



The Common Council of the City of Bellevue, Idaho met at a Special Meeting on Tuesday, July 15, 2025, at 5:30 p.m. in the Council Chambers of the City of Bellevue Offices, located at 115 E. Pine Street, Bellevue, ID 83313.

Call to Order: Mayor Giordani called the Regular Meeting to order at 5:36 p.m. (00:00:22 in video)

Roll Call: (00:00:41 in video)

Christina Giordani, Mayor – Present
Diane Shay, Council President – Present
Tammy E. Davis, Council Member – Present
Suzanne Wrede, Council Member – Present
Shaun Mahoney, Council Member – Present
Tom Bergin, Council Member – Present
Jessica Obenauf, Council Member – Present

Staff Present:

Chris Johnson, Public Works Director
Amy Phelps, City Clerk
Brian Parker, Community Development Director
Kirtus Gaston, Marshal
Shelly Shoemaker, Treasurer

1. Notice of Agenda Compliance: (00:01:10 in video)

The posting of this Special meeting agenda complied with Idaho Code §74-204. The Special meeting agenda was posted within forty-eight (48) hours prior to the meeting at the Bellevue City Hall, Post Office, and on the City website on *July 10, 2025*.

Motion: Council President Shay moved that the agenda notice was in compliance with Idaho Code §74-204. Council Member Davis seconded, and the motion passed unanimously.

2. CALL FOR CONFLICT (AS OUTLINED IN IDAHO CODE §74-404): ACTION ITEM

No conflict was noted at this time.

3. WORK SESSION

a. BUDGET WORK SESSION 5

Mayor Giordani opened Budget work session five by emphasizing that the proposed 2026 budget is designed to maintain basic city services while allowing room for future growth. She noted that current services include library operations with one librarian open four days a week, basic street maintenance such as sweeping, sidewalk cleaning, red curb repainting, striping, and snow removal, as well as trash removal, park maintenance, community development and building upkeep. She highlighted the council's focus on identifying departmental and code shortcomings, long-term planning, and health and safety, including the addition of a fifth marshal, while fire services remain unchanged.

Mayor Giordani explained that the council would need to assess priorities within the current \$90,000 budget gap and consider departmental specifics, services, and monetary impacts. She also discussed potential revenue opportunities to reduce reliance on cuts, including franchise fees, lodging taxes, and potential food and liquor-

by-the-drink taxes, noting that these measures would require voter approval and careful planning. She stressed the importance of exploring new revenue options alongside cost-cutting measures, emphasized transparency with residents regarding how new revenue would be used, and committed to further discussions on potential taxes outside the current budget workshop.

Fire Chief Greg Beaver emphasized the importance of transparency with citizens regarding past levy increases and funding allocations for the library, fire services, streets, and marshals. He noted that while taxes may be slightly higher, they directly support essential community services, including emergency response. He stressed that staff cannot continue to absorb repeated budget cuts and that open discussion and responsible funding are necessary to maintain community safety and services.

(00:22:15 in video)

The Council focused on the administrative budget with staff present to answer questions. The Mayor highlighted the \$150,000 carryover included in the budget. Council members inquired about the costs associated with Cassell software, including monthly and annual expenses, training, and travel. It was noted that the total annual cost for Cassell in the upcoming year is \$32,400, and comparisons to previous accounting solutions such as QuickBooks indicated higher costs for Cassell. The Mayor advised funding Cassell for 2026 due to staff investment and the ongoing transition, while also emphasizing that alternative solutions would be explored if Cassell proved ineffective.

The discussion then addressed overall departmental efficiency, payroll, and administrative staffing. Analyses had been conducted in the spring to evaluate employee responsibilities and ensure no duplication of effort. The Mayor emphasized the value of current staff and the importance of maintaining in-house expertise, noting improvements in operational efficiency and foundational city processes since transitioning from prior contractor-heavy staffing. Contract labor was maintained in certain departments for flexibility.

Questions arose regarding employee compensation and benefits. Current wages were reviewed against a 2023 rate study, and no cost-of-living adjustments (COLA) were included in the proposed budget. Potential adjustments to benefit structures, including 401(k) contributions and other non-taxable options, were discussed as cost-saving alternatives. The Mayor clarified that while health insurance is reviewed annually, timing may not align with the budget cycle.

Council also discussed budget assumptions, including the treatment of liability insurance, workers' compensation, and the effect of consolidating general fund costs under administration. Differences in budget year-to-year comparisons were clarified, and the impact of Cassell on administrative costs was acknowledged.

