

BELLEVUE ARTS COMMISSION  
REGULAR MEETING  
MINUTES

November 6, 2018  
4:30 p.m.

Bellevue City Hall  
Room 1E -109

COMMISSIONERS PRESENT: Chairperson Manfredi, Commissioners Gulati, Jackson, Lau Hui, Lewis, Malkin, Wolfteich

COMMISSIONERS ABSENT: None

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

OTHERS PRESENT: None

RECORDING SECRETARY: Gerry Lindsay

I. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 4:32 p.m. by Chairperson Manfredi who presided. All Commissioners were present with the exception of Commissioner Jackson, who arrived at 4:35 p.m., Commissioner Lau Hui, who arrived at 4:36 p.m., and Commissioner Wolfteich, who arrived at 4:37 p.m.

2. APPROVAL OF AGENDA AND MINUTES

A. Approval of Agenda

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

B. Approval of Minutes

**Motion to approve the September 4, 2018, minutes as submitted was made by Commissioner Lewis. The motion was seconded was by Commissioner Malkin and the motion carried unanimously.**

3. ORAL COMMUNICATIONS – None

4. ACTION ITEMS AND DISCUSSION ITEMS

A. Power Up Program Update

Arts Program Manager Joshua Heim reminded the Commissioners that Power Up is a capacity building module attached to the Eastside Arts Partnership funding program. He noted that in 2017 a coffeehouse conversation was conducted with non-profit partners about their needs and how the city might address them. One of the needs identified was capacity building and the Power Up program was developed to address the need. Workshop was held in the fall of 2017 which lead to the five pilot grant programs that were launched in 2018, including Emerald Ballet Theatre.

Ms. Cathy Springman, Emerald Ballet Theatre board member, and Ms. Viktoria Titova, artistic director, were introduced. Ms. Springman said the Power Up grant received by the organization was used for a storytelling project. She said it was concluded that because the organization would be best seen, heard and felt, the best way to tell the story was by creating a video. When the organization applied for the Power Up grant, another opportunity was sparked in the form of getting involved with the Springboard program provided by 501 Commons. The Power Up grant was used for the storytelling video and the Springboard program aided in capacity building.

Ms. Springman said the organization's outreach program has developed to be all encompassing. In the spring the opportunity to expand the Bellevue studio came up and to renew the lease for another six years. The latter is very good news as the Bel-Red arts district has been redeveloping, the result of which has been that rents are going through the roof.

Funding is always a challenge for arts organizations and Emerald Ballet Theatre is no exception. Funding is especially important given the current expansion efforts, funding all programs, paying staff market rates, and renewing the board of directors.

The video made with Power Up funds was shown to the Commissioners. Ms. Springman said more video is being recorded all the time for use in additional promotional videos.

Ms. Springman said participation in the Springboard program unveiled the fact that the board of directors was in need of a remodel. That has become the current focus as part of the capacity building exercise. The intent is to pump up the board, get them training, and get them engaged in new ways.

The organization's outreach program has been developed to be all encompassing. The performances during the season are being folded into outreach programs that include going to schools and community centers to hold assemblies and workshops. Folks from schools and community centers where outreach efforts have been held are then invited to attend performances either at no charge or at a reduced charge to experience a full-length performance and to go backstage to meet the dancers, the choreographers and the set and costume designers. The exposure is more than many children ever have.

Ms. Springman said the Bounding Boys program involves free introductory dance classes for boys. Boys are an underserved population in many arts programs. The arts is a perfect place for boys to engage in a noncompetitive sport and a creative activity.

The Commissioners were informed that in the spring of the year the space adjacent to the Emerald Ballet Theatre space became available and the organization jumped at the opportunity. The move has added more than a thousand square feet of dance space. It all came at a cost which was covered in part through a loan from a supporter and funding from Emerald Ballet Academy, a sister organization. A facility grant from 4Culture has also been submitted. The space is already being used to rehearse for The Nutcracker.

Ms. Springman said the organization feels like it is beginning to rise to the next level. She thanked the Commission and said the expansion and capacity building would not have been possible without the support of the Commission. The storytelling video is being used for fundraising purposes as well as for outreach efforts.

Ms. Titova added her thanks to the Commission. She said it is always a good thing when there is community support.

Commissioner Lewis asked how long the Bounding Boys program has been in place. Ms. Springman said it has been operational for more than three years but has been ramped up over the last year through the outreach efforts.

Commissioner Malkin asked where the organization's performances occur. Ms. Springman said they mostly occur at the Northshore Performing Arts Center. Attempts to get into Meydenbauer Center have not yet been successful. Last spring by working with the school district, it looked like the organization was going to be allowed to go into the Sammamish Performing Arts Theatre, but at the last minute the opportunity fell through.

