

BELLEVUE ARTS COMMISSION
REGULAR MEETING
MINUTES

March 5, 2016
4:30 p.m.

Bellevue City Hall
Room 1E -109

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

COMMISSIONERS ABSENT: Commissioner Jackson

STAFF PRESENT: Joshua Heim, Scott MacDonald, 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 Wolfteich, who arrived at 4:33 p.m., and Commissioner Jackson, who was excused.

2. APPROVAL OF AGENDA AND MINUTES

A. Approval of Agenda

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

B. Approval of Minutes

Motion to approve the March 1, 2016, minutes as submitted was made by Commissioner Malkin. Second was by Commissioner Lau Hui and the motion carried unanimously.

3. ORAL COMMUNICATIONS – None

4. ACTION ITEMS AND DISCUSSION ITEMS

A. Cultural Compass Update

Arts Program Manager Joshua Heim reported he met with Commissioners Jackson, Madan and Wolfteich to go over the vision survey results and put together the summary. Overall, much of the vision is perceived as still being relevant. A rewrite for clarity is necessary, and there is much contemporary context that needs to be folded into the new vision, including the city's new focus on diversity, the surging real estate market and the impact that has on cultural space, the fact that the Comprehensive Plan was recently updated to include among other things a new focus on neighborhoods, and the Council vision. The subcommittee did not recommend tossing the entire document in favor of a complete rewrite; the document primarily needs a few tweaks and improved clarity.

Commissioner Wolfteich said refinements and modifications will come from the survey and ideas from the subcommittee. He said he was in the middle of putting together a draft for the subcommittee to review. The subcommittee will then refine the draft, modifying it as necessary, and have it ready for the full Commission to review at its next meeting.

Commissioner Malkin noted that the Commission has set the goal of having the vision statement completed and approved by July. He asked when the rest of the document will be worked on. Commissioner Madan said the subcommittee has not mapped that out.

Mr. Heim related that the schedule calls for completing the work on the vision by July, then after the August break establishing a plan for addressing the next of the four goal areas the Commission identified as in need of revision.

Commissioner Madan said the vision should focus on what should be rather than where things should go, the result of which will be an ongoing vision.

Chair Manfredi asked if there will be a subsequent attempt to get the Cultural Compass vision survey out to more people. Mr. Heim allowed that the 132 responses cannot be called statistically valid. The survey is, however, indicative of what the close-in stakeholders are thinking.

Chair Manfredi noted the document includes a number of references to education and he asked if educators were asked to participate in taking the survey. Mr. Heim pointed out that there were nine who took the survey and identified themselves as educators; there could have been more who simply identified themselves as Bellevue residents.

B. Cultural Grant Program

Mr. Heim said the Commission and the Council started a conversation about examining the City's annual support to arts and culture non-profits through the grants program. The conversation occurred in November as part of the mid-biennium budget review. The Council charged staff with taking a look at various options, including the inflationary impacts on the current levels of grant support, and other spending impacts the Council should be aware of. He noted that the packet materials include three scenarios for the Commission, the Council and staff to think through with regard to the City's annual support.

The first scenario involved the notion of inflation and what it would take for the city to catch up. The second was focused on the city keeping up with comparable cities in terms of service levels, and the third scenario centered on the concept of stepping up the level of support of arts and culture non-profits through dedicated revenues. Currently, the city gives an annual allotment of \$110,000 for arts and culture grant-making, including Eastside Arts Partnerships and Special Projects.

Mr. Heim explained that budget proposals for the next two years must be submitted by the end of April. If there is to be an increase in the allocation for arts and culture, it will be necessary to know which scenario to work under.

With regard to the "catch up" scenario, Mr. Heim presented the Commissioners to three tables included in the commission packet. Three additional tables were presented that outlined three "keep up" scenarios.

Commissioner Malkin asked which scenario would enable the City to grow the number of organizations it funds. He pointed out that catching up is not the same as actually growing.

Even increasing funding to be more in line with what comparable cities allocate is in some ways only a catch-up move.

