

BELLEVUE ARTS COMMISSION
REGULAR MEETING
MINUTES

August 5, 2014
4:30 p.m.

Bellevue City Hall
Room 1E -109

COMMISSIONERS PRESENT: Chairperson Jackson, Commissioners Lewis, Ludeña, Malkin, Manfredi, Wolfteich

COMMISSIONERS ABSENT: None

STAFF PRESENT: Mary Pat Byrne, Scott MacDonald, Department of Planning and Community Development

OTHERS PRESENT: None

RECORDING SECRETARY: Gerry Lindsay

1. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 4:33 p.m. by Chairperson Jackson who presided. All Commissioners were present.

2. INTRODUCTIONS OF NEW COMMISSIONERS

Commissioner Carl Wolfteich introduced himself as a relatively new resident of Bellevue, having moved to the area from Boston. He said his background is in science and writing. He said he has always had a connection with the arts and wants to be involved in their development in Bellevue.

Commissioner Becky Lewis said she has lived in Bellevue for 17 years but originally came from Massachusetts. She said her background is in political organizing. The child of two musicians, she said music and art have always been a part of her life.

3. APPROVAL OF AGENDA AND MINUTES

A. Approval of Agenda

A motion to approve the agenda was made by Commissioner Lewis. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Manfredi and it carried unanimously.

B. Approval of Minutes

A motion to approve the June 3, 2014 minutes as submitted was made by Commissioner Malkin. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Manfredi and it carried unanimously.

4. ORAL COMMUNICATIONS – None

5. ACTION ITEMS AND DISCUSSION ITEMS

A. Bellwether 2014: Connect

- i. Outreach Update
- ii. Next Steps

Arts Specialist Mary Pat Byrne said the goals for the exhibition include artistic quality, great public outreach, and strong partnerships. She said those goals have each been reached with this year's exhibition.

Chair Jackson said opening night was wonderful. There was a good turnout of artists and they seemed very engaged. The music was excellent. Those who attended mingled, made connections, and talked about art. The food was good as well.

Ms. Byrne said one thing that seems different is the greater number of people viewing the art each day in the City Hall concourse than in the past. The same is true for the installations in the park where people can be seen viewing the works and talking about them. Overall, public involvement has been more pronounced this year than in the past.

Arts Program Assistant Scott MacDonald gave an overview of promotion efforts for Bellwether. He said Tanja Baumann, a professional public relations and marketing expert, was hired to support staff efforts promoting the exhibition. Ms. Baumann's background of working with the Bellevue Arts Museum and her connections with local arts groups and local media proved to be valuable. With her guidance and help there was more press coverage for the show than in years past, including a review by an art critic in the *Seattle Times* that was generally positive. Paid advertising covered a range of publications, online, print, and on air. Thanks to coaching from Commissioner Ludeña, staff posted frequently to Facebook and weekly post boosts were made as well. As a result, the number of "friends" has significantly increased as well as the reach of the posts.

Commissioner Ludeña commended staff on the great job done to promote the exhibition. He said he has seen advertisements for it everywhere in magazines and newspapers, and the Facebook page was very well done.

Mr. MacDonald said an mobile app called STQRY was used. People can scan the QR codes on signs for each art work to learn more about the works and the artists. It also allows people to view the exhibition remotely and includes gps map showing the location of each artwork. The data appears in the language programmed into the phone used to scan the codes. The app also generates reports on metrics such as usage, gender and age of users.

Ms. Byrne said past exhibitions have involved the use of Guide By Cell. STQRY is drawing more visits and is much more affordable.

Mr. MacDonald said the Neighborhood Outreach Program is promoting tours of the exhibition to neighborhood residents. The tours were first offered during the last exhibition and some eight tours were given. For the current exhibition, there have already been six tours given and more are scheduled. Ms. Byrne said she and Mr. MacDonald have served as the tour guides.

Mr. MacDonald said that when Ms. Baumann's contract finished in July she made some recommendations. One is to greatly increase the budget for paid advertising, at least doubling it.

Answering a question asked by Commissioner Malkin, Ms. Byrne said the number of entries received is always unpredictable; one year there may be too few and another year there are almost too many. Getting enough entries for the outdoor venues is always a challenge. During the next iteration of the exhibition, staff will take a closer look at how it reaches out for entries to ensure there will be more than enough. She went on to explain that in 2012 there were twelve large works strong enough to be chosen for the Downtown Park. This year, however, there weren't enough outdoor works to populate the park. The solution this year was to allow the jurors to invite artists to show work in the Park. Five additional artists were chosen as a result of this direct selection and all but one decided to make something new for the show. While this is exciting for the exhibition, it complicated the timeline and cost more money. Since the artists were invited, staff wanted to make sure that at least their costs were covered. As a result, there are some highly intriguing works in the Downtown Park this year. Some thought needs to be given on how this might be better integrated into the exhibition in the future if it is decided to try this method again.

