

CITY OF BELLEVUE
CITY COUNCIL

Summary Minutes of Regular Meeting

May 5, 2026
6:00 p.m.

Council Chambers
Bellevue, Washington

PRESENT: Mayor Malakoutian, Deputy Mayor Hamilton and Councilmembers Bhargava, Briar, Nieuwenhuis, Robinson and Sumadiwirya

ABSENT: None.

1. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 6:00 p.m., with Mayor Malakoutian presiding.

2. Roll Call; Flag Salute

City Clerk Charmaine Arredondo called the roll and all Councilmembers were present. Councilmember Sumadiwirya led the flag salute.

(a) Jewish American Heritage Month Proclamation

Councilmember Nieuwenhuis read the proclamation recognizing May 2026 as Jewish American Heritage Month in Bellevue and encouraged everyone to recognize and celebrate the history, culture and ongoing contributions of Jewish Americans in our community and country.

Regina Sasson Friedland, American Jewish Committee, accepted and thanked the Council for the proclamation. She expressed concern regarding rising antisemitism and all forms of hate in our society.

Stephanie Shujman, Board Member of the Jewish Federation of Greater Seattle, thanked the Council for the proclamation and commented on the important contributions of Jewish Americans throughout history. She thanked the City for its partnership in ensuring that the Jewish community can be vibrant and thriving into the future.

(b) Affordable Housing Week Proclamation

Councilmember Robinson read the proclamation recognizing May 11-15, 2026, as Affordable Housing Week in Bellevue. She encouraged everyone to recognize the importance of affordable housing in building a strong, inclusive community.

Troy Draws, Imagine Housing, accepted and thanked the Council for the proclamation. He thanked the City for its ongoing efforts to encourage and support the production of affordable housing.

Tom Getzinger, Council President, Saint Andrew's Lutheran Church Bellevue, commented on the church's partnership in affordable housing projects.

Saghar Amini, Habitat for Humanity, commented on the organization's objective to build a world where everyone has a safe, decent and affordable place to live. She thanked the City for its funding and partnership to create housing.

Mary Koutrelakos, SRM Development, commented on an upcoming 146-unit affordable housing project to be developed in partnership with Hopelink.

(c) Bike Everywhere Month Proclamation

Deputy Mayor Hamilton read the proclamation recognizing May 2026 as Bike Everywhere Month in Bellevue and encouraged everyone to consider bicycling for both transportation and recreation.

Meiling Hou, a volunteer with the Little Masters Club, said the group has been organizing an annual bike-a thon since 2015 to promote a healthy and eco-friendly lifestyle. She thanked the City's transportation department for its partnership.

Hanwen Yuan commented on his ongoing involvement with the annual bike-a-thons.

Yunjie Ma, a nine-year-old student, said he bikes 10 miles during the Bike Everywhere event with the Little Masters Club.

(d) Building Safety Month Proclamation

Councilmember Briar read the proclamation recognizing May 2026 as Building Safety Month in Bellevue. She encouraged all residents, businesses and community partners to recognize the importance of building safety and the practices that help create a safer and more resilient Bellevue.

Jake Hesselgesser, Business Services Director, Development Services Department, accepted and thanked the Council for the proclamation.

Lauren Eck, Building Plan Review Supervisor, commented on the department's work to ensure that buildings are safe and healthy.

3. Approval of Agenda

- Deputy Mayor Hamilton moved to approve the agenda, and Councilmember Nieuwenhuis seconded the motion.

→ The motion carried by a vote of 7-0.

4. Oral Communications

City Clerk Arredondo said the total time for oral communications is for a period not to exceed 30 minutes and topics must relate to City of Bellevue government. Individuals speaking to items on the agenda will be called first and if time remains, others will be called. The presiding officer is authorized to give preference to individuals who have not spoken to the Council within the past 60 days or who are speaking to items that will come before the Council in the upcoming 60 days. Each speaker is allowed up to three minutes to speak and a maximum of three speakers are allowed to speak to any one side of a particular topic. In compliance with Washington state campaign laws regarding the use of public facilities, no speaker may support or oppose a ballot measure or candidate.

