

BELLEVUE ARTS COMMISSION
REGULAR MEETING
MINUTES

September 6, 2016
4:30 p.m.

Bellevue City Hall
Room 1E -109

COMMISSIONERS PRESENT: Commissioners, Jackson, Lau Hui, Lewis, Madan, Malkin, Wolfteich

COMMISSIONERS ABSENT: Chair Manfredi

STAFF PRESENT: Joshua Heim, Scott MacDonald, Department of Planning and Community Development

OTHERS PRESENT: Kurt Kiefer, Barbara Luecke, Sound Transit; Celeste Cooning, 112th Avenue SE co
rridor artist; Louie Gong, 120th/Spring District station artist

RECORDING SECRETARY: Gerry Lindsay

I. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 6:33 p.m. by Commissioner Malkin who presided. All Commissioners were present with the exception of Commissioner Madan, who arrived at 4:36 p.m.; Commissioner Wolfteich, who arrived at 4:37 p.m.; and Chair Manfredi, who was excused.

2. APPROVAL OF AGENDA AND MINUTES

A. Approval of Agenda

Motion to approve the agenda was made by Commissioner Jackson. Second was by Commissioner Lewis and the motion carried unanimously.

B. Approval of Minutes

Commissioner Lewis noted that she had not been present for the meeting and should be shown as such in the minutes.

Commissioner Jackson called attention to the fifth paragraph on page 5 and noted that her statement "...the request from the Lake Washington Symphony for \$10,000 covers far more than a single concert in Bellevue..." was made while thinking of venue costs. Lake Washington Symphony Orchestra has personnel costs. She proposed simply striking the paragraph and there was agreement to do so.

Motion to approve the August 16, 2016, minutes as amended was made by Commissioner Jackson. Second was by Commissioner Madan and the motion carried without dissent; Commissioners Hui and Lewis abstained from voting.

3. ORAL COMMUNICATIONS – None

4. ACTION ITEMS AND DISCUSSION ITEMS

A. Sound Transit Public Art Update

Sound Transit project manager Kurt Kiefer shared with the Commission a map indicating Sound Transit's current light rail that runs from SeaTac airport to the University of Washington, the Northgate section that is under construction, and the planned East Link project. He noted that by the time East Link is completed, four additional stations will have been built for the line leading up to Lynnwood. A link to Federal Way is also being planned.

The East Link line will run from Redmond's transit/technology station to the Overlake Village station, then to the 130th station in Bellevue's arts district, then on to the 120th station in the Spring District, the Wilburton station by the hospital, the Downtown station adjacent to City Hall, the East Main station on 112th Avenue SE, the South Bellevue station at the South Bellevue park and ride, then on to downtown Mercer Island and over the floating bridge to the Judkins Park station and the International District station in Seattle.

Mr. Kiefer noted that as the train goes from the South Bellevue station to the East Main station, it will run along the edge of Mercer Slough and along the east side of 112th Avenue SE before crossing over and running along 108th Avenue SE. Artist Celeste Cooning was selected to focus on the fence along the 112th Avenue SE corridor that will separate pedestrians and bicycles from the rail leading to the South Main station. The fence will be designed to largely disappear into the landscape, but the segment is long enough to develop a work of art.

Ms. Cooning shared with the Commissioners photos of some of her works. She said she is noted for her handcut paper installations but in the permanent realm continues to focus on ephemeral nature designs that make softer and more human connections with spaces. She said her works often capitalize on a sense of grandeur and play light and shadow against each other and incorporate texture, movement and rhythm. She said her works can be translated to multiple materials.

Ms. Cooning introduced the concept of hunt and gather for the 112th Avenue SE corridor project. She said given that the rail plans are at the 90 percent stage, her job is to zoom out, look at the bigger picture, and bring it all back to something special. It is the human condition that links the past, the present and the future, and hunting and gathering was the first successful system humans invented for themselves. She said her process is to develop a language and then to build a structure in which the language can exist. Source materials and patterns were shown to the Commissioners that evoked the current history of the East Main area and its mid-Century modern architecture. Her patterns used simple geometry to explore organic forms in overlapping patterns. Stripes were used to create a bridge through the cadence of the vertical bars in the fence line, making the fence part of the visual language.

Ms. Cooning said there are two elements to the station. One is the gate that closes off some less-than-beautiful functional utility elements on 112th Avenue SE. She shared with the Commission a mockup of what the gate could potentially look like by building off of the visual language. The other element is the fence along which the artistic elements will be spaced and grouped.

