

BELLEVUE ARTS COMMISSION
REGULAR MEETING
MINUTES

October 1, 2019
4:30 p.m.

Bellevue City Hall
Room 1E -109

COMMISSIONERS PRESENT: Commissioners Gulati, Lau Hui, Lewis, Malkin

COMMISSIONERS ABSENT: Chairperson Manfredi, Commissioners Aldredge, Wolfteich

STAFF PRESENT: Scott MacDonald, Manette Stamm, Department of Planning and Community Development

OTHERS PRESENT: Ray Cullom, Jodie Miner, Sofia Babaeva, Performing Arts Center Eastside

RECORDING SECRETARY: Gerry Lindsay

I. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 4:33 p.m. by Commissioner Malkin who presided. All Commissioners were present with the exception of Chair Manfredi and Commissioners Aldredge and Wolfteich, all of whom were excused.

2. APPROVAL OF AGENDA AND MINUTES

A. Approval of Agenda

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

B. Approval of Minutes

Motion to approve the Sept 10, 2019, minutes as submitted was made by Commissioner Lewis. The motion was seconded was by Commissioner Lau Hui and the motion carried without dissent; Commissioner Gulati abstained from voting.

3. ORAL COMMUNICATIONS – None

4. ACTION ITEMS AND DISCUSSION ITEMS

A. Performing Arts Center Eastside (PACE) Update

Ray Cullom, Jodie Miner, Sofia Babaeva

PACE CEO Ray Cullom said the organization was formed in 2003. He said he came on board a year ago, having moved to Bellevue from New York City with 30 years experience in the arts, first as an actor/director/performer/designer and then as a producer/presenter of the performing arts. He said for the last ten years he has been involved with organizations engaged in new construction or renovation projects. He said he chose to become associated with PACE as part of his longstanding obsession to be part of determining what the next

generation of performing arts space should look like. Bellevue is the place to build a building that incorporates modern immersive technologies into a live performance experience. He suggested at the time of his interview that the plans for the building were backward looking and should be revised given the degree to which Bellevue has changed since the building was designed. The focus is on making sure what gets built will be set up to succeed and engage the community. New staff skillsets have been brought on board to realize the vision.

Mr. Cullom stated that in order to take the traditional plans for a 20th Century performing arts center and turn them into a building that will combine immersive technology with the live performance experience, the decision was made to put together a team of people who sit on both sides of the equation. The vision and design team meets monthly. It includes those one might normally expect to be associated with the building of a performing arts center, those who understand programming and audience behavior alongside architects, people who work in the arts for dance companies, Shakespeare companies and opera companies. Also on the team are folks who work in the immersive technology industry, including people from Microsoft, T-Mobile and Valve. The idea is to create a venue in which traditional live performing arts can be enhanced by immersive technology. Additionally, instead of designing a space that will compete with venues in Seattle, the idea is to build a space that will complement them. Many established Seattle groups are interested in building an Eastside audience and are involved in the planning work. Around the nation, companies that are putting immersive technologies into their live performances are seeing the average age of their audiences reduced by 30 or 40 years. Typically buildings are built for companies that already have audiences in place. PACE is being invented without a natural constituency or audience, and that is part of the challenge. The board is on board with the approach, the foundations and corporations being talked with are very excited about the new vision approach for the venue.

Mr. Cullom said it will be necessary to raise about \$200 million. That has been broken down to the number of gifts at certain levels that will be needed, and prospect lists are being developed to go after them. Over the years the organization has been in existence, a considerable amount of money has been raised, and pledges have been received. In figuring out what was practical and not practical in terms of the work that had been done toward raising money for the building, it became obvious very quickly that the scope and scale of the project had changed and grown so much from its original concept that the naming agreement in place with the Tateuchi family was no longer sufficient. Typically a naming gift accounts for 35 to 40 percent of the total, which for a \$200 million campaign would mean a \$75 million to \$80 million gift. The \$25 million Tateuchi gift, while unbelievably generous at the time, is not enough to allow for building the building. The Tateuchi family was approached and they agreed to remove their name from the building, which allows for working toward a larger gift. The ongoing conversations with the Tateuchi family are focused on how they will contribute to the project in terms of a program or a different space or part of the building.

