

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

Thursday  
October 4, 2018  
6:30 p.m.

Conference Room 1E-113  
Bellevue City Hall  
Bellevue, Washington

**COMMISSIONERS PRESENT:** Diann Strom (Chair), Vanja Knezevic (Vice Chair), Anne Howe, Negin Khanloo, Aaron Morin

**COUNCIL LIAISON:** Jared Nieuwenhuis

**COMMISSIONERS ABSENT:** Lisa Schreiner

**OTHERS PRESENT:** Nav Ota, Director; Andrew Lee, Deputy Director; Lucy Liu, Assistant Director – Resource Management & Customer Service; Douglas Lane, Water & Sewer Systems Sr. Engineer – Utilities; Stephanie Schwenger, Program Administrator – Utilities; Alexandra Gancheva, Business Services Manager – Utilities; Laurie Hugdahl, Minutes Taker

**1. CALL TO ORDER:**

The meeting was called to order by Chair Strom at 6:30 p.m.

**2. APPROVAL OF AGENDA**

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

**3. ORAL AND WRITTEN COMMUNICATIONS**

Oral and written communications were solicited. There were none.

**4. COMMUNICATION FROM CITY COUNCIL, COMMUNITY COUNCIL, BOARDS AND COMMISIONS**

Councilmember Nieuwenhuis welcomed new ESC Commissioner Negin Khanloo to the ESC and stated he was thrilled with the appointment. Commissioner Khanloo introduced herself and discussed her interest in the Environmental Services Commission.

Councilmember Nieuwenhuis stated that the Council had a great presentation by Utilities staff regarding AMI. The Council is considering a joint partnership with Boys and Girls regarding a facility in Bellevue. There was a presentation regarding the tree canopy in various neighborhoods in the city. There was also a presentation on road usage tax which could potentially replace the gas tax.

## 5. STAFF REPORTS

Asst. Director Lucy Liu gave an update on the mixed paper recycling program in the city. Since July Republic has been able to move the mixed paper to recycling market, but not to China which has remained closed. The City is continuing to encourage recycling and working with Republic to send a message about the importance of recycling clean, empty and dry to eliminate contamination. The City is also working to reduce the flow of mixed paper coming into customers' homes. Councilmember Nieuwenhuis asked where the recycling is going. Ms. Liu replied it is going to Vietnam and Malaysia.

Deputy Director Lee reported that the plan is to bring the full AMI contract to Council for review in November. Hopefully the implementation phase will begin at the end of the year.

Deputy Director Lee reported that the strike has concluded and the contractor was able to return to work. NE 8<sup>th</sup> has reopened, and the projection for completion is mid-November.

## 6. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

9/6/18 Regular Meeting Minutes

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

## 7. ELECTION OF NEW VICE CHAIR

Vanja Knezevic was elected as Vice Chair.

## 8. UNFINISHED BUSINESS

None

## 9. NEW BUSINESS

- Public Hearing on Proposed Utilities Budget  
*Presenter(s): Lucy Liu, Assistant Director - Resource Management & Customer Service – Utilities*

The hearing was called to order at 6:44 p.m.

Commissioners Present: Diann Strom (Chair), Vanja Knezevic (Vice Chair), Anne Howe, Negin Khanloo, Aaron Morin.

Asst. Director Liu gave an update of the Proposed 2019-2020 Utilities Operating Budget noting the one change which is the result of new public utility tax that the City of Medina adopted. This is a pass-through cost and impacts the customers of the City of Medina only. She also reviewed the Preliminary Rates Forecast as contained in the budget notebook.

Chair Strom asked what the service enhancement includes. Assistant Director Liu explained that refers to AMI.

Councilmember Nieuwenhuis asked if there are any other cities that invest in infrastructure as aggressively as Bellevue does. Assistant Director Liu thought that Seattle would be the closest one.

Public Testimony:

David Plummer, 14415 NE 14<sup>th</sup> Place, Bellevue, WA 98007, expressed the following concerns related to the Proposed 2019-2025 Water Operating and CIP Budgets:

- The budget documents do not provide sufficient information to justify the proposed budgets.
- The budgets include a large number of operating and CIP proposals for the maintenance of the three utilities infrastructure in spite of data that shows that the utility system's equipment is in good condition.
- The Water and Sewer CIP and Operating budgets include funding proposals for the non-cost-effective and unnecessary Advanced Metering Infrastructure system.
- The Department did not present a zero-rate-increase budget option.
- Information on the proposed rate increases should be expanded to include rates for 202 through 2025, and detailed information added to explain how rates are developed from the operating and CIP budgets.

