

CITY OF BELLEVUE
SPECIAL EVENTS COMMITTEE
MEETING MINUTES

April 14, 2016
8:30 a.m.

Bellevue City Hall
Conference Room 1E-112

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Jon Wilson – Parks
Andy Heider – Parks
Dennis Warner – Fire
Lt. Dave Sanabria – Police
Titus Butcher – Transportation
Neal Christiansen – Community Representative East
Jeanne Grote – Community Representative South
Joann Warren – Community Representative Downtown
Chris Dunham – Business Representative Downtown

MEMBERS ABSENT:

Reilly Pittman – Development Services
Glenn Bartolome – Metro Transit
Mike Ogliore – Business Representative Downtown
Meredith Langridge – Special Event Promoter, Position 1
Pat Harris – Parks
Katherine Ombrellaro – Special Event Promoter, Private
Roz Liming – Business Representative, Crossroads

OTHERS PRESENT:

Sharon Franzen, Parks
Cindy Shelton, Northwest Arts Center
James Henderson, Planning and Community Development
Jesse Canedo, Planning and Community Development
Vandana Slatter, Bellevue Councilmember

RECORDING SECRETARY: Gerry Lindsay

1. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 8:34 a.m. by Chair Wilson who presided.

2. COMMUNICATIONS: Written and Oral

Chair Wilson reported that on March 29 he along with Patrick Bannon and Mike Ogliore representing the Bellevue Downtown Association (BDA) met with some concerned citizens from around the Downtown Park to discuss the impacts of the ice rink and its amplified sound. The conversation focused on different things that could be done to mitigate the noise, most of which have to do with tightening up everything already being done. It was hoped that leaving the waterfall on would help, but if the park construction project moves forward, the waterfall will be turned off for all of next winter. Overall the meeting was very productive.

3. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

A motion to approve the agenda was made by Mr. Christiansen. The motion was seconded by Ms. Grote and the motion carried unanimously.

4. APPROVAL OF MEETING MINUTES

A motion to approve the March 10, 2016, meeting minutes as submitted was made by Ms. Grote. The motion was seconded by Ms. Warren and it carried unanimously.

5. OLD BUSINESS

Chair Wilson took a moment to introduce Cindy Shelton, new manager of the Northwest Arts Center and also the supervisor of the Fourth of July celebration in Downtown Park.

❖ Routing and Location Subcommittee Report

Mr. Butcher reported that the subcommittee met with Rotary to review the autism run scheduled for April 24. He said the details have mostly been wrapped up. He said he also met with security personnel at Crossroads for a follow-up discussion about parking, where to put up signs, and how to enforce restrictions.

Mr. Butcher commented that there were issues with the shuttles during the opening for the new SR-520 bridge. Chair Wilson pointed out that it will not be an annual event. He said he hoped that there were lessons learned.

❖ Committee Liaisons Assigned to Events

Chair Wilson reminded the community members to let him know if they want to be assigned to certain events.

6. NEW BUSINESS

❖ City of Bellevue Economic Development

Chair Wilson introduced James Henderson and Jesse Canedo with the city's office of economic development.

Mr. Henderson said the economic development office was set up about a year and a half ago. He said he is a Bellevue native and worked with Mr. Canedo in San Antonio, Texas, as economic developers with a particular focus on international business recruitment and export promotion. The Bellevue office is focused on three main program areas: business attraction, the aim of which is to bring new businesses to Bellevue; business retention and expansion, which seeks to encourage local companies to stay and grow in Bellevue; and Next Generation Bellevue, which is centered on start-up efforts and helping to make Bellevue into a great ecosystem for entrepreneurs. Events, promotional activities and tourism is a big part of economic development in that they serve to provide a first impression for those visiting Bellevue for the first time.

Mr. Canedo said in addition the programmatic areas, the office is in the process of developing a series of master plans for Bellevue that make up a broader destination development plan. There has been a convergence between the places people want to live and work and the places people want to visit. Companies like REI have chosen Bellevue because the talent they seek likes being in Bellevue. The companies already located in Bellevue, like Symetra and Concur Technologies, are open about saying they located in the downtown because their employees like it there. The

destination development plan will look at those places where economic development in the three programmatic areas and traditional tourism overlap.

