

CITY OF BELLEVUE  
CITY COUNCIL

Summary Minutes of Study Session

June 4, 2012  
6:00 p.m.

Council Conference Room  
Bellevue, Washington

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

ABSENT: None.

1. Executive Session

Deputy Mayor Robertson called the meeting to order at 6:04 p.m., and declared recess to Executive Session for approximately 20 minutes to discuss one item of potential litigation.

The meeting resumed at 6:21 p.m., with Mayor Lee presiding.

2. Study Session

(a) Ashwood Park Master Plan Update/Downtown Fire Station

City Manager Steve Sarkozy opened discussion regarding the Ashwood Park Master Plan and Downtown Fire Station.

Patrick Foran, Parks and Community Services Director, reviewed the Ashwood Park Master Plan process to date. Mr. Foran described the Ashwood Park site near NE 12<sup>th</sup> Street. Ashwood Park is located on a portion of the old Ashwood Elementary School property that was jointly acquired by the City of Bellevue and the King County Library District in 1986. The purpose of the acquisition was to provide a library, park, and community center.

In 1993, the Ashwood Park Master Plan was approved following an extensive public process. The Ashwood Park Master Plan features a community center with child care, a health and fitness center, and other uses. The top three floors of the structure were identified as workforce housing.

Mr. Foran described the sale of the southwest corner of the Ashwood Park block in 2004-2005, and the subsequent development of the 1020 Tower (Residential) and plaza. A Master Plan for the plaza was adopted in 2004, and construction was completed in 2009.

Mr. Foran recalled that during the 2011 budget process, the City decided to allow the Bellevue Regional Library to use the Ashwood site for construction staging and parking during the construction of a parking structure at the library.

Fire Chief Mike Eisner explained that the need for a Downtown Fire Station was identified in the 2002 Downtown Implementation Plan. At that time, the consultant recommended that the Downtown Fire Station provide both fire suppression and emergency medical services. During the 2007-2013 Capital Improvement Program (CIP) budget process, \$1 million was appropriated to Project No. PS-61 (Downtown Fire Station) to begin planning and design for the new station. In 2008, TCA Architecture and Planning conducted an operational space needs assessment. They recommended a station with 14,000 square feet and three bays, and looked at a number of possible sites including the Metro site next to City Hall.

During the 2011-2017 CIP budget process, an additional \$100,000 per year was allocated to be used toward the future development of a Downtown Fire Station. In 2011, TCA conducted a joint use study of the Ashwood Park site to evaluate the feasibility of co-locating a fire station and community center on the site. Chief Eisner described one site plan option proposed by TCA.

Mr. Foran requested Council direction about whether to move forward with updating the Ashwood Park Master Plan. If so, should the Ashwood Park Master Plan update be funded with CIP Project Nos. P-AD-27, Planning and Design for Existing and Future Park Facilities, and PS-61, Downtown Fire Station?

Responding to Councilmember Balducci, Chief Eisner said the previous studies totaled approximately \$55,000, and the funds came from a separate Public Safety Studies CIP project. In further response regarding the 2008 space assessment, Chief Eisner said TCA identified a parcel near NE 10<sup>th</sup> Street as potentially feasible for siting a Downtown Fire Station. However, that opportunity no longer exists.

Mr. Foran clarified that the previous studies were essentially an exercise to look at the park and Downtown Fire Station from a land use and configuration perspective, to determine whether the community center and fire station facilities could fit on the Ashwood site. If this option is to be pursued further, staff recommends it be placed in a design program to be evaluated within the Master Plan Review process.

Councilmember Balducci observed that the public has not been involved in looking at potential sites for the Downtown Fire Station. She said the Council is being asked to consider this site only and no other alternatives.

Councilmember Davidson expressed an interest in looking at alternative sites as well.

Councilmember Chelminiak observed that the current Ashwood Park is a downtown oasis that is used by residents and recreation groups.

Responding to Mr. Chelminiak, Chief Eisner confirmed that the Metro site adjacent to City Hall is an option for the Downtown Fire Station.

Mr. Chelminiak questioned the source of the funding for the purchase of the site in 1986. Mr. Foran said he has not yet received those records from the archives.

Councilmember Davidson recalled that it was tied to the purchase of the Downtown Park site, which was also owned by the Bellevue School District.

Responding to Councilmember Chelminiak, Mr. Foran said there are currently no funds for park development or construction. However, there is funding to proceed with updating the Ashwood Park Master Plan.

