

BELLEVUE ARTS COMMISSION
REGULAR MEETING
MINUTES

February 11, 2020
4:30 p.m.

Bellevue City Hall
Room 1E -110

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

COMMISSIONERS ABSENT: Commissioner Lewis

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

OTHERS PRESENT: None

RECORDING SECRETARY: Gerry Lindsay

I. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 4:33 p.m. by Chairperson Manfredi who presided. All Commissioners were present with the exception of Commissioner Wolfteich, who arrived at 4:41 p.m., and Commissioner Lewis, who was excused.

2. APPROVAL OF AGENDA AND MINUTES

A. Approval of Agenda

Commissioner Lau Hui noted the agenda should indicate approval of the December 2019 minutes rather than the October 2019 minutes.

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

B. Approval of Minutes

Motion to approve the December 3, 2019, minutes as submitted was made by Commissioner Malkin. The motion was seconded was by Commissioner Gulati and the motion carried unanimously.

3. ORAL COMMUNICATIONS – None

4. ACTION ITEMS AND DISCUSSION ITEMS

A. 2019 Accomplishments

Arts Program Assistant Manette Stamm reported that the list of accomplishments for 2019 included a successful grants program. She said the lessons learned from that process have been applied to improving the 2020 iteration of the program, which will be the third year of the program started by Josh. Some things will need to be made clear to applicants, such as special projects are limited to two years. The instructions for how to use the online application will also be clarified.

Chair Manfredi commented that the online application can be very complicated. A group may think it is applying for a special project and not even know they are not eligible because of the two-year limit. Additionally, the Commission will not even know a group will be applying until they submit an application, at which point they may learn of the limit and find that the deadline has passed. Ms. Stamm said applicants are required to submit a letter of interest, which outlines what they want to do. The letter, while not official, is reviewed and when a group qualifies for their proposal, they are moved on to the application round. Those who do not qualify receive a notice outlining why they do not qualify and an invitation to call and talk to staff about what can be done. It will be made clearer for the 2021 process that the letter of interest is required. Additionally, the timeline will be moved up for more time for review and approvals from the Commission and Council.

Ms. Stamm said the work to update the Cultural Compass was launched under Mr. Heim's leadership. He went before the Council to have the scope of the work approved. The proposal was well received by the Council. The cultural needs assessment was completed in 2019, though the final report has not yet been released by the outside consultant.

Meydenbauer Bay Park opened in 2019 with a lot of new public art. Bellwether was another success story for the year. The design for artwork in Downtown Park was approved by the Commission and presented to the Council. The Lattawood Park project was also approved and will start construction in 2020. There are some works returning to city hall as a result of the reconstruction of the plaza area. The city's public art collection was featured in the in-flight magazine for Alaska Airlines.

Also launched in 2019, though the city has not been directly involved in it, was the Japanese-American legacy project. Mr. Heim worked on the project briefly before leaving the city. The project was brought to the city because of an opportunity associated with the redesign of the NE 8th Street bridge. Ms. Stamm said she would work to set up a presentation for the Commission from the person who is leading it to keep the Commission in the loop.

B. 2020 Workplan

Ms. Stamm said the Cultural Compass update will be the largest strategic initiative for 2020 for the new arts program manager. The plan is complimentary to the Comprehensive Plan and serves as a guiding document for the arts program. It includes a number of very important policies used to support arts projects. The document has not been updated in quite a long time.

The BelRed Arts District strategic initiative will continue to be worked on during the year. The city has requested support from 4Culture to host a Creative Consultant to facilitate the development of a community group that will help identify opportunities in the district and integrate the creative community into a model of sustainable neighborhood development beyond just BelRed. The community liaison, Katie Miller, will likely start in April through interviewing people in the neighborhood and establishing relationships. The hope is that a community-based art district action plan will be initiated in 2021 as a grassroots effort.