The tasks and challenges are understood and the organization is now staffed to address them. The idea around the building is one that will resonate with the community. The vision has also been expanded beyond just a building at 106th Avenue NE and NE 10th Street and efforts are under way to engage with many of the developers who are coming to town, including Amazon, Vulcan and Skanska, about including cultural amenity space in their developments. The idea is for PACE to be the hub and center of the operations for the various spaces.

Answering a question asked by Commissioner Gulati, Mr. Cullom said PACE has been the name of the organization since its founding, and that will always be the business name. The building itself will ultimately have a different name. Inside, the theater and other places within the building will have individual names as a reward for gifts.

Commissioner Lau Hui asked about the timeline. Mr. Cullom allowed that for many years the timeline was all the organization talked about. Dates were given for when ground would be broken, and for when funds needed to be raised. The entire approach was designed around that approach, which has now been proved to be the wrong approach in that it continually led to the same questions over and over again. In order to do justice to the idea that is firing the imagination, the full process of designing the building will be carried out. The design process will likely take a year, after which permitting and preparation for the building will take another year. During that time fundraising efforts will be undertaken. Ground will be broken when the building is designed and ready and when there is the money in hand to do so. Typically, ground is broken when the bank sees 80 to 85 percent of the required funding in place, against which they lend money. With the city's contribution, there is currently somewhere between \$50 million and \$60 million in hand toward the estimated \$200 million total.

Commissioner Malkin asked if anything can be recovered from what was invested in the first design. Mr. Cullom allowed that there could be some recovery. The original design was more expensive than it needed to be. As the design work moves ahead on the notion of being a flexible cultural hub rather than a traditional performing arts center, the overall cost will come down. Where developers agree to include and build cultural spaces in their buildings, PACE will be called on only to raise money to outfit those spaces. The idea is that PACE would be positioned to serve as the umbrella arts organization for Bellevue and the Eastside, handling the education programs as well as the back office and financing functions. PACE would serve as presenter, curator and maintainer of the spaces.

Commissioner Gulati said it was her understanding that PACE was already booking performances and she asked where the performances will take place. Mr. Cullom said they will occur all over the Eastside, including at the Kirkland Center, Meydenbauer Center, and the Ikea center in south King County, as well as in non-traditional performing spaces, including outdoor spaces. He said he was currently in talks with three acts, one from China, one from Eastern Europe and one from the United Kingdom. The idea is that each would come to the Eastside for a couple of weeks to give the community a taste of the kind of programming PACE hopes to be able to provide, and to make the point to the Seattle organizations that PACE does not intend to compete with them.

Commissioner Malkin stressed the need to include local groups in programming performances. He noted that Bellevue used to have a symphony, but it did not have a space. The Pacific Northwest Ballet school is on the Eastside, but their performances are all in Seattle. While those are perhaps more traditional, they need to be balanced with newer performance forms. Mr. Cullom said he has heard similar concerns from others.

Mr. MacDonald said he and the Commission hears often about a lack of presentation space in Bellevue, but also hears that production space in Bellevue is an issue along with affordable living space. Commissioner Malkin added to the list education space and rehearsal space, as well as exhibition space. Mr. Cullom allowed that those larger conversations need to happen and said they need to happen now as plans are being drawn up for development in the city.

Commissioner Lau Hui asked if the city owns the land on which PACE will be located. Mr. Cullom said it is owned by Kemper Development Company. The agreement in place is that the land will be donated.

Commissioner Malkin asked where things stand with PACE. Mr. Cullom said it is in the design and fundraising stage. Asked by Commissioner Malkin what the Commission can do to help, Mr. Cullom said the main thing will be in talking up the project and making connections.

