



Memorandum

To: Mayor Giordani and Bellevue Common Council

From: Amy Phelps, City Clerk

Re: Budget Workshop #2

Date: July 14, 2026

Purpose

As part of the FY27 budget discussion, the Council has expressed interest in opening City Hall to the public on Fridays. This memorandum outlines operational considerations, potential budget impacts, and suggested performance measures to assist the Council in evaluating whether expanding public office hours aligns with the City's service priorities, workforce sustainability, and budget goals.

Current Level of Service

The City currently provides public counter service Monday through Thursday from 7:00 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. This is a 10 hours each day that accommodates residents who work a standard business day in that we are available early morning and after 5pm. In addition, residents have access to numerous services outside of in-person office visits, including:

- Online utility bill payment through Xpress Bill Pay
- Electronic applications and forms through CivicReview
- Email communication with City staff
- Telephone assistance during business hours
- Information and updates through the City's website and social media platforms

These tools have expanded accessibility while allowing staff to efficiently manage administrative responsibilities and respond to resident needs.

Evaluating Service Levels

Opening City Hall on Fridays would represent an increase in the City's current level of public service. As with any proposed service expansion, it is appropriate to evaluate both the anticipated public benefit and the operational resources required to sustain that level of service.

The City of Bellevue exists to serve the residents of Bellevue, and every budget decision should support that mission. At the same time, it is important to recognize that every service the City provides is delivered by employees. Whether processing utility payments, administering elections, issuing licenses and permits, maintaining public records, maintaining and operating City water and sewer facilities, answering resident questions, or managing City finances, these services are only possible because of the dedicated employees who carry them out each day.

In other words, residents are the heart of our community, and City employees are the heart of City Hall. City employees are the people who transform Council policy into the everyday services residents rely upon. Supporting employees and serving residents are not competing priorities. They are interconnected. Investing in a stable, capable workforce is ultimately an investment in the quality, consistency, and reliability of resident services.

Documented Public Demand

While individual Council Members have shared that they have received comments from residents requesting Friday office hours, the City has not collected data regarding:

- The number of residents requesting Friday access
- The types of services requested
- Whether those services could already be completed online, by phone, or by appointment
- Whether current office hours have prevented residents from accessing City services

For the three years that City Hall has operated within a four-day work week, staff has not maintained records demonstrating recurring demand for Friday public counter service.

Additionally, during election filing periods when City Hall has been opened on Fridays to accommodate statutory filing deadlines, staff has observed no walk-in public utilization. These observations are limited and should not be considered a comprehensive study, however, they suggest that demand for Friday in-person services may be lower than anticipated.

Budget and Operational Considerations

Expanding Friday office hours should be evaluated alongside both its financial costs, additional burden placed on employees, and its potential impact on the City's ability to maintain high-quality resident services over time.

Potential considerations include:

- Additional building operation and utility costs associated with opening City Hall an additional day each week.
- Administrative and scheduling adjustments necessary to provide consistent customer service across a five-day workweek.
- Potential impacts on employee recruitment and retention. The current four-day work schedule has become an established condition of employment and has served as a valuable recruitment and retention tool in an increasingly competitive labor market. Additional workdays per week have significant associated personal expenses, including childcare, the need to utilize more vacation time due to the lack of built in days off, and commuting costs such as fuel, depreciation, maintenance, and increased likelihood of accidents.
- Future staffing flexibility should workloads increase or additional coverage become necessary.
- The viability of Common Council and Planning & Zoning Commission meetings to maintain their current Monday evening schedule while having all the necessary staff available on Mondays. Shifting off the Monday meeting schedules would likely create delays in the reporting in the *Idaho Mountain Express*, reducing the amount of public knowledge of the happenings at City Hall.

Like employers across Idaho, the City continues to compete for qualified employees while facing rising costs of living and increasing service expectations. A supportive workplace, competitive pay and benefits, and work-life balance all contribute to employee retention. Retaining experienced staff preserves institutional knowledge, reduces turnover and training costs, and allows the City to provide consistent, responsive service to residents.

Speaking on behalf of the Clerk/Administrative Department, we take great pride in the work we do and in serving the Bellevue community. Every day we assist residents with utility accounts, licensing, public records, financial transactions, and countless other services. While concerns and complaints are an important part of improving government and should always be taken seriously, staff also regularly receive sincere expressions of appreciation from residents who recognize the professionalism, responsiveness, and care provided by City employees.

The goal is not to prioritize employees over residents, or residents over employees. Rather, it is to maintain an appropriate balance—supporting the workforce that delivers City services while continuing to provide exceptional customer service to the public. One makes the other possible.

Measuring Success:

If the Council chooses to transition to a five-day schedule, staff should monitor the following performance metrics to determine if the change measurably provides public benefit relative to the costs associated:

Performance Measure	Success Indicator
Friday walk-in customers	Average weekly and monthly visits
Friday utility payment transactions	Number of in-person payments processed
Friday permit or license applications	Number submitted in person
Friday phone calls requiring staff assistance	Volume compared to other weekdays
Online transactions	Changes in online utilization after Friday hours are implemented
Resident feedback	Formal surveys or documented service requests
Cost per resident served	Compare operational costs with actual Friday utilization

Conclusion:

Based on the information currently available, the City has not collected data demonstrating sustained public demand for Friday public office hours. Existing online services, telephone assistance, and electronic forms continue to provide residents with multiple avenues to access City services outside of in-person visits.

Should the Council determine that expanding Friday office hours aligns with its policy priorities, establishing measurable performance metrics before implementation would provide an objective basis for evaluating the effectiveness of the expanded service. Tracking utilization, resident feedback, and operational costs over a six- to twelve-month period would allow the Council to determine whether the additional level of service is achieving its intended purpose and providing measurable value to Bellevue residents.

The City's continued investment in online services has expanded accessibility while allowing staff to efficiently manage administrative responsibilities. Evaluating future service levels using measurable data, demonstrated community need, fiscal responsibility, and operational impacts will help ensure that decisions are informed by objective outcomes and aligned with the City's long-term service goals.