Commissioner Malkin asked how the proposed work would be kept looking clean over time. Mr. Kiefer said Sound Transit has a maintenance. Throughout the design process, a sharp eye is kept on what the maintenance needs of the work will be.

Ms. Luecke informed the Commissioners that there a single contract package will cover the segment from I-90 through South Bellevue along 112th Avenue SE. A notice to proceed is

about to be issued for the contract, which includes the South Bellevue parking garage and the elevated station at Mercer Slough.

Turning to the 120th/Spring District station, Mr. Kiefer noted that the light rail line crosses over I-405 to connect with the elevated Wilburton station before continuing north and making a turn to the east and the Spring District station. The station is unique in that it offers an excellent opportunity for two-dimensional artwork. He said Louie Gong was selected to be the artist for the station.

Mr. Gong said the station represents his first large public art project and said he was grateful for the opportunity. He said he is a member of the Nooksack tribe and practices Coast Salish art. He said his art is a reflection of who he is as a person, not an effort to make people feel good about the stereotypes they hold. Pictures of some of his work were shared with the Commissioners.

Mr. Gong said after a number of conversations with Mr. Kiefer and others on the project, he chose an approach influenced by the traditional story of everyone coming together to lift up the sky. He shared some preliminary ideas for how to use art to engage people and create opportunities for people to have fun with the art.

Mr. Kiefer explained that the station was one of the last to be designed. He said when Mr. Gong was hired, the architects were convinced to let him not only create artwork but decide what the artwork would be against. Accordingly the architects did not create a design for the tile surface for the walls. While it is still early in the process, Mr. Gong is focusing attention on the general look and feel. More details will follow in time, but his work will be focused on the trench wall, which is 380 feet long and which is where the people will be.

Commissioner Jackson said from a historical perspective she would like to see patterns used that are associated with local and Northwest native tribes. Mr. Gong said the patterns he uses are familiar to everyone, though they can probably be traced back to the origin of the Indian sweater in the Southwest. He said his intent was to create art that will show cohesion with the rest of the design, possibly telling a story along the length of the work. He said there very little representation of Coast Salish art, particularly contemporary Coast Salish art, and the station offers a great opportunity to help tell the story of the land beneath the Spring District while championing the notion of everyone coming together to build a sustainable future for all. The color pallet will be kept simple, with some splashes of color connecting to the larger pieces.

Mr. Kiefer provided the Commissioners with an update regarding the Ball-Nogues artwork being developed for the portal wall of the Downtown station. Ball-Nogues is proposing a form that continues to be influenced by glacier shapes and movements. The work will take advantage of the cut section of structural aluminum extrusions and use it to form patterns, with glass in the holes. The colors are yet to be determined. What the artists are working through currently is understanding what is possible structurally for the complicated piece. They have worked through some large feasibility questions and are reasonably confident in moving ahead.

Commissioner Lewis asked if there will be lighting associated with the work. Mr. Kiefer said there is lighting in the substantial canopy over the west entrance. There are no good opportunities for lighting the work from east to west, but there are great opportunities from west to east.

Answering a question asked by Mr. Heim, Ms. Luecke noted that Ball-Nogues are not big colorists. They work a lot in stainless metal forms. Mr. Kiefer added that their pallet tends to

be silver to muted metallic colors. For the station itself, the architects have designed a relatively colorful environment.

B. 2016 “How Can We Help” Meeting Planning

Commissioner Jackson noted that the meeting has not been intended to be tied to the application process of the grants, rather it has a more global view. Mr. MacDonald agreed that the focus is on how the city can better assist or facilitate arts groups and artists. The meeting has not been held for the last two years. Since then, different outreach efforts have been launched and the pool from which is draw has been broadened.

Commissioner Madan asked what the outcome was from the most recent artists meeting. Mr. MacDonald said it generated a series of notes and ideas, though not all of them were put into action. The tone of the meetings has been on how the city can help in terms of fostering and facilitating collaborations.

Commissioner Malkin asked if there are resources to support the groups when they do ask for additional help, such as facilities. Mr. MacDonald said it would be valuable to catalog such requests. Groups have also called for things like a communal calendar of arts events, and help with things like accounting and advertising events. Additionally, some groups have additional space while other groups do not. By getting the various groups to collaborate, many of the issues can be addressed, and in the past it has been mentioned that the Commission could function as a facilitator.

