

CITY OF BELLEVUE
CITY COUNCIL

Summary Minutes of Study Session

July 2, 2012
6:00 p.m.

Council Conference Room
Bellevue, Washington

PRESENT: Mayor Lee, Deputy Mayor Robertson, and Councilmembers Balducci¹,
Chelminiak, Davidson, Stokes, and Wallace

ABSENT: None.

1. Executive Session

Deputy Mayor Robertson called the meeting to order at 6:02 p.m., and declared recess to Executive Session for approximately 15 minutes to discuss one item of potential litigation.

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

2. Study Session

(a) 2012 Department Budget Presentations: Fire Department and Police Department

City Manager Steve Sarkozy recalled the Council's request for department budget presentations to complement the Budget One proposals to be presented during the budget process. He highlighted key performance measures of the Fire and Police Departments.

Mr. Sarkozy recalled that the Bellevue Fire Department was one of the first accredited in the nation and is one of two fire departments in the state with a Class 2 rating by the insurance industry. He commented on the Police Department's accreditation and its high ratings on citizen surveys. Mr. Sarkozy said there is strong support for both the Police and Fire Departments within the local business community as well.

Finance Director Jan Hawn recalled that, on April 2, staff provided an early outlook forecast of the Operating Budget. At that time, revenues were projected to be roughly equal to expenditures, and the budget reflects no additional funding beyond current service levels. The updated forecast will be presented on July 30.

¹ Councilmember Balducci arrived to the Executive Session at 6:05 p.m.

Ms. Hawn reviewed the budget calendar and major milestones. Department presentations are scheduled for tonight and July 9, and a second public hearing is scheduled for July 23. A budget workshop (Special Meeting) is scheduled for July 30, at which time the Council will review the Results Teams' proposals.

Fire Chief Mike Eisner reported that the Fire Department submitted 10 operating proposals for the Safe Community outcome and three CIP proposals to the CIP Results Team. He described the Fire Department budget as status quo and maintaining current service levels.

Chief Eisner noted the challenge of maintaining service levels due to the loss of eight full-time equivalent positions (FTEs) in 2012. During the period of January to May 2012, calls for service increased by 3.6 percent. Chief Eisner described a slight decline in the percentage of incidents in which the total emergency response time was less than six minutes. Key Fire Department performance measures are response times, call volumes, percent of fires confined to room of origin, and cardiac arrest survival rates. These measures and the deployment of resources are monitored on an ongoing basis.

Responding to Councilmember Wallace, Chief Eisner said the slight decline in incidents with response times less than six minutes is based on only five months of data at this point. He said he would rather not come to any conclusions regarding the decline until more data is available.

Responding to Councilmember Davidson, Chief Eisner said that, in the past, the City tracked and reported average response times. However, the accreditation agency recommends tracking the percentage of incidents with response times within six minutes.

Mayor Lee questioned how Bellevue compares to other cities and agencies with regard to response times. Chief Eisner said that few fire departments report on the percentage of calls with response times less than six minutes. Only a handful of fire departments in the country are accredited, and no annual report is published to provide the data.

Chief Eisner said he is not aware of any fire department that achieves 90 percent in incidents with response times within six minutes. The industry is trying to look at a more comprehensive national and regional reporting system to enable comparisons, however.

Responding to Councilmember Balducci, Chief Eisner said the City's target is 90 percent. He reiterated that Bellevue is one of a handful of agencies nationwide that track the same performance measures for comparison purposes. Ms. Balducci questioned whether the City is prepared for the next wave of growth and development. Chief Eisner said that will be addressed later in the presentation.

Responding to Councilmember Stokes, Chief Eisner said the Fire Department's average response time is less than six minutes. The calls exceeding a six-minute response are generally only slightly longer.

Councilmember Chelminiak observed that response time is just one metric of overall performance. With regard to possible reasons for the increase, he recalled that there was a time delay between the time the call went into the 911 center and was dispatched to the fire station. The Fire Department was able to trim that down somewhat due to technological improvements to the system. However, staffing has decreased since that time as well. Mr. Chelminiak echoed Ms. Balducci's interest in how the Fire Department can prepare for the next upswing in growth.

