

BELLEVUE ARTS COMMISSION
REGULAR MEETING
MINUTES

September 10, 2019
4:30 p.m.

Bellevue City Hall
Room 1E -109

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

COMMISSIONERS ABSENT: None

STAFF PRESENT: Scott MacDonald, Manette Stamm, Department of Community Development; Jesse Canedo, Assistant Director of Cultural and Economic Development

OTHERS PRESENT: Candace Gratama, ProgramWorks; Marc Fornes (via Skype), artist

RECORDING SECRETARY: Gerry Lindsay

I. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 4:31 p.m. by Chairperson Manfredi who presided. All Commissioners were present with the exception of Commissioner Lau Hui, who arrived at 4:37 p.m., and Commissioner Wolfteich, who arrived at 4:43 p.m.

2. APPROVAL OF AGENDA AND MINUTES

A. Approval of Agenda

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

B. Approval of Minutes

Commissioner Lewis noted that she had not been in attendance at the meeting and should be shown as being absent.

Motion to approve the July 9, 2019, minutes as amended was made by Commissioner Malkin. The motion was seconded was by Commissioner Aldredge and the motion carried unanimously.

3. ORAL COMMUNICATIONS

Chair Manfredi acknowledged receipt of an email from artist and former Commissioner Vikram Madan expressing concern and dissatisfaction with the lack of representation by Bellevue artists at the Bellwether exhibition. In the email, Mr. Madan stated that a review of the Bellwether artist list for both 2018 and 2019 led him to believe the event was turning into a temporary playground for Seattle artists and curators. Chair Manfredi noted that he had responded to the email and indicated the Commission had discussed that issue after the first iteration of Bellwether in its revised format, adding that the curators

were aware of the concern and had made an attempt to find some local artists, finding it more difficult than they expected.

Commissioner Gulati stressed the need to update the list of local artists and their specialties. There is a general lack of information about local artists.

Commissioner Aldredge said a group that included some Commissioners attended the recent Eastside Artists Collaborative meeting. At the meeting it was noted that there are upward of 60 Eastside artists working through the Collaborative, and their contact information is all available.

Commissioner Malkin suggested the curators had not worked hard enough at finding Bellevue artists. Commissioner Aldredge said she learned about the Eastside Artists Collaborative through a simple Google search. Larine Chung runs the Collaborative and given her wide resources is the kind of person who should serve as a curator.

Arts Program Coordinator Scott MacDonald reported that a Bellevue artist roster has been developed through talking with different organizations. While not a public document, it is a fairly long list. Bellevue artists were contacted to participate in the conversations that are a part of Bellwether, but the vast majority of those contacted were either not available or not interested in participating. The hope is that the story will be different for the 2020 exhibition.

Chair Manfredi suggested the issue should be placed on the Commission agenda for further discussion.

4. ACTION ITEMS AND DISCUSSION ITEMS

There was agreement to reorder the agenda to take up item C first.

C. Bellwether Update

Mr. MacDonald noted that a postcard highlighted Bellwether had been sent out. A commemorative pin was also created. He said the opening ceremony slated for September 13 at the Bellevue Arts Museum would run from 6:30 p.m. to 9:30 p.m. and would include two different performances, one involving music and costume and the other involving some percussion, dance, and interactive movement with projected media. The Bellwether exhibition involves the Grand Connection, including city hall, the Bellevue Arts Museum, Compass Plaza, the Doxa church, and the Meydenbauer Center theater. The associated cultural conversations, while operated as a separate city event, is a distinct program that started out as an Eastside women's group. The conversations will be open to all and will be a good fit with Welcoming Week, which will occur at the same time. More than 60 artists and curators have contributed to the exhibition and there will be 18 distinct events.

Mr. MacDonald briefly reviewed the project process that had been undertaken. The chosen theme for the event, Taking Root, was provided to the curators along with an outline of the city's public art collection vision and the Grand Connection arts and cultural element. As proposals were received, some sub-themes began to emerge, including change within the community and the environment. A lot more interactive technology was highlighted, as was using technology to relate to one another. Immigration came up in a number of artworks, as did food and culture.

