

Q&A Regarding the North Area Planning Issues

Questions:

1. What proposals have been received by the City from the property owners and what is their request from the City?

The representatives from Bellevue North who owns the majority of the property in the north part of the City's planning area have not submitted any plans or official requests to the City as of today. Staff has been in discussions with them regarding the potential for a long range Specific Plan for their property. Discussions have predominantly focused on the area where the planning would occur, the process and scope of the work which would be undertaken, reimbursement of costs incurred by the City to be paid by the applicant and the need for extensive public engagement, environmental review and planning.

Staff has specifically told Bellevue North that any specific plan must include a planning process which includes all land both inside the City Limits and within the current planning area which are outside the limits which would need to be annexed. We asked Bellevue North to work with the remaining property owners (there are three others) to participate in the planning effort, which they have said they have done. The reason for including the remaining properties is so the final plan will have complete continuity for the entire area.

[HERE](#) is a copy of the Draft Proposal sent to the City in January by Bellevue North and published recently. [HERE](#) is a copy of the City's response in March to our discussions.

2. What land are we talking about, how much is in the current City limits, how much is in the planning area, how much land would be annexed?

A simple geographic reference and roughly speaking it is for the properties located just north of Niemann Street and Moody Slough (not including those properties on Niemann). Bellevue North owns 183 acres which are currently within the City limits, 210 acres which are within the City's planning area but not in the City limits (the acreage which would need to be annexed) for a total of 393 acres. There are approximately 130 acres owned by other property owners which are in the planning area but not in the limits which are owned by others (and would need to be annexed at a later time). In conversations with Bellevue North, they have discussed the idea of possibly expanding the City's planning area by approximately 270 acres on additional land they own north of the City's General Plan area. They have also suggested they are interested in establishing a 480 acre agricultural mitigation area just north of the City.

The numbers included here are directly from the Bellevue North. Click [HERE](#) to see their draft proposal which has the maps of the areas in question.

3. Has the City Staff and City Council been meeting with the north area property owners and what has been the context of those conversations?

Yes. Over the years, we have met with representatives of Bellevue North, their owner Greg Hostetler, their engineers and environmental consultants on numerous occasions regarding multiple topics including flood control and drainage, Moody Slough, the prospect of creating public access for bike and

walking trails, water, wastewater re-use, environmental projects, economic development opportunities and planning. In total (both in and out of the City) they own literally thousands of acres and are a major land concern so without question, Staff talks with them.

As Staff discussions with Bellevue North moved toward the potential for a request coming to the City, their representative, Jeff Roberts requested to meet with the City Council Members in February for an opportunity to introduce himself, talk about the prospects of a specific planning process and the overall process for public engagement, plan development and environmental review. The Council Members met individually (so as to avoid a violation of the Brown Act) with Mr. Roberts, he brought in some large photo's of the properties and talked about the concept of the specific plan, possible expansion of the planning area and agricultural mitigation area. Staff (me) sat in on each meeting to assure continuity of information delivered to the Council and to answer any questions or provide clarification on issues which might arise, especially on process. One City Council Member met with Mr. Roberts on a second occasion and Staff participated in that meeting also.

In the past, Mr Roberts has inquired about the prospect of submitting a subdivision map for the 183 acres already in the City limits for development (which they can do at any time). Staff has suggested that a more comprehensive planning effort, such as a specific plan would be more beneficial to the City. The logic behind this position is that a broader planning area gives greater opportunities for a cohesive long term outcomes which would benefit the City.

As part of the Economic Development Advisory Committee Meetings (EDAC in 2018), Jeff Roberts representing the property owner came in as a guest speaker to answer questions regarding potential economic development opportunities on their property. The EDAC has included extensive [recommendations](#) on land use and flood control in their report. Because many recommendations were specific to Bellevue North land, Staff provided drafts of the report to Mr. Roberts so their group would not be surprised or unaware of the discussions. As Mr. Roberts was considering submitting a planning request, Staff repeatedly suggested that they wait to allow public discussions to occur (through the Strategic Planning Workshops) so they could hear public input outside of their request before submitting and starting another process.

As an aside, Staff meets constantly with property owners, businesses and prospective property owners about land use. At the City of Winters, we work to maintain optimum transparency and customer service for people who own property, businesses or people who are looking to invest in the City. Its simply what we do both big and small! The biggest complaint about government is people's inability to "get answers" so we work to keep an open door and be accessible.

4. Did the City Manager provide Bellevue with advanced versions of the Economic Development Advisory Committee Report?

Yes. Mr. Roberts was a guest speaker before the Committee in September and throughout the process there was much discussion about the Bellevue North Property which encompasses most of the north area of the General Plan and is where the vast majority of property for economic development exists. As recommendations and ideas emerged from a land use perspective, Mr Roberts was provided a draft copy and then the final copy (on the Friday before the Monday release of the report). Early release of the report was sent to almost 60 people.