Mayor Lee said he liked how the data is being presented because it facilitates discussion and targeted questions. He observed that it will be helpful to better understand the implications (i.e., Staffing, Budgeting) of the performance measures.

Moving on, Chief Eisner described the second major issue for the department, which is the fire prevention inspection workload. Staffing peaked with 7 FTEs in 2007-2010, and there are 4 FTEs in 2012. He said that new buildings have increased the complexity of annual fire safety inspections, and the number of annual inspections has increased by 13 percent since 2007. Strategies that have been implemented to improve efficiency, including process improvements and automation, a re-inspection fee for annual inspections, and retaining core staffing of Fire Protection Engineers. In 2012, there were 3,000 initial inspections and 1,300 re-inspections.

Responding to Dr. Davidson, Chief Eisner explained that re-inspections are related to code violations that arise over time, due in part to changes in building tenants.

Chief Eisner moved to Issue 3, emergency management, which has 6 staff positions, including 3.4 FTEs who are grant funded. Staffing levels could be threatened beginning in 2015 based on the possibility for a significant decrease in grant funding by that time. Strategies to address this issue include increasing opportunities to use volunteers for public outreach and identifying essential personnel and programs for continued funding by the City's General Fund in future budget cycles.

Issue 4 is Downtown Development. Chief Eisner recalled discussion with the Council on June 4 about the need for a Downtown Fire Station. He noted that the residential population, employment, and daytime population continue to increase. Call volumes have increased 8.5 percent since 2007, and vertical response time is an added component when talking about high-rise buildings. Strategies to address Issue 4 include working with other City departments to evaluate current City-owned properties for the potential siting of a new station. A proposal was submitted in this budget cycle for the purchase of land and the construction of a new station.

Mayor Lee questioned whether there is anything that building owners and tenants can do to help improve response times. Chief Eisner said the Development Services Department has discussed working with developers to provide incentives to create opportunities for a public safety presence in buildings. The City also works on security systems issues with large facilities such as Bellevue Square. However, once the Downtown is fully developed, there will be a need for a Downtown Fire Station.

Mayor Lee expressed an interest in interim alternatives to adding a new fire station that would improve service levels and response times.

Responding to Councilmember Chelminiak, Chief Eisner said approximately 80 percent of calls citywide are related to emergency medical services.

Responding to Dr. Davidson, Chief Eisner said that kitchens are a leading source of fires in residential development. Commercial buildings require sprinklers and other fire suppression systems.

Mr. Wallace questioned whether sprinklers, as a preventative measure, lower the need for inspections. He noted that growth projections for 2012 to 2030 indicate that Bellevue's daytime population is anticipated to increase by more than the population of Issaquah. He said it would be helpful to have a longer-term look at projecting the Fire Department's needs. Chief Eisner concurred, noting that the Fire Department continues to closely monitor performance measures.

Responding to Councilmember Stokes, Chief Eisner said the Fire Department recently completed a strategic plan for the next three to five years.

Continuing with the presentation, Chief Eisner said the fifth issue is an aging workforce in which 23 percent of Fire Department employees are eligible to retire now, and 47 percent are eligible to retire within the next five years. He noted that training and professional development expenditures were reduced by 67 percent from 2009 to 2012. Strategies to address this area include increased training and a focus on officer development and succession planning.

Issue 6 is aging facilities. Current facilities (Nine Fire Stations and the Training Center) are 20 to 50 years old, and most were built with a useful life of 50 years. Facilities maintenance costs increased by 32 percent from 2007 to 2011. The estimated replacement value of facilities totals approximately \$100 million. One strategy to better address facilities maintenance was to turn that responsibility over to the Civic Services Department in 2011. The Fire Department has identified the need to complete a survey of facility conditions and a location analysis by 2014 to determine future facility needs. The Department would then come back during the next biennial budget cycle with its findings and recommendations.

Councilmember Stokes commented on his participation with the Bellevue School District Board and the District's experience and challenge in balancing continued repairs and maintenance with the replacement of facilities.

Deputy Mayor Robertson endorsed the proposal to conduct a survey of all facilities. She asked about past plans to remodel the Clyde Hill station. Chief Eisner said there was a plan at one point to rebuild that station. However, that was amended to spend approximately \$1 million to renovate the station to extend its useful life by about 10 years. The Fire Department is currently seeking permits for that project, which is fully funded.