Today's Special, a distinct project within Bellwether at the Bellevue Arts Museum, comes from the history of the space that at one time was a café but which in time was walled off and turned into the community education gallery on the first floor. Artist Ellen Ito will curate the program around the confluence of food, culture, tradition and art. Every day there will be a different workshop and artist talk, and different food offerings.

Artist Kenji Stoll has created a mural on the side of the south-facing wall of the Doxa church. The mural covers some 6000 square feet and faces the Grand Connection. The piece is inspired by the history of the Japanese-American strawberry fields that were located in what is now the downtown. The work features a field of earthy tones overgrown with abstract patterns of delicate white blossoms and green leaves with barbed wire subtly woven in referencing the incarceration camps. The new growth of strawberry plants references the continued and future contributions of the Japanese-American community. The building will ultimately be torn down but the mural will stay up until then.

Commissioner Aldredge pointed out that there are ways to create murals that allow for recovering or recreating them. In the case of the Doxa church, which is to be torn down, it would have been worth thinking about a future for the work.

Commissioner Malkin pointed out that any work the city acquires must have a location selected. He noted there are also issues and costs associated with having to store works.

Commissioner Aldredge stated that there will be several opportunities for murals along the new light rail line. Commissioner Gulati agreed and pointed out that new construction is always required to put up fence barricades around their properties. Those temporary walls could include murals and other artworks that could then be moved from one property to the next. Mr. MacDonald said one way to achieve that would be for the city to require construction fencing to include an artistic element. That would set up revolving opportunities for artists in the downtown.

Mr. MacDonald reiterated that Bellwether will include 18 distinct events along with workshops and two nights of music at the Meydenbauer Center theater. There will be conceptual dance performances, guided VR sessions, panel conversations, cultural conversations, a tour with the creative director, a city hall reception, and even a marching band. All of the events are listed on the Bellwether website. He noted that the artist reception at city hall on Saturday, September 21, from 5:00 p.m. to 6:30 p.m. required special permission from the city manager. The attendees will be ushered out of city hall and to the Meydenbauer Center theater by a marching band, complete with a police escort. Prior to the reception event there will be a conversation on Bellevue as a place, with Commissioner Lau Hui serving as one of the panel members.

Commissioner Malkin asked about the marketing efforts for Bellwether. Mr. MacDonald said the word has been going out through a variety of means, including digital and print. There was a spot on KEXP and the *Bellevue Reporter* wrote a piece about the event.

Mr. MacDonald said the event includes some of the highest caliber work seen to date in Bellwether. The Taking Root theme has given artists something solid to latch onto. He said he had reached out to the schools in an attempt to get constituencies to come to specific events. Likely because the outreach occurred in the summer months, there was no response.

Mr. MacDonald said planning for the next iteration of Bellwether will begin almost immediately following the event. Getting ahead in the schedule should help in things like working with the schools.

B. Cultural Compass Update

Candace Gratama, consultant with ProgramWorks, said she is a program evaluator who has done a lot of work with the arts over the years. She allowed that while she is a researcher rather than an artist, her colleague at ProgramWorks is an artist and served as a chair at Cornish College of the Arts. She said in addition to the online residents survey, a survey will also be done for artists organizations and funders. The latter will include interviews and focus groups.

Ms. Gratama said there were 729 respondents to the residents survey, all of whom indicated they are Bellevue residents. The survey was distributed online between July 8 and September 3 and was advertised in a number of ways. The surveys were available in English, Chinese and Spanish, and overall the results represent a 95 percent confidence with a margin of error of 4.3 percent. With regard to the demographics, the respondents were fairly representative of the city with the exception of the Asian and Hispanic populations. Steps are being taken to increase the number of responses from those two populations. Twenty percent of the respondents did not indicate their ethnicity and current research indicates about 70 percent of the Hispanic population is not answering questions related to ethnicity. It can be assumed that the results are more demographically representative than it would appear at first blush.

The survey included a question about the importance of having access to compelling arts and cultural opportunities. Of the Bellevue residents, 82 percent indicated it is very important to fairly important. With regard to the question of what motivates participation and arts and culture activities, more than 70 percent said entertainment, followed by 62 percent saying gaining knowledge or learning something new, and 61 percent saying a desire to experience high-quality art.