Revenue assumptions, potential fee increases, and the inclusion of a three percent revenue growth were noted, with Mayor Giordani encouraging Council to provide guidance based on constituent priorities. The discussion included the importance of clear communication and respect for staff during inquiries. The Mayor emphasized the framework for decision-making, focusing on representing the community's interests while balancing fiscal prudence and operational efficiency.

(00:56:36 in video)

Council discussion then turned to focus on administrative staffing, and customer service. It was clarified that the City currently has two accounting staff—one handling accounts payable and payroll—while the other handles water and sewer billing. Council Member Wrede inquired about customer service levels at City Hall and in public services. Staff explained that the budget does not propose expanding City Hall hours but ensures a dedicated employee is available at the service window during business hours, with cross-training to cover absences. Discussions are ongoing regarding procedural changes and potential enhancements for citizen access, including digital and physical solutions for permits and bill payment.

Council Member Wrede asked that Emergency preparedness was addressed and sought clarification on budget support for post-crisis and emergency response beyond existing coordination with Blaine County. Mayor Giordani noted that, aside from funding the fifth officer to maintain a well-trained and appropriately staffed emergency response team, no additional dedicated budget amounts are included for emergency preparedness.

Source Water Protection Plan was brought up. Questions were raised about whether hydrant maintenance during the winter is the responsibility of the resident. It was clarified that no ordinance requires residents to be accountable for hydrant upkeep and that maintenance is currently funded through City staffing. Reference was later made to an ordinance concerning snow removal near hydrants, though it did not directly assign responsibility to residents, and the discussion was moved forward.

(01:04:59 in video) The conversation then turned to the Community Development budget. The Mayor and staff explained that reductions had been made to the comprehensive plan allocation, with \$5,000 retained for professional services such as design, photography, and translation. The department also includes funding for a planner, beginning in August, and a portion of the Community Services Manager role, which covers communications such as newsletters, social media, and events. Council Member Obenauf asked about Publishing costs which were noted to increase in line with projected building permit revenue.

Council Member Davis asked for clarification on personnel costs and potential discrepancies in budget figures. Staff agreed to review calculations and ensure adjustments such as cost-of-living increases had not been carried over incorrectly. Council Member Wrede asked about the overall cost of Community Development compared to the Fire Department. Fire Chief Beaver, Council Member Davis, Council Member Bergin, and the Mayor emphasized the importance of planning and zoning in shaping growth, ensuring safety through design standards, and avoiding costly issues in the future. Community Development was described as providing proactive services that reduce the need for emergency responses.

Questions were also raised about whether the planner position could be part-time, but it was clarified that it had been funded and approved as a full-time role in the prior year's budget. The department's communications capacity was confirmed as continuing with existing subscriptions and tools such as Mailchimp, Canva, and WordPress.

(01:18:47 in video) The Council then moved on to the Fire Department budget discussion.

Fire Chief Greg Beaver reviewed the Fire Department's FY26 budget, noting it remained largely unchanged from his earlier presentation and included a 3% *merit raise* (not a cost-of-living adjustment). He emphasized that the proposed budget maintains current service levels without reductions in staff or response capacity.

Public Works Director Chris Johnson raised the issue of Buildings and Grounds funds being used for fire station maintenance (such as an overhead door replacement), suggesting the Fire Department should have its own building maintenance allocation to relieve pressure on the citywide facilities budget. Chief Beaver responded that such expenses have shifted between budgets in the past and deferred to the Council's direction.

Assistant Fire Chief Trent Shoemaker commented on the share of the overall city budget allocated to the Fire Department, stressing the importance of maintaining adequate funding. Chief Beaver explained challenges with equipment costs and safety gear compliance, noting that while the department's budget has grown from \$62,000 in 2005 to \$195,000 today, it remains lean compared to operational needs. He expressed willingness to trim expenditures if necessary to help balance the citywide budget.

Councilmembers discussed auto-aid agreements with neighboring fire agencies, with Chief Beaver clarifying that Bellevue provides more mutual aid than it receives, often at no direct reimbursement. He noted that while larger contracts (e.g., with BLM) can provide funds, the department lacks staffing to fully take advantage of those opportunities.

Additional discussion covered upcoming vehicle payments: the fire chief's truck will be paid off in February 2026, and the structure engine in 2027. Chief Beaver mentioned longer-term equipment needs, including replacing an outdated brush truck with a crew-capable vehicle.

In closing, both Chief Beaver and Assistant Chief Shoemaker urged councilmembers to seek information directly from Bellevue Fire leadership regarding service history or consolidation discussions, emphasizing their decades of experience and commitment to the city.