Councilmember Chelminiak suggested that the Council discuss facilities replacement policies following the current budget process. He recalled that, in 1999/2000, the City was looking at investing approximately \$70 million to \$90 million in public safety facilities. He observed that it might be appropriate to consider a levy issue for capital needs.

Police Chief Linda Pillo introduced Carl Krikorian, Police Department Fiscal Manager, who was available to answer questions.

Chief Pillo reviewed that the top three initiatives of the Police Department are safety, working smarter (i.e., Technology, Process improvements), and relations (i.e., Community relationships, Career development and retention for staff). The Police Department submitted 13 operating budget proposals under the Safe Community outcome, but no Capital Investment Program (CIP) proposals. There are no new programs proposed for the 2013-2014 operating budget.

The first issue area is keeping the community safe while also maintaining current service levels. Chief Pillo recalled that the Police Department reduced staffing by nine commissioned positions and four professional staff in recent years. This has had an adverse impact on proactive policing, due in part to the elimination of bicycle patrols. Chief Pillo noted the 10-month lead time needed to recruit, hire, and train a new officer. She said succession planning is a priority as well, with 34 percent of personnel becoming eligible for retirement within the next five years.

Strategies to address this first issue include monthly monitoring of key performance measures (e.g., response times), an intelligence-led policing strategy (Crime Analysis Unit), maintaining staffing levels and training, and educational outreach to the community.

Chief Pillo said it is important to ensure that police officers have time for proactive policing and are not just going from call to call. She noted the ability for citizens to go online and check on criminal activity in their neighborhoods. She said there is also now an option to report certain incidents online, which apply to situations in which there is no evidence or suspect, but a Police Department record is desired.

Issue 2 is decreased funding for social services and corrections. There has been a 16 percent increase over the past two years in mental/emotional calls for service. She noted the link of this trend to decreased social services funding. Since the recession began, 9,000 state parolees have been released early from Department of Corrections (DOC) supervision, and there is less jail time for parolees on suspension who violate laws.

Chief Pillo described a program with Overlake Hospital Medical Center and King County Designated Mental Health Professionals (DMHP) to work with repeat offenders with mental/emotional issues. The Police Department will begin using a center in Seattle soon that handles individuals with mental health issues. An increasing number of officers are completing crisis intervention training to gain valuable skills in this area. Other strategies are working with homeowners on crime prevention and working closely with the DOC liaison to identify and monitor high-risk offenders. Chief Pillo said the high volume of false alarm calls related to home security systems interferes with officers having the time for proactive law enforcement.

Issue 3 is the maturation and evolution of the Downtown. The daytime population has increased by 20,100 individuals since 2000; and a busy nightlife and bar scene consume public safety resources. Additional demand for public safety services is related to visits by dignitaries and civil protests. While Bellevue's experience with protests has been peaceful, the City needs to be prepared for potential increased activity. The Police Department has 30 crowd control officers, and similar training has been expanded for general officers.

Chief Pillo said a staffing and deployment study is planned to evaluate the department and to provide input on ways to increase the department's effective use of personnel.

Issue 4 is the Sound Transit East Link light rail project, which could potentially affect Police operations at City Hall. She noted impacts to the Police parking garage and Police booking and holding facility. The Police Department will continue to discuss the issues with Sound Transit. Chief Pillo said the Police Department has concerns about traffic impacts on emergency response, especially during light rail construction.

Councilmember Wallace said he would like to have a discussion about the impact of light rail construction on traffic and on Police and Fire emergency response in the future.

As Issue 5, Chief Pillo described the increased demand for digital evidence examination and the handling of technology-related crimes including identity theft and child pornography. This work requires specific training for officers who work with forensic detectives. Strategies to address this area include training more investigators to examine evidence, acquiring appropriate technology assets to combat cyber-crimes, educational outreach to the community on technology-related crime prevention, and working with regional partners to combat organized criminal rings.

Mayor Lee thanked staff for the presentation and expressed the Council's commitment to public safety.

Councilmember Wallace reiterated that he would like to discuss a longer term strategic plan for both the Fire Department and the Police Department.

