

BELLEVUE ARTS COMMISSION  
REGULAR MEETING  
MINUTES

October 20, 2020  
4:30 p.m.

Bellevue City Hall  
Virtual Meeting

COMMISSIONERS PRESENT: Chairperson Malkin, Commissioners Gulati, Lau Hui, Martinez, Wolfeich

COMMISSIONERS ABSENT: Commissioners Aldredge, Gowdy

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

OTHERS PRESENT: Councilmember Stokes; Jill Anholt, Jill Anholt Studio; Po Shu Wang

RECORDING SECRETARY: Gerry Lindsay

I. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 4:31 p.m. by Chair Malkin who presided. All Commissioners were present with the exception of Commissioners Aldredge and Gowdy, both of whom were excused.

2. APPROVAL OF AGENDA AND MINUTES

A. Approval of Agenda

A motion to amend the agenda to add a welcome to the new Commissioners, Monik Martinez and Judy Gowdy, was made by Commissioner Gulati. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Lau Hui and the motion carried unanimously.

There was agreement to continue allowing written communications only.

**Motion to approve the agenda as amended was made by Commissioner Gulati. The motion was seconded was by Commissioner Wolfeich and the motion carried unanimously.**

B. Approval of Minutes

Commissioner Gulati called attention to page 6 and noted the title of the work donated to the city should be shown as *Simply Respect*.

**Motion to approve the September 1, 2020, minutes as amended was made by Commissioner Lau Hui. The motion was seconded was by Commissioner Wolfeich and the motion carried unanimously.**

3. ORAL COMMUNICATIONS – None

4. ACTION ITEMS AND DISCUSSION ITEMS

#### A. Welcome to New Commissioners

Chair Malkin and the Commissioners took a moment to introduce themselves to the new Commissioners, Monik Martinez and Judy Gowdy.

Commissioner Martinez said she works for the Bellevue School District and has a professional career in social services. She said she also leads a youth-led non-profit, likes to paint and draw, and loves music.

#### B. BelRed Streetscape Art Concepts

Arts Community Manager Scott MacDonald said the BelRed streetscape plan is fairly self-explanatory in that it involves planning for the future of BelRed streets. He said there is a robust public art chapter, currently in draft form, that largely represents the work of Jill Anholt, who was selected by a panel consisting of an Arts Commissioner, a number of community members, and professional artists. The selection of Ms. Anholt was unanimous among the panelists. Ms. Anholt is an active artist in Vancouver, B.C. and has numerous large public art projects under her belt, as well as small, more intimate and personal projects. BelRed is envisioned as an arts district and Ms. Anholt's work on the streetscape is aimed at setting the stage. The draft document will be subject to staff review and refinement, and the transportation director will ultimately need to sign off on it.

Continuing, Mr. MacDonald said Ms. Anholt was charged with developing the public art chapter for the plan as well as two art concepts. That latter was added as a way to jump start the planning work Ms. Anholt had done. The concepts involve a series of mobile artworks that are intended to be moved around as BelRed transitions from its current mix of light industrial and new development to primarily a mixed use environment; and a permanent installation that will effectively mark the route to the 120th light rail station from the new Spring Boulevard. The design guidelines developed for the plan are creative, artistic and adaptive.

Commissioner Lau Hui asked if a site has been fixed in terms of a final location. Mr. MacDonald said the site for the 121st artwork is designed for that location. The locations for the mobile artworks are intentionally not fixed.

Mr. MacDonald said the Commission will be updated at a future meeting in regard to the budget and what can and cannot be funded. If the Commission feels strongly about following a project that cannot be initially funded, consideration will be given to how to potentially get there in the future.

The Commissioners were reminded that the current contract work was for conceptual design. The next contract will be for final design or schematic design, and fabrication and installation. The schedule is flexible. The mobile artworks should probably be done sooner, and for the site adjacent to the light rail the aim is on 2023 so that it can be a landmark for the station.