Ms. Minor said help with making connections will be very important and appreciated. She said Mr. Cullom is spending as much time as possible out in the community talking to folks about the project and seeking as much feedback as possible. The process will only be so good as the network is strong. The Commission sits in a unique position in that it gets to see and know much more about what is going on in Bellevue. It would be very helpful at a minimum to have the Commission make recommendations to PACE. Additionally, providing feedback to the Council will be key.

B. Lattawood Park Final Design

Mr. MacDonald noted that the artist team of Jim Hirschfield and Sonya Ishii were selected by a panel that included a professional artist, a local resident, the president of the Whispering Heights Collingwood Neighborhood Association, and an Arts Commissioner. Including the electrical work, the total budget for the project is \$105,000, of which \$75,000 will be coming from the arts program budget. An additional \$30,000 will come from the Neighborhood Enhancement Program for lighting along the north-south path that connects the neighborhoods through the well-loved and well-used park. The community was clear during the outreach efforts that it values the sled run hill and the natural environment of the park.

The artwork is titled *Nature's Integral Fragments*. There are three designs and three artwork pieces in addition to the bollard lights. Two of the works include the projection of light patterns across the path. To the degree possible, vegetation will not be removed to accommodate the installation. The trees make the installation area the darkest part of the path, which is why lighting is included in the design of the works. Images will be etched in black granite that will top off the hemispheric stainless-steel vessels, two at 36 inches diameter and one at 25.5 inches diameter. The etching will be sealed to keep moss and the like out, though it will still be possible to feel the texture.

Commissioner Gulati asked if the artwork would be negatively impacted by a need at some point in the future to repave the pathway. Mr. MacDonald said he did not believe the work would be harmed. The pieces are pushed back enough from the walkway and the electrical lines are 24 inches deep, well below what would be needed to convert the asphalt walkway to a concrete walkway.

Mr. MacDonald explained that the third piece, because of cost implications, will be smaller and will not have the lighting component. Accordingly, it will not illuminate the path. Getting power to the site would have required moving a lot of vegetation. Solar lighting for the work would also be problematic and expensive given that the site is highly shaded. That would mean having to locate the solar panel away from the work and run conduit underground, requiring the removal of vegetation.

Commissioner Malkin asked if the lights would come on based on a solar sensor. Mr. MacDonald explained that the lighting will actually be preprogrammed to operate along with the bollard lights.

Mr. MacDonald said a contingency has been built into the budget, and once the fabrication contract is finalized, it will take eight to twelve weeks to create the works. Installation could be as soon as mid-February 2020.

A motion to approve the Lattawood Park Public Art design was made by Commissioner Lewis. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Gulati and the motion carried unanimously.

C. Bellwether Update

Mr. MacDonald promised the Commissioners a working session on Bellwether at the November meeting. He noted that the installation work wrapped up on September 28 and since then there has been no opportunity to have debriefing meetings with site managers and owners or the artists and curators. The opening night party was a tremendous success with more than 750 attendees.

Mr. MacDonald said the first three years of Bellwether are aimed at building capacity and testing the pilot. With the second year in the books, the third year will be aimed at developing partnerships and pivoting from the simple use of space to much more active engagement on the part of organizations on the ground.

Addressing the issue of there being few local artists involved, Mr. MacDonald said there was only one artist working to create work, but there were a number of Bellevue-based artists participating as speakers. Of the total number of people who either created work or participated in an event, excluding the musical performances, Bellevue-based artists accounted for 25 percent. There was also a lot of engagement with the local community around pulling in voices and focusing discussions on Bellevue that was incredibly rich.

The lesson learned from Bellwether is that there is an active local audience that wants to be engaged, both on a face-to-face level and with the arts in general. There is admittedly work to do on the 2-D and 3-D artists from Bellevue. Part of the challenge for the Bellwether program will be in looking to the future. The work being done by Mr. Cullom in regard to immersive technologies fits perfect in with what Bellwether is envisioned to be. Bellwether is about the future. It is a program for the community and a dialog about what is to come. It has been a struggle to find Bellevue artists with that background, but inroads are being made. Steps are being taken to get a Bellevue artists roster drafted.

