

BELLEVUE ARTS COMMISSION  
REGULAR MEETING  
MINUTES

February 6, 2018  
4:30 p.m.

Bellevue City Hall  
Room 1E -109

COMMISSIONERS PRESENT: Commissioners Gulati, Jackson, Lau Hui, Malkin, Wolfteich

COMMISSIONERS ABSENT: Chair Manfredi, Commissioner Lewis

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

OTHERS PRESENT: Councilmember Stokes

RECORDING SECRETARY: Gerry Lindsay

I. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 4:36 p.m. by Commissioner Malkin who presided. All Commissioners were present with the exception of Chair Manfredi and Commissioner Lewis, both of whom were excused.

2. APPROVAL OF AGENDA AND MINUTES

A. Approval of Agenda

**Motion to approve the agenda was made by Commissioner Wolfteich. The motion was seconded was by Commissioner Jackson and the motion carried unanimously.**

B. Approval of Minutes

**Motion to approve the January 9, 2018, minutes as submitted was made by Commissioner Wolfteich. The motion was seconded was by Commissioner Gulati and the motion carried unanimously.**

3. ORAL COMMUNICATIONS – None

4. ACTION ITEMS AND DISCUSSION ITEMS

A. Bel-Red Streetscape Plan Artist

Arts Program Coordinator Scott MacDonald informed the Commissioners that a number of different planning efforts are under way at the city. The BelRed Look Back is one of those studies. Following adoption of the current Bel-Red code, the city went on to create a document called the BelRed Corridor Plan Streetscape Character Standards and Guidelines, the intent of which was to establish a vision for what the new streets in the corridor should look like. The 2008 document distilled the character, history and social fabric into the streetscape as an expression. Since then a number of CIP projects have been constructed in the corridor. For a variety of reasons, there is a need to recalibrate the original plan and to re-hone the vision. The update offers the opportunity to pull out some of the key sections that

could use a little more thought, in particular the public art chapter of the plan. A consultant group will be hired to look at the full plan in general, and the proposal is to hire an artist to work on the consultant team to look for art opportunities and to draft a public art chapter. As part of the scope of work, the artist will be asked to identify three early concepts for potential future artworks in a second phase.

With regard to the budget, Mr. MacDonald explained that there are currently a couple of projects being paid for through the Urban Boulevards Program, a CIP program that is separate from the arts program. A couple of placemaking opportunities are identified through that program and if what the artist proposes for Bel-Red fits the mold, the Urban Boulevards Program would pay the artist to do a small implementation in Phase 2. The \$20,000 budget for Phase 1 would be split evenly between the arts budget and the Urban Boulevards Program, the latter of which focuses on design enhancements within rights-of-way.

Answering a question asked by Commissioner Malkin, Mr. MacDonald said the work of the consultants will be focused on the entire 900 acres of the Bel-Red corridor. He said the streetscape plan is adopted into the Transportation Design Manual. When a development comes in, elements within the manual give the city reviewer the authority to seek different elements. As such, the plan carries weight with the development community for both private and public projects.

Mr. MacDonald stated that any artworks proposed for Phase 2 would need to be accepted into the public art collection.

A somewhat different selection process is envisioned. In seeking to hire employees, the city establishes two different panels. The first panel looks at all of the applicants and selects the top five or so to interview, and the second panel makes the final selection. The reasoning behind the approach is based on fairness and limiting the amount of bias on the part of the panelists. The proposal is to have a panel made up of staff, the consultant team and a member of the Commission review all of the applicants, select five to interview, and then to have a traditional public art panel with an equal number of residents, professional arts and the same Commissioner conduct the interview and make the final selection.

Mr. MacDonald said once the process is approved, the call will be advertised immediately with a closure date in roughly four weeks. That would allow for having someone under contract by the beginning of May. The call will be open to all United States and British Columbia artists.

A motion to approve the Bel-Red Streetscape Plan Public Artist Call as presented was made by Commissioner Jackson. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Wolfeich and the motion carried without dissent; Commissioner Gulati did not vote.

