

CITY OF BELLEVUE  
CITY COUNCIL

Summary Minutes of Study Session

July 1, 2013  
6:00 p.m.

Council Conference Room  
Bellevue, Washington

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

ABSENT: Councilmembers Balducci and Chelminiak

1. Executive Session

The meeting was called to order at 6:07 p.m., with Mayor Lee presiding. There was no Executive Session.

Mayor Lee welcomed Councilmember Davidson back following his surgery.

2. Study Session

(a) Cultural Compass Limited Update Progress

Acting City Manager Brad Miyake opened staff's presentation regarding the status of the Cultural Compass update. This plan is currently being updated to coincide with the overall Comprehensive Plan update.

Mr. Miyake introduced Genevieve Tremblay, Chair of the Arts Commission.

Ms. Tremblay recalled that the Cultural Compass was established in 2004. She noted Bellevue's increased urbanization and the expansion of public art at City Hall and in the Downtown. The Bellevue Arts Museum closed temporarily in 2004 but reopened and is now thriving. Over the past several years, the museum has set records for attendance, membership, and fundraising, and has received national recognition for the quality of its programming.

Ms. Tremblay reviewed the eight goals of the Cultural Compass plan including strengthening organizations and artists, supporting economic and business development, promoting cultural diversity and education, expanding public art, and building private and public funding. The Arts Commission and staff chose four of the goals as the focus of the Cultural Compass limited update: 1) strengthening organizations and artists, 2) promoting cultural diversity, 3) developing cultural facilities, and 4) expanding public art.

Mary Pat Byrne, Arts Specialist, commented on the importance of supporting and nurturing arts organizations and artists. She noted the increasing cultural and racial diversity within the community over the past 10 years. She said the availability of arts-related facilities is an ongoing challenge. Bellevue's facilities include the Ten20 theatre space and the future homes of the KidsQuest Children's Museum, Tateuchi Center, and Bellevue Youth Theatre at Crossroads.

Ms. Byrne described three goals for expanding public art: 1) establish an art walk extending from City Hall to the waterfront, 2) encourage businesses to incorporate public art in their developments, and 3) commission unique public art works for neighborhoods. Ms. Byrne said the East Link light rail project and the Bel-Red Arts District provide new opportunities for public art.

Ms. Byrne said the Arts Commission recently discussed the accomplishments under the Cultural Compass plan and future needs. She described her work with the Parks Department to reach out into the community to identify a broader, more diverse pool of artists; discuss their goals and challenges; and develop recommendations for improving the ability to serve diverse artists and audiences.

Ms. Byrne provided an overview of the Cultural Compass update process and milestones. Staff and the Arts Commission will return to the Council in December or January to present more findings and provide recommendations.

Ms. Tremblay made additional comments on enhanced public engagement efforts and thanked Councilmembers for their support.

Deputy Mayor Robertson thanked staff and the Arts Commission for the presentation. She asked about partnerships for the use of facilities, for example, with Bellevue College and the Bellevue School District. Ms. Byrne said that public school facilities are sometimes used for rehearsals by certain arts groups. However, it is more difficult to secure the use of school facilities for performances.

In further response, Ms. Byrne said the Bellevue Youth Theatre will continue to use the current Ivanhoe facility for rehearsals and set construction even after their new theatre opens at Crossroads. The Ivanhoe facility will continue to be available to other arts groups as well.

Ms. Robertson questioned how often there are performing arts groups who want to perform in Bellevue but cannot due to the unavailability of space. Ms. Byrne said it happens quite a lot. She knows that the Theatre at Meydenbauer Center often turns down groups looking for a place to perform. In further response, Ms. Byrne said the Bel-Red area is expected to provide new space and opportunities for arts organizations.

Ms. Tremblay commented on the goal of providing larger performance venues while also fostering and cultivating smaller performance opportunities ( e.g., coffee shops, seasonal events).