(b) Initiation of Bellevue Transit Master Plan Update

Mr. Sarkozy introduced staff's presentation of the Bellevue Transit Master Plan, noting that 25 percent of Downtown workers commute by bus. Staff proposes an update of the 2003 Transit Master Plan to enable the City to be more effective in dealing with regional partners on transportation issues.

Bernard Van de Kamp, Assistant Director of Transportation, reported that staff has conducted preliminary public outreach to get a sense of the level of transit use and attitudes toward transit. Staff is seeking approval of the draft project principles and the major elements in the Plan Update scope of work.

Franz Loewenherz, Senior Planner, said that hundreds of millions of dollars have been invested in transit infrastructure improvements since adoption of the Transit Master Plan in 2003. He noted some of the projects that have occurred in Bellevue, including service enhancements for the major activity centers (e.g., Downtown, Eastgate, Factoria, and Crossroads). There was a 84 percent increase in citywide average weekday transit ridership between 2003 and 2011. This includes a 232 percent increase in the Eastgate area, 110 percent increase in the Downtown, 80 percent increase in Crossroads, and a 23 percent increase in Factoria.

In 2011, the King County Council approved a temporary congestion reduction charge to help fund transit service for two years. Metro is expected to reduce or eliminate unproductive services for reinvestment in more productive areas. Overall transit services will incorporate the development of the East Link light rail system over the next 10 years.

Mr. Loewenherz said that Bellevue's 2012 budget survey indicates that citizens support transit services. He noted that employers are moving to Downtown Bellevue from other Eastside locations because they like the amenities, including transit options. A 2012 Bellevue transit survey had 4,252 respondents. Of these, 53 percent were regular or occasional transit users in Bellevue, 16 percent formerly used transit but no longer do, and 31 percent said they have never used transit in Bellevue. Staff will use the data to help develop strategies for enhancing transit use.

Responding to Councilmember Balducci, Mr. Loewenherz said more information on the Transit Master Plan is available in the Council office. The City will continue to work with the business community, schools, social services providers, and others who have a strong interest in transit services. Mr. Loewenherz said there has been targeted outreach to Chinese, Spanish, and Russian speakers.

Mr. Loewenherz reiterated that staff is seeking approval of the Transit Master Plan Update Scope of Work (Attachment 1, Page SS 2-17 of meeting packet) and the Project Principles (Attachment 2, Page SS 2-25).

Councilmember Chelminiak said he believes the City needs a very bold transit plan to fully meet the future needs of the Downtown. He emphasized the need to continue to grow ridership. He noted the need to plan for the 2013-2023 time period when the East Link project is under construction, and to identify what the City should build to complement regional projects and ridership.

Mr. Chelminiak observed that the Bellevue Transit Center is increasingly becoming a regional hub. However, he said it is also important to maintain a focus on local service, including innovative alternatives. He suggested subsidized taxi cabs as one potential option.

Councilmember Chelminiak said that transit is critical in providing access to human/social services. He suggested the creation of a steering committee or sounding board of Commission and Board Members to monitor issues related to transit and human services.

Mayor Lee noted the limited remaining time for the discussion.

Councilmember Balducci suggested that staff finish the presentation.

Continuing, Mr. Loewenherz said he believes that most or all of what Mr. Chelminiak has suggested is included, at least to some extent, in the proposed scope of work. He briefly reviewed the last two slides covering the three major elements of the Plan Update: Service, Capital, and Policy. Following Council direction on the scope of work and project principles, next steps are consideration of the plan by the Transportation Commission and a continued public involvement process.

Councilmember Wallace would like a discussion of Park and Ride facilities, which are a critical element of how people use transit in Bellevue. He would also like an update on the status of the Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) plan included in the I-405 Master Plan. Mr. Wallace commented that the Transit Master Plan is an important advocacy document for promoting Bellevue's interests and priorities.

Councilmember Davidson would like to consider a transit service option that picks people up at their doors and avoids having to get into their cars at all. He believes there are creative ways to do this.

Mayor Lee noted that he has been on the Regional Transit Committee for a number of years. He looks forward to continued discussion on this topic.

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

Myrna L. Basich, MMC
City Clerk

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