The survey asked the respondents to select up to three arts and culture events and activities that interest them the most. The top answer was art museum, galleries or exhibits, followed by outdoor fairs and festivals and theater, opera and dance performances.

Respondents were also asked to what extent they agree with the statement “arts and cultural events and activities help enrich our quality of life.” Amazingly, 98 percent of Bellevue residents indicated they strongly agree or somewhat agree with the statement. The associated comments were heartfelt about how important the arts are to Bellevue.

The survey included a series of questions focused on the experience of the respondents with the arts in Bellevue. Asked if they attend arts and cultural events in Bellevue or outside of Bellevue, very few indicated they always or mostly go to events in Bellevue. The comments indicated that Seattle and neighboring cities offer far more options when it comes to arts and culture. About 15 percent of the Bellevue respondents indicated they attend events in Bellevue on a monthly basis or more, though four percent stated they never attend events in Bellevue. When asked what prevents them from attending events in Bellevue, the respondents listed certain events not offered, lack of information, and certain arts or cultural facilities are not available.

Asked about their level of satisfaction with the number of arts and cultural offerings, 41 percent of the Bellevue residents said they were not satisfied, while 38 percent said they were satisfied with the selection.

Ms. Gratama pointed out that the Cultural Compass talks about Bellevue becoming an arts and cultural destination, so the survey asked the respondents to indicate if they believe Bellevue is in fact an arts and cultural destination. Only 19 percent of the Bellevue respondents said Bellevue has reached that goal, and 20 percent indicated they would recommend Bellevue as an arts and cultural destination.

The top two answers to the question of what the respondents like best about arts and cultural offerings in Bellevue were the Bellevue Arts Museum and the Bellevue arts fair. Also mentioned were the Botanical Gardens, the jazz festival and the Crossroads cultural festivals. When asked what improvements the respondents would like to see, the performing arts of music concerts, theater and dance rose clearly to the top. More diversity and high-quality arts programming were also mentioned.

In terms of the Spanish-speaking population, Commissioner Wolfeich asked if it was possible to specifically target parents of children attending dual language schools. Ms. Gratama said that was not done but it would be a good approach to take.

Commissioner Lau Hui asked if a kiosk was set up at mini city hall in Crossroads Mall as a way of getting people to fill out the survey. Ms. Gratama said that was not done but agreed it would be something to follow up on. She said some focus groups with those populations will be set up to triangulate the results.

Ms. Gratama said the level of interest in the arts among residents of Bellevue outweighs the survey data she has seen for other cities. She said clearly Bellevue residents value the importance of the arts. Commissioner Malkin suggested that the more educated a population is, the more it values arts and culture. Bellevue is a very highly educated population.

Commissioner Lau Hui said she hoped the survey results would serve as a catalyst to motivating the Council to put more funding into the development of the arts in the city. Mr. MacDonald said the goal is first and foremost to gain an accurate representation of what the community feels is important. Funding of the arts is clearly a separate discussion.

Commissioner Malkin said it was clear to him from the top-level results that arts and culture feeds into the economics of the city. Commissioner Lau Hui said the comments included by survey respondents will be helpful in passing on the message to the Council. Commissioner Malkin suggested there also would be value in sharing the survey results with the Tateuchi team that is trying to close the funding gap.

A. Downtown Park NE Corner Public Art Proposal

Mr. MacDonald welcomed artist Marc Fornes via Skype.

Mr. Fornes explained that over the last month he had spent time developing the project concept, including defining the number and positioning the columns, the canopy and the edges. He said the canopy roof moves from an institutional height to a more personal height, allowing a person to experience the pavilion both when just passing through or spending time in it. The top of each column is similar yet different, with some being wider and some deeper, creating playful and welcoming spaces. He noted that work had been done on the orientation of the work to allow for views from and of the main circle of the park and the new entrance to the park. The color scheme is not yet fully worked out.

