

BELLEVUE ARTS COMMISSION
REGULAR MEETING
MINUTES

November 5, 2019
4:30 p.m.

Bellevue City Hall
Room 1E -109

COMMISSIONERS PRESENT: Commissioners Aldredge, Lewis, Malkin, Wolfteich
COMMISSIONERS ABSENT: Chair Manfredi, Commissioners Gulati, Lau Hui
STAFF PRESENT: Manette Stamm, Gwen Rousseau, Department of
Planning and Community Development; Jesse Canedo,
Economic Development
OTHERS PRESENT: None
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 Gulati and Lau Hui, all of whom were excused.

2. APPROVAL OF AGENDA AND MINUTES

A. Approval of Agenda

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

B. Approval of Minutes

Motion to approve the October 1, 2019, minutes as submitted was made by Commissioner Lewis. The motion was seconded was by Commissioner Malkin and the motion carried unanimously.

3. ORAL COMMUNICATIONS

Ms. Mary Ellen Hunley, executive director of City Opera Ballet, said she was present just to observe.

4. ACTION ITEMS AND DISCUSSION ITEMS

A. 2020 Census: What, Why and How

Senior Planner Gwen Rousseau reminded the Commissioners that the next decennial census will occur in 2020. She shared a short video about the census and then noted that the census motto is to count everyone once, only once, and in the right place, which is mandated by the US Constitution to be done every ten years to ensure fair representation in the House of Representatives. In addition, the census figures are used to determine how to allocate money through the 55 federal programs that are guided by census data. In 2016, Washington state

received over \$16 billion through the federal programs, averaging about \$2300 per person. Since 2010, Bellevue has received more than \$76 million for transportation projects; \$7.1 million for park projects; and \$5.8 million by way of Community Development Block Grants. The state annually allocates tax dollars collected back to the city based on the population number, which over the last decade totaled about \$40.9 million.

Ms. Rousseau stated that as the city's demographer for the past ten years, she has come to understand the interest in having solid demographic data. The census is important for helping decision-makers make good decisions in equitable ways.

Beginning in mid-March 2020, postcards will be sent out via mail. For the first time, they will invite people to go online to fill out their census questionnaire. Moving to the online format will cost the government far less and there will be less room for error. Ms. Rousseau said the controversy around adding a question about citizenship to the census was resolved by not adding the question, which means some who might otherwise have elected not to fill out the questionnaire will choose to participate. It will, however, be challenging to help people understand how important the census is and that the data are confidential. It is understood that some will face challenges going online to fill out the census, and to address that assistance centers will be set up around the nation in places like libraries, social service agencies and community centers. People will be able to receive online and by phone assistance in 12 different languages. Those who do not respond either online or by phone by early April will receive in the mail another letter that will include a reminder and a paper questionnaire. Census takers will start knocking on doors in May to collect information face-to-face for those who have not responded by then.

Ms. Rousseau said the census questionnaire has questions about age, Hispanic origin, race, relationship to householder, sex, and whether the person is a homeowner or renter. Additionally, there will be operational questions about the number of people living at the address, any additional people staying at the residence, the telephone number of the person filling out the questionnaire, the names of the people living at the address, and whether anyone usually lives or stays somewhere else.

Commissioner Malkin asked why the census would include a question specifically about Hispanic origin. Ms. Rousseau said it has been found that many who are Hispanic or Latino view that as a race, so when they see the racial question, if Hispanic or Latino is not included they will check "other." Hispanic is a protected class and is the largest ethnic group in the United States, so it will be important to get solid data. Each time the census comes around there is talk about changing the racial questions. This time consideration was given to adding another category for Middle Eastern though it was not done.

Ms. Rousseau said the census will face a number of challenges, not the least of which is the move to primarily filling out the questionnaire online, affecting those with low digital skills or who lack access to the internet. There is also an increased level of distrust in government generally, and there is less funding for the census in terms of being able to open assistance centers. Bellevue has a very large number of recent immigrants. Some 24,000 Bellevue residents, which is 17 percent of the city's population, entered in the United States after 2010 and have never participated in the census. Helping them understand what the census is and why it is done will be very important. Bellevue also has a large number of its population who speak a language other than English at home.

Commissioner Malkin asked what will prevent people from outside the United States filling out the census online. Ms. Rousseau said the Census Bureau has spent a lot of resources compiling a master address file. The census is actually based on that file and everyone is associated with it. Bellevue has an address coordinator in the IT department. That person has

been combing through all of their addresses to make sure they have the correct ones. Hacking the system is certainly something people are concerned about. The Census Bureau has been testing the system, including getting people to try hacking in. Because the census is so important to the form of government in the United States, confidentiality and security is given the highest priority.

Commissioner Wolfeich of more concern than someone hacking person files is someone hacking the system to inflate or deflate numbers for their own reasons. Ms. Rousseau said those who work at the Census Bureau are statisticians and they are looking at things very closely and making sure people are counted only once. They are constantly focused on quality control to make sure the numbers are not off. Undercounts of some populations do occur and they are looking at that very closely as well. They send people out to verify addresses as part of their quality control efforts. If something that seems fishy arises, it will be checked out.

Commissioner Aldredge asked how homeless persons are counted and Ms. Rousseau explained that they are counted at the shelters. She allowed that getting an accurate count of the homeless is challenging. Certain groups of populations such as the homeless, people in nursing facilities and students in college dormitories fall into a category called special enumeration. Census workers actually go out before the census period to collection the locations and get counts for those populations.

