

Minutes, Kirkland Alliance of Neighborhoods
October 12, 2022 Virtual online meeting

Note: Action items are highlighted in yellow.

Neighborhoods attending:

Central Houghton	
Everest	Anna Aubrey
Evergreen Hill	Johanna Palmer
Finn Hill	Bill Blanchard (KAN Chair), Scott Morris
Highlands	Mari Bercaw, Launa Johnson
Juanita Neighborhoods	Leo Gilbert, Doug Rough
Lakeview	Mark Still
Market	Ken MacKenzie, Liz Hunt
Moss Bay	
Norkirk	Huan Zou, Janet Pruitt
North Rose Hill	
South Rose Hill/Bridle Trails	Chris Kagen

City Staff/Elected Officials attending:

- Don Robinson, Senior Community Engagement Coordinator
- Kurt Triplett, City Manager
- Lt. Troy Knafla, Kirkland Police Department

Guests:

- Karen Story, Highlands
- Prossy Nambalirwa, Totem Lake
- Fortilda Patience? (spelling not available; spoke her name; logged in as Sabrina Hazel Nangonzi)
- Dana Nunnely, North Rose Hill
- Johyn Tymczynsyn, Houghton, Planning Commission
- Sue Contreras
- Jennifer
- Sheila Cloney, Norkirk
- Christina, a business owner on Park Lane
- Tina Moody, a business owner on Park Lane

7:20pm Introduction

- Chair Bill Blanchard called the meeting to order
- (Delayed start: technical glitch due to the Zoom link being used for another meeting)
- Round-the-horn introductions
 - Everest held neighborhood picnic recently: 80-85 people, new families.
 - Norkirk held a picnic as well. Market as well, 100+ people at Waverly.

Juanita had their annual epic Welcoming picnic. Highlands picnic at Crestwoods Park. Liz is the new chair of the Market NA.

7:35pm Public comments

- None solicited

7:35pm Upcoming tax increases in Kirkland

- Kurt Triplett presenting
- “Safety investment initiatives”
- Budget goes to City Council next week
 - October 25th study session; public welcome to observe
 - Two public hearings in November on budget and capital projects
 - Budget title: *Sustaining Services and Building a Community Where Everyone Belongs*
- Challenges
 - Rising prices
 - The Great Resignation (or the Great Reshuffle), small hiring pools
 - People moving away or retiring, not shifting to similar local jobs
- No reductions in the base budget: all existing services and personnel
- \$20 car tabs: Investment opportunity to accelerate projects
 - Safer routes to school action plan, tree and median management
 - \$800K/year already set aside for these projects, which would sum out to 20+ years to complete them
 - A \$20/car tab would generate \$1.3M/year
 - \$300K for tree and median management
 - \$1M for safety project acceleration, to complete in a few years
 - Q: [Doug] Prioritize Juanita, since the only two student deaths in Kirkland have been in Juanita.
 - We’re allocating some money to study Juanita needs.
 - Q: Why \$20? What’s special about that number?
 - City Council can do \$20 without a public vote, by State law.
 - Q: [Mark] How do I explain this tax to residents who are already dealing with inflation?
 - Residents’ primary feedback is “Do these projects and do them now.” We could do no revenue increase and get the projects done in a longer time. We could also examine other areas of the budget for money to shift, but everything else in the budget is also critical! We’re increasing support for low-income families, so it’s a balance of the impact of a higher fee in one place vs. added support elsewhere.
 - Q: [Huan] Bike lane on 7th Avenue? Kimberly told us we can’t have one ... but now I see it in the Safer Routes to School plans. It’s a contradiction.
 - I’ll have to check on that. The Safer Routes list was generated in 2019-2020, and Kimberly wasn’t part of that process at that time. The Active Transportation Plan followed the Safer Routes

planning and it focused more on bicycle infrastructure, and it was a different set of people, so there could be discrepancy there, too. And then there's the Neighborhood Safety Projects, where one could fund and implement improvements separately from the other budgets.