Chair Malkin asked if there will be any synergy or collaboration between the work of Ms. Anholt and the work by Po Shu Wang on the 130th project. Ms. Anholt said the work done by Mr. Wang predated her involvement with the project. However, his work and the work of other artists previously commissioned has been incorporated into the overall art plan narrative. Mr. MacDonald added that Mr. Wang is proposing to collaborate with local singers.

Ms. Anholt said the project has been both interesting and challenging. She said she appreciated the opportunity to do both art planning and strategizing and to test the strategies through opportunities and concepts. She said she has been working for a number of years in public art and is always interested in hidden stories and systems qualities that can be woven into dynamic installations that try to invite active engagement with viewers. She said she is particularly interested in the relationship and interconnectedness of natural and cultural systems, and in how human bodies occupy space and absorb and participate within artworks, and in creating moments in the world where preconceptions are upended, leaving the viewer curious and questioning their relationship to time and place.

Ms. Anholt said the Bel-Red streetscape plan conceptual framework includes guiding principles, concepts and directives throughout the plan. The major idea is the notion of the intermediary or the in-between. The streetscape occupies the liminal space between buildings, physically acting as the intermediary space between specific locations where people live, work and play. In that way they are the interstitial connected material of the community and they have the potential to become active, lively spaces where people want to congregate and exchange ideas. Public art can play a critical role in streetscapes by mediating between private and public conditions and providing a layer of intrigue and wonder that activates and transforms the community. Significant change is occurring in Bel-Red and as the district develops there is the opportunity to also occupy the time between states, between the tension created by the area's history and its future. Streetscapes and the public art created within them can act as the driving mechanism through which change is taking place.

Within the master plan, some public art typologies have been created. They are meant to provide a range of different artistic approaches for works that are long-term and permanent, and short-term rotating works. The goal is to inspire artists working at all different scales and in various mediums to create pieces that are impactful and meaningful.

Collectively the works will create a layered and multidimensional experience for viewers. With that in mind, four different art typologies were created with the first being thresholds, which are integrated, permanent and physical elements which lend identity and character to their site, marking places of significance or character. The second typology, crossings, are groups of artworks that mark the intersection between natural and human systems. Platforms, the third typology, are places for public art to provide space for temporary or event-based artworks to animate streetscapes, and the fourth typology, mobile, involve works that are temporary in location, activating different areas of the district over time as they move from place to place.

Ms. Anholt said the Spring Boulevard scramble marks the entrance to the 120th station in the Spring District. Those leaving the station must pass by it when walking toward the Spring District. It lies in the space between a pedestrian scramble and a plaza. The goal for the artwork is to have a dialog with pedestrians, commuters and cyclists who will likely pass by the piece multiple times per day. It is to be interactive, welcoming, and to spark contemplation and reflection about the work's immediate surroundings and the wider Spring District. This site is a very interesting transition zone between different conditions. The scramble has chaotic and random individual pedestrian movements, while just below is the collective, mechanized linear movement of the train. It is also a place where the past and present come together. There is also interest in the natural landscape and human infrastructure. When rail lines are laid, the landscape is smoothed out. Areas that are elevated are cut, while areas that are low are filled, all to create a line that is as flat

as possible. Accordingly, the title for the art concept is *Cut and Fill*. It is a dynamic undulating sculptural ribbon created from bent, recycled and cast rails that creates a gateway to the new light rail station. It is meant to speak both to the past history and the present condition of the site. Those entering and exiting from the station will pass through it. The work is inspired by the historic profile of the beltline from 1904 that was discovered in the archives. The words “cut” and “fill” are written in different languages of people who once lived in the Bel-Red area as well as those who live there currently, evoking the shifts of different ethnicities of those who have occupied the site over time. Consideration is being given to translating the words into First Nations, Chinese, Japanese and Spanish.