Ms. Rousseau added that there are predicted mail non-response rate areas identified for the city. Those are areas with concentrations of hard-to-count populations. The locations are mainly places where there are a lot of renters, people who have lower incomes, and people who do not speak English very well.

The city's strategy has three prongs: publications, people and places. In terms of publications, the focus will be on making sure every way of getting the word out is utilized to the fullest. The people strategy focuses on the city's frontline staff, including all of the boards and commissions and all partner organizations. The places strategy will involve making sure every city facility has a census presence. There has been a lot of collaboration between local jurisdictions to make sure any gaps left by the federal government are addressed. Bellevue has contributed \$50,000 to the regional census fund. Seattle and King County have contributed \$250,000 each to the fund, and the Seattle Foundation contributed \$500,000. Redmond and Kirkland have contributed \$20,000 and \$30,000 respectively. Funds have also been received from philanthropists. In all, the dollars will be used to fund community based organizations that are in touch with harder-to-count populations. Eastside Refugee and Immigrant Coalition is one of those organizations.

Ms. Rousseau said everyone can help the process by becoming more informed and sharing information with others. The census website has been designed to be accessible and user friendly. Local residents will be hired to help with the census.

Commissioner Malkin asked if the census will be hiring homeless persons. Ms. Rousseau said they are willing to hire any viable candidates. Commissioner Aldredge suggested those hired would need to be reliable and persons residents will open their doors to.

Answering a question asked by Commissioner Wolfeich, Ms. Rousseau said the \$16 billion in federal funds that flowed to the state of Washington in 2016 alone took several forms. Some of it went to individuals via Medicaid and Medicare. Another large segment of the dollars were in the form of highway transportation funds.

B. Grant Program Update

Planner Manette Stamm announced that she has been put in charge of a large portion of the arts program. With regard to the grant program, she noted that 46 applicants had applied for the 2020 cycle. The applications are online, which has proved to be a difficult transition for some but the kinks are being worked out in conjunction with the consultant. Help is offered in different languages as well.

Commissioner Malkin said he has filled out the application both on paper and online and found the scoring mechanism online to be much better. It certainly is more consistent and easier to track. Commissioner Wolfteich concurred and stated that the version of the online application for 2020 is certainly an improvement over the 2019 version. Commissioner Malkin said he would prefer to see separate applications for each type of grant.

Ms. Stamm said three Commissioners are chosen to participate in the review process annually along with two outside artists. The consultants provide process training and the panel then has about three weeks to review all of the applications, discuss and score them. Selection of the two outside artists largely depends on who responds to emails that are sent out. The outside reviewers are compensated for their time.

Commissioner Malkin said he was concerned about the fact that neither of the outside artists chosen for the 2020 cycle live in Bellevue. He said he had no doubt that they have the qualifications needed to serve on the panel.

Ms. Stamm said the schedule calls for presentation of the grant recommendations to the City Council on December 9 for review and approval. Once approved, the grantees have a week or so to accept their grants. A post-grant report will be required to be submitted by late November 2020.

Ms. Stamm stressed that the requested dollar amounts far exceed the available allocation dollars. In part that is because the pool of applicants continues to increase each year and because the dollars available for allocation have not increased. Commissioner Malkin pointed out that the allocation amount has not increased for close to 20 years. Jess Canedo with Economic Development noted that the city will adopt a new budget in 2020. Commissioner Malkin said the budget funding requests put forward by the Commission have traditionally been pushed to the bottom of the list and it has always been thanks to the Council alone that the arts program has been funded at all. Mr. Canedo said the staff will be getting updates on the next budget process in December. He said he would keep the Commission informed.

Commissioner Malkin asked when the final report on the Cultural Compass survey being done by the consultant will be received. Ms. Stamm said the work was put on hold and will remain on hold until the position vacated by Mr. Heim is filled. That likely will not occur until the first quarter of 2020.

Commissioner Lewis observed that in past years the Commissioners had been given tickets to attend programs funded in part with grant dollars. She said it was a good way to be aware of what was being offered. The Commissioners who attended programs were asked to write up a review.

5. COMMISSION QUICK BUSINESS – None

6. REPORTS

A. Commissioners' Committee and Lead Reports – As Noted

B. Project Updates from Staff

Ms. Stamm reported that the Power Up program has a cohort that meets periodically throughout the year. They have a final meeting scheduled for November to close things out. She said she hoped to do a survey to determine what worked and what did not work in order to improve the program for next year. She stressed that the Power Up program is not fully budgeted for next year.

Ms. Stamm said she was currently working with the artist on the fabrication contract for the Downtown Park public art project. Mr. Canedo said once the contract is developed it will be handled by staff and will not be coming back before the Commission for review. Ms. Stamm said a maintenance plan and schedule will be included in the scope.

Commissioner Aldredge said she saw some basic design problems in the work that will lead to maintenance problems. Maintenance budgets rarely increase as collections constantly increase. She said she had been told that the concerns would be handled at the contract phase. Simply saying the issues will be addressed through the city's maintenance contract will not be enough. Mr. Canedo said maintenance is always a concern and that there is a need to make sure there is sufficient budget to do the required work. Commissioner Aldredge pointed out that the works done by the artist have for the most part tended to be located in dry and sunny climates. There is nothing in the design that addresses Bellevue's very different climate.

7. CORRESPONDENCE, INFORMATION

A. Written Correspondence – As Noted

B. Information

i. Committees – As Noted

8. ADJOURNMENT

Commissioner Malkin adjourned the meeting at 5:40 p.m.