Mr. Heim said growing the program is outlined in the step-up scenario. The research showed that there are three cities that have had increases in grant funding for arts and culture non-profits, namely Seattle, Spokane and Issaquah. The common denominator for those jurisdictions is that they have a dedicated revenue source for the arts in the form of an admissions tax, which is a tax on entertainment and events. Bellevue has an admissions tax that is three percent, but the tax in other cities is five percent. Where Bellevue's admissions tax revenues flow into the general fund, Issaquah dedicates one hundred percent of its admissions tax to the arts, which answers why their fund grows annually.

Commissioner Madan suggested that at the very least Bellevue's allocation to arts and culture non-profits should keep pace with the CPI. The cost of living in Bellevue is high and continues to rise, a factor that impacts organizations as well as individual residents, all of which argues in favor of the catch-up scenario. Merely catching up, however, may not be sufficient to provide an adequate level of funding to the organizations, particularly as the number of organizations seeking funding increases every year. A strong case could be made for the step-up scenario outlined in Table G, which would entail increasing the admissions tax by two percent.

Chair Manfredi said the context for increasing funding could be taken from the Council vision itself.

Commissioner Lau Hui questioned the population figures for Bellevue listed in Table A, Table B and Table C. Mr. Heim said the numbers were pulled from the Comprehensive Plan projections for what the population will be by 2035. He clarified that the numbers are for the nighttime population, not the daytime population.

Commissioner Wolfteich noted from the materials that Seattle has instituted a program aimed at working their way up to 100 percent of the admissions tax within a couple of years. Mr. Heim said their direction stems from the recession during which their Parks Department was decimated. As part of reprogramming dollars for the arts, Seattle has launched an arts education initiative and a cultural space program.

There was consensus in favor of directing staff to include a budget request for additional funding for the cultural grant program based on the increased number of organizations seeking funding, and the fact that funding has remained flat for a number of years even though costs continue to rise.

Mayor Stokes asked if the Commission had a plan for what to do with the increased revenues that would flow from increasing the admissions tax from three percent to five percent. Chair Manfredi said there is an immediate need to increase funding for the grant program. Many new organizations have come seeking funds but have not found satisfaction because of the limited dollars available. A number of those organizations represent a number of diverse cultures, which fits in with a number of specific goals. Having more funds available would send a clear message to many who are interested in coming to Bellevue with new arts programs.

Mr. Heim explained that two existing budget proposals will be submitted as part of the budget process, the Arts Program, which includes the grants programs, and the Public Art Program. Two additional proposals for CIP money will be made as well, including one to create a cultural space fund specifically to fund cultural facilities. He said he recently had a conversation with representatives of Pacific Northwest Ballet who plan to come to the city

seeking facility support for relocating their school. He said he also had a conversation with the executive director of the Bellevue Arts Museum who explained they will be coming to the City seeking funds to address a number of deferred maintenance issues. Formalizing a cultural space fund would take such requests out of the ad hoc realm. The second CIP budget proposal will be focused on implementing the arts district in BelRed.

Commissioner Madan pointed out that organizations that seek grants from Bellevue repeatedly highlight the cost of doing business in Bellevue. Bellevue also has a lack of venues.

Mayor Stokes asked if the Commission is working toward a comprehensive assessment of the state of the arts in Bellevue and a vision for where Bellevue should be, both in the near-term and the long-term. He said the city is currently undertaking a similar approach relative to affordable housing aimed at truly understanding the need and what it would take to meet it. He explained that he and Deputy Mayor Chelminiak have been working on a presentation to the Bellevue Downtown Association on the state of the city; it is focused on delivering on the vision of building the next great city. There needs to be an arts component in the vision. The Council's vision for the city was adopted in 2014; it was incorporated into the Comprehensive Plan and the city's budget it built around it. The affordable housing plan being developed will be a strategic action plan with specific goals; something similar is needed for an approach to the arts which are paramount to creating a great city. Having a clear plan in place for how to fund the arts will be crucial for the upcoming two-year budget cycle, particularly for the next mid-biennium and the budget cycle two years out.

Chair Manfredi said the Council vision for the city is what is driving the Commission's work to refine its vision.