Commissioner Malkin suggested that when reaching out to the artists that they be asked to reach out to their friends to identify a larger list of Eastside artists.

Commissioner Gulati asked if only artists registered as artists will be included on the roster. She said she knows people who have careers outside of the art world but who also are artists. Mr. MacDonald answered that anyone could apply to be added to the list. Art does not have to be the person's primary job. On the other hand, the roster should not necessarily be flooded with the names of everyone who has an artistic leaning. It should be reserved for those who are interested in getting their work out there and working toward a professional artist career. The roster will be used in working with curators, who will need to have some way of looking at the artists' works, such as a website.

Commissioner Malkin suggested the Commission could play a role in reaching out to local artists and encouraging them to seek to be added to the roster. He proposed adding to the Commission's webpage a place for people to submit feedback. Commissioner Gulati agreed and added that the *Bellevue Reporter* could run an article talking about the city looking for local artists to be added to the roster. She allowed that some screening would likely be necessary.

Commissioner Malkin asked where things are projected to stand by the time of next year's Bellwether. Mr. MacDonald said the design guidelines should be close to being completed by then. Installation of the artwork for the entrance to the park will be a big jump in the right direction. Commissioner Malkin highlighted the need to leverage the development of the Grand Connection as Bellwether continues to be moved forward. Mr. MacDonald agreed and said he intended to have a conversation with Mr. Cullom about focusing on the Grand Connection and being strategic about the things desired for certain areas.

Commissioner Malkin asked about the Bellwether survey results. Mr. MacDonald said had not yet reviewed the survey, which is posted to the Bellwether arts week website. Emails calling attention to the survey were sent out.

Commissioner Lewis said she could not put her finger on why the music events were not better attended. She said the music was very good.

Mr. MacDonald said there were over 50 artists participating in Bellwether and there were 18 distinct events. It appears that upwards of 3000 people attended during the nine-day period. Some events were lightly attended, such as the music events, but the workshops and Today's Special were booked solid. Many who attended indicated they had not engaged in the arts for quite some time. One woman flew in from Austin to attend the While Supplies Last event; she read about the event and used it as an excuse to visit Bellevue for the first time. Her friend flew in from France.

Commissioner Malkin said it would be helpful to include in the survey a question about being either a first-time visitor or having previously attended Bellwether.

Mr. MacDonald said the demographics were quite diverse, including age diversity ranging from small children to senior adults. The most meaningful events, according to many, were the smaller events that involved conversations and one-on-one contact. The opening party was well attended and was a great success. It was evidence that an audience is being built that sees Bellevue as a place for the arts. The two pop-up While Supplies Last markets saw over 900 people attend, many of whom showed up 45 minutes early. Some 495 artists contributed works for the markets, and more than 65 percent of the works were sold. The City Hall reception saw 110 people show up. The event showcased the artwork at City Hall. The marching band finale to the event was a lot of fun and well received. The Today's Special event was the most successful component. It was made very welcoming as an art and community space by Ellen Ito. The cultural conversations held at the Bellevue Arts Museum drew some 65 attendees. The musical showcases were fun, though clearly there are some kinks to be worked out. The breaks between some performances were too long, and there is a need for better marketing. The tour with the creative director was certainly a highlight. It drew more than 20 people.

Mr. MacDonald said the next steps will include debriefing sessions with each of the curators, the creative directors and the site partners. There will be a larger debrief meeting and anyone who participated as a speaker or performer will be welcome to attend. A date for that meeting has not yet been determined.

5. COMMISSION QUICK BUSINESS

Mr. MacDonald reported that applications for the grant cycle were due October 9.

6. REPORTS

- A. Commissioner's Committee and Lead Reports – As Noted
- B. Project Updates from Staff – As Noted

7. CORRESPONDENCE, INFORMATION

- A. Written Correspondence

Mr. MacDonald noted the receipt of a correspondence from the Evergreen Association of Fine Arts.

B. Information

i. Committees – As Noted

8. ADJOURNMENT

Commissioner Malkin adjourned the meeting at 6:33 p.m.