Mr. Heim noted that he had included in the packet a letter from Trudi Jackson as executive director of Bellevue Youth Symphony Orchestra concerning her experience with Power Up. Asked to provide comment, Commissioner Jackson said Power Up grant made it possible for the organization to do something it has wanted to do for a long time, namely update its website and engage in a branding exercise. She said 75 to 80 percent of the kids are from families that originally came from outside of the United States and attention was paid to making sure the website would be accessible to those whose first language is not English. User testing was done with ESL folks and the feedback was very useful in improving the website. From the website, users can easily learn about events, hear recordings, learn about the conductor, register for auditions and various other things. She noted that the number of auditions was way up this year, and the primary reason was people found the organization through the website. She said the board would likely not have agreed to update the website without the Power Up grant.

Mr. Heim stated that five Power Up grants were awarded for 2018. In addition to Emerald Ballet Theatre and Bellevue Youth Symphony Orchestra, the organizations that received the grants were Evergreen City Ballet, Music Works Northwest and Tasveer. He said the Power Up program launched in 2017 with limited resources and the notion of ramping it up over time. The technical assistance aspect was initiated in 2018 with the consultant Kaya Strategic, which is handling technical assistance for the grants programs. They are working with applicants and are assisting them in completing their applications. A cultural liaison program has also been piloted through which technical assistance is provided in Mandarin, Cantonese, Russian, Ukrainian, Japanese and Spanish.

For 2019, the idea of a learning cohort will be rolled out. The Kaya Strategic contract will be continued and they will facilitate monthly or bi-monthly meetings of the cohort members, who will be both new and previous grantees. The concept is to facilitate mentorship between older organizations and newer organizations. Currently there is budget for two grants, funded through the annual grant support from King County, which is \$15,000 annually. The Allocations Committee will at its meeting on November 9 talk about the cohort concept.

The idea of the cohort is to be networking based. If funding were identified as an issue for a group, someone like the director of 4Culture or the Seattle Foundation could be invited to come and have a conversation with the Power Up folks.

Answering a question asked by Chair Manfredi, Mr. Heim said the \$15,000 from the county will be allocated to the program. The initial thinking was that there would be two grants of \$5000 each, leaving enough in the pool to support the cohort and the consultant. Since merging with the office of economic development, that office has been funding Kaya Strategic and the language services. They are committed to continuing that piece and to pick up the cost of the online application portal. That means three \$5000 grants could be awarded instead of two.

Commissioner Malkin said the developments are very positive. He said if the Power Up program can be leveraged to attract more organizations, including some the Commission does not currently know about, there would indeed be a positive outcome. He said he would support heralding the fact that the city is reaching out to non-profit organizations to assist them in their capacity building, including by posting it to the website. Mr. Heim pointed out that information about each of the three programs is available on the grants website.

Commissioner Jackson said she was very happy about the Power Up program, adding that she wants other organizations to be able to make a step up. At the same time, the Commission should not forget that the Eastside Arts Partnerships was created to support budget-balancing funding for arts organizations. That type of funding is difficult for organizations to find elsewhere.

Mr. Heim reiterated that the ultimate goal is to strengthen the network and the arts ecosystem. Looking forward to 2020, the desire is to focus on creating a pipeline for business and tech professionals in Bellevue to connect with the arts, either at the board level or at the volunteer level. That element could prove to be the most challenging.

#### B. Bellwether Program Update

Mr. Heim informed the Commissioners that the first-ever Bellwether website was up, and let them know that a Bellwether partner debrief was held with folks from the Bellevue Arts Museum, parks, civic services and the property manager for Compass Plaza. On November 15, there will be a three-hour action planning session with all of the partners. The outcome will be a collective vision and individual site plans.

Mr. Heim said it was a big year given all the changes to Bellwether. Where before the focus has been on an every-other-year sculpture exhibition primarily centered in Downtown Park and City Hall. This year the event included multiple forms of art, the Bellevue Arts Museum and Compass Plaza as site partners, consolidation of the program from three months over the summer months to ten days, and development of a website. Just over 4000 people visited the website since it went live. Some 2000 people participated in the Bellwether events. The attendance numbers released by the Bellevue Arts Museum for the same ten-day period indicated a substantial increase from 800 in 2017 to 1500 in 2018, not including the 500 people who showed up for the opening party. In all, 64 artists were supported, most of whom did new works for the event. One of the works has been retained in the city's collection.