Councilmember Stokes questioned how the Arts Commission chose the four goals to focus on for this limited plan update. Ms. Tremblay commented that strengthening organizations and artists is an ongoing, fundamental need. Promoting cultural diversity is relevant for demographic trends and supporting and celebrating diversity. She said the need for cultural facilities is felt throughout the county, and there is an emerging trend to collaborate to provide public art in conjunction with private development.

Councilmember Stokes expressed concern that not focusing on the goal regarding building public and private funding will have a detrimental effect on other goals. Ms. Tremblay concurred with the connection of that goal to the need for more facilities. She said the recession has forced arts organizations to be more creative in their activities, including performances.

Ms. Tremblay said relationships are expanding and developing among developers to produce art elements throughout the community. She suggested this goal will rise to the top during the next round of discussions and update. The Arts Commission felt it would be more effective to focus on a few goals at a time.

Mr. Stokes said he feels strongly that the arts are an important component of economic development and the Comprehensive Plan update.

Ms. Byrne indicated that she and the Planning and Community Development Director and staff keep these issues and needs in the forefront in their ongoing strategic planning.

Mayor Lee thanked staff for the presentation.

Councilmember Wallace noted the issue regarding the Pacific Northwest Ballet site in the Bel-Red area. Sound Transit is considering options in the Bel-Red corridor for an operations and maintenance facility, one of which would displace the ballet facility. If that building is condemned by Sound Transit, one available solution is to relocate the ballet. However, the cost is estimated at several million dollars. He believes the City should work with Sound Transit to ensure that that issue is handled appropriately.

Mr. Wallace concurred with Mr. Stokes regarding the link between arts and cultural development and economic and business development. He would like to see a communications piece in the economic development strategy regarding the arts to give the City the ability to communicate with 4Culture, the State, and philanthropists about the goals of the City arts program. He suggested that the arts can be approached similar to human services in terms of leveraging public and private dollars for optimum results. He noted the success of Seattle ArtsFund and observed that there is not a comparable counterpart on the Eastside.

Mr. Wallace suggested that the Council and staff should talk about the role that the Tateuchi Performing Arts Center will play in Bellevue and what the Council's participation will be with the project.

Councilmember Davidson said that, as Mayor and Deputy Mayor, he and Mr. Lee attended many cultural events that were produced in limited space. He said it is important to ensure that the City

continues to provide opportunities to support cultural diversity. He wondered whether there might be potential performing spaces in a variety of facilities including private buildings that could be shared on a rotating basis by different groups.

Mayor Lee said the Council has demonstrated ongoing support for nurturing the arts and cultural activities. He wants to ensure there is ongoing communication between the Arts Commission and the Council. He said that art and cultural events provide opportunities to build community and to support organizations' activities. The arts provide a number of opportunities and are an important part of the economic development strategy. Mr. Lee said the City needs to be proactive in advocating for public art in conjunction with the light rail project, which designates one percent of the funding for public art.

Mayor Lee asked about the Ten20 Theatre space. Ms. Byrne said the space exists but has not been leased to date. Evergreen City Ballet located in Renton would like to move its professional company to the space. The group and the owner of the building are discussing leasing the space. The organization would provide classes and performances, as well as allow other organizations to use the performance space.

Mayor Lee said he believes that, with communication, perhaps the Council could make it happen faster. He suggested working more proactively on these projects.

Mr. Wallace suggested working with the Arts Commission to form a coherent strategy for the investment of arts dollars in the community, including the Sound Transit art money. Rather than have the Council trying to tell Sound Transit how to spend its money on art, he would rather see a plan that has the Arts Commission working with City staff to develop a plan to be used by Sound Transit as it considers what to do with its art funding.

Ms. Byrne said staff and the Arts Commission have been working with Sound Transit's arts program staff. Sound Transit will attend the Arts Commission meeting on July 2 to discuss art opportunities for the six light rail stations and alignment through Bellevue. Ms. Byrne has attended several meetings with Sound Transit to work specifically on art elements.

