

BELLEVUE ARTS COMMISSION
REGULAR MEETING
MINUTES

March 3, 2020
4:30 p.m.

Bellevue City Hall
Room 1E -109

COMMISSIONERS PRESENT: Chairperson Manfredi, Commissioners Aldredge, Gulati, Lewis, Malkin

COMMISSIONERS ABSENT: Commissioner Wolfteich

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

OTHERS PRESENT: Councilmember Stokes

RECORDING SECRETARY: Gerry Lindsay

I. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 4:30 p.m. by Chairperson Manfredi who presided. All Commissioners were present with the exception of Commissioners Lau Hui and Wolfteich, both of whom were excused.

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 Malkin and the motion carried unanimously.

B. Approval of Minutes

Motion to approve the February 11, 2020, minutes as submitted was made by Commissioner Aldredge. The motion was seconded was by Commissioner Malkin and the motion carried unanimously.

3. ORAL COMMUNICATIONS – None

4. ACTION ITEMS AND DISCUSSION ITEMS

A. Bellwether 2020 Creative Brief

Ben Beres with SuttonBeresCuller noted that while the process is in its early stages, a good team is being developed. He said leaning on what the Commission has said, more Bellevue people will be involved. The theme for the first of the three-year pilot was “Connections,” which focused on how artists engage in the region. The second year the theme was “Roots” and was focused on how the arts ecosystem thrives. For 2020 the theme will be “Growth” and will zero in on how art is nourished and sustained given the city’s rapid growth. For the second year Meydenbauer Center will serve as a venue, though the music event will be held on Friday night rather than Saturday night to improve attendance. There will be a big push to

highlight that element, possibly including a march to grab the attention of people. Compass Plaza will be revisited again as a venue, possibly with some sculptures but certainly with poetry in the marquee. The programming at the Bellevue Arts Museum will be much the same as in 2019 with the auditorium, the main foyer and the side area for Today's Special, which proved to be very popular. There is talk of extending the event to last longer than ten days, particularly at the Bellevue Arts Museum. Downtown Park will also be reengaged for one of the weekends, and possibly Meydenbauer Bay Park, for performances. There is also the potential to use a transit center building for visual arts.

Continuing, Mr. Beres said the list of curators includes Molly Sides, a performer who has done a lot of choreography. She will do the opening night celebration at the Bellevue Arts Museum and the Friday evening performance at Meydenbauer Center. Megan Stelljes, a glass blower and neon artist, will join other glass artists, including Sarah Blood will co-curate part of the Bellevue Arts Museum exhibits. Maja Petric, a Bellevue-based artist who has done a lot of tech art, will serve as one of the main curators with a focus on Eastside artists. Anna Mlasowsky will have one of the main floors at the Bellevue Arts Museum. The While Supplies Last event from 2019 will be reprised with Mo Quick putting together a craft fair with zines, silk screens and acoustic music in collaboration with Bellevue College. Priscilla Dober will return with some sculpture and interactive style work. Cannupa Hanska Luger will be tapped for one of the Downtown Park performances. The conversations event, which in 2019 was with John Boylan, will be continued with Gary Faigin moderating around the Growth theme.

Commissioner Aldredge asked if there will be a call put out to artists. Mr. Beres said that will be up to the curators. Commissioner Aldredge said she would like to see the process made somewhat democratic with a public call, avoiding having curators tap their friends or those within their own networks. She said that is what it felt like happened in 2019.

Commissioner Gulati asked how many artists are included annually. Mr. Beres said the first year there were 66 total artists, and in 2019 there were close to 50.

Commissioner Aldredge allowed that for some elements, such as performances, it might be harder to seek artists by application, but said for the traditional art components the process would make things easier. She urged Mr. Beres to talk with the curators about identifying ways to make some components more accessible to a larger audience.