Ms. Anholt said the idea of the mobile typology artwork is that the works, while permanent, move from location to location over time throughout the district. As the district undergoes a transformation from its current condition to a high-density transit-oriented community, the streetscapes will act as the first indication of changes to come. Art becomes an important factor in how the streetscapes are activated in the time between the current and the future. The goal is for an artist to create different works that are able to easily be moved, creating or facilitating wonder, intrigue and a sense of place in each location it occupies. Bel-Red has an interesting history of implementing sweeping changes in land use and occupation, morphing from a natural landscape to farmland to light industry. The current development places the area in line with another transformation. Over time the changes have resulted in many different people and businesses being pushed out of Bel-Red to make way for new uses. The mobile work has the ability to occupy the in-between space and to help knit communities together as the transformation occurs.

The concept entitled *Cut and Fill* speaks to the notion of displacement in BelRed by examining how objects that trigger memories of other cultures and uses that have become displaced can be reimaged and relocated to create new situations of occupation and social exchange in the present. A collection of four moveable, cast bronze “rooms,” have been created, each of which recall a specific collective displaced in the Bel-Red: family, community, business and artist. The “rooms” can be used and occupied like how they were in the past, evoking intimate, everyday acts from BelRed’s past. Cast bronze transforms these everyday objects into timeless pieces that will continue to change over time as the artwork patinas. The movable “rooms” will occupy empty parking spots throughout the district, becoming small social enclaves that are discovered and searched for in surprising locations. The Eastside Heritage Center archives and other places were looked to identify objects from the past and different situations that existed in Bel-Red that no longer exist or are becoming less common as the district changes. The “rooms” will consist of family in which there is a Japanese American Kokaido folding chair; artist, featuring an easel; homesteader, with rocking chairs; and business, featuring a beauty salon chair.

Chair Malkin asked what the length of the *Cut and Fill* piece is. Ms. Anholt said it is almost 80 feet long. Chair Malkin said one of his concerns is that as conceptually rendered the work is permanent given that it is embedded in the ground. He said that might create a challenge as the district changes and develops. Mr. MacDonald said the view in the rendering looks toward an open space planned for the Spring District development. That space continues over the light rail station via a bridge. The open space is not at risk of redevelopment, thus the work is not at risk of having to be moved.

Chair Malkin said he liked the concept of *Cut and Fill* and the mobile works, but said there is the overarching question of maintenance and protecting them.

Commissioner Gulati asked if the public will be able to use the “rooms” chairs to sit on. Ms. Anholt said people will absolutely be able to use the chairs. They are intended to evoke remnants of what came before while facilitating new futures and narratives as well. Because they are bronze, the more people sit on them the more shiny and polished they will become.

Commissioner Wolfeich asked how the mobile works will be moved from place to place. Ms. Anholt said the entire “room” will be designed to be picked up with a forklift and relocated. The individual chairs will be permanently fixed to the platforms.

Answering a question asked by Commissioner Lau Hui about moving the works, Ms. Anholt said the “rooms” will be designed with adjustability to allow for different curb slopes and the like. She also clarified that each “room” is meant to occupy a parking spot and to look strange and catch the eye. They are intended to be unusual and surprising.

With regard to *Cut and Fill*, Commissioner Lau Hui asked about the beltline, from which the idea was drawn, wondering where the line was historically located. Ms. Anholt shared with the Commission a map showing the historic beltline, noting that the Eastrail line is part of it and that the 120th station is the first that pulls away from the original beltline to create a new line.

Commissioner Wolfeich asked if the Japanese Kokaido chairs will include Japanese writing on them. Ms. Anholt said they will and stressed the importance of doing that.

Commissioner Gulati asked if any consideration had been given to attaching to each piece a plaque to help people understand what the artist had in mind and what the associated story is. Ms. Anholt agreed that there should be some information available to the viewers. Mr. MacDonald added that it is rare for works in Bellevue’s collection to have a plaque, although there is a project being developed that will do that across the collection. Any signage would be addressed in the next phase of the contract, which is final design. He added that all of the concepts will be vetted by the Japanese American community as part of the final design phase.