Mayor Lee thanked staff and the Arts Commission for their work and asked them to keep the Council up to date on activities and planning.

(b) Update on Eastside Rail Corridor Planning Activities [Former Burlington Northern Santa Fe (BNSF) Right-of-Way]

Mr. Miyake opened discussion regarding planning activities for the Eastside Rail Corridor (former Burlington Northern Santa Fe right-of-way), which is a 42-mile stretch of railway from Renton to Snohomish County that passes through Bellevue. The corridor was initially sold to the Port of Seattle. Since that time, a group of agencies (King County, Sound Transit, City of Kirkland, City of Redmond) has purchased portions of the corridor. While not an owner, the City of Bellevue has interests related to the corridor and has been involved in a number of regional meetings to discuss its future.

Joyce Nichols, Director of Intergovernmental Relations, noted that Nancy LaCombe is the project manager and has been involved with committee meetings and the technical group.

Ms. Nichols referenced packet materials regarding the history of the rail corridor and Bellevue's interests in its development. The ROW travels adjacent to the Downtown, Wilburton and Bel-Red areas and involves the East Link light rail project as well. Staff is working to ensure that Bellevue's interests are communicated to the regional forum.

Ms. Nichols said staff is seeking Council direction regarding its vision for the trail as well as principles or guidelines in communicating Bellevue's interests. Staff will return on July 22 to work with the Council on finalizing the interest statements, which are provided in the meeting packet: 1) 2006 BNSF Preservation Project Interest Statement, and 2) 2010 BNSF Corridor Implementation Interest Statement. She noted a 2007 letter to the King County Executive regarding Bellevue's interests as well.

Ms. Nichols said it might be necessary to come back to the Council in the early fall depending on what issues come forward that might affect the interest statement. She said Dave Berg presented to the Eastside Rail Corridor Regional Advisory Council in April. Bellevue's goal at that time was to lay out its interests and potential vision.

Transportation Director Dave Berg said he wanted to duplicate his presentation to the Eastside Rail Corridor Regional Advisory Council and to obtain feedback from the City Council regarding Bellevue's interests and vision. He asked the Council to consider the following topics: stakeholder collaboration, public outreach, desired framework for conceptual design, interim improvements or staged implementation, approaches to funding, uses along the corridor, and the need for regional continuity. Mr. Berg said the Eastside Rail Corridor Regional Advisory Council includes representatives from King County, Kirkland, Redmond, Sound Transit, and Puget Sound Energy.

Councilmember Davidson questioned why Bellevue is not represented on the committee. Ms. Nichols said that when the Regional Advisory Council was originally appointed, its membership was limited to agencies owning property along the corridor.

Mr. Berg noted that Councilmember Davidson served on a Puget Sound Regional Council (PSRC) working group related to the rail corridor, which resulted in the development of the City's 2006 interest statement. Mr. Berg said the City has had influence over the corridor but is not a property owner.

Responding to Mayor Lee, Ms. Nichols recalled that, years ago, the Cascade Water Alliance had expressed an interest in establishing an easement along the rail corridor to provide a water line.

Mr. Wallace questioned what the City's position should be from a regulatory and/or political standpoint and whether it will influence the corridor's owners. Ms. Nichols said a number of parties have said they would have liked to see Bellevue on the Eastside Rail Corridor Council. She said there are stakeholders who are interested in Bellevue's interests and objectives. She believes there will be opportunities for the City to enhance its involvement.

Mr. Berg said there was positive feedback after Bellevue staff's presentation in April with regard to the City's forethought in planning and developing policy-level guidance regarding the corridor. He highlighted milestones in the Regional Advisory Council's process including workshops and public meetings. An open house is scheduled for July 31 at Bellevue City Hall, and the RAC anticipates releasing its final report by October.

