

CITY OF BELLEVUE  
CITY COUNCIL

Summary Minutes of Study Session

January 4, 2010  
6:00 p.m.

Council Conference Room  
Bellevue, Washington

PRESENT: Mayor Davidson, Deputy Mayor Lee, and Councilmembers Balducci, Chelminiak, Degginger, Robertson, and Wallace

ABSENT: None.

1. Executive Session

The meeting was called to order at 6:05 p.m. by Temporary Chair Degginger.

2. Study Session

(a) Election of Mayor

Councilmember Degginger reviewed the procedure for the election of Mayor and Deputy Mayor. He opened the floor to nominations for the position of Mayor.

Councilmember Balducci nominated Councilmember Chelminiak for Mayor.

Councilmember Wallace nominated Councilmember Davidson for Mayor.

Hearing no further nominations, Mr. Degginger called for a vote on the nomination of John Chelminiak as Mayor. The nomination for Councilmember Chelminiak failed by a vote of 3-4, with Councilmembers Balducci, Chelminiak, and Degginger in favor.

Councilmember Davidson was elected to serve as Mayor by a vote of 5-2, with Councilmembers Chelminiak and Degginger voting in the negative.

Dr. Davidson took his seat as Mayor and thanked Councilmembers for their support.

(b) Election of Deputy Mayor

Mayor Davidson opened the floor to nominations for Deputy Mayor.

Councilmember Wallace nominated Councilmember Lee to serve as Deputy Mayor.

Councilmember Chelminiak nominated Councilmember Balducci.

Councilmember Lee thanked Mr. Wallace for his nomination. Mr. Lee stated that it would be an important historic step and milestone for Bellevue to elect a the first Deputy Mayor who represents the community's 36% is a member of the community's growing ethnic minority (currently at 36% of the City's population). *[Minutes approved by the City Council on February 16, 2010, as amended at Deputy Mayor Lee's request.]*

Ms. Balducci said she enjoyed serving as Deputy Mayor during the past two years and would be happy to continue in that role.

Councilmember Lee was elected to serve as Deputy Mayor by a vote of 7-0.

Councilmember Wallace congratulated Mr. Lee. Deputy Mayor Lee thanked the Council for its support.

(c) Report on the Findings of the 2009-2010 Human Services Needs Update

City Manager Steve Sarkozy opened discussion regarding the 2009-2010 Human Services Needs Update.

Parks and Community Services Director Patrick Foran said that the most recent Human Services Needs Update is of particular importance due to the effects of the recession, which have been discussed with the Council on an ongoing basis. The data collected through the update process is used to guide the Human Services Commission in developing its recommendations for the allocation of limited funds. Mr. Foran noted that several commissioners were in the audience.

Alex O'Reilly, Human Services Planning Coordinator, opened staff's presentation of the key findings of the Human Services Needs Update.

Emily Leslie, Human Services Manager, reviewed the human services funding sources, which are the City's Human Services Fund and federal Community Development Block Grant funds. CDBG funding has been decreasing since 2003. State, King County, and private donations continue to decrease as well.

Ms. O'Reilly explained that the Human Services Needs Update guides recommendations for the allocation of 2011-2012 human services funding from all sources. Data sources include community surveys, focus groups, key informant interviews, and additional studies and reports. Key indicators of the community's needs are the unemployment rate, the lack of affordable housing, an increase in the number of citizens in need of emergency financial assistance, increased reports of domestic violence, a growing number of adults without health insurance, and

increased demands on school lunch and food bank programs. Additional pertinent trends are the growing number of older adults, increasing ethnic diversity, and an increase in families living at the poverty level.

The Human Services Commission began discussing funding strategies in December. A call for proposals from the community will be issued in March, and the Commission's recommendations will be presented to the Council in the fall.

Jan Stout, Human Services Commission Chair, reported that Bellevue will expand its joint application process with North and East King County cities to now include cities in South King County. Bellevue typically receives more than 90 applications for funding. Applications will be reviewed from March through August. Ms. Stout explained that the Commission will assess the extent to which programs are addressing the needs of Bellevue residents most affected by the economic recession, while ensuring that a broad spectrum of services are still available for those who need them. The Commission looks for opportunities to leverage other financial contributions and is concerned that the safety net has been weakened by reductions in funding from multiple sources.

Ms. Stout noted that investments in human services are a cost-effective way to prevent or mitigate issues or situations before they become more problematic or expensive to address. For example, early childhood learning is correlated with lower rates in teen pregnancy and incarceration as well as with increased graduation rates and sustainable employment. The Human Services Commission ensures accountability by reviewing both contract performance and outcome results.