- (a) Tim Carr, CEO, Bellevue Convention Center Authority, said he currently serves as chair of the Board for the Bellevue Downtown Association and on the steering committee for Friends of the Grand Connection. He expressed support for the Grand Connection crossing project and the use of tax increment financing (TIF) as a funding tool.
- (b) Katherine Hollis, Executive Director, Eastrail Partners, expressed support for the Grand Connection crossing project to connect the downtown to the Wilburton neighborhood and the Eastrail across I-405. She expressed support for the TIF proposal.
- (c) Arman Bilge, speaking on behalf of Eastside Urbanism and Complete Streets Bellevue, thanked the Council for the Bike Everywhere Month proclamation. He commented on the sense of community fostered by cycling events and thanked the City for its efforts to expand bike and other multimodal infrastructure.
- (d) Putter Bert, President/CEO, KidsQuest Children's Museum, said the museum will relocate to the former Bellevue Arts Museum building in mid-2029. She thanked the City for its ongoing support and partnership.
- (e) Kevin Wallace expressed support for the TIF tool to fund the Grand Connection project. He commended staff for their work on this complex proposal and thanked King County for its support. He said the use of TIF funding will preserve more transportation funding for additional needed projects.
- (f) Jessica Roe, representing the Bellevue Chamber of Commerce PLUSH (Permitting, Land Use, Sustainability and Housing) committee, said they look forward to working with the City on the Downtown Livability 2.0 initiative. She asked the City to include language to enable pedestrian connections between private spaces above the right-of-way with objective design standards and a clear permitting pathway and to update standards for compact parking and reduced parking requirements. Ms. Roe noted that the PLUSH committee recently submitted these and other comments in writing to the Council.

- (g) Matt Jack, representing the Bellevue Downtown Association, expressed support for the launch of the Downtown Livability 2.0 initiative. He encouraged code revisions to clarify predictability, outline an efficient review process, maintain flexibility to achieve high-quality design, support housing production and project feasibility, and to integrate tools to facilitate iterative code updates.
- (h) Paul Rood expressed concerns regarding noise regulation and enforcement in Bellevue over the past 30 years, including related to noise generated by vehicles, gas-powered leaf blowers and construction activity.
- (i) Arlyn Nordhorn recalled his past comments to the Council regarding the need for services to assist 100-percent disabled veterans. He expressed concern regarding utility rates.

5. Reports of Community Councils, Boards, and Commissions: None.

6. Report of the City Manager

City Manager Diane Carlson highlighted Ordinance No. 6915 [Agenda Item 8(d)], which adopts an agreement with KidsQuest Children’s Museum to provide up to \$10 million in funding assistance to open a new facility in Bellevue. She said the museum serves more than 200,000 visitors annually and provides educational activities and additional public benefits for the community. Ms. Carlson thanked the KidsQuest Board and staff for their partnership with the City.

7. Council Business and New Initiatives

- Councilmember Robinson moved to appoint Carolyn Besana to serve a partial term on the Human Services Commission expiring on May 31, 2027. Deputy Mayor Hamilton seconded the motion.
- The motion carried by a vote of 7-0.

8. Consent Calendar

- Deputy Mayor Hamilton moved to approve the Consent Calendar, and Councilmember Nieuwenhuis seconded the motion.
- The motion to approve the Consent Calendar carried by a vote of 7-0, and the following item was approved:

- (a) Council Minutes
Minutes of April 21, 2026 Special Meeting
- (b) Motion to award Bid No. 26035 for the Cedar Terrace Pump Station Rehabilitation Project to Northwest Cascade, Inc., as the lowest responsive and

responsible bidder, in an amount not to exceed \$1,996,996, plus all applicable taxes (CIP Plan S-16).

- (c) Ordinance No. 6914 to: 1) authorize execution of an agreement with Washington State University to accept \$500,000 in grant funding from the Community Energy Efficiency Program for Energy Smart Eastside to implement heat pump incentives for income-qualified households; and 2) amend the 2025-2026 budget of the Operating Grants, Donations, and Special Reserve Fund to increase the appropriation by \$500,000; 3) authorize expenditures of said grant funds.
- (d) Ordinance No. 6915: (1) authorizing execution of a funding agreement with KidsQuest Children's Museum to provide up to \$10,000,000 in funds over the next two biennia to be used by KidsQuest to open a new facility in Bellevue, and (2) amending the City of Bellevue 2025-2026 General Fund budget to increase the appropriation by \$4,500,000 from the Long-Range Planning Reserve to fund the initial installment.
- (e) Resolution No. 10627 authorizing execution of all documents necessary to release an existing wall maintenance easement located at 1425 120th Avenue NE.
- (f) Resolution No. 10628 authorizing execution of amendment to the Energy Smart Eastside Boost Heat Pump Reimbursement Contract with Hopelink, increasing the contract by \$500,000 to an amount not to exceed \$9,978,810, plus all applicable taxes.

