

CITY OF BELLEVUE
CITY COUNCIL

Summary Minutes of Study Session

June 17, 2013
6:00 p.m.

Council Conference Room
Bellevue, Washington

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

ABSENT: Councilmembers Balducci and Davidson

1. Executive Session

The meeting was called to order at 6:16 p.m., with Mayor Lee presiding. He noted there would be an Executive Session at the end of the evening's Regular Session.

2. Study Session

- (a) Update on Development Activity and Discussion of Economic Development Vision and Strategy

Acting City Manager Brad Miyake opened continued discussion of the City's economic development vision and strategy. He recalled that the Council retreat on March 1 addressed this topic, at which time the Council directed staff to prepare mission and vision statements for Council consideration. Staff presented draft documents on March 18, and staff is returning tonight with revised documents based on that discussion.

Chris Salomone, Director of Planning and Community Development, said staff is seeking to finalize the mission and vision statements and to move forward with the strategic planning effort.

Mike Brennan, Director of Development Services, provided an update on development activity which was strong by 2012 year end. Early 2013 shows accelerating activity for major projects, commercial alterations, and single-family home applications. Sound Transit East Link permit applications will be submitted in the near future. The valuation of projects is increasing, and the City is experiencing overall increases in workload and revenue, making additional staff resources necessary. Mr. Brennan noted that paperless permitting is being implemented for all development permits.

Responding to Councilmember Wallace, Mr. Brennan said the valuations are based on issued permits.

Mr. Brennan described large private projects under construction or in review for the Downtown. Two major public projects are the reconstruction of Sammamish High School and the Factoria Transfer Station. Two projects in review for the Bel-Red area are the Spring District office buildings and the GRE residential development.

Mr. Salomone presented the economic development mission statement proposed by staff: “To recruit new businesses and nurture existing businesses in Bellevue, in order to generate prosperity and enhance the vibrancy of the City.” He said the purpose of the statement is to promote a standard of living and overall economic health in both qualitative and quantitative ways. Desired outcomes are to recruit businesses, support startups, nurture existing businesses, address neighborhood centers, facilitate new development, and enhance regional collaboration and overall competitiveness.

Councilmember Chelminiak observed that the mission statement is housed in a 1990s model of economic development. He encouraged a focus on a strategy for attracting desired businesses. Noting that he does not want to get bogged down in wordsmithing, he suggested moving forward with consultants to help develop that strategy. In talking about higher education as a desired element of the community, he said the Council should also be mindful that it potentially brings certain negative aspects including the current issue with boarding houses in single-family neighborhoods.

Councilmember Stokes observed that the mission statement falls short of the mark. He would like to see further refinement as part of the Comprehensive Plan work. He agreed with Councilmember Chelminiak about continuing to move forward at this time with developing specific strategies.

Deputy Mayor Robertson said she likes the mission statement but believes it could have more impact. She said it is a good start, and she looks forward to planning for continued opportunities for economic development.

Mayor Lee said the language of mission and vision statements are important. However, the language can continue to be refined and it is important to start moving forward with an effective strategy. He said Bellevue already has startups, entrepreneurs, and venture capitalists. The key is to identify and take advantage of opportunities. He said Bellevue has technology, aerospace, research and development (R&R), biotech, and health care. He suggested looking at ways to bring them all together and to incorporate global talents. Mr. Lee said he looks forward to hearing about the consultants.

Councilmember Wallace suggested removing the comma in the mission statement and using the word stimulate instead of generate. Mr. Salomone agreed that those improve the statement.

Continuing, Mr. Salomone described the vision of Bellevue’s economic future. Key points include inspiring ideas and new technologies, developing and attracting the best talent from around the world, and providing a safe, clean, international, and dynamic city life.

Mr. Salomone thanked Councilmembers for their input and said he anticipates revisiting the vision and mission statements as the work moves forward. Staff is working to provide a draft strategy by the end of the year.

Deputy Mayor Robertson said the mission statement is fairly generic but the vision statement does a good job of capturing the Council's discussion during its economic retreat.

Councilmember Chelminiak concurred. In terms of implementation of the vision, he would like it to articulate the City's role in recruiting and retaining businesses. He would like to see the steps the City needs to take to make sure Bellevue remains competitive. These include things like support of education, investment in the right types of infrastructure, reliable energy infrastructure, and future trends (i.e., potentially an increasing number of citizens working from home). He wants to see an overall strategy.

Councilmember Stokes observed that the vision statement essentially reflects the current situation, and he would like to see more inspirational statements (i.e., becoming the economic leader of the Eastside). He believes the strategy should outline what the Council and City staff can do together to facilitate and encourage economic development. Change is rapid and there needs to be an ongoing conversation.

Mr. Salomone said staff received funding for a strategic plan proposal and has identified a consultant to assist with this work. Staff anticipates preparing a draft plan by the end of the year. Mr. Salomone said the Council will be asked to take action on July 1 to approve the consultant contract.

Responding to Deputy Mayor Robertson, Mr. Salomone said the internal economic development committee includes several Department Directors and certain key management staff who have been meeting over the past year.

Councilmember Wallace said he hopes the plan can be used as a tool for communication, much like the Transit Master Plan.

Mayor Lee encouraged early involvement and outreach with the community.

3. Council Business [Regular Session Agenda Item 6]

Mayor Lee noted recommendations for Planning Commission and Transportation Commission appointments in the desk packet memo. He and the Deputy Mayor participated in the interviews, which had an impressive pool of applicants.

- Deputy Mayor Robertson moved to appoint Michelle Hilhorst to serve on the Planning Commission and Janice Zahn to serve on the Transportation Commission. Councilmember Wallace seconded the motion.
- The motion carried by a vote of 5-0.

Deputy Mayor Robertson reported that she attended the Growth Management Policy Board meeting.

Councilmember Wallace attended meetings of the Bellevue Chamber of Commerce transportation committee and the Eastside Human Services Forum.

Councilmember Chelminiak attended meetings of the Eastside Human Services Forum and the Firemen's Pension Board.

Councilmember Stokes reported that he participated, for the third year, in the International School's Senior Project Day. He attended meetings of the King County Regional Policy Committee and Eastside Transportation Partnership (ETP).

Mayor Lee noted that the City and King County would be holding a transit town hall meeting at Bellevue City Hall later in the week. Mayor Lee said he participated in an economic development meeting in Redmond. He has been working with three interns from Interlake High School who have completed a project with the American Immigration Forum. Mayor Lee attended the Bellevue Firefighter Recruits Graduation, Youth Council meeting, and Jubilee Reach event.

At 7:28 p.m., Mayor Lee declared recess to a reception honoring outgoing City Manager Steve Sarkozy before the Regular Session.

Myrna L. Basich, MMC
City Clerk

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