Commissioner Malkin asked for details regarding the 2020 goal of developing strong relationships with local arts organizations. Ms. Manette said that is a nod to the role of the new title of Arts Community Manager, which used to be called Arts Program Manager. The focus of the job will be interfacing with the community and developing relationships. Commissioner Malkin noted that currently most outreach is through the granting process, which essentially leaves out those who do not get grants. He said that is particularly true with the PowerUp program and he asked if there is a strategy to expand that concept with capacity

building. Ms. Stamm said that is a question to be answered during the course of the coming year under the direction of the new Arts Community Manager.

Commissioner Gulati noted the Commission had previously discussed seeking additional funding from the city to prevent having any organization that applies get left behind. The Commission also previously discussed the number of years funding from the city for the arts has not increased. There should be discussions with the Council about increasing funding for the arts. Ms. Stamm said that is an issue that could be added to the list of topics of interest.

With regard to public art projects, Ms. Stamm said a scope has been released for a contractor to help bring some of the city's artworks up to a needed level of maintenance and care. The assessment conducted with 4Culture during 2019 will be used to inform that work. Those items that need significant work will be treated as separate work items. She said she is currently working to update the public art map to reflect all recent changes. The work to ramp up Bellwether 2020 has kicked off and the Commission will receive an update at its March meeting.

Commissioner Aldredge suggested the Commission should be more involved with the selection of a curator for Bellwether. She said she had concerns about what happened in 2019 and did not want the Commission out of the loop until it was too late to do anything about it. Ms. Stamm said the issue could be discussed as part of the Commission's committee and project lead assignments.

Commissioner Malkin asked if there had been any pushback from the Council when the Downtown Park art project was presented. Chair Manfredi said the update for the Council did not include an ask of any kind. The major purpose of the update was to prepare the Council for the next step, which is penciling contracts with the artist.

C. Topics of Interest

Commissioner Malkin said he wanted to resuscitate the Artspace project, which involves affordable housing for artists and gallery performance/studio/rehearsal space. The project was shelved pending the consultant's research regarding the need. He said there are four Artspace projects in Seattle for which there clearly is a waiting list for those spaces. It would behoove Bellevue to also have an Artspace, particularly in light of the fact that a group called Vala, which has a new home at City Hall in Redmond, is pitching Redmond as the Eastside arts center. Given the economic growth Bellevue is facing, the Artspace conversation should be picked up again.

Commissioner Aldredge said she attended the Creative Economy meeting at which a couple of representatives of different culture groups talked about needing performance space. Commissioner Malkin said there virtually is no exhibition space for visual artists in Bellevue. It was hoped the Tateuchi Center would help in that regard, but that project seems to be moving very slowly.

Commissioner Gulati commented that nothing had ever been done to address the Bellevue Festival of the Arts fair that closed down when it lost the site on which it operated. She said she has heard conversations about holding the event in Downtown Park on the same weekend as the other downtown arts fairs.

With regard to Bellwether, Commissioner Aldredge reiterated the need for the Commission to be involved in the process of selecting a curator. She said she felt strongly that Bellevue and Eastside artists were not included in 2019. She said the person who runs the Eastside Artists Collaborative would be an excellent choice. She is based on the Eastside and works with

many artists from the Eastside. Hiring a hipster from Seattle who then brings 30 friends from Seattle does nothing to further the Bellwether mission.

Commissioner Lau Hui said she would welcome having a combination of artists from the Eastside and other areas. Commissioner Aldredge agreed but said by hiring a curator that has local connections is the right approach. There will of course be artists from Seattle included, but hiring someone without local connections will result in participation primarily by non-Eastside artists.

Ms. Stamm said the Commission approved and the city hired SuttonBeresCuller to be the curator for one year and creative director for the subsequent two years. The creative director selects the theme and direction for the show each year, which must also be approved by the Commission. The curators recommended by the creative director must be approved by the Commission, and the curator is tasked with finding artists. SuttonBeresCuller remains under contract to perform those services.