9. Public Hearing

- (a) Public Hearing and Action on Resolution No. 10629 authorizing the execution of documents necessary to release portions of two easements, one Sidewalk and Utility easement and one Sidewalk, Utility and Wall easement located at 1425 120th Avenue NE which have been determined to no longer be required for continued public service.

City Manager Carlson introduced the public hearings and Council action on two resolutions to release public easements.

Loren Matlick, Real Property Division Manager, Finance and Asset Management Department, recalled that on March 17 the Council declared the easements referenced in Resolution No. 10629 as surplus to the City's needs. The easements are located at 1425 120th Avenue NE between NE 12th Street and NE Spring Boulevard and the property is under development. He said staff is requesting Council action on the resolution following the public hearing.

- Deputy Mayor Hamilton moved to open the public hearing, and Councilmember Robinson seconded the motion.
- The motion carried by a vote of 7-0.

No one came forward to comment.

→ Deputy Mayor Hamilton moved to close the public hearing, and Councilmember Robinson seconded the motion.

→ The motion carried by a vote of 7-0.

→ Deputy Mayor Hamilton moved to approve Resolution No. 10629, and Councilmember Robinson seconded the motion.

→ The motion carried by a vote of 7-0.

- (b) Public Hearing and Action on Resolution No. 10630 authorizing the execution of documents necessary to release an existing water easement located at 12835 NE Bellevue Redmond Road, which has been declared surplus to the City's needs and is no longer required for providing continued water service; the granting and recording of such release being deemed in the best interest of the public.

Mr. Matlick said Resolution No. 10630 authorizes the release of a water easement located at 12835 NE Bellevue Redmond Road. The Council declared the easement as surplus to the City's needs on March 24. The property is being redeveloped into a market-rate townhome community and a new water easement will be acquired from the property owner at no cost to the City.

→ Deputy Mayor Hamilton moved to open the public hearing, and Councilmember Robinson seconded the motion.

→ The motion carried by a vote of 7-0.

No one came forward to comment.

→ Deputy Mayor Hamilton moved to close the public hearing, and Councilmember Robinson seconded the motion.

→ The motion carried by a vote of 7-0.

→ Deputy Mayor Hamilton moved to approve Resolution No. 10630, and Councilmember Robinson seconded the motion.

→ The motion carried by a vote of 7-0.

10. Study Session Items

- (a) Bellevue Grand Connection Tax Increment Financing (TIF) Update

City Manager Carlson introduced discussion regarding a proposal to use tax increment financing (TIF) to fund the Grand Connection project. She thanked staff for their hard work to develop the proposal.

Genesee Adkins, Deputy City Manager, City Manager's Office, said staff is seeking direction to prepare an ordinance for action at a future meeting to establish the TIF area in Bellevue.

Nathan Torgelson, Director, Office of the Grand Connection, recalled that the Grand Connection project was first established as a Council priority in 2012. A framework plan was adopted in 2018 and early design work was completed in 2021 and 2022. The 30-percent design was completed by WSP, the City's consultant, in 2023 and the Office of the Grand Connection was established in 2025. The Grand Connection will help accelerate development in the Wilburton area and provide robust pedestrian and bike connections, including to the Eastrail corridor. The 2025 Wilburton land use update enables transit-oriented development of up to 450 feet at the core of the district.

John Resha, Chief Financial Officer/Director, Finance and Asset Management, said TIF captures property taxes generated from the increased assessed valuation on a site that results from private development following infrastructure investments. The TIF statute provides for a base assessed value for a district of up to \$200 million. The legislature provided a special authority expiring June 2026 for up to \$500 million in assessed valuation. The TIF proposal affects five taxing districts: 1) King County and King County Emergency Medical Services, 2) King County Flood Control District, 3) King County Library System, 4) Port of Seattle, and 5) Sound Transit. Those districts must take action to participate in the TIF before the City takes action.

