

CITY OF BELLEVUE  
CITY COUNCIL

Summary Minutes of Study Session

May 21, 2012  
6:00 p.m.

Council Conference Room  
Bellevue, Washington

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

ABSENT: Councilmember Wallace

1. Executive Session

Deputy Mayor Robertson called the meeting to order at 6:02 p.m., and declared recess to Executive Session for approximately 25 minutes to discuss one item of potential litigation and one item of pending litigation.

The meeting resumed at 6:38 p.m., with Mayor Lee presiding.

2. Study Session

(a) Proposed Downtown Land Use and Livability Work Program

City Manager Steve Sarkozy opened discussion regarding the Downtown Livability work program. He summarized the Council's interest in updating the Downtown Land Use Code to better align it with the Great Place Strategy, light rail, and other developments. The work has been on hold pending decisions on the light rail alignment through the Downtown and budget priorities.

A budget proposal was prepared for the 2011-2012 budget process, at which time the Council directed staff to proceed with funding for the Downtown Transportation Plan effort but to defer the Downtown Livability work program to the 2013-2014 biennium budget.

Mr. Sarkozy referred the Council to the desk packet for a management brief and list of projects in the Development Services Department's current Code Amendment work program. Staff has reserved part of the June 4 Study Session and the July 9 Extended Study Session for continued discussion about the Downtown Land Use Code and Livability Plan. At this point, staff is interested in establishing a possible process for addressing these work items.

Dan Stroh, Planning Director, recalled that the Great Place Strategy came out of the Downtown Implementation Plan (DIP) Update a few years ago. The strategy reflects three objectives in making the Downtown a great place – viability, livability, and memorability.

Mr. Stroh said that budget constraints and light rail planning deferred work to update the Downtown Livability Plan and Land Use Code. He recalled comments to the Council by Brian Brand, Bellevue Downtown Association, on May 7, who encouraged addressing these issues before the next upswing in development activity.

Mr. Stroh reviewed the Downtown Livability Initiative scope of work, as proposed in March 2012, which identifies the following topics: 1) Amenity incentive system, 2) Building height and form, 3) Design guidelines, 4) Pedestrian Corridor, 5) Light rail interface, 6) Downtown parking, and, 7) Other Land Use Code amendments (e.g., recycling/garbage, vendor carts, nonconforming uses).

Mr. Stroh noted a number of considerations in setting the work program, including other planning and land use initiatives in the Council's work plan and the City's limited budget resources. The Downtown Livability work item is currently unfunded but is the subject of a staff budget proposal for the 2013-2014 biennium. Prioritizing the project above existing work items would require a shift of funding, staffing, and the Planning Commission's time. Mr. Stroh said a broader discussion of planning and the land use work plan has been scheduled for next month.

Mayor Lee commented that the Council needs to look at the Downtown Livability Initiative. However, he acknowledged the budgetary constraints.

Councilmember Stokes observed that this is a unique period in Bellevue's history and the economy. He questioned that if we do not address the issues now, then when? He commented that the light rail project will be a key factor in the City's future planning, and transportation and land use issues are closely connected. He encouraged moving forward with this initiative as quickly as possible to ensure that Bellevue continues to be a leader on the Eastside and in the region.

Deputy Mayor Robertson thanked staff for the list of Land Use Code Amendment work program items, and for presenting a realistic perspective about staff's and the Planning Commission's workloads. She recalled that, during the last budget process, the Council chose to initiate only the transportation update portion of the Downtown Livability review. She spoke in favor of proceeding with the additional Study Sessions as proposed by staff.

Ms. Robertson said it will be important to review the Downtown Livability components within the broader context of competing priorities and light rail planning. She suggests completing this preliminary work before the Council's August recess, to allow the Leadership Team and Budget Results Teams to hear about the Council's priorities as we continue through the budget process.

Ms. Robertson said she would like to hear staff's rankings of what they consider to be the most important priorities, while also discussing individual Councilmembers' priorities, during the next Study Sessions.

With regard to the list of Land Use Code work items detailed in the Desk Packet management brief, Ms. Robertson said she would prefer that the Transportation Commission address transportation issues and the Planning Commission address land use issues separately, and to perhaps follow up that work with a couple of joint meetings.