Mayor Davidson thanked Ms. Stout and the Human Services Commission for their work and dedication.

Deputy Mayor Lee expressed appreciation for the Commission's work. He noted increasing needs due to the recession and demographic trends, and he encouraged expanding the City's partnerships with multicultural and faith-based organizations.

Councilmember Balducci added her thanks to the Commission and staff for their work. She recalled her experience as a volunteer with an information and referral service focused primarily on providing free legal services. Referrals were often expanded to include domestic violence programs and a number of other services. Ms. Balducci commented on the funding crisis, especially related to decreased King County funding, and stated that the community's safety net is in danger. She does not believe that the cities alone can make up for the loss in funding, and most of the human services organizations cannot operate without some level of government support.

John Chelminiak expressed concern that individuals are not eligible for most services until their life is in significant crisis. He questioned the ability for early intervention.

Mr. Foran said the Bellevue Cares referral and outreach program initiated by the City in 2009 was a response to that very issue. People who have never needed assistance are now finding themselves in situations in which they do need help. Mr. Foran said that emergency financial assistance agencies are working to implement a joint intake process which will allow individuals to request assistance from multiple service providers on one application. Ms. Leslie noted that this effort is sponsored by the Eastside Human Services Forum.

Councilmember Wallace observed that Bellevue residents have big brains and hearts, and are willing to volunteer. He questioned the City's role in coordinating volunteers.

Mr. Foran noted that a number of volunteer awards will be presented during the later Regular Session. A staff person in the City Manager's Office works to develop and coordinate volunteerism, and the City has developed relationships with faith based communities through these efforts. The Planning and Community Development Department's Neighborhood Initiative coordinated a number of volunteer activities throughout the year, which resulted in significant donations of food and other goods for those in need.

Mayor Davidson suggested coordinating an event to acknowledge the involvement of the community's faith based organizations, as was done last summer to celebrate the efforts of neighborhood groups.

Mr. Foran stated that Bellevue's traditional approach has been not to provide direct services, but to provide information, assistance, and coordination for the human services network of nonprofit organizations.

Councilmember Balducci noted that the City has done a good job of centralizing access to information and services through the eCityGov Alliance. She suggested a similar type of electronic referral tool for posting volunteer opportunities. She further suggested a focus on fostering small businesses as a way to create jobs.

Responding to Mayor Davidson, Mr. Foran said the Human Services Forum took the first step years ago to coordinate the efforts of human services providers. Ms. Stout said a number of agencies have merged in recent years in an effort to become more efficient and effective.

(d) Eastgate Area Properties Master Plan Review

Mr. Sarkozy opened discussion regarding the Eastgate Area Properties Master Plan review, and recalled the City's acquisition of the properties through three transactions.

Mr. Foran introduced Glenn Kost, Planning Manager, and Pam Fehrman, Project Manager. Mr. Foran commented that development of the Master Plan has been an extensive community process that attempted to balance multiple interests and the needs of the community. He explained that tonight the Parks and Community Services Board will present its recommendation to the Council. If approved, the preferred alternative will move forward into the environmental review process. The Master Plan will ultimately come back to the Council for formal adoption.

Mr. Kost reviewed that the Eastgate area properties are 27.5 acres acquired through three transactions for a total cost of \$6.3 million. The properties are the site of a former landfill and airfield, and approximately nine acres represent an open area. He noted the importance of master planning in terms of identifying a shared long-range vision, developing a phased implementation plan, and providing planning level cost estimates. The planning process has generated more than 2,700 instances of community feedback through workshops, neighborhood meetings, petition, email, phone, surveys, and public comments before the Parks and Community Services Board and the City Council. Mr. Kost noted that citizens might have provided multiple submissions. The most frequent requests have been for a Little League tournament complex, off-leash dog areas, an aquatic facility, and to save the existing open meadow.

Mr. Kost summarized the community's interest in sportsfields (especially for soccer and Little League) and off-leash dog areas. Dogs on leashes are allowed in all parks, and off-leash dogs are the top complaint received by the Parks Department. Mr. Kost recalled that the City completed a separate off-leash dog area study, and staff continues to work on this project. He noted proposals for an aquatic facility or other indoor sports center. A group of residents have advocated to preserve at least two-thirds of the open meadow as a natural area. Master Plan elements with broad support by the community are picnic facilities, children's play areas, trails, and restrooms. Residents are in favor of limiting vehicle access to 160<sup>th</sup> Avenue, utilizing existing parking if possible, and maintaining residential buffers.