Chair Manfredi stated that the curators did not in either 2018 or 2019 gather a large number of possible artists and share the list with the Commission. He asked if that approach could be used in 2020. Mr. Beres said it could be done, though that would involve a lot of cooks in the kitchen. He said SuttonBeresCuller was tasked from the beginning with putting together a cutting-edge contemporary show. He said he sat on a panel in 2019 to sift through the 700 applicants for the Bellevue Arts Fair, and nearly all of them offered crafts, water colors and other paintings that do not necessarily align with what SuttonBeresCuller was hired to do.

Commissioner Gulati pointed out that 4Culture regularly advertises for artists on its website and on social media. She suggested an ad could be put out on their website and on the city's social media sites calling for different forms of art for Bellwether. Commissioner Aldredge agreed and said if there is a bent toward more contemporary works, that could be made clear in the call.

Arts Program Coordinator Scott MacDonald reminded the Commissioners that there is a very tight schedule. He said the curators will have the next four weeks to get their artist rosters submitted. There is a clear need to be realistic about the next steps, especially since artists would need a meaningful amount of time to respond to a call. Even getting on 4Culture's

website can take up to three days. The fact of the matter is that every day counts going forward. If there is to be a general call, it should be for specific opportunities. Having an artist address the entire pedestrian corridor from the transit center to the Bellevue Arts Museum would conceivably be a big project with a separate timeline, but a call for artists to work, for example, in Downtown Park would put the whole Downtown Park element on hold. The schedule has been crafted in a way that will push the program to a higher and more professional level, and any delays across the program would not be good. With the focus on trying to make meaningful work people will want to come and see, a call, especially for visual artists, would be problematic for the curatorial model and the timeline. It might be easier to get performance artists onboard.

Mr. Beres said Ms. Sides has plans to collaborate with some Eastside organizations, the result of which will be more Bellevue artists in the 2020 Bellwether. Every curator has been given notice to focus on local artists.

Councilmember Stokes said it sounded to him like the idea of initiating a call had been previously discussed. If the approach is something the Commission wants to explore, it should make a commitment to do so after the 2020 Bellwether, which ends the three-year pilot project.

Commissioner Aldredge suggested that Mo Quick's pop-ups featuring affordable works from young artists seems like a perfect place to encourage submissions and participation from local artists. Mr. Beres said he would plan for that. Commissioner Aldredge added that as a visual public artist she had never had the luxury of having more than five months to develop a design and create a work. Bellwether is six months out and allowing a month for a call for artists would will given whoever is selected five months. Mr. MacDonald clarified that artists do not have until September to come up with a proposal, they only have until May 15. Commissioner Aldredge said that deadline is for submitting concepts. Artists would still have sufficient time to make their works.

Mr. Beres left the meeting.

Commissioner Aldredge said if a call to artists is to be put out, it would need to be done within about a week. She said she would like to direct staff to do a 4Culture call next week for the components curated by Mo Quick and the glass work. Commissioner Gulati agreed and said she would like to see the call include trying to get visual artists to create works to locate in the transit center space. Economic Development Strategist Jesse Canedo said he would relay that thought to Mr. Beres, but he urged the Commissioners to temper their expectations and the city's role in making a call. The city as a public agency must be very careful about how calls are structured to avoid quirky issues around art as expression and the like.

Ms. Stamm agreed a call would work well with Mo Quick's element because the schedule would more easily allow for it. She said the city will be signing agreements with the curators but stressed that will not happen until later. Under the agreement with SuttonBeresCuller, putting out a call until agreements are in place with the curators would be jumping ship.

In terms of a path forward, Mr. MacDonald agreed with the suggestion relative to Mo Quick's part of Bellwether. He said that element involves more of a fair and does not necessarily require proposals. He also agreed that the call could be broadened to allow any of the curators to review the submittals, allowing a curator to fit something in if they so choose. The concern is in holding up the whole body of work and avoiding dictating to curators the types of works wanted. There must be clarity as to the rolls of the city, the creative director and the curators. Any call to artists would be for a body of work rather than proposals. A general call, with a

subsection of it specific to Bellwether, would help to achieve multiple goals, including the building of an artist roster.

