

East Bellevue Community Council
Summary Minutes of Regular Meeting

March 6, 2012
6:30 p.m.

Lake Hills Community Clubhouse
Bellevue, Washington

PRESENT: Chair Kasner and Councilmembers Capron, Gooding, Hughes¹, and Seal

ABSENT: None.

STAFF: Alex O'Reilly, Parks and Community Services

1. **CALL TO ORDER**

The meeting was called to order at 6:30 p.m. with Chair Kasner presiding.

2. **ROLL CALL**

The Clerk called the roll. All East Bellevue Community Councilmembers were present, with the exception of Councilmember Gooding.¹

Chair Kasner led the flag salute.

3. **COMMUNICATIONS - WRITTEN AND ORAL**

James Eder expressed concern about the appearance of Lake Hills Boulevard, including a fence that is not being maintained, west of 148th Avenue SE. He suggested planting vegetation to screen the fence. He noted efforts within the state legislature to terminate community councils (community municipal corporations), and expressed support for continuing the East Bellevue Community Council.

Jim Biles inquired about financial assistance from the City for converting to locking residential mailboxes.

Chair Kasner referred Mr. Biles to the City's Neighborhood Outreach web page and the Neighborhood Partnerships link on that page for information on the program. He noted upcoming Neighborhood Forums sponsored by the City scheduled for March 29 and April 19.

¹ Councilmember Hughes participated remotely via speakerphone, joining the meeting at 6:32 p.m. and signing off at 8:43 p.m. Councilmember Gooding arrived at 7:14 p.m.

Chair Kasner read a letter from Liz Tidyman, Certified Long-Term Care Ombudsman, into the record. The letter describes King County's program and its efforts to convince the state legislature to restore funding removed in December.

4. **APPROVAL OF AGENDA**

Chair Kasner welcomed Debra Westwood, King County Library System, and apologized for not including her on the printed agenda.

Mr. Kasner requested adding Agenda Item 11(a), Proactive Community Council Advocacy.

Councilmember Seal moved to approve the agenda, adding Agenda Item 11(a) as suggested, and Councilmember Capron seconded the motion. The motion to approve the agenda, as amended, carried by a vote of 4-0.

5. **PUBLIC HEARING:** None.

6. **RESOLUTIONS:** None.

7. **REPORTS OF CITY COUNCIL, BOARDS, AND COMMISSIONS:** None.

8. **DEPARTMENT REPORTS**

(a) 2011-2012 Human Services Needs Update

Alex O'Reilly, Human Services Planner, opened discussion regarding the 2011-2012 Human Services Needs Update.

Betty Takahashi introduced herself as the Bellevue School District Homeless Liaison and the supervisor of five Family Connections Centers, including one at Lake Hills Elementary School. She introduced Dawn Powers, Human Services Specialist at Lake Hills Elementary.

Ms. O'Reilly described the Human Services Needs Update, which has been published by City staff since 1989. It provides detailed information on community needs including survey results, community discussions, key informant interviews, Census data, and other sources. She described the impact of the economic recession and the high unemployment rate on the demand for services. King County and the State have reduced human services funding, and private contributions have decreased as well.

Responding to Councilmember Seal, Ms. O'Reilly said the City receives approximately \$700,000 annually through the federal Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) program. Approximately half of the funding is allocated to the Major Home Repair Program, which provides no-interest loans of up to \$12,000 for major projects (e.g., new roof), to be repaid when the residents sell their homes.

Ms. O'Reilly reviewed the key issues identified by the Human Services Commission including impacts on families and children, reduced funding for "safety net" services, demand on human services by returning veterans, and increasing community diversity.

Mr. Kasner encouraged involving more children and youth in discussions and interviews for the next Human Services Needs Update.

Ms. Takahashi said she has been a liaison to the homeless community for six years. There were 40 homeless students in the Bellevue School District in 2006, and there are now 162 homeless students. This includes children from families who have lost their homes due to the loss of jobs, as well as those affected by domestic violence, high medical bills, and substance abuse. Ms. Takahashi said that families are staying homeless for longer periods due to the lack of available jobs.

Ms. Powers distributed pamphlets on the Family Connections Centers, and described her role in working with families and children.

