas that are unlikely to ever be annexed (e.g., Points communities, parts of Issaquah (? If this policy is directed at areas of unincorporated King County, then more specific language is needed. Conversely, if the intent of this policy is covered by UT-7, consider deleting it.*

Deputy Director Lee indicated he would look at the language.

*UT-X7: Why should LID principles be limited to infrastructure improvement projects? Shouldn’t we apply them to all operations, maintenance, and capital projects?*

Deputy Director Lee commented that LID principles are typically applied where you are replacing or adding new impervious area. This would apply to capital projects. Operations and maintenance projects do not generally impact impervious areas.

*Solid Waste: I propose an additional policy (or an amendment to an existing policy such as UT-14). I will also be bringing this forward to the ESC at the next mtg. Bellevue should incentivize waste reduction by subsidizing waste containers inversely proportional to their size (i.e., provide the largest subsidy to the smallest solid waste container and shift the costs to the larger sized containers).*

Deputy Director Lee wasn’t sure if the Comprehensive Plan was the right place for this kind of language.

*UT-39, UT-X8, and UT-X 21: The City should promote undergrounding of electrical distribution and other appropriate utilities by subsidizing a small part of the costs and by working with neighborhoods proactively to establish local improvement districts. While subsidy may appear to benefit a limited number of citizens, a programmatic approach will eventually benefit all areas of Bellevue with overhead utilities. I suggest the Environmental Services Commission, the Planning Commission, and the Transportation Commission work on approaches to maximize value to the community and keep costs to the City reasonable.*

Chair Helland recommended taking EN-X10, EN-37, and AN-3 forward to the Planning Commission from the ESC.

EN-X10 (tree canopy) – There was discussion about whether or not this should be required for maintenance projects. Vice Chair Swenson spoke in support of this. Commissioner Mach wondered if non-native vegetation should even be replaced. Commissioner Howe expressed support for replacing tree canopy for maintenance projects. Deputy Director Lee stated that adding requirement to maintenance projects to replace vegetation comes with a new set of challenges and costs. Commissioner Wang did not think it made sense to replenish tree canopy removed for maintenance purposes since there is generally a reason why it is being removed in the first place. Commissioner Pauley discussed issues related to mitigation in related the outflow for Lake Sammamish. Commissioner Howe commented that many people value non-native vegetation and think it should also be replaced. Chair Helland said his comment is about replacing tree canopy in general. Vice Chair Swenson spoke to the importance of considering these situations on a case-by-case basis. Commissioner Wang did not think the loss of tree canopy in a situation where it was not meant to be should be a factor. Chair Helland explained that it is not possible to differentiate whether or not vegetation was intended to be there. His intent is to recommend a policy which is not limited to transportation and infrastructure projects. He thinks the policy should be to minimize the loss of tree canopy in general.

There was significant discussion and differing opinions. Vice Chair Swenson commented that in light of the comments it might be best to address these topics individually. He stated he would like a copy of Chair Helland's letter. Chair Helland indicated he would send a copy of the letter to all commissioners.

Commissioner Mach said he also sent in his own comments. His concerns are that certain topics such as PSE transmission lines are not coming to the ESC for discussion.

Commissioner Wang commented on photos he had sent regarding concerns about the design of the railing of the walkway under the bridge at Coal Creek which block pedestrian views and inadequate drainage at the site.

## 9. DIRECTOR'S OFFICE REPORT

Deputy Director Lee stated that the City received an APWA award for the Coal Creek Bridge/Culvert Replacement Project. The City will receive the award at the APWA Project of the Year Awards Banquet at the Tacoma Convention & Trade Center on April 2<sup>nd</sup> at 7PM.

The City of Bellevue is hosting the 2015 AWWA in the last week of April. He stated he would be sending out a link for anyone who might be interested in attending.

The Water System Plan and Stormwater System Plan will be discussed over the next few months. Staff went to the City Council at the beginning of March to talk about the Council's interests with respect to the Water System Plan.

10. CONTINUED ORAL COMMUNICATIONS

11. ADJOURNMENT

**Motion made by Commissioner Wang, seconded by Commissioner Howe, to adjourn the meeting at 8:52 p.m. Motion passed unanimously (6-0).**

The meeting was adjourned at 8:52 p.m.