Commissioner Aldredge suggested the draft of the call should be shared with the Commissioners before it goes out. Ms. Stamm pointed out the need to avoid quorum issues by having only the subcommittee conduct any reviews.

Mr. MacDonald clarified that 4Culture has a calls page to which organizations can submit. They have email lists for sending calls out but they do no other marketing. Calls by the city posted by 4Culture are typically posted to Facebook, Instagram and other venues, including the city of Seattle.

Commissioner Malkin recommended using the email lists covering the entire Eastside when putting out the call. Mr. MacDonald said the city and specifically the Department of Economic Development enjoys ongoing partnerships on the creative economy side of things with Redmond and Kirkland. He proposed using that structure. Commissioner Aldredge argued the call should go out more widely than that, particularly since many artists live in rural areas where it is more affordable. She suggested focusing the call on all of the east side of King County. Mr. MacDonald pointed out that even with a targeted release, there likely will be responses from artists outside of the targeted area, including artists from Seattle and the island counties.

Mr. Canedo proposed targeting the Startup 425 partners, which includes Redmond, Kirkland, Renton and Issaquah. Mr. MacDonald said that would work. There was agreement on the part of the Commissioners to take that approach.

A motion to recommend the acceptance of the Creative Brief as presented from Creative Directors SuttonBeresCuller for Bellwether 2020 was made by Commissioner Malkin. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Aldredge and the motion carried unanimously.

B. Andy Arkley Artwork Opportunity

Ms. Stamm explained that artist Andy Arkley participated in Bellwether 2018. He recently approached the city with an opportunity for the city to relocate a piece currently on display at the Bellevue Arts Museum. The proposal was to relocate *Chromamotion* at City Hall. The artist is willing to reconfigure the work if necessary, which would make it easier to find a suitable wall at City Hall. An analysis of where it could be sited at City Hall are under way. The office of Finance and Asset Management will also need to be involved. Once that work is done, staff will return to the Commission with options for either hosting the work temporarily or purchasing it and adding it to the city's permanent portable collection.

Commissioner Gulati asked where funding to purchase the piece would come from. Ms. Stamm said there is a budget for the acquisition of portable artwork. Mr. MacDonald explained that the portable art collection began in 2015 as a subset of the broader public art collection. Under the program the city has purchased three artworks, including the dragon panels that were created for Bellwether and displayed at City Hall, and two paintings that hang in the City Manager's Office and adjacent to Council meeting rooms. The intent for the future is to set up another call and establish a panel in line with Commission policies to go through the roster and make a selection for purchase.

Commissioner Aldredge said the portable collection owned by the Port of Seattle includes works of various dollar values. The Port commissioners can pick from the collection works they want displayed in their offices. It certainly is a way to get more art in the public purview.

Mr. MacDonald agreed it is a very valuable tool and an excellent way to engage with artists at different levels of their careers.

Councilmember Stokes noted that the Council had recently received a presentation on the creative economy. A number of Councilmembers had positive and kind things to say about having more public art in the city. Given the upcoming budget cycle, if the Commission wants to see something considered it is the right time to talk about it and work with the staff ahead of bringing forward a budget proposal. The time seems right in the context of the change that is rapidly coming to the city. There are cities around the country the size of Bellevue that are doing amazing things with public art, and there is a growing appetite for art in Bellevue. It is becoming evident that the arts contribute to the economy rather than draw on the economy.

Commissioner Aldredge suggested the time was right for the Commission to create a committee to develop a proposal for the Council.

Councilmember Stokes said the integration of the arts into economic development is intended to be a part of making Bellevue into a place people want to be and visit. Bellevue is very much a part of the tech scene, and art is very much a part of that. It is known that when people visit Bellevue, they do not find places for music and the arts.