Mr. MacDonald clarified that he was looking for feedback and approval from the Commission on the general design. He said he would also welcome ideas about color but noted that they along with some fine details may evolve somewhat in the final design stage. Once the Commission approves the general design, a second contract will be negotiated that will include final design and construction.

Commissioner Aldredge asked if the intent is for the underside of the sculpture to remain white. Mr. Fornes said it will actually be a tone of gray rather than white, with a lighter color in the back and a more muted color in the front. Commissioner Aldredge said it would be very helpful to have a palette submitted for the Commission to review before making a final decision. She said it also would be helpful to have samples of the materials to be used. Mr. Fornes said he would be glad to provide material and color samples once a fabricator is on board.

Commissioner Malkin pointed out that it rains a lot in the Northwest and asked if the forms will capture or divert rainwater. Mr. Fornes explained the structure will act like a tree canopy and will not be a waterproof shelter. The design will keep water from being captured, allowing the rain to come through.

Commissioner Lau Hui observed that the low part of the structure was oriented toward the park and she asked if consideration had been given to having it the other way around, with the low part facing the street corner. With regard to the water feature that at one time was next to the adjacent buildings, she asked if it is part of the scope of work or is being addressed by someone else, and how it relates to the canopy. Mr. Fornes said he had considered all possible orientations, some of which did not test as well. Having the low end facing the street would actually obstruct more of the views from the entrance down to the rest of the park. With regard to the water feature, he said it is being addressed by the landscape architect. Commissioner Lau Hui suggested working with the landscape architect to ensure some level of continuity and to avoid having the canopy and the water feature being two independent objects. Mr. Fornes said he has been working with and has a good relationship with the landscape architect.

Chair Manfredi asked about lighting and Mr. MacDonald said the parks department will construct all of the built elements except for the artwork. Lighting will be incorporated into their part of the work. There will also be uplighting included as part of the canopy feature.

Commissioner Malkin asked what the height range is between the tallest and the shortest elements. Mr. Fornes said it ranges from eight feet on the lowest end to between 18 to 20 feet at the highest. The highest point of the pavilion will be 24 feet.

Commissioner Gulati pointed out that the Commission had a meeting with parks representatives at which a question was raised about the grass and the pathway leading to the monument. Mr. Fornes explained that initially all of that was steps. For different reasons, grass cannot be located under the pavilion, but the space should be usable.

A motion to extend the meeting beyond 6:30 p.m. was made by Commissioner Gulati. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Lewis and the motion carried unanimously.

Mr. MacDonald noted that maintenance of the work will be added to the city's public art maintenance plan. Everything on the ground level will be the responsibility of the parks department to maintain.

Commissioner Aldredge referred again to the hardscape area and suggested there might be a missed opportunity. Even if concrete is used, color could also be incorporated that

might mirror and play with the shape and color above in subtle ways. Mr. Fornes said what he was working toward was a sense of place, a sense of being able to rest, and a sense of continuity into the park. The structure will have color that is both light and pronounced, with the lighter colors on the lower parts. He said he would not necessarily try to color the concrete, which could have the effect of making the structure look much heavier.

Commissioner Lau Hui said she was happy with the refinements to the proposal.

A motion to approve the design as presented was made by Commissioner Malkin. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Wolfeich and the motion carried without dissent; Commissioner Aldredge abstained from voting.

5. COMMISSION QUICK BUSINESS – None

6. REPORTS

- A. Commissioners' Committee and Lead Reports
- B. Project Updates from Staff

Mr. MacDonald reported that the final design and pricing are being worked out for the Lattawood project. The final design will be before the Commission for a vote in October. He said the park project will go out to bid in April 2020 and construction will begin in the fall. Installation of the artwork will follow the park construction.

7. CORRESPONDENCE, INFORMATION

- A. Written Correspondence – As Noted
- B. Information – As Noted
 - i. Committees

Commissioner Lewis asked what steps are being taken to replace former Arts Program Manager Joshua Heim. Mr. MacDonald said he has taken on most of Mr. Heim's responsibilities. Manette Stamm will be managing the grants program. The Council is working agreements with PACE and KidsQuest. The goal is to have Mr. Heim's position replaced by early in 2020.

8. ADJOURNMENT

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