Commissioner Aldredge asked if it would be possible to have SuttonBeresCuller come talk to the Commission, especially about what did not work in 2019. Chair Manfredi said the established process involves regular updates from SuttonBeresCuller. He pointed out that the Commission expressed discontent about the first Bellwether under their leadership and directed that there be a different direction taken for the second year. The response was that they did not do enough in the second year to make the desired changes. Their third year will be 2020 and the same message will need to be delivered again. He stressed, however, that while the Commission has not been satisfied with the level of local artist participation, there are elements of the program the Commission has collectively been very happy with. SuttonBeresCuller has been involved in a number of projects in Bellevue that go beyond the scope of Bellwether, including the Grand Connection.

Commissioner Aldredge said instead of taking the negative approach with SuttonBeresCuller, the Commission should act positively by giving them specific local resources.

Ms. Stamm noted that the intention of Bellwether has never been to showcase only local artists. In past years there was no creative director and a general call to artists was put out. The show was therefore very dependent on those who responded to the call, many of whom were international. That approach changed under the current pilot program which allows the creative director to determine the vision. SuttonBeresCuller has found it challenging to find artists on the Eastside due to the lack of a comprehensive list. While in 2019 there was a desire on the part of the Commission to see more local artists selected, the fact is the curators rather than the creative director made the artist selections.

Commissioner Aldredge pointed out that if the creative director chose the curator, the vision of the creative director played a major role. She suggested the Commission should seek to exert some consequence, control or direction on those kinds of decisions. In the absence, Bellevue is not getting the benefit.

Commissioner Gulati agreed that in the future the Commission should be involved in determining who the creative director is for Bellwether.

Chair Manfredi stressed that Bellwether has changed dramatically from where it started. He agreed that in the beginning the purpose of the show was never to feature sculpture coming out of Bellevue or the Eastside. The event was completely transformed a couple of years ago into its new format. What the event should be and should look like going forward will absolutely be within the purview of the Commission to determine. He reiterated that the Commission has been very clear with SuttonBeresCuller in voicing concerns about including

local artists, and he said the point could again be made and even more clearly. SuttonBeresCuller was very receptive and it was noted that the curator in fact did look at a roster of local artists, though the decision was made not to use them. It is not known how complete that roster was, and it is entirely possible the curator for 2020 will reconsider.

Commissioner Malkin said the feedback was that the curator could not find Eastside artists, which is what led to the work done by Arts Program Coordinator Scott MacDonald that resulted in a new roster of Eastside artists. Going into the third year, the curator will have access to a better roster from which to choose.

Commissioner Aldredge asked if the Commission could review the roster before it is handed off to the curator. Mr. MacDonald said it is not a public document in that it is not a roster people applied to be included on. It is not a complete roster by any means and was intended only as a bandaid approach to the problem rather than a complete solution, which would be a roster artists choose to have their names included on.

Commissioner Malkin said he would like to see a form included on the Commission's website for artists wanting to be included on an official roster to fill out. Commissioner Aldredge agreed and suggested it should be posted in advance of the next Bellwether. Mr. MacDonald said it will not be possible to do something like that ahead of the next Bellwether given the schedule. The artists rosters must be in hand very soon.

Commissioner Aldredge asked if a call could be put out for artists to apply for Bellwether. Mr. MacDonald said the model for the current three-year pilot does not include doing that. Commissioner Aldredge said the model is not working, but Mr. MacDonald countered that in fact the model is working, just not for Eastside artists.

Commissioner Malkin asked if SuttonBeresCuller had already selected curators for the 2020 Bellwether. Mr. MacDonald said their draft of that was due to be submitted on February 12. The list of curators will be presented to the Commission in March. Commissioner Malkin said the opportunity could be taken at that meeting to stress the importance of recruiting Eastside artists. Mr. MacDonald said the curators will have a couple of weeks to come up with an artist roster, and the artists themselves will have six to eight weeks to come up with proposals. Creating a roster of Eastside artists is something that would take far more than just a few weeks. The fact that the Commission wants more local artists in the show has been relayed strongly to the creative director. He stressed, however, that the vision of anchoring art on the Grand Connection is not about involving Bellevue artists; that is not the vision that was approved by either the Commission or the Council. The ship has already sailed, at least for the coming year, but attempts will be made to steer the ship to the degree possible. Bellwether is about a sign of what is to come. The challenge is that a lot of Bellevue artists have work that is not aligned with that particular idea in that their work is not about emerging forms of art.