Commissioner Gulati agreed to serve as the representative for the Commission.

## B. Creative Edge Project Update

Arts Program Manager Joshua Heim reminded the Commissioners that the purpose of the Creative Edge project is to identify how arts, culture and creativity can thrive in the city, and to identify the steps to be taken in order to strengthen what is going right in the community relative to the arts. It is known that more support is needed across the city, county and private sectors for the things that are being done, as well as additional partnerships, to ultimately make arts and culture a fixture of community life in Bellevue. The journey began nearly a year ago when the consultant team MDB Insight was brought on board. The first work of the consultant was to dive into the economic research and analysis phase, and to

help development value statements based on interviews with local leaders in a variety of contexts. Since their presentation to the Commission in September, the team has been doing a SOAR (strengths, opportunities, aspirations, results) analysis and strategy development. The schedule calls for having a strategy endorsed by the Commission in mid-May and forward to the Council for approval and adoption, and to engage in implementation beginning in June.

The traditional approach to strategic planning is to focus on what the needs are and what gaps exist. The alternative to the deficit-based model is to focus on the strengths and assets of the community, what is working particularly well, and how to build off what is already in place. There are always aspirations to reach for and there is room for setting goals. The decision was made to take the latter approach by focusing on who Bellevue is, what Bellevue has, and what is going right.

The consultants concluded that there are three things going well in the community related to arts, culture and creativity. There is an abundance of arts and culture educational programming as evidenced by the fact that more than half of the non-profits registered and operating in Bellevue have arts education as their primary mission, including the Bellevue Youth Symphony Orchestra and Music Works Northwest. Additionally, there are regional arts organizations that operate successfully in Bellevue, including Pacific Northwest Ballet, Pacific Science Center, Mercer Slough Environmental Education Center and Village Theatre. The organizations operating in the arts district in Bel-Red are primarily for-profit music and dance studios. Clearly what is selling in Bellevue is arts and creative learning.

Diversity is Bellevue's strength. As it relates to arts and culture, a good portion of the non-profit cultural activity happening in the city is ethnic specific, including Chinese choirs and Indian dance companies. In trying to determine if there is a market for art and culture, two things are often looked at in terms of market research. The first is household income. That is followed by education attainment. Where there is high household income and high education attainment, economists will say an arts patron community exists. Bellevue has high household incomes and high education attainment, and the highest education attainment is in the Chinese and Indian families. Of the 50 percent of Bellevue residents who are of color, and the 40 percent who are international, the majority have high household incomes and high education attainment. Statistically, that means there is the high likelihood of Bellevue having an arts-going audience.

Bellevue is a tech community that is highly focused on research and development. While there are not all that many corporate offices located in Bellevue, there are in the city a number of satellite offices for big tech firms, and most of them conduct research and development. Bellevue also has a high concentration of interactive media and digital arts organizations. Those are the industries that regularly employ artists in the production of their creative business services.

The consultants recognized that the convergence zone of arts education, diversity and digital and interactive media is at the heart of Bellevue's arts, culture and creative strengths. The convergence highlights the fact that Bellevue is an international center for arts, creative learning and innovation.

Commissioner Jackson said she had not previously seen anything that accepts and welcomes the educational aspect of the arts that exists in Bellevue. It is reflective of what is rather than setting forth something aspirational.

Commissioner Malkin questioned that Bellevue is an international destination. He said it certainly is multicultural, and added that being international is certainly aspirational.

Commissioners Gulati and Lau Hui agreed. Commissioner Lau Hui said she sees Bellevue more as an open-fenced community that has a strong creative learning populace. She agreed that the city should aspire to become international but said it is not there yet. Bellevue is certainly open to the idea of diversity and multiculturalism.

Commissioner Wolfeich argued that as suggested by the consultants, Bellevue is not held up as being an international destination so much as being an international community. Commissioner Malkin suggested the word “cosmopolitan” might be more appropriate. That word evokes smart educated people. Commissioner Wolfeich agreed but said the word does not necessarily imply diversity in any way.