Ms. Robertson observed that residential development receives a higher FAR (floor area ratio) than office development. She would like to see this issue studied as part of this work.

Councilmember Chelminiak observed that the Downtown Livability Initiative was introduced in 2006-2007, and he acknowledged that this is a significant work item. He recalled that staff brought the topic to the Council again in May 2009, at which point the Council was in the middle of deliberations regarding the East Link light rail project.

With regard to the involvement of the Transportation and Planning Commissions, Mr. Chelminiak suggested that perhaps other Boards and Commissions should be involved as well. He recalled that multiple Commissions and Boards were represented on the Bel-Red Steering Committee and the Light Rail Best Practices Committee.

Mr. Chelminiak said he sees the objective of the Downtown Livability Initiative as improving the pedestrian and bicycling environment and the overall lifestyle experience. He noted the need to address regulations applicable to food trucks as well.

Mr. Chelminiak believes the time is right to move forward and he would like to get the process going by the fall. He said there are developers who would like to move forward with projects, but they want to know how the City plans to update the Downtown Land Use Code. He reiterated that he would like to get the work program going in September.

Councilmember Balducci said that an economic lull is an appropriate time to plan for the next development upswing. She noted a number of issues to be addressed - food trucks/carts, the Pedestrian Corridor, the appearance of the skyline when fully developed, and making the ground level of the Downtown look and feel safer.

Ms. Balducci recalled that the last major discussion about the Downtown Land Use Code related to helistops. She observed that it is preferable to update the Code now before the next major development proposals come forward for the Downtown. She said creating the desired Downtown experience is the reason the Council has spent so much time on light rail planning over the past several years. She believe the Downtown Livability Initiative is the basic foundational work needed to ensure that Bellevue remains successful into the next generation.

Ms. Balducci would like to get the work going while the economy is slowed. She believes that the proposed budget and work program are enough to get the work going. She said it makes

sense to use funds from the East Link Downtown Station Area Planning and the Pedestrian Corridor budget items.

Ms. Balducci observed that, as a government, the City does not build the Downtown, but it provides a framework and context for development to occur. She said it is important to be clear about what the update will do and will not do. She suggested that the update work should specifically address what the City wants to do differently and better (e.g., incentives that will appeal to developers). She suggested coming up with a work plan and schedule for the Council's review.

Councilmember Davidson cautioned against preempting the budget process. He noted his ongoing concern about using Capital Investment Program (CIP) funds for the work, however. He observed that there are a number of budget issues tied up in making a decision about how to proceed, and the Downtown Livability items must be considered within the broader context of the City budget.

Dr. Davidson said he supports the information presented by staff. However, he is not supportive of making commitments until the overall budget is addressed. He commented that it is likely that Downtown development will start coming back before development in other areas, so he does believe it is important to update the plan.

Councilmember Stokes concurred with Ms. Balducci's suggestions about addressing new issues and incentives as part of the Downtown Livability Initiative Update. He believes the work should be a priority now and that updating the Downtown Land Use Code is closely tied to economic recovery.

Mayor Lee said he appreciates the list of work items. He acknowledged the importance and urgency of addressing Downtown land use issues. However, he concurred with Dr. Davidson's comments about considering the specific work program within the broader budget context. He would like to see a comprehensive review of Downtown land use policies for the near term, midterm and long term.

Mr. Stroh said that staff plans to address the work items in greater detail during an upcoming Council meeting.

Mayor Lee said he would like to narrow the list of work items during the next discussion.

Deputy Mayor Robertson requested a brief overview of each item and an estimate of the level of staff time and effort that will be needed. She would like to identify opportunities that provide synergy with light rail projects.

Mayor Lee said he does not want to dilute the Downtown Livability Initiative too much.

Mr. Sarkozy confirmed that staff will bring the topic back on June 4 with more details on the items/issues and a proposed work plan and schedule.

Deputy Mayor Robertson said it would be helpful to get an idea of how much work this might generate for Boards and Commissions.

(b) Update on 2012 Street Overlay Program

Ron Kessack, Interim Assistant Director of Transportation (Capital Program Services), provided an update on the 2012 Overlay Program, which will be completed through a contract with Lakeside Industries. Mr. Kessack described the pavement management review process, major 2012 project sites, public notification methods, and GREEN recycled asphalt products.