Commissioner Gulati said the question is how to avoid having Bellwether look like something that comes out of Seattle. The Commission should direct the creative director to provide something fresh, something different from what Seattle offers. Mr. MacDonald concurred and said he has given that advice to the creative director for the coming year.

Commissioner Aldredge allowed that staff are working with the creative director to bring about different results, but said she was not sure things were being done differently enough. Mr. MacDonald pointed out that the first year of the three-year pilot there was one Bellevue artist in the show and no Bellevue community members taking part in the events. In 2019, 28 percent of the total participants were from Bellevue, including performers and keynote speakers, though Bellevue residents did not account for 28 percent of the visual art presentations. That increase represented a huge improvement and that success can be built on

for 2020, including in terms of visual artists. He stressed that the vision outlined by the Commission and approved by the Council for the three-year pilot has been carried out. Tweaks have been made each year, and at the end of the third year the Commission will step back, look at everything, consider what worked, what needs to be improved, and if an entirely new course should be charted.

Mr. MacDonald agreed with the need to move forward with building an official roster of Eastside and Bellevue artists, one that continues to build over time. He stressed that he could not promise such a roster could be developed in time to be useful for the 2020 Bellwether. He also said he would like to see open office hours during Bellwether where anyone in the community could come and talk with arts program staff. That is one way artists attending the show could make themselves known. Commissioner Gulati said forms could be made available there and even at the Bellevue Arts Museum for artists to fill out.

Chair Manfredi said the budget is an issue that comes up frequently. He said he has on occasions made presentations to the Council regarding the need to increase the city's allocation to the arts.

Commissioner Lau Hui said she would like to see an art tax approved, like the hotel/motel tax most cities have. Commissioner Malkin commented that Issaquah has an entertainment tax that applies to movie theaters.

Chair Manfredi said it was recently mentioned by a Councilmember that in some cities once a location is established for art, it is made available for naming rights, giving the community the direct opportunity to support the arts program.

Commissioner Gulati reminded the Commission that Chief Economic Development Officer Jess Canedo at a recent Commission meeting indicated some work is under way with Councilmembers to see more money flow into the arts program.

Commissioner Lau Hui said having a tax dedicated to the arts would do away with the need to constantly be asking the Council for more money. Mr. MacDonald said the Council has the say in how the hotel/motel tax revenues are divvied up. Currently all of those funds go to Meydenbauer Center. Some jurisdictions do have entertainment taxes or admissions taxes, which is what Issaquah has.

Commissioner Aldredge asked what would have to be done to effect an entertainment or admissions tax. Mr. MacDonald said he was not sure. The one percent for arts approach is something the Council could initiate in that it would only apply to city projects.

Commissioner Malkin pointed out that the data from the surveys is in hand showing the community appreciates public art and wants to see more of it.

Ms. Stamm said she has been doing some research into the Commission's involvement in the budget process. She said there is nothing in the Commission's bylaws or the city's code that says the Commission has a role to play. Mr. MacDonald said that is why the Commission is not involved in making budgeting decisions other than in advocating for arts funding. Councilmember Zahn brought up the idea of private funding via naming rights, an option that may be tapped along the Grand Connection in conjunction with the Bellevue Downtown Association, which has relationships with all of the property owners.

Commissioner Gulati asked how much money is spent on the arts during the course of the year, outside of staff salaries. Mr. MacDonald said there is by ordinance \$350,000 in the Capital Investment Program. To either increase or decrease that amount would require

changing the ordinance. There are additional funds, including right-of-way funds, that can be used for urban design and associated public art projects. Part of the scope for the Bel-Red streetscape plan approved by the Commission includes developing two concepts for art for which there is a separate pot of money set aside for potentially enacting one or both of the concepts. In the General Fund, grants amount to about \$145,000, and over the past couple of years the Department of Economic Development has been supplementing the arts program with planning dollars, including the work on the Cultural Compass and the Creative Edge program. There are also dollars that flow in from 4Culture and other outside sources.