An evaluation was sent to all of the partners, the 64 artists, all of the contractors, all of the staff involved and all of the Commissioners seeking post-event input. Overwhelmingly the responses indicated that strides are being made toward the mission and toward achieving the goal of advancing the vision of the Grand Connection as a cultural corridor and ultimately catalyzing an arts scene in downtown Bellevue. All of the artists pleasantly noted that people stopped and engaged with them in Compass Plaza and in Downtown Park. There was consensus around the fact that Bellwether supports local and regional artists, that a new level of innovation and risk taking had been reached, that a community of artists and arts organizations is beginning to be built, and that the event met with success in enlivening the streetscape. The areas highlighted where improvements could still be made included making a stronger connection with the Grand Connection, promoting tourism, and making art after hours more interesting.

Commissioner Malkin asked if there were any numbers regarding people who came explicitly for Bellwether from somewhere else. Mr. Heim said he did not have those numbers but pointed out that the website numbers overwhelmingly indicate the audience is from Seattle. Commissioner Malkin suggested that could mean promotion of the event should be widened

beyond the immediate area. Mr. Heim said the marketing consultant, Tanja Baumann, formerly with the Bellevue Arts Museum, was given very specific goals and objectives: make Bellwether a household name for downtown residents, and heighten the awareness of Bellwether within the arts community, which is primarily Seattle. The latter was addressed through positive coverage in *City Arts* magazine, the *Stranger*, *Crosscut*, the *Seattle Times* and the *Bellevue Reporter*. The former was tackled by sending a mailing to every single downtown resident.

Commissioner Gulati asked if the event was advertised in materials available at hotels to visitors and tourists. Mr. Heim said one of the Bellwether partnerships was a marketing arrangement with the Bellevue Downtown Association. Their specific assignment was to run the ground game in the downtown and to that end they put up posters and made postcards available in every apartment building and hotel. The banners hung on light poles along the pedestrian corridor of the Grand Connection were put up by the Bellevue Downtown Association as well.

Commissioner Gulati asked how many of the artists were from the Eastside or the city of Bellevue. Mr. Heim said only one artist was from the Eastside. He allowed that is one area that could be improved upon. Commissioner Gulati added that because Bellevue is hosting the event, Eastside artists and musicians should be highlighted. Mr. Heim said he would welcome that, but stressed that it would not be possible to simply tell the various partners what to do.

Mr. Heim informed the Commissioners that 40 percent of the artists were women and 25 percent were persons of color. The big moves for Bellwether for 2018 were working with a curator, changing the format to include more than sculpture, relying on partners, having a website, and moving from a summer show to a ten-day multi-disciplinary festival. Feedback is still coming in that will ultimately be used to inform any new innovations that should be implemented next year in order to keep advancing the mission and goals. The survey respondents were positive about the direction the program is moving. The team will also consider all the post-event input from the site partners and come up with a plan for addressing the challenges and building on the strengths.

Mr. Heim said the Bellwether team believes one solution to advance the event will be to create a new position of creative director. The team also believes SuttonBeresCuller should fill that role for at least the next two years. The team concluded that what was asked of SuttonBeresCuller for the 2018 event was just a little too much. One idea is to split up the curatorial elements into pop-up and portable, with a curator brought on to specifically curate all of the indoor spaces, and come up with the pop-up exhibitions as well as a curated portable collection from which purchases would be made. Additionally, an open air curator would be brought on to address all outdoor spaces, and an events curator would be added to focus on poetry readings and the live art elements.

Mr. Heim briefly reviewed the 2019 Bellwether budget and timeline, noting that the schedule called for building the team and setting the strategy and scope by December 15.

Commissioner Malkin asked what process would be undertaken to select the curators. Mr. Heim said he would ask SuttonBeresCuller to provide him with a roster of curators from which to choose.

Chair Manfredi said the opening party for the event was amazing but the weather was terrible. He asked about shifting the date for 2019. Mr. Heim said the overall thinking is that the timeline should be retained for the next two years, in part to support getting a brand going and setting expectations.

Chair Manfredi said he found the Downtown Park installations to be underwhelming and difficult to find. Mr. Heim commented that the work in the pond was the largest scale work to date, but it was also very quiet. Chair Manfredi said the exhibition in the Bellevue Arts Museum was extraordinary.

Commissioner Malkin said he attended the opening party and the Bellevue Arts Museum exhibitions, and also attended Guillermo's performance in the Bellevue Arts Museum auditorium and was impressed by the turnout. It was good to see that there is an audience for that kind of art.

Councilmember Stokes suggested that a lot of people walked past the sculptures in Downtown Park without even realizing they were part of Bellwether. He commented that challenges like parking and access are always going to be there and he asked if attention is being given to how to deal with them more effectively. Mr. Heim allowed that parking is an ongoing issue in Bellevue. Many believe Bellevue does not have enough parking when in fact there is quite a bit. The real issue may be a lack of signage and better advertising in regard to where people can park while attending events.

