



December 10, 2025 Ratepayer Advisory Board (RAB) Meeting Minutes - Taken by Sophie

Date: December 10, 2025

Location: In-Person Meeting

Present (in person):

Tom Malone, CKM Associates
John Marasco, Security Properties
Mike Kahrs, Resident
Barry Blanton, Greenfire Campus, Commons at Ballard
Legh Burns, re-soul
Gretchen Swanson, Chase Bank
Christine Ackerman, Hjarta Condominium
Paul Osher, Rachel's Bagels & Burritos

Absent:

Scott Koppelman, AMLI Mark24
Stephanie Carrillo, Equity Residential
Randy Brinker, Sweet Mickey's, Resident
Max Genereaux, Hattie's Hat
Michelle Rosenthal, Veris Law Group
Brian Trickel, Providence Swedish

Present (on Zoom):

Philip Lloyd, Seattle CFO
Kaitlin Huffman, Seattle CFO
Kurt Utterback, Regency Centers - Ballard Blocks
Mark Craig, Henbart

Observers/Presenters:

Mike Stewart, Ballard Alliance
Wren Wilson, Ballard Alliance
Sophie Iannone, Ballard Alliance
Wyatt Hoffman, Ballard Alliance
Will Cadra, Ballard Alliance

1. Welcome and Introductions (Tom Malone)

A meeting of the Ratepayer Advisory Board was called to order at 3:04 pm on December 10, 2025.

In Max Genereaux's absence, proxy was given to Legh Burns.

Proxy for Randy Brinker was given to Tom Malone.

2. Public Comment

No public comment.

3. Finance Report and Minutes Approval (Phil Lloyd, Kaitlin Huffman, Mike Stewart)

Phil Lloyd presented the finance report through November 2025. Annual spending conformed to projections, with 93.1% of the budget spent at 95% of the way through the year as of December 10th. Spending tracked slightly over in Marketing and Advocacy/Urban Design categories, and slightly under for Public Safety.

Kaitlin Huffmann explained that several grants were used to offset costs associated with public safety, which led to lower spending in that category from assessment funds.

Mike Stewart attributed higher spend in the Marketing category to the Visit Ballard brand and website refresh. Additionally, around \$18,000 in excess funds from the Safety Coordinator position were used to offset the cost of private security. Stewart expected spending to remain within the budget through the end of the year, adding that revenue from various fundraising events was able to reimburse spending.

Tom Malone commented that 2025 spending informed proposed budget changes for 2026.

Mike Kahrs asked about revenue generated from SeafoodFest.

Mike Stewart explained that several different profit centers existed within Ballard Music & SeafoodFest, and earnings for each varied by year. For 2025, revenue projections were hit, though expenses were slightly higher than previous years. Stewart emphasized that in addition to benefiting Ballard Alliance programs, BMSF added value as a celebrated community tradition.

4. Approve Meeting Minutes

Barry Blanton moved to approve the September 2025 meeting minutes.

Gretchen seconded.

All in favor, motion passed.

5. Alliance Team Updates

Events

Will Cadra provided an update on Ballard Alliance Events. Several successful events took place in Q4 of 2025, including The Tomte Trail Passport program, Harvest Food Drive, Ballard Gives, and Ballard Holiday Fest. Additional promotions took place for Small Business Saturday through Visit Ballard and the Ballard Bulletin, and it was reported to be a busy day for businesses.

Adjustments were made to the 2025 Ballard Holiday Fest to incorporate an evening vendor market. A Small Sparks grant was secured for the event, which closed the street from 2pm to 8pm and featured local vendors including the Ballard Cut, Matador, Small Market and Thread Hunter. Buskers, live fire pits, games and s'mores were also components of the event in addition to the traditional Holiday Fest setup at Marvin's Garden Park. Attendance for the event far exceeded expectations and was steady throughout the evening. Feedback from participating vendors was positive.