Commissioner Gulati voiced concern over the fact that the consultant made a connection between the arts and educated people. She said many people give the arts a kind of wash because they feel it is all about the STEM program for kids in the schools. She said she did not really know how much the arts are focused on in the schools, thus setting a groundwork for the future of the arts in the city.

Commissioner Jackson disagreed. She said the Bellevue School District funds two more arts and culture periods than required by the state. The district requires music in elementary school, orchestra and band in fifth grade, and arts classes in order to pass middle school and high school. The district certainly has a strong focus on STEM, and many parents are zeroed in on that, but over the last five years the district has also seen massive growth in its middle school and high school music programs. Sammamish High School has had a glass program for ten or fifteen years. Bellevue is unique in that it makes time in the day for kids to do art. Mr. Heim said that factors into the notion of how important arts and culture education is in Bellevue. The Bellevue School District does the most by way of arts education when compared against Seattle and any other school district in the state.

Mr. Heim said the Creative Edge task force recently met and discussed many of the issues voiced by the Commissioners. The group questioned Bellevue as an international city and also brought up the word cosmopolitan. The city’s director of Economic Development, who is also currently working on a tourism master plan, favored the word cosmopolitan.

Commissioner Malkin commented that when people choose to live in an area, they look at things like education for their children, cultural opportunities and the distance to a large city. The umbrella term they look for is cosmopolitan.

Councilmember Stokes suggested that having a hundred different languages in the schools and companies from all over the world coming to Bellevue would qualify the city as being an international center. He proposed that arts and cultural education an innovation is a key component. GIX has more than just students from Tsingua University and the University of Washington; there are some 26 different schools represented. Bellevue plays host to festivals that celebrate cultures from around the world, and the city’s help desk provides assistance in nine different languages, and many more can be requested. Bellevue is far more diverse than Seattle. It would be helpful in going forward to talk more about why the feeling is that Bellevue is not an international center and what it would take to be able to say it is.

Commissioner Malkin said he would interpret the word international as something that is a destination on the world stage. What Bellevue is is multicultural. He said becoming a destination could be the vision for the future.

Commissioner Wolfteich said when he hears reference made to an international city he envisions a certain level of diversity, the components of which are celebrated within the city. Bellevue has that.

Mr. Heim said there was general consensus at the task force that the vision is going in the right direction. Some called out the need to make it more uplifting and poetic. Others held that the larger descriptive paragraphs should be made shorter. There was agreement that diversity needs to be emphasized.

Commissioner Jackson allowed that while there are wealthy families in Bellevue who hail from China and India, much is also done in the city to reach out to and make art connection with those who have lower incomes and who do not have the same educational attainments. The word cosmopolitan favors the upper income and education attainment tiers and leaves out the others. Bellevue's approach on the arts side is international or multicultural than it is cosmopolitan.

Commissioner Malkin agreed, adding that it was not his intent to use the word cosmopolitan as meaning exclusive.

There was agreement that the statement of what the Creative Edge is and the vision statement are headed in the right direction.

Mr. Heim said there are three overarching goals, outcomes, and strategies to support those outcomes, with the first goal focused on transforming the public realm through creative placemaking. The associated outcomes talk about the need to have strong cultural districts and embedding arts and creativity across the city, and the strategies call for playing an active community development role to advance the desired districts. The second goal is centered on the idea the creativity and culture are key drivers in innovation and economic growth. The associated outcomes talk about an enhanced civic image and profile and an entrepreneurial and startup culture in the creative cultural industries; the strategies include promoting and expanding festivals and events, raising awareness of Bellevue's diverse communities and cultures, and building skills and knowledge that support startups and strengthen entrepreneurship. The third goal aims for a resilient and sustainable creative cultural sector. The associated outcomes call for increased investment from a variety of sources, increased capacity in all sectors, and affordable creative spaces. The strategies range from embracing new operating models for cultural organizations to implementing local and regional partnership mechanisms and embracing and implementing an integrated vision of creative spaces.