Mr. Berg said a number of government entities have made presentations to the RAC including Bellevue, Renton, Woodinville, and Snohomish County. The City of Kirkland has completed a master plan for its section of the rail corridor, and the City of Redmond is planning its Central Connector.

Mr. Berg reviewed information from his presentation to the RAC on April 24, 2013. He reported that Mayor Lee opened the presentation by talking about how Bellevue's segment of the corridor links the entire 42-mile ROW. Mr. Berg described how the corridor can fit into the City's parks and open space system, economic development, neighborhoods, and redevelopment. Mr. Berg said the Eastside rail corridor provides an excellent opportunity for a regional trail and the potential for commuter rail in the future.

Mr. Berg said that previous interest statements and the City's Comprehensive Plan include policies specific to the rail corridor. He explained that a number of plans, reports and studies completed by the City relate to the corridor including the Parks and Open Space System Plan 2010, Bel-Red Corridor Final Report, Wilburton Plan, and the 2009 Pedestrian and Bicycle Transportation Plan Report.

Mr. Berg described a map and aerial photographs of the Eastside rail corridor. There are 21 crossings within Bellevue, including nine at-grade crossings. He described conceptual pedestrian crossings with elevated NE 4<sup>th</sup> Street and NE 8<sup>th</sup> Street crossings and an at-grade crossing at NE 6<sup>th</sup> Street.

Mr. Berg recalled the history of the Wilburton Trestle, which was built in 1904 approximately 98 feet above the Mercer Slough and 984 feet in length. He presented photos of trestle conversions to trail projects, noting that this is one potential use for the Wilburton trestle.

Mr. Berg said the removal of the Wilburton Tunnel in 2006 resulted in the removal of a wildlife crossing. The Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) has committed \$5 million to restore the wildlife connection when there is a regional need to do so. Mr. Berg shared photos of a number of examples of rails and trails next to each other.

Councilmember Davidson questioned whether King County has a policy on graffiti. Mr. Berg said he is not sure of specific policies. However, the County is working on removing graffiti on the I-90 structure.

Deputy Mayor Robertson said she would like to hear staff's recommendations after the Eastside Rail Corridor meeting next month. She would like to avoid any at-grade crossings.

Ms. Robertson noted information in the meeting packet indicating that the County's proposed parks levy identifies \$600,000 annually to preserve and protect the Eastside Rail Corridor. She recalled that the Bellevue City Council sent a letter to the King County Executive expressing support for a parks levy vote on August 6. She requested an update from staff during the next briefing on why the levy does not provide more funding.

Ms. Robertson said she would like specific recommendations from staff on how the Council might update the interest statement to be an effective advocate for Bellevue's interests.

Responding to Councilmember Davidson, Mr. Berg said staff would advocate for placing the Eastside Rail Corridor regional trail along the elevated light rail structure at NE 8<sup>th</sup> Street, to avoid an at-grade crossing of the trail at NE 8<sup>th</sup> Street.

Dr. Davidson wondered what the federal government has directed with regard to rails and trails. He observed that adding the regional trail to the light rail structure would be very expensive and wondered whether there are other options. Dr. Davidson suggested that the trail essentially duplicates many existing nearby trails including along the Mercer Slough.

Mayor Lee suggested that more information is needed before finalizing the interest statement. He noted an additional agenda item and suggested moving to that topic.

Mr. Stokes expressed support for the idea of developing the trestle as a park/trail facility. He questioned when Bellevue will join the Regional Advisory Council.

Mr. Wallace said he hopes the graffiti issue does not get stuck into the overall plan because he believes it can be resolved in the short-term and should not be a big budget item. He is concerned about tying it to the passage of the parks levy. He said the graffiti is not consistent with Bellevue's standards. He believes the County should be treated like any other individual or entity with regard to requiring the cleanup of graffiti.

Mr. Wallace observed that the 2010 interest statement remains relevant today, especially with regard to the language about multiple uses. While the current discussion is about a trail, he reminded the Council that the ROW is 100 feet wide. If \$4 billion is being invested in light rail to connect from Seattle to the rail corridor, he suggested encouraging regional leadership to look at opportunities along the north-south connection. Mr. Stokes concurred.