Mr. Kost reviewed previous feedback from the City Council which identified lighted athletic fields as a priority and emphasized the importance of neighborhood buffers and accessible picnic facilities. The Council previously expressed support for the expansion of off-leash dog areas citywide. Councilmembers were concerned about displacing the current informal off-leash use at the Eastgate properties, but agreed that Robinswood Park would be an acceptable alternative if higher priority uses at Eastgate limited off-leash opportunities. Mr. Kost said there was Council interest in an indoor recreation facility, but that was considered a lower priority.

Mr. Kost reviewed the components found in all three Master Plan alternatives: 1) Lighted synthetic sportsfield area with two Little League fields and one soccer/lacrosse area, 2) Picnic area in northwest corner with adjacent parking and restrooms, and 3) Natural areas with trails and renovations to the stormwater ponds.

Responding to Councilmember Wallace, Mr. Kost reviewed the topography of the site.

Continuing, Mr. Kost explained that Alternative A adds a second lighted sportsfield area. Alternative B provides a three-acre off-leash dog area instead of the second sportsfield area. Alternative C provides a recreation building instead of the off-leash area or additional sportsfield.

Merle Keeney, Chair of the Parks and Community Services Board, reviewed the Board's recommendation. The Board heard staff and public input at three of its meetings, and most Board Members attended all of the community meetings that were held. The Board reviewed a

significant amount of data provided by staff, toured the site, and discussed ideas with residents. The Board approved Alternative A by a vote of 5-2, with the two no votes favoring Alternative C.

Mr. Keeney said the Board's support for Alternative A is contingent upon providing an off-leash area of at least five acres at Robinswood Park, with the amenities that are consistent with Bellevue's off-leash areas plan. The Board recommends that funding from the Eastgate Areas Properties project be used to improve the off-leash area at Robinswood Park. Mr. Keeney said the Board wanted to show its support of the need for off-leash areas.

Mr. Keeney reviewed the rationale for the recommended Master Plan. It responds to the needs expressed by the community, is consistent with the original intent of the property acquisition, is consistent with the Parks and Open Space System Plan goals, responds to the need for lighted sportsfields, and is environmentally responsible and respectful of neighbors.

Mr. Keeney said the Board's recommended name for the park is Airfield Park, which reflects the historical use of the property. The Board wanted a name that was unique, memorable, historical, simple, and responsive to community input. The City received 59 suggested names from residents. Many were eliminated because the names were similar to existing parks or areas. Mr. Keeney said the site is the only airfield ever located in Bellevue, and it would be appropriate to preserve this bit of history.

Mr. Kost said next steps for the project are a lengthy (2-3 years) environmental review and permitting process. Council adoption of the plan is slated for the second quarter of 2010.

Councilmember Degginger recalled that when the Boeing site was acquired in 2002, staff and the Council discussed its potential for the development of much-needed sportsfields. He thanked the Parks Board for its work and recommendation for Alternative A. He noted the plan still provides opportunities for trails, picnicking, and other activities.

Councilmember Balducci noted that she lives near the park, which she values for its open space and presence of wildlife. Throughout the planning process, she has been interested in designing a park that will meet as many needs as possible. She observed that a common theme in public comments was to encourage some flexibility in the usage of the park. She acknowledged the Board's recommendation to provide an enhanced off-leash dog area at Robinswood Park. However, Ms. Balducci observed that Alternative A reflects one use, as the sportsfields take up essentially all of the relatively flat, usable area.

Ms. Balducci said she has always supported sportsfield improvements. However, she described her perspective that parks should be for everybody. She said as the mother of a three-year-old, she is familiar with Bellevue's many wonderful children's play areas. She questioned the need for play areas at the new park, and suggested there is a greater need for off-leash dog areas. While she would use the picnic area if provided, she questioned whether it is needed. Ms. Balducci suggested that every park does not need to include every possible amenity, and that this park could focus on targeted unique needs.

Ms. Balducci expressed support for Alternative B, which provides sportsfields while also preserving the off-leash dog use. She favors maintaining an open, natural dog run and preserving the wooded areas. She likes the access and parking configuration, noting that it is a good idea to provide access via the commercial side of the park. She encouraged minimizing the impacts of the trail going down to the ponds, and avoiding any paved trails. She thanked the Parks Board for its thorough review and hard work.