He urged the Commission to review the materials he had distributed to the Commission and recommend staff development of a reduced-cost, no-rate-increase budget.

Chair Strom stated that Mr. Plummer's testimony would be forwarded to the Council.

Seeing no further comments the public hearing was closed at 6:59 p.m.

- **Wastewater System Plan Implementation**  
*Presenter(s): Douglas Lane, Water & Sewer Systems Sr. Engineer – Utilities*

Mr. Lane reviewed the contents of the Wastewater System Plan with three categories of recommendations: existing capacity concerns, capacity for growth, and infrastructure renewal and replacement. Mr. Lane presented an overview of the Plan implementation to date, and of emerging issues since the Plan.

Completed projects included East CBD Trunk Capacity Improvements, Bellefield Pump Station Capacity Improvements, Wilburton Sewer Capacity Upgrade, and Utilities Facilities for 20<sup>th</sup> Avenue NE Segment 2. The Midlakes Pump Station has been delayed due to siting issues. For infrastructure renewal, mains were reviewed. An economic life cycle model was developed to include the likelihood and consequence of failure for gravity mains. This will help staff determine the best way to replace the system. Options for root treatment to reduce repairs are also being researched. Staff established a program to prioritize forced main replacement using a scoring method. The City is planning for field assessment now. Pump Station 12 FM will be replaced in West Lake Sammamish roadway.

Ongoing work includes: sewer repair and replacement, lakeline assessment and replacement, ad on-site power at sewer pump stations, Midlakes Pump Station capacity upgrade, I&I investigations, and flow monitoring.

Emerging Issues that have happened since the first plan which will inform the next plan include:

- Downtown height restriction adjusted up to 600 feet.
- Demand trends:
  - Diurnal study (hourly patterns) completed for Water System Plan
  - Currently evaluating domestic demands vs. decade constructed
- Sewer Model rebuilding and software upgrade
- Eastgate rezone

Questions:

Chair Strom asked what the estimated lifespan of a main line is. Mr. Lane replied it depends on the material and the local conditions. A typical sewer main might last 100-125 years depending on the materials. The lakelines

are more like 50-75 years. A lot of them have already reached the lower end of that.

- Utilities Rate Relief Program Review  
Presenter(s): Alexandra Gancheva, Business Services Manager – Utilities;  
Nav Ota, Utilities Director

Staff is preparing for a recommendation that will be delivered to the Council on Monday.

Ms. Gancheva explained that the Utility Rate Relief Program provides utility bill discounts to low income residents 62 years or older or those who are permanently disabled or on home kidney dialysis. The program is owned and administered by the City, and renewal is required each year. She gave an overview of numbers of customers served. Goals for evaluating the program were to improve program efficiency and ways to find capacity to implement new emergency assistance low income program. She reviewed results of research showing how Bellevue compares to eight other agencies. Ms. Gancheva summarized that Bellevue's program is very robust with a high bill discount and discount offered to multifamily residents, but some gaps were discovered: The renewal policy is cumbersome; and there is no emergency assistance for low income who are not 62 or who do not have disabilities. A goal is to make it easy for customers to apply and to renew their application. The proposal is to reduce application renewal to every other year. A partnership with Hopelink was explored but was determined not to be viable. Other goals are to improve administrative efficiency such as process improvements, reducing manual processing and updating code.

Staff is also recommending implantation of a new emergency assistance program to help provide short-term, temporary utility rate relief to low-income residents who are not eligible for the current URR program. The program would provide a discount on two bimonthly bills or four months of utility services for low income single-family residential customers who are experiencing a financial crisis and who otherwise would be subject to service disruption. Customers would only be eligible once every three years for the program.

Vice Chair Knezevic spoke in support of the recommendation, but expressed concern about changing this for the existing customers who have already qualified. She asked about just changing to 70% for customers going forward instead of changing the benefit to the current customers who are already used to the current rate of savings. Ms. Gancheva indicated staff could run the numbers to check on that, but 92% of the customers renew each year so the City would not be able to save the

money necessary to establish the new program. Director Otal added that it would also be cumbersome to administer the separate tracking of that. She stressed that even a 70% reduction on a bill is very generous and much more than most jurisdictions offer.

Vice Chair Knezevic asked how a financial crisis would be determined. Ms. Gancheva replied that customers would be asked what new item happened to make them unable to pay their bill. Vice Chair Knezevic asked who this was only focused on single family. There was discussion about how multifamily bills are administered and collected which makes providing discounts for customers who are struggling financially difficult. Commissioner Knezevic recommended a policy to require builders of condos to install individual meters in units. Director Otal replied that the complex would have a smart meter, but the individual units would not.