Commissioner Aldredge asked if a percentage for art has ever been tried in Bellevue. Mr. MacDonald said it has been researched. The public art manager who preceded Mr. Heim did not want to pursue it on the concern that in times of economic slowdown when no capital projects are built the arts program would have no funding. Of course, the trajectory over the past decade shows a percentage for art would have generated a lot of money. The option could certainly be explored again.

Commissioner Malkin raised the issue of arts education. He said there is an active STEM program in Bellevue to which he would like to see an A added for art. There are several definitions extant for STEAM where at one end it involves including an art component to educational programs and at the other end it involves a much more integrated pedagogical approach to arts education. He suggested the Commission should seek to put its finger on the scale in favor of art education if possible.

Chair Manfredi pointed out that art is very much a part of the curriculum in the Bellevue School District, and all students are required to take art classes in one form or another.

Commissioner Malkin noted that the King County Library System is very much involved in STEM and he said he has taken the opportunity to suggest they add art to their STEM curriculum.

Mr. MacDonald said he recently met with the Bellevue School District's director of community development. He said he intended to have her come and address the Commission. He agreed that there is more than one ideology concerning STEAM programs. It started at the Rhode Island School of Design after NASA came and worked with interior architects, painters, sculptors and industrial designers to create vehicles to roam future worlds. Often STEAM is misinterpreted as including an arts curriculum, which undervalues the benefit of the arts in the creative design process.

Mr. MacDonald suggested the Commission should form a subcommittee to focus on Arts Space.

D. Committee and Project Lead Assignments

Ms. Stamm called attention to the list projects included on page 12 of the packet. She asked the Commissioners to look over the list and come to the next Commission meeting prepared to sign up to work in their areas of interest.

Mr. MacDonald said Commissioners wanting to be on specific committees should email either him or Ms. Stamm. If there are committees no one signs up for, the Chair has the authority to make appointments. Ms. Stamm reminded the Commissioners that there can be no more than three members on a committee in order to avoid quorum issues.

Mr. MacDonald suggested a committee would not actually be needed for either the public art map or the collections care and maintenance plan work.

5. COMMISSION QUICK BUSINESS

Mr. MacDonald said he along with Ms. Canedo read through a total of 141 applications for the currently vacant public arts community manager position. He said the range of applicants is very wide, ranging from those with no arts background at all to those with 25 years experience managing large departments. A set of phone interviews will be conducted through which a total of three applicants will be chosen to be interviewed in person by a panel of persons yet to be identified. The intent is to have a person hired by the end of April or early in May.

6. REPORTS

- A. Commissioners Committee and Lead Reports – As Noted
- B. Project Updates from Staff

Ms. Stamm reported that all of the grants program awards were accepted. Post-grant reports will be compiled throughout the year.

Mr. MacDonald commended Chair Manfredi on his presentation to the Council. He said it went very well and the comments from the Councilmembers were good. Contract language both parties can agree to should be in hand in the next week or so. The goal is to have the project completed by the end of May 2021 at the latest.

Mr. MacDonald said work is progressing to refine concepts for the Bel-Red streetscape plan. Those concepts will be brought before the Commission in the next couple of months. He said work on the Cultural Compass will remain on hold until the new arts community manager is in place. With regard to the Lattawood Park project, he said delivery of the stone to the engravers has been scheduled. Installation is planned for the April/May timeframe.

With regard to the downtown art project, Mr. MacDonald noted that of the \$866,000 fabrication contract, the arts program will cover \$310,000. The rest will be coming from Planning and Community Development, Department of Community Development and the Grand Connection.

7. CORRESPONDENCE, INFORMATION

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

8. ADJOURNMENT

Chair Manfredi adjourned the meeting at 6:20 p.m.