Mr. Canedo said the office worked on events at the Meydenbauer Center, including Geek Wire in February, a national event that brought in some 700 attendees. Power of Play is an event focused on video game developers, coders and artists; it is scheduled for May 20 and 21. A virtual reality conference is slated for the fall of the year. As momentum builds, other events will be planned.

Mr. Henderson said he and Mr. Canedo go out and meet with company representatives on an individual basis. One of the consistent thing heard from companies is that they really do not know what is going on in the city after 5:00 p.m., especially on weekdays. There is a clear need to do a better job of getting the word out about what Bellevue has to offer. In attracting new conferences to Bellevue, it will be necessary to understand the need for creative solutions to accommodate the types of folks coming to the conferences.

Mr. Canedo added that with new companies like REI coming in, there will be an increased demand to know what is going on in the community. REI has traditionally been very involved in its local community and is already asking questions about how to get involved in Bellevue.

Mr. Henderson said San Antonio is a convention town and every day there are banners touting the latest conference coming to town. If a similar approach were to be used in Bellevue, more people would know about what is going on and coming up. The result would be a buzz of excitement.

Ms. Dunham commented that Meydenbauer Center has faced a slow uphill climb to get banners and to find public places where people can be brought together. Mr. Henderson said it would be great to be able to tie in with parks and outdoor spaces where there could be food trucks and places to sit, eat, talk and network.

Chair Wilson said the focus of the Committee is public events on public property. Often events are by code defined as private events, which leaves the Committee out of the loop. Even private events, however, have public impacts. The Committee is often asked by event organizers about being allowed to put up banners, but there is limited opportunity under city code.

Mr. Canedo asked if events that are sponsored by the city are considered to be public events. Chair Wilson said events do not need to be run by the city or even partnered with the city in order to be public events. Various organizations sponsor fun runs and open them to anyone who wants to join, and those are public events; such events are often held on public property. When it comes to determining if an event is public or not, it often comes down to who is invited to participate and how they are publicized. The city's special events code was drafted in the 90s and it is admittedly time to give it another look.

Mr. Butcher said when a city partners with an event, some of the fees involved can be waived. If the economic development office is thinking of future events to be held in city parks, it would be helpful to have a partnership with the city, not only to provide guidance through the process but also to help mitigate the costs. With regard to signage and banners, the city's sign code is the holdup.

Mr. Henderson said he recently provided the Council with an update regarding economic development activities through the first quarter of the year. He said it is clear that Bellevue is at an inflection point in terms of decided who Bellevue is as a city; it is no longer just home to

Microsoft and Expedia, it is home to some major international companies and is being considered by others. Bellevue is no longer a small town, it is no longer a suburb of Seattle, it is in its own right a major economic center and regional powerhouse. Bellevue is becoming known internationally as a result. A trip to China is planned with the Seattle Chamber of Commerce and other regional players to pitch the region to Chinese companies and major investors. Bellevue needs to begin seeing itself as an international economic center and needs to respond accordingly, which could translate into a need to review codes and policies.

Mr. Canedo added that the coming of the Global Innovation Exchange will inject 3000 students into the heart of the Spring District. They will all be graduate students and they will all have different expectations for how to interact with the community.

Chair Wilson noted that as the Spring District develops, it could easily become an event area.

Mr. Christiansen asked if there is a group assigned to reviewing the codes that are in place with an eye on tweaks that are needed in order to improve Bellevue's economic standing. Mr. Henderson said his office certainly is serving as the squeaky wheel; where issues are run up against, those issues are made known.

Mr. Butcher said the Department of Transportation is currently looking at updating the right-of-way code. That process may offer the potential to insert some things that circumvent other codes. Mr. Canedo said that would be a good conversation to join.

Mr. Henderson said the whole landscape of the city is going to change radically in the coming years. Businesses make decisions quickly and they need places that are flexible and able to keep up with technological changes.

Mr. Christiansen asked how the evolution of Bellevue College to a four-year college impacts the work of the economic development office. Mr. Canedo said the college is positioning itself to be heavily involved with startups and helping people become entrepreneurs. It certainly is becoming a big player in the region. Mr. Henderson added that the college is planning for housing on the campus, and the plan for the Eastgate corridor is to develop transit-oriented development near to the park and ride. The area could ultimately become a hub for students.