Mr. Resha explained that when a tax increment area (TIA) is formed, the assessed value (up to \$500 million) is frozen and all of the existing taxing districts continue to collect taxes on that base assessed value. All of the growth above that is accrued to the local government's project. After the debt associated with the project is repaid, the existing taxing districts receive the full economic value. Mr. Resha said an analysis was conducted of three development scenarios and delivered to the Office of the State Treasurer on January 14 for review. The resulting TIA includes 33 parcels over 64.5 acres. Mr. Resha highlighted the anticipated revenues for the three development scenarios (i.e., full buildout, phased full buildout, and market-responsive limited buildout).

Mr. Resha said the TIA does not create an additional tax but allows the City to capture tax revenues that would go to other taxing jurisdictions. It does not affect school levies. Under the limited buildout scenario, approximately \$67.7 million would be generated for the Grand Connection project.

Ms. Adkins described staff's efforts since July 2025 to develop the TIF proposal. All of the five existing taxing districts have approved resolutions to participate in the TIF.

Mayor Malakoutian thanked staff for their detailed, disciplined work through a complicated process. He thanked the existing taxing districts for their support of Bellevue's TIF proposal. He thanked the Friends of the Grand Connection and Amazon for their support and partnership.

Deputy Mayor Hamilton thanked everyone for their work and expressed support for the proposed TIF area.

Councilmember Robinson thanked King County Executive Girmay Zahilay for his support and work with his staff and the King County Council to move Bellevue's TIA forward.

Councilmember Nieuwenhuis thanked everyone and expressed support for adopting the TIF.

Councilmember Briar noted there is widespread support for creating the TIA, which will provide nearly \$68 million in revenue without increasing taxes.

Councilmember Sumadiwirya said she previously served on the Friends of the Grand Connection committee. She expressed support for the TIF proposal.

Councilmember Bhargava expressed his support and commended the broad cooperative effort with multiple partners to reach this point.

- Deputy Mayor Hamilton moved to direct staff to prepare the tax increment financing (TIF) ordinance establishing the tax increment area (TIA), for final action at a future meeting. Councilmember Robinson seconded the motion.
- The motion carried by a vote of 7-0.

At 7:49 p.m., Mayor Malakoutian declared a short break. The meeting resumed at 8:06 p.m.

- (b) Council Initiation of the Downtown Livability 2.0 Land Use Code Amendment to update Part 20.25A of the Land Use Code to further implementation of Downtown Livability.

City Manager Carlson introduced discussion regarding the initiation of the Downtown Livability 2.0 Land Use Code Amendment (LUCA) process.

Nick Whipple, Code and Policy Director, Development Services Department, recalled that the first Downtown Livability planning process occurred in 2017. He said staff is seeking direction to initiate work on the next update to the Downtown code. The 2017 update focused on open space, amenity incentive program, station area planning, and building design and scale. Mr. Whipple said strong growth was enabled over subsequent years by the height limit increases and zoning changes in the 2017 code update.

Mathieu Menard, Senior Planner, said approximately 3,500 new downtown residents and 2,200 new homes have been added since 2017. Office and commercial space have been added as well along with 6,000 new jobs and approximately 100 new businesses.

Mr. Menard said there has been a huge growth in ground floor retail space since 2017 and many of the spaces are too large for small businesses. He said rental rates are high for downtown office

and retail space and a number of small businesses have left the downtown since the pandemic that began in 2020. He acknowledged the continued need for evening and weekend activity in the downtown. He recalled the adoption of the Downtown-Old Bellevue interim official control (IOC) on February 10 to focus on reinforcing the character of Main Street.

The purpose of the Downtown Livability 2.0 LUCA is to reinforce and align with existing policy guidance. The planning effort continues to prioritize open space and overall neighborhood vitality, introduces modest refinements to building form and scale, and reflects strong coordination with internal stakeholders. Mr. Menard said the scope of the LUCA includes enhancing evening vitality, supporting the implementation of the Grand Connection, preserving historic development patterns on Main Street in Old Bellevue, streamlining the land use tables, strengthening the effectiveness of the amenity incentive program, exploring incentives for affordable commercial space and ensuring a welcoming pedestrian environment.