- Q: [Leo] "Fee" makes me think of regressive tax. \$20 is small for me but it's grocery money for others. Is there an accommodation for low-income residents?
 - Yes, it's regressive, as is nearly every other tax in Washington. Council has asked us to look into a rebate or exemption method, because the state licensing bodies will not do an income-testing method. We're looking into some way for people to apply for a rebate without a complicated stack of paperwork.
- Q: [Launa] Why is it so hard to get crossing flags? Cheap and quick improvement. (And can we use bag tax to fund things?)
 - No, bag tax is managed by the state. As for flags: We don't put them everywhere, because there are engineering, safety, and social criteria for where we put them—generally not at multi-lane crossings. Recommend putting it on your Neighborhood Safety Projects list.
- Q: [Ken] We need to do more with the money we already have, rather than borrow for decades. Surely there's another place in the budget where we could find that money.
 - It's a fair and appropriate comment. Among the pressure on the budget: \$4.5M human services, salary increases and bonuses for police hires, inflation. As an example, giving existing employees a 1% raise, to stay competitive and retain staff, would cost \$650K. Sidewalks cost 35% more than they did five years ago. Yes, we could prioritize Safer Routes over other things, but this is a specific and focused use of new money and Council will decide if it's an appropriate addition.
- Business license fee increase
 - Proposing increasing from \$105 to \$130 per employee, which is less than if we adjusted for inflation since the \$105 was set in 2017
 - Also raising the lower exemption limit from \$12K to \$20K/year
 - Funds go to street maintenance. Asphalt cost is up 40%. We've lost revenue from gas taxes because people are traveling less.

8:12pm Police Command Staff Q&A

- Lt. Knafla presenting
- Hiring challenge
 - Lateral hiring is the most difficult
 - We're at 107 out of 108 capacity, though 11 are in some form of training right now (often up to a year of training and onboarding)
 - Some specialty positions open, which are filled by veteran officers rather than new hires

- Etching event for catalytic converters
 - Held one event at Lake Washington Technical College
 - Coordinated by the police ProAct unit
- Gun buyback program
 - Several hundred weapons destroyed
- Dashboards available now
 - [Crime](#) (calls for service, arrests, offenses)
 - [Use of force](#)
- Q: [Leo] Lots of homeless activity in Juanita near the freeway, with breached chain-link fences. The relationship between WSDOT and KPD seems to not be addressing the problem.
 - Officers try to build rapport and relationships first; not start with enforcement
 - Community responders (mental health professionals) get involved
 - It's hard for us to monitor those areas. We do actually have a good relationship with WSDOT and pass information back and forth.
 - [Leo] The encampment near the southbound offramp was cleared a month ago and it's already back. I'd like to see it taken more seriously. I'm concerned about lack of bathrooms and sanitation, and people setting fires and throwing things onto the freeway.
 - Our officers have made contact with the people at that location. Then we'll try to connect them with resources.
- Q: [Huan] What is the "school zone" category for service calls?
 - Any response that involves schools or students.
- Body cameras
 - Requires additional personnel to manage the data, including redactions (time spent removing images, such as faces of children)
 - You'll see cameras on officers beginning January 2023
 - Q: [John T.] Have you seen any aversion from officers or applicants to working with body cameras?
 - No. Our officers appreciate them. Valuable for evidence.
- Community responders
 - Can ride with officers or in their own vehicles
 - Best application of resources, access to supportive services and tools
- Q: [Luna] What can we do to improve our home safety? Recent story of a home invasion.
 - The best actions are to get to know your neighbors and keep an eye out for suspicious things. If you see a car you don't recognize that looks suspicious, make a call. Ring cameras and motion lights are great, but people are the most important part. Lock your doors.
- Q: Do some areas of the city get faster responses than others?
 - Our officers tend to be in the field all the time; they don't hang out at the station. Average response time is under three minutes.

8:35pm Proposed gas leaf blower ban

- Karen Story presenting

- Member of *Quiet Clean Kirkland* organization
- City Council considering a ban on gas-powered leaf blowers
 - More than 100 cities have such a ban
 - Health, social justice, and climate change
 - 2-stroke equipment in California produce more pollution than all vehicles combined
 - Disproportionate effect on maintenance workers and children
 - Commercial battery-powered blowers now rival the power of gas blowers
- If you think this issue is worthy of further discussion or action by KAN, please let Bill know
- Consider submitting a letter of support to City Council, as Highlands has done
- If you have a maintenance service, consider asking them not to use a blower, or to use your own electric blower

8:50pm Pedestrian closure of Park Lane West

- Sheila Cloney presenting
- Council considered closure in 2021
 - Decided to close it only on summer evenings after 6pm
 - Ended in early October
- Survey of businesses done by a business owner
 - Conclusion: restaurants did not like the closure
 - 11 want to end all closures
 - 20 want to continue the summer closures
 - 2 had no comment
 - 0 advocated for full closure
- Consultant
 - Council hired a consultant for \$50K
 - Evaluating three options: full closure, partial closure, no action
- Businesses are confused and exhausted
 - Has there been any scientific survey to show public support for any closure?
 - What does closure achieve?
 - Loss of disabled parking and pickup options
 - Resources could be better spent on other issues
- Shared and common interests for Park Lane
 - Where is this coming from? Who wants it?
 - Has there been any sort of survey?
- Discussion
 - [Leo] You're asking where interest is coming from. What is your interest in the matter?
 - I'm a small business consultant. Some of the business owners asked me because I have partial ownership of an Edmonds shop, and Edmonds tried the same thing and it has stopped.
 - [Leo] My opinion: The experience is fantastic in settings like this in other cities. You can walk around with kids, can park lots of bicycles, not breathe car exhaust.