Commissioner Jackson commented that five years ago the Commission did not have at its disposal as many outreach tools, including the website and the art walk map. It is still important to garner public input, it may not be necessary to conduct a big meeting to do so. It could be more effective to encourage individual artists to attend Commission meetings to share their comments and observations. Commissioner Lewis pointed out that the idea is to encourage an interchange among the groups, which could only happen if they are all in one place at the same time.

Mr. MacDonald said the open house format utilized by the Downtown Livability Initiative involved having different stakeholders, interest groups and the public interact in a facilitated discussion. Everyone was able to share their goals and to hear directly from the community. The open house format could be used with arts groups as well. Another option would be to conduct an open forum as part of a formal Arts Commission meeting.

Mr. Heim shared that during his tenure in Redmond opportunities were capitalized on as part of planning exercises. The events had non-traditional formats and were very well attended. Mr. MacDonald suggested that tying an artists meeting to a planning effort makes a lot of sense because there is a specific goal.

Commissioner Malkin commented that the Commission has for many years been giving out grants, but it has received little feedback with regard to how well the Commission is doing relative to furthering programs. Feedback and lessons learned would be very helpful. He said he liked the idea of engaging in a visioning process.

Commissioner Jackson said she was reticent to reopen the visioning process that was undertaken as part of updating the Cultural Compass. However, it could be continued by moving forward with the strategies phase and inviting arts groups to help brainstorm specific strategies that look out ten years. Of course the process could simply highlight issues that are already known, such as rising rents in the Spring District and the general lack of venues,

which the city can really do nothing about. If that is what the groups will focus on, there will be little value in engaging in the process.

Commissioner Malkin suggested the outcome could be profitable if the Commission were to drive the agenda as a networking opportunity aimed at making connections and identifying synergies. By bringing the groups together, the Commission could foster connections, and that would be of value.

Commissioner Jackson commented that collaborations, particularly where the performing arts are concerned, takes a long time. Collaborations should be encouraged but will also need to be nourished. Mr. MacDonald agreed but noted that it all begins with communication. He voiced support for tying the effort to developing strategies for the Cultural Compass. Commissioner Malkin agreed that would be a good place to start.

Mr. Heim said he was hearing from the Commissioners no urgency to quickly pull together such a meeting. He said he would put the issue on hold at least until the budget is approved.

5. COMMISSION QUICK BUSINESS - None

6. REPORTS

A. Commissioner's Committee and Lead Reports

Mr. Heim noted that Bellevue has been rated in the top ten underrated cities for art lovers.

B. Project Updates from Staff

Mr. Heim reported that a potential location at the Botanical Gardens has been found for *Night Bloom*. He also noted that mini City Hall in Crossroads is set to be painted on September 19, after which a gallery rail will be installed, ushering in options for changing out artworks easily.

Mr. Heim said the report analyzing the funding needs of the arts will be wrapped into the budget rollout of the Council budget at the end of September. A second study session will not be needed to address the report. He also noted that a number of things will be happening in September, including release of the Bellevue Arts Museum final report and plan for going forward, and a fundraising update for the Tateuchi Center. Accordingly, the City Manager has decided the time is not right to engage with the City Council around the Cultural Compass vision.

Mr. MacDonald reported that Artspace, which focuses on non-profit artist housing, has a wait list that includes 1000 persons for their facilities in Seattle. It is clear there is a demand for affordable artist housing in the region. Artspace first looks at the feasibility of projects in communities and once they determine a project is feasible it moves on with development, which typically takes three to five years. They then manage the projects to ensure the buildings remain affordable. He said the city's planning department is looking at hiring the organization to do an initial feasibility study. Representatives of the organization are tentatively slated to visit Bellevue the first week of November to conduct site visits and meeting with stakeholders, including members of the Arts Commission, adjacent property owners, developers, heads of foundations, community members and local and regional artists.

Commissioner Madan asked what kind of support the city would need to extend to the group. Mr. MacDonald said the organization typically likes to develop properties that are owned by cities and gifted to the organization.

7. CORRESPONDENCE, INFORMATION

A. Written Correspondence – As Noted

B. Information

i. Future Agenda Items – As Noted

ii. Committees – As Noted

8. ADJOURNMENT

Commissioner Malkin adjourned the meeting at 6:34 p.m.