When the City discusses and does planning regarding private property, it is essential to keep the affected property owners both informed and engaged in the process. In this case, the EDAC discussed some zoning issues related to expansion of industrial and commercial areas, planning to address flood control and key issues related to the Bellevue North Property. It only makes sense to keep the property owner in the loop when we are talking about their property versus getting the notice second hand. We did this extensively in regards to the Downtown Master Plan, Form Based Code and the Parking Master Plan. In many cases, we invited the property owners to be at the table during these discussions.

5. Has a request for proposal (RFP) been released for planning firms to assist the property owners in the development of a specific plan?

The City Staff is unaware of any RFP by Bellevue North for planning services. We have told them and they have acknowledged that they want to bring a quality planning organization as part of any application to work with the City on such a project, so it would not be out of the ordinary for them to look to hire someone. This is no different than a property owner who hires an architect to help them design a home. In this case, Bellvue North will have a large group of planners, engineers, environmental consultants, etc within their team and doing an RFP is how you get proposals.

6. Has the City entered into a reimbursement agreement with the developer to cover costs to pay the City for services associated with working with the developer?

Yes. Before considering or working on any submittal by Bellvue North (or any applicant), the City has provided our standard form "reimbursement agreement" which provides for the applicant to cover all City costs in the consideration of their application. In this case, we requested a \$20,000 deposit and they have executed and sent the agreement it back. We do this for all projects to insure that the City costs are covered.

As a perspective, the City hires and pays all consultants associated with processing an application by any developer. This includes the project manager, environmental consultants, engineers, traffic engineers, financial consultants, etc as well as City Staff. The City team works independently of the applicant, reporting only to the City and not the applicant. This is done to avoid any conflicts. It is through the reimbursement agreement that the City receives the funds to pay the consultants.

7. Has the City been in contact with the Yolo Local Agency Formation Commission regarding annexation information?

Yes. LAFCO is the agency responsible for all annexations and it is logical to contact them on process and law. Our discussions are also a courtesy to keep them in the loop that something might be on the horizon. We have been talking with them about annexation issues for probably the past 5 years!

8. When will the City be moving forward on an update of its General Plan, doing a General Plan "Refresh" or additional planning work?

General Plans are extremely expensive and the City still owes almost \$400,000 from the 1992 plan. Timing on this depends on whether a planning application is submitted by Bellevue North which would essentially do a comprehensive update on all of our planning documents and in essence, an updated General Plan. The City has received a \$100,000 grant towards a "refresh" of our documents to make

them more user friendly and in line with State goals for how planning documents look. A refresh would most likely occur in our 2019-20 Fiscal Year.

9. Why was there not more publicity about the discussions with Bellevue North, a specific planning process and the prospect of annexation?

A key aspect of what the City of Winters does involves property, land use and economic development. Most cities have a “planning” department (with sometimes extensive staffing) which exclusively works on land planning, discussions with property owners (large and small) as well as looking forward in implementing a city’s general plan. Many cities have “economic development” departments which proactively work to attract business investment and see community properties developed. It is an important part of creating sustainability for a community, generating jobs and supporting the local economy.

In the case of Bellevue North, neither the scope or process is anywhere finalized to even tell people about it, even today. Most information which is out is either a “draft” or pure speculation on what may or may not occur.

We live in an age where information can be widely broadcast in multiple formats almost instantaneously. Making sure that information is accurate is critical from the City standpoint and the premature release of information which is not 100% accurate is not a benefit to anyone. For years in the City Manager’s Friday Update, we have indicated that we were in discussions with Bellevue North on planning issues to let folks know discussions were occurring. The planning process, proposals and City response were pending an actual submittal which has not yet happened. City staff anticipated something happening in either 2016 or 17 which did not occur. Two years down the road, there is still nothing official.

Bellevue North and Hostetler Ranches have owned the property for in excess of five years and done extensive work, primarily farming, on the property. We have had numerous discussions with them on a litany of issues including water, wastewater, flood, environmental and land use. The relationship between the City and the Bellevue North team has always been extremely professional and cordial. That is how business is done and is a key expectation of how the City of Winters works with any and all property owners and investors coming to our town.

10. Where can I get more information on the North Area Planning subject or the Economic Report?

The City of Winters has a website by clicking [HERE](#) for North Area information.

For complete information on the Economic Development Advisory Committee, click [HERE](#).

You can contact john.donlevy@cityofwinters.org with any additional questions.