Responding to Mr. Kasner, Ms. Takahashi said that most of the families live in some type of shelter or transitional housing (e.g., living with family member or friend), but some families live in their cars. Some teens are living in shelters and on the streets by themselves. The City provides shelter services primarily during the winter months. Ms. Takahashi noted a Salvation Army drop-in shelter for women and children and other shelters sponsored by local churches and Congregations for the Homeless.

Ms. O'Reilly explained that the City is involved with the Eastside Homelessness Advisory Committee (EHAC), a branch of the regional Committee to End Homelessness. She described ongoing efforts to document the number of homeless people in King County.

Ms. O'Reilly responded to questions of clarification from the Council. She noted a new housing development at St. Margaret's Church in the Factoria area, which includes a number of units dedicated to homeless veterans.

Ms. Takahashi said there has been a significant increase in the number of students participating in the school district's free and reduced price lunch program. At Lake Hills Elementary, 69 percent of the students receive a free or reduced price lunch, and 42 percent of students at Stevenson Elementary receive a free or reduced price lunch.

Responding to Mr. Hughes, Ms. Takahashi said there are homeless students at every school. Stevenson Elementary has the largest number of homeless students, followed by Interlake High School, Sammamish High School, and Lake Hills Elementary. Stevenson Elementary has a program for children who have left domestic violence situations.

Mr. Hughes noted that he has grandchildren attending a number of Bellevue schools, and the cultural diversity varies greatly.

Chair Kasner asked the Bellevue School District representatives to keep the community council informed about human services activities.

Debra Westwood, King County Library System, noted library programs that focus on early childhood literacy, summer programs, and school absenteeism. She said the libraries provide a safe place for citizens to come during the day to read books and use computers. Patrons are required to follow the library system's rules of conduct, which do not allow them to sleep. Ms. Westwood said the library provides assistance with job search skills as well.

Ms. Westwood responded to a number of questions regarding the libraries. She noted library storytime programs in multiple languages and programs for teens.

Responding to Councilmember Gooding, Ms. Westwood explained that storytime programs are focused on encouraging an interest in books and reading. Studies indicate that students who do well in their first language are more likely to do better with a second language (i.e., English) and in school overall. Mr. Gooding concurred with the importance of reading, noting that he enjoys reading to his children.

Responding to Mr. Kasner, Ms. Takahashi said that the schools with the highest usage of free and reduced lunches also have breakfast programs. Preschool programs are offered at some schools in the district.

Ms. O'Reilly noted the City's involvement in the Wrap Around Services Program at Lake Hills Elementary School. Eastside Pathways is a new program to assist and track children in order to enhance their ability to succeed. Eastside Pathways is a collaboration of the Bellevue Schools Foundation, the City, Bellevue School District, and a number of other citizen groups and organizations.

Councilmember Seal said he believes that vocational training would be helpful in setting youth on a path toward college or whatever other goals they might have.

Responding to Mr. Kasner, Ms. Takahashi said the Bellevue School District has programs for volunteers who work with students. Ms. Westwood said the library offers free tutoring through its Study Zone program.

Richard Erwin, a former Community Councilmember, asked staff to identify key areas that could benefit from the Community Council's support and advocacy. Ms. O'Reilly said there is still a high unemployment rate, and even those who have found jobs have not regained their previous financial position. Many people seeking assistance during the past few years previously never needed to ask for help. Ms. O'Reilly encouraged Community Councilmembers to become involved with the efforts of the Bellevue School District, local churches, and other service providers.

Chair Kasner suggested a program to initiate interaction between students of public and private schools.

Councilmembers discussed sources for publicizing information about community needs including the Bellevue Reporter, the Bellevue Patch, a KOMO blog, and others.

Ms. Takahashi noted a program in which students from Sacred Heart school are reading buddies with Lake Hills Elementary students. Sacred Heart students also collected and distributed books to every first-grader at Lake Hills Elementary over the holidays.

Ms. Takahashi described efforts by the Nourishing Networks program to provide food for students to take home to their families for the weekend. Two pilot programs, supported by local faith-based organizations, are starting at Sammamish High School and Highland School.