Mr. Chelminiak recalled that the KidsQuest Museum has purchased property at the location and will need more parking facilities. He suggested that a number of proposals are pending, and perhaps it would be better to wait on making a decision. He would like to explore more options, both with and without a Downtown Fire Station on the site.

Responding to Deputy Mayor Robertson, Mr. Foran said the work program anticipates that the Parks and Community Services Board will address the Ashwood Park Master Plan Update in 12 to 18 months, after work is completed on a number of other projects including the Bellevue Youth Theatre, Bellevue Botanical Garden Visitor Center, and projects in Bridle Trails.

Ms. Robertson said she is in favor of updating the Master Plan, even if capital/construction funding is not currently available. Mr. Foran clarified that staff is requesting further study of mixed uses that could be implemented on the Ashwood site, including whether the site would be appropriate for the Downtown Fire Station.

Ms. Robertson said there are a number of possibilities for the site including a senior center and cultural center. With the KidsQuest Museum moving to that area, she believes the City should provide a good public facility. She noted that the City's own studies indicate the need for a Downtown Community Center.

Ms. Robertson said it would be helpful to have an analysis of the optimal location for the Downtown Fire Station, which is a separate analysis from the Ashwood Park work. She said it is fortunate that the City owns the site, and she wants to continue to study all of the possibilities for the site.

Councilmember Wallace recalled the target date of 2015 for a Downtown Fire Station, noting that he does not believe this could be accomplished. He believes the first step is to analyze the specific needs and parameters related to the Downtown Fire Station, and to then determine what might be the best location, whether that is Ashwood Park or somewhere else.

Mr. Wallace concurred with Mr. Chelminiak's observation that the park's current recreational usage serves the community well. However, he also believes it could use some sprucing up.

Councilmember Stokes said he does not understand why identifying and planning a Downtown Fire Station has not been funded and prioritized, given the 2015 target date. He believes the City needs to move quicker than it is on this. Secondly, he sees Ashwood Park as a gem for the downtown. He supports a community center, but is not in favor of an overly large building. He believes that any uses should be complementary to the library and other uses (e.g., KidsQuest Museum). He noted that this area of the downtown has developed nicely and is pedestrian friendly, and he would like to preserve that without developing too intensely. He believes it is important to preserve the open space. Mr. Stokes suggested moving forward now with studying the Downtown Fire Station separately.

Councilmember Davidson requested data on the anticipated level of activity at the Downtown Fire Station and how this impacts surrounding development.

Responding to Deputy Mayor Robertson, Chief Eisner said that every emergency response, day or night, involves lights and sirens.

Councilmember Chelminiak said he believes the City needs a Downtown Fire Station, but the question is where and when.

Responding to Mr. Chelminiak, Chief Eisner said the 2002 Downtown Implementation Plan identified the need for a fire station. A position paper was presented to the Council in 2006-2007, which estimated the need based on growth between 2003 and 2006. The study projected an 18 percent to 25 percent growth in call volume. However, the anticipated level of growth has not occurred. The call volume has increased approximately six percent over the past five years.

Councilmember Chelminiak observed that the Metro site would be preferable to Ashwood Park. He suggested continuing to work to identify at least one other alternative.

Deputy Mayor Robertson said the discussion indicates to her that it would be timely to utilize some of the PS-61 funds to conduct an analysis for the optimal location. She would like to address the Ashwood Park Master Plan separately through the regular budget process. She agreed with Councilmembers Chelminiak and Stokes that the City needs to move forward in preparing for the next development boom.

Councilmember Davidson referred to the Bel-Red corridor, and asked whether the Downtown Fire Station would serve development there once it occurs. If so, he would like information on

how emergency vehicles would cross I-405. He asked staff to bring back a response to this question.

Ms. Robertson clarified that she is requesting that staff come back to the Council with a plan on how to proceed with identifying and studying alternative Downtown Fire Station sites.

Mayor Lee observed that this is good discussion and the Council is on the right track. He believes that the two issues, Downtown Fire Station and Ashwood Park, should be considered separately. He said that public safety is a top priority. He requested an update on growth projections addressing the needs related to a Downtown Fire Station. Mr. Lee believes the Ashwood Park Master Plan should be considered separately as part of the normal budget process.

Councilmember Balducci requested a clarification of the direction Council is giving to staff.