(01:36:15 in video)

Council reviewed the Library's proposed budget, which remains unchanged from the prior presentation. The budget maintains the current level of service—open four days a week—under the leadership of Library Executive Director Kristen Gearhart, who was commended for securing grants and providing diverse programming for all ages.

Gearhart noted the library's city-funded budget is lean, but she has successfully leveraged grants to support programming. She reported that recent statewide cuts have not yet impacted library operations, though effects may be felt in the next fiscal year. She confirmed she will continue serving in her role through the coming year, while long-term plans for the library's future remain under discussion.

Council briefly discussed potential strategies for supplementing library funding, including using QR codes to encourage community donations.

(01:40:50 in video)

Council discussed the Marshal's Office budget, with Marshal Gaston stressing the need for a 5th officer to help reduce staff burnout and overtime and to maintain service quality. The addition of this position was recognized as the major change in the budget, with the Marshal noting that the department would still remain below federal staffing standards even with the hire.

Council further discussed the decision to prioritize staffing over vehicle replacement, acknowledging that two vehicles are aging but that purchases could be deferred for another year. Members also talked through income sources, including court fines and one-time vehicle sale proceeds, and agreed to analyze whether those funds could be carried over to the department in FY26.

The discussion also covered operating costs, which were reduced in some areas to offset payroll increases, and included conversation about code enforcement responsibilities, small fundraising opportunities, and Marshal Gaston's ability to provide training to other jurisdictions. Council noted health insurance estimates were budgeted to account for the additional officer, with hopes that costs may come in lower depending on new insurance options.

(01:52:48 in video)

Council Member Davis asked about the Development Impact Fees (DIF), seeking clarification on their use and whether they could fund operating expenses. Treasurer Shelly Shoemaker explained that DIFs are reserved for future capital improvements and are not considered operating income for this fiscal year. Council discussed the importance of updating the capital improvement plan to allocate these funds, noting that department heads have generally treated DIFs as savings for larger projects, including public safety facilities and infrastructure.

The discussion then turned to the combined Streets, Parks, and Buildings and Grounds budget. Mayor Giordani outlined carryover funds, lot tax projections, and fiscal year 26 goals, including maintaining streets, replacing signage, and addressing general repairs. She stated Personnel focus will be on asset management and implementing a maintenance schedule. Councilmembers asked about specific line items such as grants, professional services, small equipment, and staffing. Mayor Giordani noted reallocations where previous funds were unused, funding for street light repairs, door replacements at City Hall, and procedural improvements to enhance public communication. GIS technology and maps developed by the water department will support asset

management. It was stated that budget increases include merit raises, staffing adjustments, and additional funding for signage, pothole repair materials, and electrical maintenance.

(02:30:48 in Video)

The council reviewed all categories in the General Fund and discussed department head questions and potential adjustments. There was general agreement that non-critical items, such as the library budget, could proceed as proposed, while other line items may need further review. Councilmembers identified “low-hanging fruit” for adjustments, including minor discrepancies in streets, community development payroll, and miscellaneous income for the Marshal’s department.

Professional services and Community Development budgets were reviewed, including contractual obligations with DOPL for building permit services. Mayor Giordani confirmed the necessity of this contract as the city’s only current option and noted its impact on revenues. The records management budget for the City Clerk was confirmed to be included. Discussion then turned to staffing and potential savings. One proposal to contract out payroll and reduce deputy clerk positions was raised but did not receive council support due to concerns about financial oversight and liability.


Public safety staffing and the potential addition of a fifth officer were discussed. Councilmembers considered funding options, including LOT (Local Option Tax) taxes and DIF funds, noting that partial funding for additional staffing may be possible. The importance of maintaining adequate contingency funds for streets equipment was emphasized, with discussions on contracting services versus purchasing equipment.

The council agreed that further cleanup of budget numbers and exploration of DIF funds would require an additional work session. After considering scheduling conflicts, the session was set for 5:00 PM on July 23, 2025 with materials provided by July 21. The council noted that a tentative budget must be adopted at the next meeting to allow for proper public notice. Public comment on the budget will be accepted at the August 28 meeting, and the council encouraged public participation in shaping the budget.

4. **Adjournment:** (02:58:50 in Video) With no further business coming before the Common Council at this time, Council Member Davis moved to adjourn the meeting. Council Member Wrede seconded the motion. The meeting adjourned at 08:34 p.m. The motion passed unanimously.


Christina Giordani, Mayor

Attest:


Amy Phelps, City Clerk