Mr. Menard said the Downtown Livability 2.0 planning initiative will launch in June if approved by the Council. Community engagement will include meetings with community and developer/stakeholder groups, tabling events, meetings with individuals and groups as requested, the Council and Planning Commission processes and digital outreach. The draft code will be reviewed by the Planning Commission and staff will continue to refine the code through the first quarter of 2027. Staff anticipates finalizing the LUCA early in the second quarter of 2027 for Council action.

Responding to Councilmember Bhargava, Mr. Menard said key topics to be addressed include floor plate sizing, especially for residential development, and retail-related issues. Mr. Bhargava suggested identifying measurable outcomes (e.g., housing production) early in the planning process.

Councilmember Briar thanked staff for their work. She encouraged the creation of robust pedestrian-oriented spaces, potentially with a closed street. Mr. Menard said that closing streets is more of a transportation issue than a land use issue. He said the Land Use Code has been effective in promoting open plazas, and the Downtown Park is a successful open space. He said the Land Use Code can influence the creation of pedestrian spaces and amenities with development.

Councilmember Robinson said she would love to incentivize unique, independent businesses. She suggested the consideration of smaller storefronts for more affordable tenant space, especially in Old Bellevue. She wants to be sure that Old Bellevue is considered separately from the rest of the downtown. She encouraged retaining the wedding cake concept of downtown development to honor adjacent single-family neighborhoods. Ms. Robinson said she looks forward to hearing from downtown residents, businesses and workers as the LUCA process moves forward.

Councilmember Sumadiwirya expressed support for moving forward. As a general suggestion, she encouraged creating a process to welcome new small businesses and to help them engage with the community. Responding to Ms. Sumadiwirya, Mr. Menard said economic development staff will be involved in outreach to small businesses as part of the LUCA process.

Councilmember Nieuwenhuis encouraged robust outreach with downtown residents and workers to understand what they think is special about the downtown and how they want the downtown to be preserved and enhanced. Responding to Mr. Nieuwenhuis, Mr. Whipple said staff has met with and will continue to work with the Bellevue Chamber's PLUSH committee in developing the LUCA.

Deputy Mayor Hamilton expressed support for moving forward. Mr. Hamilton requested a midpoint update to the Council in person or in writing.

Mayor Malakoutian expressed support for moving forward and thanked staff for their work.

→ Deputy Mayor Hamilton moved to direct staff to initiate work on the Downtown Livability 2.0 LUCA and to direct the Planning Commission to review and process the LUCA. Councilmember Robinson seconded the motion.

→ The motion carried by a vote of 7-0.

At 8:51 p.m., Mayor Malakoutian declared a short break. The meeting resumed at 9:02 p.m.

(c) 2026-2027 Federal Legislative Agenda

City Manager Carlson introduced discussion regarding the proposed 2026-2027 federal legislative agenda.

Katie Halse, Assistant Director for Intergovernmental Affairs, City Manager's Office, highlighted the timeline for engaging with elected officials, federal agencies and other partners to advocate for federal legislative priorities. She recalled that the City received two congressional funding awards during the 2025-2026 session: 1) \$500,000 for the Lake Washington Sanitary Sewer Lake Lines Program, and 2) \$2 million for the Grand Connection I-405 crossing. She said reauthorizations up for renewal this year address surface transportation and water infrastructure. She said both the House and the Senate have proposed legislation regarding housing supply and affordability.

Ms. Halse said key priorities for the 2026-2027 federal legislative agenda include transportation and mobility, essential water infrastructure, housing and safety net programs. The policy statement includes a broader range of topics including immigrant and refugee community support, public safety, innovation and cybersecurity, fiscal sustainability, economic and workforce development, resilient infrastructure and energy, and the I-405/SR 167 corridor.

Ms. Halse described a request for \$1 million in 2027 federal funding for the Safer Signals Program to implement real-time traffic signal safety interventions to reduce vehicle-pedestrian conflicts at high-risk intersections.

Mayor Malakoutian thanked staff for the information and noted that a number of amendments from the Council would be presented later.

Ms. Halse responded to questions of clarification from Councilmember Nieuwenhuis. Mr. Nieuwenhuis expressed an interest in seeking funding for the drone-as-first-responder program when appropriate.

Councilmember Robinson thanked staff for their work and concurred with Mr. Nieuwenhuis regarding the drone program.