Mike emphasized the importance of this event to the community.

Wren Wilson provided a brief update on ArtWalk, adding that the event took place 11 months out of the year and included over 20 participating businesses.

Clean & Safe

Wyatt Hoffman provided Clean and Safe programmatic updates and shared a graphic comparing daily averages of cleaning statistics from Q4 2024 and Q4 2025.

The number of leaf bags removed increased due to smaller bag sizes this year. An average of 1,000 pounds of leaves were removed per workday during the quarter, nearing a ton at peak periods in October and November. A community cleanup event resulted in the removal of 6,800 additional pounds of leaves (100 bags). Hoffman added that the Alliance utilized the adopt-a-street program to provide materials for leaf cleanup efforts.

Mike Stewart added that these efforts provide a strong opportunity for public engagement, noting frequent community interest in volunteer opportunities.

Hoffman shared Q4 statistics for the Ambassador Program, noting that reported numbers were low and represented minimums due to factors such as staff turnover, individual reporting tendencies, and duplicative reporting. There was one instance of Narcan administered, and seven disturbances addressed.

Mike Kahrs asked who was responsible for de-escalation; Hoffman clarified that these statistics reflected ambassador's activity.

Tom Malone recounted a successful example of the Alliance coordinating with City partners to address frequent offenders and noted that no-contact orders have been effective.

Chris Ackerman recounted a negative experience with Praetorian Security.

Advocacy and Engagement

Mike Stewart provided an update on relationship building with new City Council and mayoral leadership. The Alliance had a pre-existing relationship with staff from Mayor Wilson's transitional team, as well as with Deputy Mayor Brian Surratt. Stewart reported attending a meeting with Mayor Wilson, her staff, and other BIAs and neighborhood organizations, where the Alliance shared information about its work and neighborhood priorities. Stewart expressed optimism about the working relationship, noting the Mayor's attention to detail and appreciation for the expertise of BIAs.

Ongoing relationship building was anticipated through 2026 with the City Council, City Attorney, and Mayor's Office. The Alliance successfully advocated for \$290,000 in City funding for homeless outreach, including a dedicated REACH outreach worker assigned to Ballard and a shared HOST worker focused on individuals with severe substance use or mental illness. Remaining funds were designated to support beautification efforts.

The Alliance continued to consult Natalie Quick (Public Affairs) regarding the Burke-Gilman Trail and was working to develop a plan for the north side of Shilshole that addressed parking challenges by converting parallel parking to back-in only. Additional options for rezoning variances to create parking were being explored. Initial response from SDOT was lukewarm, and a meeting with Councilmember Dan Strauss was scheduled for January 7. The Alliance also planned to meet with Deputy Mayor Surratt.

Stewart shared that the Seattle Police Department had assigned two officers exclusively to Ballard beat patrols, and a meeting was being arranged to meet the officers.

Emerging advocacy priorities for 2026 included Sound Transit, the Comprehensive Plan, and SDOT projects.

Public Realm

Wren Wilson provided the Public Realm update, beginning with a recap of the Alliance Planter Program. Planters were installed from May through November, with 26 planters and one sponsor per planter. Approximately 50 volunteer hours supported maintenance efforts. The program was expected to maintain its current scale in 2026, with a focus on improving consistency in watering and upkeep.

Holiday lighting included 273 trees, as well as installations at the Marvin's Garden bell tower and additional decorative elements such as spheres and snowflakes. The Alliance was working with the vendor to address maintenance issues.

Wren Wilson submitted an Arts in the Park grant application through the Office of Arts and Culture to support live music at Marvin's Garden and enhance community events.

Wilson also continued to outreach partners to address graffiti, including on a King County-owned parcel that had experienced repeated tagging. A mural was being considered for this site.

Wilson was also exploring a matching fund grant opportunity for a larger mural initiative, tentatively titled “Muralfest,” which could cover 75% of project costs.