Mr. Heim asked how much further the Commission should take the parts of the Council vision that relate to arts and culture. Mayor Stokes said the Planning Commission took it upon themselves to rewrite the Comprehensive Plan vision statement after the Council adopted its vision statement so that the two would be in sync. Of course, they focused primarily on the elements related to planning. The Arts Commission could take a similar tack. The Council's vision statement is written to take the high-level view and it is up to the boards and commissions to dig down into how it should be translated to mesh with their specific focus areas. That is the work the Commission should do along with developing budget proposals aimed at making the Council vision reality.

C. Draft Public Art Project List 2017-2023

Mr. Heim reminded the Commissioners that the public art project list was launched by the Commission as part of the budget process. Where the city's budget covers a two-year period, the CIP covers a seven-year period. The proposed draft public art project list does the same and includes potential public art projects and programs running from 2017 to 2023 with an annual budget of \$350,000. The funds can carry over so funds not used in one calendar year flow to the next. The new budget proposal would fund placemaking, cultural district planning, and an arts incubator in Bel-Red. The list of day-to-day fixed costs includes a .5 FTE, yearly maintenance for existing sculptures in the city's collection, and things that are done to inform the community about what the city has, such as the downtown and citywide art maps.

With regard to programs and temporary projects, Mr. Heim explained that the category would include the Bellwether exhibition. He said the big change being considered for Bellwether is moving it around the city, an action that will be necessary to address the fact that downtown Bellevue is going to be torn up for the next five years. The Lamppost Project

will not go forward given the construction project in the Pedestrian Corridor. The ideas behind those projects, however, will not go away but rather will be incorporated into the street art program. The new BelRed cultural district proposal is a line item focused on planning what would need to be done to realize the district. The notion of planning for an arts incubator came forward in the 2009 BelRed code update.

Commissioner Lau Hui asked how the programs relate to the Grand Connection project and the Lake Hills pole project. Mr. Heim said an artist is being sought to join the Grand Connection team. Applications have been received and it is hoped that an artist will be selected soon. The proposal is to set aside some public art funds for the chosen artist to do some early projects within the project site. Rather than doing a sculpture show, dollars will be reprogrammed for the artist to animate the vision of the Grand Connection through art. That would be in 2017-2018. Then in 2019-2020 the Lake Hills poles project will go forward as part of taking the opportunity to include an art walk in that area. The BelRed Safeway site will be a staging ground for the light rail construction project, but ultimately it will be turned into a park.. Assuming funding for the arts incubator is approved, getting artists to participate by doing projects there will be a win. The site has a warehouse that eventually will be removed, but in the meantime it could be used as a place for artists to produce works reflective of the arts district.

Continuing, Mr. Heim explained that the projects are designated to fall into the new categories of destinations, signatures, hidden gems, art walks, neighborhood, city galleries and city studios. Essentially the categories are intended to serve as placeholders to identify budgets. The draft budget amounts for each category, while arbitrary, are based on historical data. The Grand Connection, Meydenbauer Bay Park and Downtown Park are good examples of signature sites.

Mr. Heim informed the Commissioners that the city is in line to receive some long-term loans that will facilitate the design of several Transportation projects in BelRed, including the 124th Avenue BelRed gateway and art walk, and 130th Avenue arts district Main Street.

With regard to art walk and hidden gem projects, Mr. Heim provided a brief description of potential art walk opportunities throughout the city. For art walks, potential projects include 124th Avenue, Newport Way, and 130th in BelRed. For hidden gems, potential projects could include projects coordinated with Utilities work planned at several locations throughout the city, the Bellevue Youth Theatre, City Hall, and other sites.

With regard to neighborhood art projects, many of which have been funded through NEP, Mr. Heim said the idea is to transition from being independent from the NEP to integrating into the NEP. One good example of a proposal that came from the community concerns Lattawood Park. The community has come up with the idea of installing pedestrian lighting along the path through the park. There is already a public art project planned for the park and by integrating the two projects the results could be unique.