Councilmember Sumadiwirya expressed appreciation for staff's efforts on behalf of Bellevue.

Councilmember Bhargava thanked staff for their expertise and effectiveness in state and federal legislative advocacy.

Councilmember Briar thanked staff for their work.

Deputy Mayor Hamilton expressed support for the federal legislative agenda.

Mayor Malakoutian referenced proposed minor revisions to the agenda and requested Council approval. He noted a consensus in support of those refinements.

Mr. Halse requested Council input regarding four additional proposed revisions that are more substantive in nature.

Councilmember Robinson referred to amendment 8 and recalled that in March 2026, President Trump announced the White House ratepayer protection pledge related to the development of data centers and potential higher energy costs for American households.

- Councilmember Robinson moved to approve the following amendment: "Bellevue supports policies that ensure that large-scale energy users, including AI data centers, fund the electricity infrastructure needed to serve their operations, avoiding ratepayer impacts and supporting reliable, sustainable energy systems." Councilmember Briar seconded the motion.

Responding to Mayor Malakoutian, Ms. Halse opined that the motion was consistent with the overall legislative agenda. Ms. Adkins concurred.

- The motion carried by a vote of 7-0.
- Deputy Mayor Hamilton referred to the priority of essential water infrastructure and moved to add: "Without increased federal partnership, rising infrastructure needs and regulatory requirements will drive significant cost increases for ratepayers." Councilmember Nieuwenhuis seconded the motion.
- The motion carried by a vote of 7-0.

- Deputy Mayor Hamilton moved to add to the public safety and first responders policy statement: “Bellevue supports responsible data sharing for public safety purposes that is consistent with state and local laws and protects privacy and civil liberties.” Councilmember Briar seconded the motion.

Councilmember Nieuwenhuis asked about the definition of “responsible.” Ms. Halse suggested the word could be removed from the motion.

Councilmember Briar said most large technology companies have more constrained privacy rules than the federal government. She said she reads the motion as expressing the desire for reasonable legal justification for data sharing.

Mr. Nieuwenhuis expressed concern about trying to determine the potential public safety needs for data sharing.

Councilmember Robinson said an online search for “responsible data sharing” provides a definition referring to the ethical, controlled exchange of information prioritizing privacy, security and societal benefits.

- The motion carried by a vote of 6-1, with Councilmember Nieuwenhuis dissenting.
- Councilmember Briar moved to add to the fiscal sustainability and governance policy statement: “Bellevue encourages Congress to preserve and strengthen tax-exempt municipal bonds, as well as flexible financing tools and credit assistance that helps cities deliver infrastructure, housing, utilities, transportation and public facilities at lower costs to taxpayers and ratepayers.” Councilmember Robinson seconded the motion.

Ms. Briar said she wants to provide flexibility for the full set of federal financing tools for cities.

Responding to Mayor Malakoutian, Ms. Halse said tax-exempt municipal bonds are a common request from other cities and the National League of Cities.

- The motion carried by a vote of 7-0.

Councilmember Bhargava suggested adding language to the immigrant and refugee community statement to highlight the implications for possible labor shortages, economic competitiveness, healthcare and the construction industry.

- Deputy Mayor Hamilton moved to extend the meeting to 10:15 p.m., and Councilmember Briar seconded the motion.
- The motion carried by a vote of 7-0.

Ms. Adkins commented that adding the language suggested by Councilmember Bhargava does not change what the City will be supporting but is more of a why statement. She said it does not substantively change what the City is asking Congress and the administration to consider.

Ms. Halse proposed language referring to expanding lawful work opportunities to support local economies and promote community stability through workforce and labor stability.

- Councilmember Bhargava moved to revise the language as described by staff, and Councilmember Briar seconded the motion.
- The motion carried by a vote of 7-0.
- Deputy Mayor Hamilton moved to adopt the 2026-2027 Federal Legislative Agenda, as amended, and Councilmember Robinson seconded the motion.
- The motion carried by a vote of 7-0.

11. Land Use Reports: None.

12. Other Ordinances, Resolutions and Motions: None.

13. Written Reports: None.

14. Unfinished Business: None.

15. New Business: None.

16. Executive Session: None.

17. Adjournment

At 10:08 p.m., Mayor Malakoutian declared the meeting adjourned.

Charmaine Arredondo, CMC
City Clerk

/kaw