Community Engagement

Wren Wilson provided an update on the Residential Engagement Meeting program, noting that an insurance broker attended the October meeting to discuss coverage considerations for multifamily properties.

Wilson also provided a brief recap of volunteer participation during the fall leaf cleanup.

Sophie Iannone shared an update on the Breakfast in Ballard program. Six events took place in 2025, and events continued to be well attended. Planning for 2026 included a presentation from Port of Seattle Commissioner Ryan Calkins, and City Attorney Erika Evans.

Economic Development

Sophie Iannone provided Economic Development programmatic updates.

The Alliance continued to provide business support efforts, including hosting guest speakers and trainings at monthly Ballard Merchant and Restaurant Group meetings. Iannone noted that recruiting guest speakers from business support organizations would continue to be an ongoing focus for 2026.

Iannone provided a recap of the Retail Study program in partnership with the Seattle Office of Economic Development. The Alliance was awaiting review of the final deliverable and would participate in trainings in 2026.

Iannone provided an overview of commercial space tracking numbers through Q4 and presented a breakdown of business types in the neighborhood by category. 35 new ground floor businesses opened in 2025, and the neighborhood maintained a low vacancy rate of 5.9%. Iannone also shared statistics on business longevity for retail and restaurants, noting that the neighborhood had nearly 60 ground floor businesses that were at least 10 years old, and 16 businesses that had been operating for over 30 years.

The Small Market program saw continued success through Q4. Iannone noted that sales increased significantly in November and December, which she attributed to increased holiday shopping traffic and Small Market’s presence at several neighborhood events and pop-up markets.

Iannone presented data on neighborhood visitation through 2025. An estimated 5.6 million visitors were projected by the end of the year, an increase from 2024 levels (5.4M), but still below 2019 levels (6.6M).

Marketing & Promotions

Mike Stewart presented the Marketing and Promotions updates in place of Anndrea Dohring, Senior Marketing Manager. The Visit Ballard website was refreshed in 2025 and saw a peak in new users in Q4, representing a significant increase compared to Q4 2024.

Mike Stewart provided an overview of marketing efforts targeting cruise audiences. Utilizing a grant through the Port of Seattle, the Alliance used Datafy to generate targeted advertisements for cruise audiences. The project generated 6,124 trips to Ballard and approximately \$629,180 in visitor spending. The Port's Economic Development leadership expressed interest in using Ballard as a pilot and continuing funding for an additional two years. The campaign concluded on September 30, and there was interest in leveraging similar strategies for FIFA-related opportunities.

6. Review 2026 Work Plan and Budget

Mike Stewart led a review of the 2026 work plan and budget. As the City CPI had not yet been released by the Bureau of Labor Statistics, a 3.0% increase was used to project revenue.

Stewart provided an overview of program areas, including Clean and Vibrant Environment, Public Safety, Business Development and Retention, Marketing and Promotions, Advocacy, and Urban Design and Transportation. He noted that program areas will remain largely consistent with the prior year, with minor updates.

Paul Osher asked about small adjustments within the budget. Stewart clarified that these changes reflect program costs and staff time allocations.

Barry Blanton motioned to approve the work plan and budget.

Lekh Burns Seconded.

All in favor, motion passed.

7. Confirm Program Manager for 2026

Tom motioned to approve Ballard Alliance as the program manager for the 2026 Ballard Improvement Area.

Mike Kahrs and Barry Blanton Seconded.

All in favor, motioned passed.

8. Confirm New Member Terms

Chris Ackerman held proxy for Gretchen Swanson, who left the meeting.

Mike Stewart provided a summary of board members up for a 3-year term approval, including Max Genereaux, Kurt Utterback, Michelle Rosenthal, and Randy Brinker.

Chris Ackerman moved to approve the board.

Barry Blanton seconded.

All in favor, motion passed.

9. New Business

No new business.

Meeting Adjourned at 4:45 pm.