Commissioner Gulati pointed out that funding for the arts program in Bellevue has not increased at all over the last 20 years. Councilmember Stokes said the same is true of human services. Both the Human Services Commission and the Arts Commission are charged with determining how those funds should be allocated. With both of those bodies, where 100 applications are submitted but only a handful of them get funded, clearly something is not right with the budget.

Commissioner Aldredge said the opportunity should be taken to seek an expansion to the arts budget. Some of the funds may be restricted to certain things depending on what the Council wants to see happen. A committee should be formed to draft some options for things that need to be funded.

Councilmember Stokes allowed that public concern about safety and connectivity led to the passage of the transportation levy. To a great extent, the process was driven by the work of the Transportation Commission.

Commissioner Malkin said the Commission has the data to make a strong case for increasing funding for the arts in Bellevue. He said one of the ideas the Commission has explored is the notion of having a continued funding source rather than an annual budget allocation, such as a percentage like the hotel tax, a building tax, or something like the one percent for arts program in King County. Funds generated in those ways could be used for grants to arts organizations as well as for art in public places and generally building more of an arts community. Councilmember Stokes agreed and pointed out there are a lot of pieces that are tied together, like the Grand Connection and the Eastrail corridor. Recently Mayor Robertson gave a presentation at the Bellevue Arts Museum about the Grand Connection, which has a strong connection to the arts. Feedback on the sculpture piece for the Grand Connection has been very positive. There is a growing sense that the arts are important, and that Bellevue needs to have more culture and art overall.

Commissioner Malkin asked if a proposal from the Commission presented to the Council through the staff would be received positively. Councilmember Stokes said he could not speak for the entire Council but suggested that it might be. There is currently at least an opportunity to talk about the subject and how it might be brought about. The time certainly is right to figure out a path.

C. Topics of Interest and Committee Assignments

Ms. Stamm said she had received feedback from Commissioners Lau Hui and Wolfteich regarding the committees on which they would like to serve. She said Commissioner Wolfteich was willing to be assigned to the allocations committee, while Commissioner Lau Hui expressed an interest in working on the Power Up program, and said she also was interested in exploring a percent for the arts and admission tax structure by serving on the budget committee.

Commissioner Aldredge volunteered to serve on the allocations committee as well, as did Commissioner Lewis.

Ms. Stamm clarified that nowhere in the Commission's bylaws does it state that the Commission is to be involved in the budget process. The work to explore a percent for the arts and/or an admissions tax will be aspirational and not a part of the budget process.

Commissioner Gulati volunteered to work on building a roster of Bellevue artists.

Commissioner Aldredge volunteered to work on Bellwether 2020.

Commissioners Malkin and Gulati asked to have their names added to exploring resuscitating the Artspace notion.

Chair Manfredi suggested Commissioner Gulati should also be involved with the art festival conversation. She agreed to be included on that committee.

Commissioner Aldredge said there is going to be a big arts crafting headlined by the Bellevue Arts Museum in 2021 that will be different from their existing arts festival. Mr. Canedo said the Commission could still have a discussion with the Bellevue Downtown Association about the traditional arts fair, particularly around re-siting some of the elements that have had to move due to development.

Commissioner Gulati pointed out that historically there were three arts fairs in Bellevue, the Bellevue Arts Museum arts fair, the Bellevue Arts Festival sited in the Cost Plus World Market parking lot, and the NE 6th fair put on by the Bellevue Downtown Association which has expanded into the adjacent church area, though that site is set for redevelopment in the fall. Redevelopment of the Cost Plus site triggered the loss of the Bellevue Arts Festival.

Mr. Canedo said the Bellevue Downtown Association is discussing alternative locations to use once redevelopment of the church parking lot gets under way. He said his office would work with the Bellevue Downtown Association and the Commission in charting a course forward. He noted that by the spring of 2021 the gateway project for Downtown Park will be completed and there may be some opportunity to use some of that new plaza space for at least part of an arts fair.