B. Cultural Demographic Survey Update

Ms. Byrne explained that the cultural demographic survey was started well over a year ago as a way of reaching out to the diverse artists known to be living and working in Bellevue and with whom the Commission had not yet come in contact. The survey is being conducted in partnership with the Parks & Community Services Department. An online survey was launched in several languages, notices were physically posted on bulletin boards around town, and focus groups were conducted by getting known artists to contact artists they knew. While contact was made with fewer people than hoped, some excellent outcomes have flowed from the process. Commissioner Ludeña participated in a focus group and from that contact he was encouraged to apply to become a Commissioner. The number of artists representing diverse cultures applying for special projects has increased significantly; where previously about a third of the special projects applications were from diverse organizations, during the most recent application period the total number of applications increased and more than half of them were from diverse cultures.

Ms. Byrne called attention to page 30 of the packet and the early feedback from the survey. She noted that while some of the comments relate to issues faced by artists from all backgrounds, others in fact relate specifically to people of different cultures on the Eastside.

In Seattle there are long-established networks of people from various cultures, but an equivalent does not exist on the Eastside. While there are foreign-language schools and human service agencies focused on specific populations, there is no organization on the Eastside offering a similarly full array of services directed toward particular a culture. As a result, immigrants arriving on the Eastside find it very difficult to plug in. Anything the Commission can do to help construct those networks will be a positive thing.

The survey results make it clear that artists want to meet each other regardless of their individual cultures. Many want to start cross-influencing each other, and clearly they all want to widen their audiences.

Ms. Byrne said she is working with Shelley Brittingham, Assistant Director for Parks & Community Services and Su' n Chon, the consultant on the final draft report. It should be ready for the Commission to review in October.

Commissioner Malkin asked if the report will become a tool for the work being done on the Cultural Compass. Ms. Byrne said it will. The survey was launched in response to the goal of encouraging work from diverse cultures.

C. City/PACE Partnership, Arts Commission Role

Ms. Byrne explained that the Commission has been given an assignment from City Council. In February the Council officially responded to a request from the PACE board to partner with them by making a funding contribution toward constructing Tateuchi Center. In addition to funding, the board asked the Council to help raise public awareness of the project. Council issued a resolution to set up a framework for a process for the City and PACE to work together in advancing public and private efforts to secure Tateuchi Center as a public benefit for Bellevue and the Eastside. By May, both PACE and the City signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) formalizing the process, and representatives of both parties began working together.

Ms. Byrne called attention to a printed chronology of the city's involvement in the development of a performing arts center going all the way back to 1973 when the Arts Commission was established. She suggested the documentation is a clear indication of how deep the city's and the community's involvement has been in considering a performing arts center.

The MOU sets out what each entity will do individually and collaboratively. The City is exploring legal and fiscal aspects of investing significant public funds in the project. A committee has been appointed to identify all funding and legal issues and options and to present them to City Council. A study session is set for October 20 at which Council will review the options and narrow the list; the hope is that City Council will provide direction to explore more deeply two or three of the options. Staff would return to Council in 2015 with its analysis, and Council would then use that information to help in making their decision.

Continuing, Ms. Byrne explained the commitments PACE made as part of the MOU. Additionally, Council wants to help raise awareness of what Tateuchi Center is and what it will bring to the community. Once informed, Council would like to find out what the community thinks about the city investing money in the project. To that end they want to see a robust community outreach effort launched, and they identified the Arts Commission as the convener for these neighborhood conversations.

Ms. Byrne described the initial plans for the presentation. The intent is to conduct the outreach meetings between September and December. All of the city's media outreach abilities will be utilized to get the word out. Articles will be included in *Lake to Lake*, *It's Your City*, *Neighborhood News*, and information will be posted to social media.

Noting that a public relations consultant was hired to market the sculpture exhibition, Commissioner Malkin asked if the outreach campaign could be marketed through a similar approach. Ms. Byrne said the question is a good one but will require some exploration before it can be answered.

Answering a question asked by Commissioner Manfredi, Ms. Byrne said PACE has raised \$65 million toward the fundraising goal of \$160 million. That amount includes construction cost between \$115 million and \$120 million, funds to cover initial operations until revenue begins to be generated, and setting up an endowment fund of at least \$10 million.

Commissioner Malkin said the presentation made to the Commission by Mr. Haynes included the fact that Eastside participation in Seattle arts events has markedly decreased due to traffic congestion. He suggested the public should be asked what their experience has been in that regard. Ms. Byrne agreed that asking the question could help people clarify things in their own minds.

Commissioner Malkin pointed out that meeting with the public to both promote PACE and find out what the public thinks about City investment could be somewhat awkward. Having a Commissioner note the Commission's and the Council's support for the project could open the door to criticism, but he agreed it will be a necessary part of the picture.

Ms. Byrne said the working committee has also identified the need to start working with the school district.

Commissioner Lewis proposed going to shopping centers like Crossroads and asking people to answer a few well-chosen questions. While true interaction between people would be limited, the approach could gather in a lot of information. Ms. Byrne suggested that asking people questions without first offering them some background could result in opinions based on misperceptions about the project.