Ms. Nichols said staff will be back on July 22.

(c) State Legislative Update

Ms. Nichols and Mike Doubleday, lobbyist, provided the state legislative update. Ms. Nichols said the state legislature adopted a budget on Saturday. It was printed on Friday and staff is still reviewing it to determine any impacts to the City. More details will be provided in late July. She noted the need for funding in response to the McCleary decision which said the State is not adequately funding education.

Ms. Nichols noted the state legislature's intent to take \$500 million annually from the Public Works Trust Fund, which provides funding to local governments, over the next six years. She said Bellevue has one project on the trust fund's list (i.e., NE 4<sup>th</sup> Street).

Ms. Nichols reported that the state budget reduced the amount the City receives from the liquor excise tax. However, the budget did not change liquor profit tax proceeds that go to the City. A few years ago the City received \$650,000 annually in the liquor excise tax, which now is just over \$200,000.

The state legislature did not make any changes in the administration of the local share of the business and occupation (B&O) tax, which is significant for Bellevue and the four other cities working with Bellevue on this issue. She reported good news on the telecommunications parity bill which closes the tax exemption for landline telephones. This spares both the State and the City from having to issue refunds to landline customers.

Ms. Nichols said the biggest disappointment with the legislative session was the failure to approve a transportation revenue package. The proposed package contained funding for I-405 and the new interchange at 124<sup>th</sup> and SR 520. The good news is that the City's Meydenbauer Bay Park Project, Bellevue Youth Theatre Foundation, and the Boys and Girls Club of Bellevue all received funding.

Ms. Nichols thanked Councilmembers for testifying and advocating for Bellevue's interests with state legislators.

Responding to Dr. Davidson, Ms. Nichols said \$70 million was allocated to the Puget Sound acquisition and restoration program for salmon recovery, of which \$1.4 million goes to WRIA 8 for salmon habitat restoration projects in Bellevue and/or other WRIA 8 jurisdictions. There was \$4.1 million for the King County lower Cedar River integrated floodplain restoration project, which is administered by the State Department of Ecology. Mr. Doubleday said \$10 million were allocated to the Puget Sound estuary and salmon recovery program.

Ms. Nichols thanked state legislators, Mr. Doubleday, and City staff for their work on behalf of the City.

Deputy Mayor Robertson suggested sending tailored thank-you letters to Bellevue's state legislators.

Mr. Wallace said that, despite the failure to pass a transportation package, he believes there was good success by the state legislature. He recognized delegates representing the 41<sup>st</sup> and 48<sup>th</sup> Districts including Ross Hunter, Rodney Tom, Steve Litzow, Judy Clibborn, and Cyrus Habib. Councilmember Wallace feels it was a good year for the Eastside and for Bellevue. He supports sending letters to thank legislators for their support of Bellevue's interests. He commended the Council's involvement in advocacy this year and encouraged continuing to build on that.

Mr. Wallace commented on the ongoing need for transportation funding for both I-405 and SR 520. He would like a Study Session update on the SR 520 project from WSDOT, including whether a funding solution has been identified for the west side of the bridge project.

Councilmember Stokes recognized Representative Marcie Maxwell for her efforts with the state legislature as well and agreed with the need to continue the City's advocacy work. He said Representative Judy Clibborn commented on the effectiveness of the collaboration between local and state elected officials this session.

Mayor Lee thanked state legislators and Councilmembers for their work. He suggested being more proactive in the future, however, to advocate for Bellevue's interests. He said Bellevue needs to figure out how to identify new funding sources to meet its needs. He directed staff to prepare letters to state legislators and thanked staff for their hard work.

At 8:00 p.m., Mayor Lee declared recess to the Regular Session.

Myrna L. Basich, MMC  
City Clerk

/kaw