Commissioner Lewis volunteered to work with Commissioner Gulati on the arts festival committee.

Commissioner Malkin said he would work with Commissioner Gulati on the roster of artists committee.

There was agreement to ask Commissioner Lau Hui to serve on the Bellwether 2020 committee.

Commissioner Malkin agreed to serve on the arts education committee but said he did not want to be the sole member or the lead. There was agreement to ask Commissioners Lau Hui and Wolfeich to serve on the committee. Councilmember Stokes added that he is serving as Council liaison to the Bellevue School District and suggested that raising the issue of arts education would be good to add to the discussion.

Commissioner Aldredge volunteered to be included on the budget committee.

Mr. MacDonald said he had gathered from the committees conversation a couple of themes. He said the work of some of the committees would fit until the umbrella heading of how to support local and emerging artists. The portable art collection issue would fit into that category, as would the artist roster. He suggested a single committee should focus on both of those things while also looking at strategies to support visual artists.

Commissioner Malkin suggested that in that light it would make sense to have a committee comprised of himself along with Commissioners Aldredge and Gulati to take up that combined work. He also suggested adding the work of the budget committee. Commissioner Malkin proposed adding to that committee exploring the open house concept.

Chair Manfredi noted no Commissioner had been assigned to the Cultural Compass update. Mr. Canedo said there was as yet no timeframe for that work. The process of interviewing for the arts manager position is ramping up and that person will need a few months on the job before restarting the Cultural Compass update work.

Chair Manfredi said he would be happy to join the arts education and budget committees along with the supporting local artists committee, and Commissioner Lewis said she would join the budget committee.

5. COMMISSION QUICK BUSINESS – None

6. REPORTS

A. Written Correspondence – As Noted

B. Project Updates from Staff

Ms. Stamm said the work to screen the eight candidates chosen from the 141 applicants for the open position of arts manager would begin next week. That will be followed by interviews. Mr. Canedo said the list of applicants ran the full range from recent college graduates to those who have spent time managing performing arts venues and public art programs for municipalities across the country. Criteria have been developed to guide the screening process to be done by internal staff, including Mr. MacDonald. He said he wanted to see a member of the Commission join the interview panel for the three or four finalists. The schedule calls for conducting the interviews during the month of March and being prepared to make an offer to a candidate by the beginning of April.

Chair Manfredi assigned himself to serve on the interview panel.

Mr. MacDonald reported that the final details of the Lattawood project are being worked out. He said he would have a fuller update for the Commission at the April meeting.

Mr. MacDonald said the public art maintenance call for contractors had closed and that a decision would be made in the next couple of weeks. Concurrently, 4Culture is writing out the

scope of work for some of the larger renovations that need to be addressed, including *Garden of Alternatives* in McCormick Park, and *Ark with Four Forms* in Downtown Park.

With regard to the Downtown Park, Mr. MacDonald said the construction project is close to being completed. The anticipation is that the pavilion project will follow immediately, which if the schedule holds would be have the art done by the end of April or possibly early May.

Commissioner Lewis asked what is happening with the performing arts center. Mr. Canedo confirmed that Ray Cullom has left PACE. The board will be going through an internal process to determine if they should hire someone else or simply have one of the board chairs take on the project more directly. Currently, chair of the board Eric Stelter is directing the project. It is expected that the project will remain in a quiet period for an additional 18 to 24 months as they reevaluate how to take the facility forward.

Mary Ellen Hunley with City Opera Ballet said the woman who was serving as the development director is currently serving as the deputy director in place of Mr. Cullom. The staffer serving as the education director is still there, but all other staff have left.

7. CORRESPONDENCE, INFORMATION

A. Written Correspondence – As Noted

B. Information – As Noted

i. Committees – As Noted

8. ADJOURNMENT

Chair Manfredi adjourned the meeting at 6:14 p.m.