Mr. Kessack described the City's process to identify pavement surface conditions using the Pavement Surface Condition Field Rating Manual for Asphalt Pavements. He described types of wear and rutting that can occur. He noted that all project planning and design is completed by City staff.

Mr. Kessack listed the following major arterials that are part of the 2012 work program: 1) 148<sup>th</sup> Avenue NE from Main Street to SR 520, 2) 156<sup>th</sup> Avenue NE from Bel-Red Road to the north city limits, 3) 164<sup>th</sup> Avenue NE from SE 14<sup>th</sup> Street to NE 8<sup>th</sup> Street, and 4) NE 8<sup>th</sup> Street from 124<sup>th</sup> Avenue NE to 156<sup>th</sup> Avenue NE. Public notification methods include mailers, media notifications, email, the City's web site, and on-site portable changeable message signs. The City will also be using social media to provide real-time information to assist the public.

Mr. Kessack described green overlay practices using reclaimed asphalt pavement (RAP) and recycled asphalt shingles (RAS). The City will be using RAP as 15 percent to 20 percent of the mix for new surfaces. A combination of three percent RAS and 15 percent RAP will be used on 164<sup>th</sup> Avenue. The bid prices for the recycled asphalt products are the same as other asphalt. However, the 164<sup>th</sup> Avenue project alone keeps nearly 100 tons of recycled asphalt roofing out of the landfill. The City's 2012 Overlay Program will use approximately 7,000 tons of recycled asphalt.

Mr. Kessack presented a video depicting the process of installing pavement overlays.

Councilmember Davidson observed that major north-south arterials are all in this year's program. Mr. Kessack replied that the arterials will be done in sequence, not all at the same time. Dr. Davidson suggested launching the public education campaign as soon as possible.

Councilmember Balducci stated that the City's Overlay Program is designed to be proactive and to avoid letting conditions deteriorate to the point that it becomes necessary to rebuild streets. She noted that citizens speak favorably of the City for its maintenance of Bellevue parks and streets.

Responding to Ms. Balducci, Mr. Kessack described plans to do the work at night. Ms. Balducci said the reader boards are very helpful and provide an immediate mechanism to help people reroute.

Ms. Balducci questioned the durability of the recycled materials. Teresa Becker, Pavement Manager, said the materials have been used in the Midwest for some time. King County established a pilot project in 2009 to test different mixes of recycled material in four areas, and they are all holding up well.

Councilmember Stokes complimented the paving work on SE 8<sup>th</sup> Street and the Lake Hills Connector.

Mayor Lee concurred with Ms. Balducci about citizens' favorable comments on how well the City maintains its streets.

Responding to Mr. Lee, Ms. Becker said a contractor checks all 940 lane miles in the City every two years at a cost of approximately \$125,000 to determine the need for overlays.

In further response, Ms. Becker said the material from recycled asphalt shingles came in at the same cost as the other asphalt mix. However, there could be future cost savings as the material becomes more widely used.

Referring to Councilmember Balducci's earlier comments, Mr. Kessack said the cost of rebuilding a roadway is approximately four to five times the cost of installing overlays.

Dr. Davidson said he has noticed some street conditions, such as cracking, that are not being maintained as well as in the past. Mr. Kessack said weather conditions affect pavement wear.

Mr. Sarkozy noted also that overlay activity was slowed somewhat under the last budget. However, staff recognizes the need to continue to be proactive, and he recommends that the Council restore funding for overlays as the economy improves.

Mr. Chelminiak said his recollection of the last budget discussion was to continue with the robust maintenance of arterials but not necessarily internal neighborhood streets, based on the availability of funding. He would like to discuss whether more money can be allocated to overlays during the next budget process, and whether delaying overlays on neighborhood streets is the right policy.

Responding to Dr. Davidson, Mr. Kessack said the Overlay Program rotates through areas of the city every two years. He confirmed that there are economies of scale in doing the work in one geographic area at a time.

At 7:55 p.m., Mayor Lee declared recess to the Regular Session.

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Myrna L. Basich, MMC  
City Clerk

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