Mr. Heim said the task force has discussed and will continue to discuss how the goals and outcomes should be measured. He put to the Commissioners what role the city, in particular the Commission, should play. The consultant has suggested that the city's role should be to enable a pro-culture and pro-creative environment to develop the sector, and to support knowledge and information. As a cross-sectoral leadership group, the Commission would work to foster and broker relationships and partnerships across non-profits, businesses and entrepreneurs to advance the strategy.

On the notion of hosting an annual summit to bring all sectors together, Commissioner Malkin suggested the Commission could certainly be doing more. Meeting with other municipal arts commissions on a proactive basis would be a good move and would promote the sharing of resources. Commissioner Lau Hui agreed and said the ultimate goal should be to create a high-level network with adjacent arts communities to address achieving common goals regionally. Commissioner Malkin said the approach would in the long run support things like ArtSpace.

Commissioner Lau Hui added that while the Commission meets once a month to discuss plans and aspirations, the Commissioners could be doing more individually to reach out to the community.

Commissioner Gulati said her focus has always been on the fine arts of sculpture and design. She suggested that as a community much more can and should be done for fine arts organizations. In every discussion with fine arts artists there is talk of how much they are struggling. It is sad to see talented people have so few avenues in which to get their work known and to be understood. It is possible that once the Bel-Red corridor is constructed there will be a place for them to live and work; currently, they struggle to afford Bellevue.

Commissioner Malkin said the Commission has often heard that visual as well as performing artists need facilities in Bellevue in which to create, exhibit, rehearse and perform. That is why the ArtsSpace program keeps coming up. Commissioner Gulati observed that if the different art commissions from area cities were to get together, they could pinpoint some avenues to address the issues.

Commissioner Lau Hui asked if grant funds from 4Culture could be sought to address the promotion of arts events via a website or some other communication tool. Mr. Heim said several years ago Arts Specialist Mary Pat Byrne and others, including 4Culture, was involved with the Eastside Arts Coalition, which was an attempt at creating a larger Eastside presence. Their last posting, however, was four years ago. He added that he recently received an email from 4Culture, which hosts the website and pays the annual fee to keep it running, asked if Bellevue would like to take over the site. The idea has been run up the chain to determine if there is time and resources to take on the task.

Commissioner Jackson commented that 4Culture has recognized the fact that the hosting of any information source requires a moderator/content guru/website administrator. It takes more than a high school intern and the work does not come cheap. Commissioner Malkin said the cost of a shared resource of that sort should be shared by other arts commissions and arts organizations.

Commissioner Malkin said it has been in the news lately that King County wants to take over the operations of 4Culture. He asked the Commissioners if they wanted to formally support having 4Culture operate the way it currently does, or would prefer to see King County take over. Mr. Heim said his understanding was that the Commission could not legally endorse legislative efforts; that is the purview of the City Council. The Commission could certainly discuss the issues and provide thoughts to the Council.

Councilmember Stokes said the Council at its retreat in January looked at the roles of the city's boards and commissions. He called attention to the role of the Commission outlined by staff and noted that the Commission does not really engage in the three items directly. Obviously it is important for the Commission to endorse and make recommendations on the arts program set forth by the city, and the city benefits from the dialog. The model with the Human Services Commission has always been focused around approving a certain program based on the available funding. ARCH works well but it has limitations, which is one reason the Council chose not to turn over the affordable housing project to that organization. The question is how boards and commissions can be more effective in advancing the subject matter that is their purview. That will require a long conversation but it certainly is time to start thinking about it. The Creative Edge concept is a way to support arts and culture in ways that will contribute to the economy and growth of the city. What staff and the consultant is putting together leads into issues about how to support the arts by providing arts space. The affordable housing plan will play a key role.