Lt. Sanabria urged Mr. Henderson and Mr. Canedo to be prepared to convince the Council that it needs to be ready to answer questions from constituents regarding the growth of the city. Those doing the work on the ground will not have the big-picture viewpoint. Chair Wilson agreed. He pointed out that while the Special Events Committee understands that events are good for the community, that is not always understood at the neighborhood level. There is a balancing act required between hosting special events and mitigating for their impacts.

Ms. Dunham pointed out that Bellevue does not have a Space Needle or a giant lava lamp. If it had a pinnacle event people could associate with Bellevue, it would be very positive for the city. Chair Wilson agreed. He pointed out that the arts festivals, Snowflake Lane and the Fourth of July are the city's signature events.

Councilmember Slatter noted that a great deal of attention is currently being given to the concept of the grand connection, which is truly aspirational. A lot of visioning is under way for something that could ultimately be iconic for the city. She asked what the Council needs to do to help with the big picture question. Chair Wilson said in part what is needed is for the Council to outline its vision for special events in the city. Currently the overall number of events are limited to avoid overly impacting the community. Road races are good examples. In the past a large

number of requests were submitted, but the concerns over closing roads down too often has resulted in fewer road races; those that are run are pushed to the downtown early on Sunday mornings. Every attempt is made to spread events out around the city, but most organizers want to be downtown. Downtown merchants, however, do not want to see the roads closed too often. One option would be to concentrate on the established events and make them bigger and better.

Councilmember Slatter urged the Committee to share its views and recommendations with the Council.

Lt. Sanabria allowed that the special events code, which was written in 1993, may not fully reflect the city Bellevue has grown into. He stressed that Bellevue citizens are very aware of what the codes allow and do not allow, so to take any different direction will require code changes. Councilmember Slatter said the point was well taken, but stated that understanding what the Committee wants to achieve will help the Council make good decisions.

Mr. Henderson asked if the Committee generates ideas for events or just entertain proposals. Chair Wilson said the Committee does not go out looking for or soliciting events. The Committee is not a commission or a board and is comprised of a mixture of staff and community members, including residents and business interests. The committee receives proposals, reviews them, and approves or disapproves them. The event organizers are assisted in working through the process and is given guidance that will make the events work better.

Mr. Butcher said it has been very helpful to add representatives to the committee. As events come in, the discussions are fuller in that they include advocates for the events.

Mr. Henderson said he and Mr. Canedo along with Mayor Stokes recently attended the grand opening in Bellevue of Time Extender, a big data company that is headquartered in Denmark. He said it was impressive to hear the company emphasize that it chose Bellevue because of the local talent. That theme has been echoed by a number of technology companies. It would be great if the Committee, or possibly some other body, could seek out the kind of iconic events that would foster keeping the existing talent in Bellevue and drawing more talent in. Ms. Dunham suggested it would be helpful for the economic development office to work closely with the Committee to bring about the right kind of events.

Mr. Canedo said his office is working with a branding consultant to update Bellevue's image. One of their recommendations was to focus on the culture and lifestyle in lieu of the city having an iconic structure to feature. People should know Bellevue because of the way the residents live and embrace and welcome each other.

❖ Post-Event: CRY Holi Festival

Chair Wilson commented that the weather was perfect for the event, though there were some issues encountered. Staff was present with a sound meter to take readings every half hour throughout the event. The highest level was 76.9 decibels from the gazebos or small shelters; the code allows up to 90 decibels within 50 feet. No complaints were received about sound at the event.

Answering a question asked by Mr. Christiansen, Chair Wilson said with only a few exceptions, all of the events that will have amplified sound will have staff assigned to take decibel readings.

Mr. Christiansen suggested that those who live adjacent to a park should not complain about the noise from events, because most of the time what they have is absolutely gorgeous. Ms. Warren

agreed, noting that as a downtown resident she accepts the fact that there will be noise.

Chair Wilson said parking for the event was an issue. Signage was posted and a shuttle was operated. However, the signage was not obvious and visible, and the lettering was difficult to read. Volunteers were utilized to control parking, but at times they took breaks. The volunteers did ask people if they were shopping at Crossroads Mall, but mall personnel complained that people were parking in their lot for the sole purpose of attending the event.