Mayor Lee said his understanding is that the Council requests an update from the Fire Department of the analysis that identified 2015 as the target date for opening a Downtown Fire Station, given that growth has not occurred as originally projected. Mr. Lee reiterated that public safety is a top priority. He would like to consider alternative sites for the Downtown Fire Station, including Ashwood Park.

Ms. Balducci observed that if a date is identified for opening the Downtown Fire Station, the planning will have to work backwards from there. She said it is potentially problematic to select a site before there is a plan for moving forward, because the sites identified as alternatives might no longer be available or feasible as time passes. She would like staff to present a plan with a schedule identifying decision points, and for the Council to fully commit to a plan for implementation.

Similarly, Ms. Balducci encouraged making a decision soon on whether to move forward with reviewing the Ashwood Park Master Plan, to provide some certainty for staff and the public about what to expect.

Mayor Lee would like the analysis to address whether the City would absolutely need to own the property or whether it could be leased.

Dr. Davidson said that deciding about the Downtown Fire Station would help him consider and visualize how Ashwood Park should be developed.

Councilmember Stokes observed that the Ashwood Park Master Plan is in the queue to be considered during the ongoing budget process. However, he feels the Downtown Fire Station is a more immediate need, and he would like to see a plan for accomplishing that project.

Deputy Mayor Robertson suggested directing staff to bring back a proposal for conducting the analysis of the station. At that point, the Council can consider timing, planning, and budgeting decisions.

Councilmember Wallace concurred with Ms. Robertson's suggested course of action and with the Council's interest in reviewing more options and comparing the costs and benefits. He observed that Downtown development and high-rise buildings have different needs than other types of development throughout the city.

Councilmember Chelminiak concurred with the suggestion to update the analysis to determine the appropriate timing for the Downtown Fire Station. He agrees also with separating the Ashwood Park Master Plan from the planning for the Downtown Fire Station. He would like a review of projected growth rates and Downtown Fire Station staffing needs. He is leaning toward preserving Ashwood Park as a park.

(b) Development Services Department Code Amendment Work Program

Mike Brennan, Development Services Department Director, opened staff's presentation to update the Council on the status of initiated Code amendments; orient the Council to the Development Services Code Amendment Docket; and, to determine the Council's priorities.

Carol Helland, Land Use Division Director, referred to Attachment 1, page 2-19 of the meeting packet, which lists the currently initiated Code amendments on the 2012 work plan. These include the Shoreline Master Program Update, East Link light rail transit use regulations, medical marijuana collective garden regulations, and Camp and Conference Center regulations.

Referring to page 2-21, Ms. Helland noted the list of docketed Amendments. The City is required by state law to maintain this list of amendments requested of the City. The origin of these amendments tend to be the result of Comprehensive Plan updates, Council-requested Code review, Community-requested Code review, external mandates (e.g., Shoreline Master Program), citywide initiatives (e.g., Downtown Livability Plan), and DSD-identified Code amendments (e.g., process improvements and Code changes to address emerging trends).

Ms. Helland said that mandated amendments relate to the Shoreline Master Program Update, East Link work tied to the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with Sound Transit, the National Flood Insurance Program, innovative housing Code amendments, and specific Comprehensive Plan amendments.

Ms. Helland said a number of Code amendments have timing considerations. One relates to grant funding for the Green Building and Alternative Energy Accommodation Code. The timing of this item is linked to Evergreen State Solar Partnership (ESSP) work, and she suggested that the Council act on this item in the very near future.

Responding to Deputy Mayor Robertson, Mr. Brennan said the grant amount is \$60,000. The in-kind contribution in staff time is a \$10,000 match. The City has not yet accepted the grant but a request for action will be presented to the Council within the next few weeks.

Responding to Councilmember Chelminiak, Mr. Brennan confirmed that the grant is related to solar panel installations and permitting.

Continuing, Ms. Helland noted several economic recovery and development amendments with timing considerations including the appeal process related to requesting Code amendments, increased flexibility for Bel-Red corridor development, increased allowances for threshold exemptions under the State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA), and the Downtown Livability initiative.

Ms. Helland noted a new proposal by the Renton School District to collect impact fees for certain areas of the school district within Bellevue's city limits.

Ms. Helland highlighted a number of customer-identified concerns including commercial property maintenance, inconsistency in nonconforming use amendments, vendor carts, Planned Unit Development (PUD) process simplification, the wireless communications facility Code, the Noise Code, and the Sign Code.

Ms. Helland said the Enatai Neighborhood Association continues to express concerns about the wireless communications facility Code.