Councilmember Stokes asked how much advertising was done to surrounding cities. Mr. Heim said the marketing budget was limited. No print advertising was done except for posters which were widely distributed. The bulk of the advertising was done via digital ads. The cost of the direct mailing to all addresses in the downtown accounted for a third of the marketing budget.

Commissioner Malkin suggested a direct mailing to downtown addresses may not be required again in 2019 because the seeds have already been planted with that constituency.

Chair Manfredi asked if the Bellevue Arts Museum was pleased with the results. Mr. Heim allowed that they were. He noted that they are on board for 2019. All of the partners have expressed an interest in being part of the event again, and potential new partners, including Meydenbauer Center, have also expressed interest. An idea has been floated about doing specific family and kid-oriented programming, possibly under a different brand. Meydenbauer Bay Park could be another partner given that the park is set to open in December.

Mr. Heim invited all Commissioners to attend the planning workshop scheduled for November 15 from 9:00 a.m. to noon. at City Hall. The event will be facilitated and will start with identifying a collective vision.

#### C. Project 42

Mr. Heim said he met recently with the director of service learning at Bellevue College. The service learning program connects students with local non-profits but it has been struggling with how to connect them in with the arts. He said he also has scheduled a meeting with the arts director for the Bellevue School District to talk about how to work together with the Commission.

Mr. Heim said his conversation with Bellevue College led him to Project 42, a project by artist Jono Vaughan, an assistant professor of art at Bellevue College. Ms. Vaughan identifies as transgender. November is transgender awareness month, and November 20 is Transgender Remembrance Day. Project 42 was started in 2012 to honor trans women who were murdered because of their trans identity. Ms. Vaughan has created an artwork every time an announcement is made that a transgender individual has been killed, and all of the artworks are dresses. Because of the things happening at the national level, Ms. Vaughan would like to

bring her work into a public space to advance the dialog about trans awareness and specifically trans violence.

Mr. Heim said the proposal is to bring to City Hall the artwork dress made for a woman named Lorena Escalera Xtravaganza, who was murdered in Brooklyn, New York and have it on display through the end of the year.

The Commissioners were told that the city supports employee resources groups, which are essentially affinity groups for employees. Currently there are three groups, one around disabilities, one around employees of color, and one around LGBTQIA employees. The latter group will be doing a series of events to call attention to Transgender Awareness Month.

With regard to Project 42, Mr. Heim explained that the number 42, while not scientific, is representative of the short lifespan of transgender people. All of the fabric used in the works are abstractions of Google Earth maps of the sites at which specific people have been killed.

Mr. Heim said he would have a walk-through with the artist on November 9. The installation will not be difficult. The LGBTQIA employee resource group event is slated for November 14. The installation will not require much from the public art budget, but there will be some costs.

Chair Manfredi said it looks like a great program. He said it calls to mind the idea of a featured artist at City Hall and an ongoing, revolving display.

A motion to endorse the Project 42 exhibition at City Hall was made by Commissioner Wolfeich. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Jackson and the motion carried unanimously.

5. COMMISSION QUICK BUSINESS – None

6. REPORTS

A. Commissioners' Committee and Lead Reports – As Noted

B. Project Updates from Staff

With regard to Meydenbauer Bay Park, Mr. Heim said most of the four installations by the three artists have been completed. The tile mural on the beach house by Laura Brodax; the sculptures on the pier by Stuart Nakamura; and the view point guard rails by Adam McIsaac are all installed. The bronze salmon sculpture by Adam McIsaac will be installed in early December.

Commissioner Malkin asked if there will be a grand reveal. Councilmember Stokes said nothing has been said about that yet. Mr. Heim suggested either waiting until next summer or having the celebration to honor the three artists be part of the next Bellwether.

Councilmember Stokes said the park opening is slated for early December. He said there is additional work to be done and ultimately the park will be an amazing space. The Grand Connection begins at Meydenbauer Bay Park.

7. CORRESPONDENCE, INFORMATION

A. Written Correspondence – As Noted

B. Information

- i. Committees – As Noted
- ii. Creative Edge

Councilmember Stokes mentioned that there was a good write-up about the Creative Edge recently in *It's Your City*. Mr. Heim helped to facilitate it. Councilmember Stokes said wrote the piece and took the opportunity to emphasize the importance of art and culture relative to economic development. He added that the city will need to make some investments in order to make sure the Creative Edge actually produces.

## 8. ADJOURNMENT

Chair Manfredi adjourned the meeting at 6:10 p.m.