Commissioner Malkin said it could be boiled down to "Would you support a performing arts center in the downtown?" and "Would you support the city supporting a performing arts center in the downtown?" The questions would not require a lot of background information and would elicit yes or no answers. Chair Jackson said the approach would generate some data but it would not be based on informed decisions. The education component is truly important and should not be overlooked.

Commissioner Ludeña said he would be comfortable attending meetings and talking with the public provided he had a clear idea of what the public benefit of having a performing arts center in the downtown will be. Ms. Byrne said Tateuchi Center is already under contract with the City to provide a range of public benefits. She said she would provide the list to the Commission. She is also working with the joint city/Tateuchi Center committee to develop more information on that as part of the outreach materials being developed. To a certain degree, it won't be possible to put together a comprehensive list without knowing how much the City might invest.

Answering a question asked by Commissioner Wolfeich, Ms. Byrne said many neighborhoods have associations that meet on a regular basis. There are several that are large and very well organized, including those in Bridle Trails, Lake Hills and Newport Hills. The intent is to get on the agenda of those meetings and many more just like them around the city. Clearly the process will be labor intensive and it cannot be expected that the same Commissioners will go to all the meetings.

Commissioner Malkin said he is a member of a neighborhood association that holds regular meetings, but only a fraction of the homeowners represented by the association actually show up. He asked if there could be a road show-in-a-box created that could simply be unpacked and shared with groups on those occasions where the principal players are not able to attend. Ms. Byrne said that would be a very good idea. Another approach would be to have a slide show anyone could look at on a website.

Chair Jackson said clearly the task will loom large on the Commission's plate for a while.

6. COMMISSION QUICK BUSINESS

A. Change September Meeting Date to Tuesday, September 9

There was consensus to make the change.

7. REPORTS

A. Commissioners' Committee and Lead Reports

Chair Jackson reported that the work of the Downtown Livability Initiative has wrapped up. The staff are working to create the final report that will be handed off to the Planning Commission for review and a recommendation to the Council. That process will involve public input and public hearings so a final decision by the Council will not occur for at least a year. Whether or not the arts will benefit from the incentive system will not be known until the calculations are made and the points system is determined.

Ms. Byrne said staff will track the process going forward and will at the appropriate times ask for presentations to be made to the Commission.

B. Project Updates from Staff

Ms. Byrne reported that for the last three years the Commission has partnered with the Bellevue Arts Museum to produce the "Lamppost Project." In this project, an artist is commissioned to create and install artwork on 27 lamp posts along NE6th (the Pedestrian Corridor) between Bellevue Way NE and 108th Ave. NE. This year the artist has created laser-cut wood panels and placed them on every facet of the lampposts. The panels are colorful, have fine detail and are very noticeable.

Ms. Byrne said the project is important to the one of the Public Art Program's three major goals: establishing a public art walk between City Hall and Meydenbauer Bay. The Lamppost Project fills in a crucial segment of the walk route beyond what Bellwether can do. The works are temporary and will stay up until October.

Ms. Byrne shared with the Commissioners pictures of the Newport Hills neighborhood art project. She said the project ultimately will transform the way the street looks in part because the project is being carried out in partnership with the City's Urban Boulevards Program that deals with landscaping along key city arterials.

Mr. MacDonald said the area along the street in front of the church is currently without landscaping. The Urban Boulevards Program secured an easement from the church to accommodate a planting bed that will extend the length of the property and turn the corner at SE 58th to provide the setting for the "Rain Chain" art element on the corner. One benefit of having the neighborhood art project and the urban boulevards programs work together has been having the feel of the landscaping informed by the artist and the design of the art work.

Ms. Byrne encouraged the Commissioners to walk across the street from City Hall to look at the Shunpike storefront windows at Meydenbauer Center. She reminded them that the Arts Program contracted with Shunpike which has a roster of artists that create displays for storefront windows. The program began in Seattle as a way of making empty storefronts look more appealing. In a "good news/bad news" situation, vacancy rates are very low in the Downtown (the good news) and finding opportunities has been challenging (the bad news). In a meeting with Stacy Graven, it was determined that the storefronts at Meydenbauer Center should be addressed. Now there is art in all of Meydenbauer Center's windows along NE 6th Street.

With regard to the Comprehensive Plan update, Mr. MacDonald said staff met with the Planning Commission in July to talk about the arts policies that are included among with the urban design policies. The discussion included suggestions for small tweaks but very little overall change. The Planning Commission was very engaged and a number of diverse opinions were expressed. The bulk of the discussion centered on the urban design policies and the fact that arts policies are actually scattered throughout the Comprehensive Plan.

Mr. MacDonald said staff is reviewing the suggestions made for the Urban Design Element as a whole, including changing the name of the Element to be more descriptive of its content. The Arts Commission will have opportunity to review all proposed revisions to policy language before the process wraps up.

Ms. Byrne explained that the Comprehensive Plan is under the guidance of the Planning Commission, and that Commission will be making a recommendation directly to the City Council. Ultimately the City Council will determine what should and should not be adopted.

8. CORRESPONDENCE, INFORMATION - As Noted

9. ADJOURNMENT

Chair Jackson adjourned the meeting at 6:22 p.m.