Responding to Councilmember Stokes, Ms. Helland confirmed that the City has received requests from permit applicants/customers to simplify the quasi-judicial permit appeal process.

Responding to Councilmember Balducci, Ms. Helland said all of the permit processes related to the Spring District development in the Bel-Red corridor are administrative and to be decided by the Director of Development Services.

Mr. Brennan said staff is seeking Council direction regarding revisions or deletions to the docketed Code amendments, the initiation of new amendments, and the ranking of priorities.

Councilmember Stokes would like the Downtown Livability initiative to be a high priority.

Councilmember Davidson said he does not want to preempt the budget process. He inquired about the Downtown Livability work.

Chris Salomone, Director of Planning and Community Development, said the funding level recommended to the Council on May 21 was \$350,000 for the studies.

Dan Stroh, Planning Division Director, said the work is not funded in the operating budget. Staff's request to the Council was to direct funding from other projects in order to get the Downtown Livability work moving forward. Staff has identified potential funding from related projects in the Capital Improvement Program (CIP) Plan, including the Pedestrian Corridor Update (\$150,000) and a component of the East Link work for station area planning (\$200,000). Mr. Stroh said staff determined that there is a logical connection between these items and the Downtown Livability program.

Responding to Mayor Lee, Mr. Stroh clarified that staff is requesting moving CIP funds to the operating budget to move forward with Downtown Livability work.

Responding to Dr. Davidson, Mr. Stroh said the \$350,000 is intended to cover the Downtown Livability work. However, if the Council directs staff to proceed with the work, it will be necessary to come back for a discussion about the final scope of the Downtown Livability program. It is possible that more funding will be needed.

Mr. Stroh noted potential work items listed on pages SS 2-35 through SS 2-37 of the meeting packet. If Downtown Parking is addressed now, there is an opportunity to leverage funds related to the Downtown Transportation Plan.

Dr. Davidson observed that the \$350,000 does not seem sufficient for the Downtown Livability priorities that have been discussed. He reiterated his concern about preempting the budget process as well.

Mr. Stroh said that staff's request is based on a recognition of the limited resources as well as the desire to start advancing the Downtown Livability work. Staff can provide more details on potential work items and costs to the Council.

Deputy Mayor Robertson noted that this topic is scheduled to come back to the Council on July 9 for more discussion. She referred to a statement on page SS 2-14 of the meeting packet, which indicates that key Code amendment projects (e.g., Shoreline Master Program Update, East Link, and others) fully utilize the community, staff, and Planning Commission work capacity for 2012. She would like an understanding of the resources and capacity available for each work item/project. A top priority for her is simplifying the quasi-judicial permit appeal process. She would like to remove the Council from that process. Her additional top priorities are flexibility for nonconforming uses in the Bel-Red corridor, interim uses in the Bel-Red, Downtown Livability, and a holistic review and cleanup of the Land Use Code.

Responding to Councilmember Chelminiak, Mr. Stroh said that Pedestrian Corridor work has not advanced due to pending decisions about light rail planning. Mr. Chelminiak observed that the Pedestrian Corridor relates to Downtown Livability. He recalled that, during the last budget process, there was a decision to postpone work on the Downtown Livability initiative until 2013. However, he believes there was an understanding that the City would continue to look for a way to begin the work earlier. Therefore, he does not see the current discussion as preempting the budget process.

Mr. Chelminiak observed that the scope of the Downtown Livability program has expanded. He did not recall it involving a full review and revision of the entire Land Use Code. His understanding was that the work would be focused on specific livability issues affecting the Downtown. He would like to get moving on this initiative.

Councilmember Wallace said it would be helpful to see a project schedule with the mandatory projects prioritized first and included in the 2013 budget. He suggested that combining the

Pedestrian Corridor and light rail station topics would be productive. With regard to East Link light rail, he wants to ensure that the City is able to articulate clear standards for the mitigation of all of the impacts of light rail (i.e., traffic, noise, etc.), whether in the Code or through an agreement with Sound Transit. He would like to be able to competently answer questions from citizens about how the mitigation will work.

Mayor Lee asked staff to come back with the information requested by the Council for further discussion.

Councilmember Balducci said she would like to provide additional input and requests to staff that cannot be discussed now due to time constraints.

At 8:04 p.m., Mayor Lee declared recess to the Regular Session.

Michelle Murphy, MMC  
Deputy City Clerk

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