With regard to the business “room,” Chair Malkin said it would be interesting to have the work evoke a recognizable business in the district.

Commissioner Lau Hui said she would like to see *Cut and Fill* pushed to be more engaging and better tied to what it is referring to.

### C. 130th Streetscape Artwork Concept Update

Mr. MacDonald reminded the Commissioners that artist Po Shu Wang was also hired in 2017. He said Mr. Wang is a very accomplished international artist who has been a finalized on a number of local city panels and noted that he has since his selection for the 130th project been working with the streetscape design team. The project is approaching 100 percent design. The work is designed to be a cohesive all-encompassing project. Mr. Wang will begin installation of his work after construction of the street is complete in late 2022 or early 2023.

Mr. MacDonald noted that Mr. Wang had previously shared with the Commission his early concept of a work involving a large tuning fork and an interactive sphere with a sound element. Given the questions raised by the Commission and other constraints and opportunities, Mr. Wang worked to update the work. While the original concept is

retained, the representation and the form has changed. A video was played showing the work and demonstrating the tonal range that would be part of the piece.

Mr. Wang said the work is about the identity of the location and the year. The music is the interaction between true north and magnetic north. Mr. MacDonald clarified that magnetic north is a few degrees off of true north, and depending on where one is on the globe, magnetic north has a slightly different declination from true north. The basis of the work is sound that is specific both to precise location and to the moment in time given that the declination changes given the variations in the tilt of the earth.

Mr. Wang explained that when one approaches the work from the front, they encounter the proximity center of the sphere. The piece senses their presence and if the person waves their hands closer or further away, the tone will change. What the public will be interacting with will actually be the voices of local choir groups. The background music is the interaction between magnetic north and true north. The public will keep the work alive by becoming part of the creators and interacting with their fellow residents. The work will look at history from the present tense, and those looking at it and interacting with it will be creating the history.

Answering a question asked by Chair Malkin about the singers, Mr. Wang said they will be locals and their voices will be sampled. The key is specific and is not of equal temperament. The pitch is slightly different from equal temperament, which is the musical scale. The singers will be given the notes and they will be asked to improvise with the background music. Fragments of each singer will be embedded in the interactive software, which will be triggered when a person approaches the sculpture.

Mr. Wang explained that the sphere will serve as a resonator. Tuning forks and resonators were in the old days used to tune instruments. Every cavity has a pitch, and the sphere will be tuned to the desired pitch. When the voices are heard they will resonate with the fundamental based on the identity of the place.

Commissioner Lau Hui commented that participants come in all different shapes and sizes and asked if each will produce different sounds by interacting with the sculpture. Mr. Wang said the sound effects will be generated based on proximity rather than height or shape. Raising one's hands or waving in front of the work will generate different sounds.

Chair Malkin asked if the sound will be localized to within a few feet of the sculpture. Mr. Wang confirmed that it will be, adding that he did not want to broadcast the sounds widely given the intent to generate an intimate interaction.

Commissioner Wolfteich commented that there is some drift to magnetic north, which means the declination changes slightly over time. He asked if the work takes into account the very small changes in declination. Mr. Wang said the software will have built into it the magnetic inclination at the time the work is created.

Chair Malkin asked about the mechanics of the piece that make it work. Mr. Wang said the work needs power to run its electronic components, all of which are easily obtainable. The platform used is Cycling '74 but the software is customized to work as a standalone unit on a microprocessor. The lifespan of the work is projected to significant. The exterior material is 316 stainless steel and the interior material is 304 steel. The light that will illuminate the work is an LED and will shine from the back side of the sphere and will reflect in the flared opening.

Commissioner Lau Hui said the piece is exciting and said children will have a fun time interacting with it. Mr. Wang said adults will have fun with as well.