Mr. Butcher pointed out that Crossroads Mall is reticent to enforce their parking restrictions because towing cars creates a bad image for them. Additionally, many of the people who attend the events are also residents who shop at the mall. There should be a balance between event organizers keeping posting signage and the mall enforcing their rules.

Lt. Sanabria said he worked the event which was well attended and went off without major issues. The bicycle unit was on-site and was very well received. Traffic was an issue as it always is for events at Crossroads Park. There is a need to be clearer about expectations relative to pedestrian drop-offs. Police resources were placed to help keep Fire Station 3 clear; hopefully fire personnel will handle that duty next year so the police resources can be focused on the event. He agreed that the corner of the mall parking lot adjacent to the park was a madhouse for much of the time and there were obviously a lot of people parking there and walking directly over to the event. He agreed with Mr. Butcher that while the Committee sets with the event organizer the expectations relative to parking, it is ultimately up to private businesses to monitor their facilities.

Chair Wilson said the festival will likely move back to Downtown Park at some point. There were actually four holi events throughout the city, two of which were private. Attendance at the public events exceeded the planned expectations, something that needs to be addressed.

Mr. Christiansen pointed out that while the CRY Holi event had some 2000 in attendance, the Strawberry Festival typically has 15,000 to 20,000 attendees on a given day. He said he was surprised to hear the traffic problems for the CRY Holi event described as being similar to those experienced during the Strawberry Festival. Lt. Sanabria clarified that there are significant parking and traffic issues during the Strawberry Festival. The CRY Holi event generated far fewer complaints about parking on the streets. One major difference is the Strawberry Festival is a recurring event that has a solid plan in place that makes it run very smoothly. Smaller events like CRY Holi do not yet have a solid blueprint to follow.

Ms. Shelton asked if tow trucks are ever parked on site as a deterrent. Mr. Butcher said he actually recommended that to the Crossroads representatives.

Chair Wilson said he would ask the event organizers to come in during the fall to talk about the 2017 CRY Holi event to discuss the logistics.

❖ Application of Intent: GTOAA Parking Lot Party

Chair Wilson explained that the event is hosted by the owners of classic GTO cars.

Mr. Butcher said they will trailer in a number of the vintage cars. Once the cars are unloaded, the trailers will be parked at Bellevue High School. While the event appears to fall outside the bounds of what is considered to be a special event, the one thing they want to do that will involve the streets is to send out the cars in a procession traveling to Snoqualmie Falls. The organizer asked about having the police close the intersections as the cars pass through, but it was

determined that by going northbound on 112th Avenue, then east on Main Street, and then south of 116th Avenue it will not be necessary to use the police. He said his initial intent was to require a right-of-way use permit and an approved traffic control plan.

Chair Wilson said the event is booked into the Hilton, and it was the Hilton staff that directed the organizers to seek permits from the city for the event, which will be held in their parking lot. Development Services directed the organizer to contact the Special Events Committee. The primary impacts can be handled through a right-of-way permit. However, the event wants a sound permit in association with a party in the parking lot complete with a band. The Committee can issue a sound permit through Development Services without requiring a special event permit, which the event clearly does not need.

Mr. Christiansen said he assumed that as part of the sound permit it will be possible to control the direction in which the loudspeakers are pointed. Chair Wilson said he would set the conditions for the sound permit. He said he probably will also require staff to attend and take decibel readings.

A motion to authorize a sound permit for the GTOAA event, and to not require a special events permit, was made by Mr. Butcher. The motion was seconded by Mr. Christiansen.

Mr. Butcher said the event will be open to the public and will feature some 150 classic cars.

Councilmember Slatter commented that the Surrey Downs neighborhood, which is close to where the event will take place, is very concerned about sound. She asked if there were any way to make sure the community will be comfortable having the event. Chair Wilson agreed that directing the organizer to engage in outreach efforts would be in order.

The motion carried unanimously.

Mr. Warner suggested that the event organizer should also be directed to contact fire about an operational use permit.

- ❖ April Events: All In For Autism 10K; Sheep Shearing
- ❖ Application of Intent for Possible LifeSpring Event

7. NEXT MEETING

- ❖ May 12, 2016

8. ADJOURNMENT

Chair Wilson adjourned the meeting at 10:07 a.m.