Mr. MacDonald said the Commission is in a position to speak to a much broader landscape of how the arts impact the entire city. The conversation could be enriched by meeting with the Human Services Commission to talk about affordable living space for artists, or with technology groups to talk about cross-pollination opportunities. The Commission has over the last two years been moving in a positive direction. What the Creative Edge demonstrates is that the arts are engrained in the city. Accordingly, the Arts Commission should also be engrained.

Commissioner Lau Hui suggested it is equally important for the Commission to have a platform for reaching out to the citizens of Bellevue so that they can be aware of what is being done. That will help to gain support for moving the program forward. How to do it will need to be discussed. Mr. Heim said the question is what is the right platform for developing partnerships and for sharing knowledge across all the different factors.

Commissioner Malkin said he did not think it should be the role of the Commission to take on the clearinghouse role for the creatives that live and work in Bellevue. Councilmember Stokes said the Commission should not necessarily taken on that role, but it should seek ways to promote the arts generally and arts policies specifically n the city. The Commission should develop a quality of life in Bellevue by cultivating and nurturing those who are doing the creative work. Commissioner Malkin said the question is what platform should be used to do that. The roles played by the Commission in providing grants and participating with Sound Transit on art for light rail stations are very important.

Commissioner Lau Hui argued in favor of the Commission continuing to do all of that while at the same time doing more.

Councilmember Stokes suggested the larger discussion could be well suited to a Commission retreat setting. Commissioner Malkin supporting scheduling a brainstorming session focused on how to support the Creative Edge proposals. Mr. Heim said the discussion could be expanded by inviting folks from the Creative Edge task force, and possibly even the chairs of area arts commissions, to join the conversation.

Having been directed to do so, Mr. Heim said he would look into scheduling a time toward the end of February.

Commissioner Malkin asked what steps would need to be taken if the Commission wants to take a formal position on King County taking over the operations of 4Culture. Mr. Heim said a letter would need to be drafted outlining the position of the Commission. The full Commission would then discuss the draft and vote on it. He pointed out that King County is set to vote on the issue on February 21.

Commissioner Jackson commented that the Commissioners could work as individuals in addressing the issue. Currently, 4Culture and the King County Arts Commission operate independently. One member of the King County Council wants to destroy the independence of 4Culture. Commissioner Lau Hui pointed out that the executive director of 4Culture is hired by the Board, and that approach will be overridden if the King County Council votes to take control of the organization.

Commissioner Malkin said he supported keeping 4Culture independent. Commissioner Jackson agreed but suggested there was not enough time for a recommendation from the Commission to be forwarded to the Council, and for the Council to make a decision, before the King County Council votes on the matter. Accordingly, Commissioners wanting to have a voice should work as individuals in expressing opinions. Mr. Heim stressed that the

Commissioners can identify themselves as being members of the Bellevue Arts Commission but cannot indicate that they are speaking on behalf of the Commission.

C. Meng Huang Installation Project Update

Mr. Heim said the upcoming *Dragons Are Your Friends* exhibition, slated for February 16 through September 28, will include installation of a dragon on the City Hall concourse ahead of the lunar new year. A text panel is being produced that will be translated into simplified Chinese as well as Spanish. The dragon is 25 feet long and will be on loan from the Wing Luke Museum in Seattle. The display will be enhanced by adding a number of masks beginning in May to coincide with Asian Pacific American Heritage Month. The city will also be hosting a program with the Seattle Asian Art Museum in May as part of Asian Pacific American Heritage Month; included will be a panel discussion on fashion and appropriation.

5. COMMISSION QUICK BUSINESS – None

6. REPORTS

A. Commissioners Committee and Lead Reports – As Noted

B. Project Updates from Staff – As Noted

7. CORRESPONDENCE, INFORMATION

A. Written Correspondence

Mr. Heim called attention to the notice in the agenda regarding the draft environmental impact statement for Wilburton.

B. Information

i. Committees – As Noted

8. ADJOURNMENT

Commissioner Malkin adjourned the meeting at 6:28 p.m.