Asked whether or not City Hall should be refreshed with regard to its artwork, Mayor Stokes said he really likes the way the place transforms every other year when artwork is brought in as part of the Bellwether exhibition. Having something like that, which people really like, would be wonderful. It is good to have permanent works as well.

Commissioner Malkin suggested that facilitation of the changing of the art would add a burden to the staff. Mr. MacDonald agreed but said a portable collection is more manageable and could be changed around a couple of times each year. Chair Manfredi said if doable, the idea is great.

Mr. MacDonald pointed out that the projects on the list have ties to a number of City departments, including Transportation, Utilities and Parks, though some are standalone arts projects.

D. New Public Art Opportunity: Mini City Hall

Mr. Heim noted that there have been recent conversations about starting a portable art collection, a collection of works that would be owned by the city. The works could include paintings, small-scale sculptures, textiles, prints and photographs. In conversations with Mini City Hall staff, who are about to embark on a project to refresh their Crossroads location, the notion of using new and different art was broached. They were excited by the idea which led to a proposal to acquire art for the space to base their painting project on, and to use the acquisition to pilot a portable art collection. Ahead of establishing a portable art collection, it will be necessary to develop policies and criteria for the selection of works. Mini City Hall offers a good low-risk opportunity to delve into establishing a portable art collection.

Portable works could be displayed at City Hall in a variety of spaces, including Bellevue Youth Theatre, Crossroads Community Center, the Bellefield courthouse, and other community facilities. Mr. Heim said the proposal is to include a portable art collection as a public art project program, and to start small with a budget of about \$12,000 per year beginning in 2016, increasing the funding level to \$25,000 in 2019 once the program has found its footing.

Mayor Stokes said he liked the idea of including art from local artists that represent the diverse community. Bellevue is an international city when it comes to the makeup of its residents, and the city's collection of art should reflect that fact.

Commissioner Madan asked if building up a portable collection would involve commissioning work or buying existing works. Mr. Heim said portable collections typically involve the latter.

A motion to establish a committee to draft criteria for the acquisition of works for the portable art collection was made by Commissioner Malkin. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Lewis and the motion carried unanimously.

5. COMMISSION QUICK BUSINESS

6. REPORTS

A. Commissioners' Committee and Lead Reports - None

B. Project Updates from Staff

i. Bellwether

Mr. MacDonald said focus has been given to the upcoming schedule. The subcommittee met to discuss having a soft opening on July 15 and the official opening on July 29 to align with the Bellevue Arts Fair.

Mr. MacDonald said ideas for the teen project are being explored, though a number of details are in need of being worked out.

The Commissioners were informed that the lamppost project has historically lived outside of the Bellwether exhibition, though it has run during the same timeframe and has always been intended to align with the exhibition. For the upcoming iteration, the idea has been folded into the exhibition. In collaboration with the Bellevue Arts Museum, the idea is to activate a

site outside the museum on the Pedestrian Corridor, a site at City Hall, and a site in Downtown Park. Works by artist Bill Kennedy have been reviewed by the Bellwether committee; his art involves giant, custom-made and lit inflated balloons that are quite spectacular.

ii. Grand Connection Artist Call

Mr. MacDonald reminded the Commissioners that a design charrette focused on the Grand Connection concept was slated for April 7-9. The idea is to put creative people in a room and generate a number of ideas. Eight groups, each of which will have a mix of artists, architects, landscape architects, planners and designers, will develop ideas. The final presentation on April 9 will be open to the public.

Mayor Stokes commented that the Eastside rail corridor will provide an additional opportunity for public art.

Mayor Stokes reported that at the recent Bellevue Downtown Association dinner the speaker talked about making cities fun places to be. The examples he cited included a city that commissioned a number of brass mice in different poses which they put in different places around the city. That and other whimsical installations by other cities have proven to be well loved by the people and very popular.

7. CORRESPONDENCE, INFORMATION

A. Written Correspondence – As Noted

B. Information

i. Future Agenda Items – As Noted

ii. Committees – As Noted

8. ADJOURNMENT

A motion to adjourn was made by Commissioner Lewis. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Malkin and the motion carried unanimously.

Chair Manfredi adjourned the meeting at 6:46 p.m.