Ms. Westwood suggested that the Community Council work to raise awareness about the higher level of need in East Bellevue compared to West Bellevue.

The Councilmembers and guests continued to discuss human services needs, existing programs, and ideas for additional assistance.

Councilmember Seal noted his concern about the number of vacant homes in the community. Chair Kasner said there are 437 vacancies in West Lake Hills, which is 10 percent of the housing stock. The Downtown has 35 percent of its housing units vacant; however, they are less visible because they are located in multifamily developments. Mr. Seal observed that while some jobs are available, many do not pay enough to keep pace with the cost of living.

Councilmembers commented on the lack of affordable housing.

Councilmember Hughes said that homeless individuals often do not have appropriate clothes or available transportation for a job search.

[Councilmember Hughes signed off from the meeting at 8:43 p.m., noting that it was nearly midnight from where he was calling.]

Councilmember Capron, owner of the 76 Service Station at Main Street and 148th Avenue, said he is well aware of the high cost of gas. He said his employees direct individuals to Hopelink and other providers for assistance on occasion, and his business provides discounts on car repairs through the St. Vincent de Paul program at St. Louise Parish.

Ms. O'Reilly encouraged the Community Council and the public to attend Human Services Commission meetings at City Hall, including an upcoming public hearing.

Councilmember Gooding encouraged residents to get to know their neighbors and to understand their needs.

Chair Kasner requested information on the Bellevue School District's VIBES program.

Mr. Kasner thanked staff and the guests for attending.

(b) Kelsey Creek Enhancement at Larsen Lake

Chair Kasner noted the memo in the meeting packet regarding the Kelsey Creek Enhancement project at Larsen Lake.

9. **COMMITTEE REPORTS:** None.

10. **UNFINISHED BUSINESS**

(a) State Legislative HB 2610 Update

Chair Kasner reported that he, Councilmember Seal, and former Councilmember Erwin, along with members of the Houghton Community Council from Kirkland, visited the state legislature to testify regarding HB 2610. The bill, which would have terminated the community councils, did not pass the state legislature this year.

Mr. Kasner said that those opposed to community councils have stated their concern that the community councils provide unfair representation to one segment of a city's residents. He noted that he met recently with Mayor Conrad Lee and briefly discussed this topic.

Councilmembers talked about the need to develop a clear strategy and Community Council position should similar legislation be proposed during the next state legislative session.

11. **NEW BUSINESS**

(a) Proactive Community Advocates

Chair Kasner led a discussion about ways to become more informed and involved within the community. He said that staff will attend the Community Council meeting in April to discuss graffiti, and in May to discuss Airfield Park and Robinswood Park.

Noting his recent discussion with Mayor Lee, Mr. Kasner said he plans to provide an update to the City Council during its Special Meeting on March 21.

Chair Kasner talked about a Capital Investment Program (CIP) project to replace the wiring in three traffic signals on 148th Avenue (NE 8th Street, Main Street, and SE 8th Street). While he views this as normal maintenance, City staff has explained that the cost of the project requires that it be identified as a CIP project.

Chair Kasner questioned Councilmembers' interest and availability to focus on key priorities, especially planning and transportation issues.

Councilmember Seal agreed to review Transportation Commission meeting minutes and packet materials to identify issues of interest to the Community Council.

Mr. Kasner noted that the minutes of East Bellevue Community Council meetings are available on the City's web site. He said they have been helpful to him as a source of background information on past discussions and decisions.

Councilmember Gooding agreed to review Planning Commission meeting minutes and packet materials.

Mr. Seal provided a brief update on construction and redevelopment activities at the St. Louise Parish site.

12. **CONTINUED COMMUNICATIONS:** None.

13. **EXECUTIVE SESSION:** None.

14. **APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

Councilmember Gooding moved to approve the Summary Minutes of the February 7, 2012, meeting. Councilmember Seal seconded the motion, which carried by a vote of 4-0.

15. **ADJOURNMENT**

Councilmember Seal moved to adjourn. Councilmember Capron seconded the motion, which carried by a vote of 4-0.

At 9:54 p.m., Chair Kasner declared the meeting adjourned.

Michelle Murphy, CMC
Deputy City Clerk

/kaw