- [Karen] At the 2017 “[For the Love of Kirkland](#)” event, one of the top priorities that came out was to close Park Lane. Long before that, when the city first designed Park Lane, it wasn’t meant to be an open road. Council caved to business pressure and designated it as a “flexible street” that could be closed. (See the [Park Lane history website](#).)
 - [Sheila] Park Lane started as “Commercial Avenue” and has always been a road.
 - [Karen] Until the redesign about 12 years ago.
 - [Sheila] The road was redesigned because of flooding; the money was spent on water improvements, including bioswales. The electric grid doesn’t support the lighting of a festival street, there’s no water source for public amenities, the road is sinking, and the city has not designated funds for improvements.
- [Scott] Have the Kirkland Downtown Association and business owners met with Council members? Seems odd that they say they don’t know where support for it is coming from.
 - It seems to be coming from Councilmember Falcone. One of the big topics is reducing combustible engine exhaust. I don’t think it’s reasonable to think that cars are going to go away.
- [Huan] Can restaurants benefit from the expanded space available from closure? The people of Kirkland like the small-town feel and a pedestrian street supports that.
 - It’s very expensive to expand your alcohol serving footprint. If the closure were good for business, you wouldn’t be hearing any pushback on it from the businesses.
- [Christina, who owns a business next to Cactus] NONE of the businesses support closure of Park Lane. I personally went to every business. While there is parking available in the wider area, when it rains, the street goes dead. You’ll see more vagrants and more homelessness. And yes, there’s revenue loss; it kills business. People who want to walk the street already do walk the street. Spending money to shut down businesses—because we really will lose businesses if they close Park Lane—is infuriating.
- [Tina Moody, owner of a Park Lane business] We did a survey of revenue impact. Businesses lost 50% of their sales during partial closures. We filled out spreadsheets and sent them to the city, and no one talks about that. We rely on people being able to park in front of the store. When these businesses close, the restaurants will follow. I don’t see these people [who are supporting closure] down here when it rains, supporting the businesses. No one seems to be taking the danger of business failure seriously. It’s not a time to play around with businesses.

9:20pm 85th St. Station Area Plan working group

- Liz Hunt presenting
- Phase 1 has been approved
 - High and dense commercial buildings near I-405
- Phase 2 underway now

- Ambitious re-design of six areas (overlying existing neighborhoods)

Spread the Word!

- SAP Open House
 - Mon Oct 24th, 1:00–5:00 PM, City Hall
 - Staff will be there
 - View information about the SAP and draft FBC
 - Go learn and ask questions!
- SAP Phase 2 FBC Presentation and Q&A
 - Mon Oct 24th, City Hall, 6:00-8:00 PM
 - In person, virtual, and recorded
- Planning Commission SAP Phase 2 mtgs
 - Thurs Oct 13th and Thurs Oct 27th
- Creating transit-oriented development, walkable neighborhoods, etc.
- The new form-based code (FBC) zoning will provide detailed definitions of the characteristics of development in a zone (massing, setbacks, active storefronts, street designs, etc.). There is some flexibility; the zoning encourages certain features but does not guarantee them. City is considering how prescriptive the FBC should be for the desired results.
- New codes (as “form-based code”) are in process, so look into it now to see the coming impact. There’s a lot of potential good, but the devil’s in the details
- **Come to the open house, Planning Commission, and Council events**
 - Planning Commission tomorrow and again on the 27th

9:24pm Juanita public pathway

- Doug Rough presenting
- Rescheduled to next KAN meeting; too late and half the audience has left

9:25pm Neighborhood Services updates

- Don Robinson presenting
- Neighborhood Safety Projects
 - Too complicated to try to play catch-up with the last cycle
 - Instead: Doing a “super-sized” budget and scope for the coming cycle
 - Bringing the budget forward from the last cycle
 - **Take a breather and go back to considering what projects your neighborhood would like to propose, to prepare for the coming cycle**
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9:30pm Closing

- Adjourned at 9:30pm
- Next meeting: November 9, 2022