Commissioner Morin asked what percentage of the population ends up not having their own meter, and would therefore be unable to access this program. Ms. Gancheva indicated staff could look into that.

Chair Strom asked about having a shorter reapplication period. Director Otal commented that this is intended to be temporary and intended to help different people over time. Ms. Gancheva noted that the program would be reevaluated after a year or so.

Commissioner Morin asked about having a voluntary donation program for assistance. He also asked if staff has considered deferring payment for a period of time instead of waiving fees.

Councilmember Nieuwenhuis expressed appreciation to staff for looking into this. He asked for more information about the application and renewal process. Ms. Gancheva reviewed the process.

Commissioner Knezevic commented that a large number of people served by the organization she works for may be able to benefit from this. Director Otal commented on the importance of partnering with organizations like Hopelink or DSHS for outreach. Staff intends to take this recommendation to Council next week.

Commissioner Knezevic suggesting outlining examples of financial crisis for the Council. Director Otal concurred that this was important.

There was unanimous consent to support moving this forward to the Council.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Councilmember Nieuwenhuis and Commissioner Knezevic left the meeting at 8:08 p.m.

- Solid Waste Contract Annual Performance Report  
Presenter(s): Stephanie Schwenger, Program Administrator – Utilities

Ms. Schwenger reviewed the 2018 Contract Performance Review Results including the audit done of the single-family container labeling and results of annual customer surveys.

The labeling audit found that about 11% of containers audited had a missing, outdated or unauthorized label. Other non-compliance issues included outdates, molded-in branding; damaged labels; and the presence of “Yard Debris” and “Yard Waste” labels. These results are similar to results from last year.

As a result the City communicated the results to Republic and will continue to enforce labeling provisions in the Contract. Republic must pay the applicable performance fees and develop an action plan to address the issue by the end of the year.

The single-family customer satisfaction results show that customer satisfaction has been very stable among single family customers for the last several years, but there are still some issues with response times to a missed collection. Multifamily and commercial surveys had a similar result. The City has communicated results of the surveys to Republic and fees have been assessed. Republic must develop an action plan by October 31, 2018 to address response time following missed collections.

Single family customers were also asked about preferred modes for receiving information on waste and recycling. The preferred ways were labels on containers, websites and mailed brochures. Customers were also asked about their understanding of collection procedures. The top four things people were confused about were special pick up requirements, where to take unusual or difficult to recycle items, scheduling a special pickup and what is accepted at Republic Services’ Recycling Drop Off Center. Efforts to increase awareness of Republics Drop Off Center have increased.

Multifamily/Commercial property managers/owners were asked about organics recycling participation. The number of those participating in the organics recycling program have increased slightly. Property managers/owners were then asked about the likelihood of taking advantage of embedded organics recycling in the next year. About 30% said they were likely to sign up next year. Preferences for city resources

questions showed that apartment and multifamily owners were interested in getting recycling tote bags, posters, and kitchen food scrap containers. The top preferences for city resources were posters, a recycling needs assessment and indoor common area recycling containers.

Single family customers were asked about solid waste and recycling priorities. The highest priorities were promoting recycling by providing convenient opportunities, educating the public about handling and disposing of household hazardous waste, and improving the percent of materials diverted from landfill by encouraging residents and businesses to voluntarily participate in recycling programs.

As a result of survey results, next steps include improving awareness of convenient options for non-routine collection and difficult-to-recycle items; continuing to expand organics recycling program to select apartment and condo properties to increase and improve voluntary participation in organics recycling in the multifamily sector; improving promotion of recycling resources available to apartments, condominiums, and business; improving customer awareness of convenient take-back programs for mercury-containing lights, medicines, paint, batteries, and electronics; and increasing customer education on safe handling and disposal of household hazardous waste items.

**10. ORAL AND WRITTEN COMMUNICATIONS**

None

**11. REVIEW OF ESC CALENDAR/COUNCIL CALENDAR;  
CONSERVATION AND OUTREACH EVENTS AND VOLUNTEER  
OPPORTUNITIES**

- ESC Calendar/Council Calendar

Deputy Director Lee reviewed these items. At the next meeting staff will be looking for a budget and rate recommendation. Doug Lane will be talking about the Water System Seismic Vulnerability Assessment. In January, staff has invited Jennifer from the Environmental Stewardship Initiative. Commissioners should have received an invitation to a training on parliamentary procedures on Thursday, October 18.

- Conservation & Outreach Events & Volunteer Opportunities

**12. ADJOURNMENT**

**Motion made by Commissioner Strom, seconded by Commissioner Howe, to adjourn the meeting at 8:46 p.m. Motion passed unanimously (4-0).**

The meeting was adjourned at 8:46 p.m.