Councilmember Chelminiak thanked the Parks Board for its review and recommendations, noting that he observed the Board's deliberations. He agreed with Councilmember Balducci about keeping the trails more natural and not paved. However, he supports the importance of ensuring the park is ADA compliant and accessible.

Responding to Mr. Chelminiak, Mr. Keeney recalled the Board's discussion of the off-leash area in Alternative B. Mr. Keeney said there were concerns that while the proposed area is 3.5 acres, it is long, narrow and sloping. The Board felt that expanding the off-leash area at Robinswood Park offered a better option, with the opportunity for an area of at least five acres.

Mr. Chelminiak expressed support for listening to the public and expanding the Robinswood off-leash area to compensate for the loss of this use at the Eastgate Area Properties. Mr. Keeney thanked residents for their involvement in this issue.

Councilmember Robertson said she is excited to see more sportsfields in the Master Plan, and she feels the site lends itself well to this use. She requested more information related to sportsfields revenues and cost recovery. Mr. Foran said he is not aware of any public recreational facility that is self sustaining. However, the City can offset costs with an appropriate fee structure, and there is also the opportunity for individual user groups to earn money through concessions. Mr. Foran estimated that the maximum cost recovery possible would be 50 percent to 60 percent of operating costs.

Ms. Robertson said she strongly supports sportsfields, and she prefers a cost recovery model in order to enable the City to continue to invest in more park facilities. She wants to ensure that the sports activities and lighting do not negatively impact neighbors.

Responding to Ms. Robertson's concerns about the safety of children playing in the vicinity of the stormwater ponds, Mr. Foran said the City can mitigate potential problems by directing visibility and access to the pond area. Ms. Robertson supports having play areas near the sportsfields. Mr. Foran stated that picnic areas complement the sportsfields use as well.

Deputy Mayor Lee agreed with the need for sportsfields, and expressed support for the Parks Board's recommendation. He likes that the preferred alternative also preserves natural areas including the ponds. He would like to see at least a smaller off-leash dog area at the Eastgate location, but respects the Board's recommendation in that regard.

Councilmember Wallace asked staff to accompany him on a tour of the site. He requested information on funding sources and the estimated costs for each alternative. Responding to Mr. Wallace, Mr. Keeney said the Robinswood Park off-leash area would be expanded at its current location. Mr. Kost briefly described a preliminary concept for expansion of the area. Mr. Foran noted that the expansion will likely include an area where dogs can run more openly than in the traditional configuration.

Councilmember Degginger suggested Bellevue Airfield Park as a more complete name, because the site was previously called Bellevue Airfield. Mr. Keeney commented that the Board talked about how Bellevue Downtown Park is referred to as Downtown Park. The Board therefore chose to shorten the name and keep it simple.

Responding to Mr. Degginger, Mr. Kost said the idea of incorporating an airfield design theme into the park has not yet been discussed.

Councilmember Chelminiak said his first choice is Alternative A, with the expanded off-leash area at Robinswood Park. His second choice is Alternative B.

Councilmember Balducci concurred with Mr. Degginger's suggestion about the park's name. Pursuant to Mr. Wallace's request, she would like information on preliminary cost estimates and available funding for both the Master Plan and expansion of the Robinswood off-leash area. She wants to ensure that expansion of the Robinswood off-leash area is concurrent with the Eastgate properties development, in order to maintain this use without interruption.

Mayor Davidson expressed support for Alternative A, and the Board's recommendation regarding the Robinswood off-leash area. He noted residents' interest in a formal off-leash area at Downtown Park as well.

Responding to Mayor Davidson, Mr. Wallace said he would like the Council to have an additional opportunity to review information and staff's responses to questions, before providing final direction to staff regarding a preferred alternative.

Mr. Sarkozy confirmed that staff will come back for additional Council review and discussion. He noted that the Council will have the opportunity to modify the design as the environmental review process moves forward.

Responding to Councilmember Chelminiak, Mr. Foran said that expansion of the off-leash dog area at Robinswood Park will need to go through an environmental review. Mr. Foran clarified that staff was not contemplating an environmental review of Robinswood Park as part of the Eastgate Properties Master Plan review. Combining the two reviews will complicate the process.

Mayor Davidson suggested further analysis of this issue, along with other issues and questions raised tonight, before staff and Council proceed with the identification of a preferred alternative.

At 8:01 p.m., Mayor Davidson declared recess to the Regular Session.

Myrna L. Basich  
City Clerk

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