#### D. Portable Artworks – Approval of Purchase

Arts Program Assistant Manette Stamm said the call put out on July 17 ran through August 17. A total of 1440 pieces were submitted from 194 artists located in King, Snohomish and King counties. Each artist was allowed to submit up to ten different works that were currently available for purchase. The works were allowed to be in various mediums, including two- and three-dimensional works and electronic art. A selection panel that included Chair Malkin, former Arts Commissioner Genevieve Tremblay and Ellen Ito from the Tacoma Art Museum met and selected 20 works and recommended them for purchase. The criteria for the selection included artistic merit and compelling themes relevant to the mission of the city's art collection. The total budget for the purchase of the works was set at \$24,000, plus tax, with a maximum of \$2400 per artwork and per artist. The call went out in the midst of Covid-19 and was intended both to support local artists and grow the city's portable art collection.

Ms. Stamm said the works selected by the panel exceed the budget by \$925. She said the staff were confident the overage could be covered by the additional budget set aside for framing and installation costs. A photo of each work was shown to the Commissioners.

Chair Malkin said the panel engaged in a great deal of discussion about all of the pieces. Consideration was given to the quality and aesthetic value of the works as well as the artists themselves in terms of regional representation. The selected artists represent a broad cross section ranging from indigenous persons and different ethnic groups. The overarching consideration with all of the pieces was in regard to the quality of the works.

Mr. MacDonald added that the works initially selected by the panel exceeded the budget by \$15,000 to \$20,000. Each review round was exceptionally competitive given that there was a lot of very excellent works. It was fortunate that many artists currently have works they are willing to sell. In years past there have been calls issued for works priced at up to \$25,000 per piece. Under that process the city acquired two works. Careful consideration was given to what the community needs now, and to what the city's collection needs. Portable artworks offer the community a whole new take on cultural stories in ways fixed public artworks can never do.

Commissioner Martinez asked where the permanent collection lives. Mr. MacDonald said currently the collection spread out over a number of public places, including parks, streets and public buildings. All of the city's portable works, with very few exceptions, are sited at City Hall. Going forward, the process for the new additions will be to create a catalog and then work with city buildings to see the works spread throughout the community in public places.

Chair Malkin said going forward he would like to see the collection shown in total at some venue. The community could then be invited to see the entire collection as a whole. Mr. MacDonald said staff was willing to move forward to see that come to fruition.

Commissioner Gulati asked if the works to be purchased will be displayed at City Hall or some other public building and not just housed in storage. Mr. MacDonald said initially they will be put into storage, but as the framing and site selection work is done they will be moved out of the storage. There is no desire to keep any works in storage.

A motion to approve the purchase of the works as recommended by the panel was made by Commissioner Gulati. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Wolfeich and the motion carried unanimously.

5. COMMISSION QUICK BUSINESS – None

6. REPORTS

A. Commissioners' Committee and Lead Reports – As Noted

Mr. MacDonald reported that he and Commissioner Gulati had a conversation about how to help artists, particularly those who previously have participated in the city's art fairs. He said the Bellevue Downtown Association is planning to hold the 2021 6th Street Fair, and the Bellevue Arts Museum is planning a fully virtual art fair for the last weekend in July of 2021. If possible, the virtual fair will be converted to an in-person event. The Bellevue Festival of the Arts is no longer in operation. No one can say for sure yet what 2021 will look like in terms of the arts fairs. He said his conversation with Commissioner Gulati was focused on how to help artists sell their work in Bellevue, something that is an important element of an arts community. Given that the city has only a handful of galleries, the arts fairs offer artists the most opportunities.

Commissioner Wolfeich asked by what date a decision must be made about going with an in-person Bellevue Arts Museum fair. Mr. MacDonald said the museum has not given him a final cutoff date. Typically their process for receiving entrance fees wraps up in December. For 2020, they waited until April to cancel the event. A turnaround to make the event in-person would likely happen in April at the latest given the logistics involved.

B. Project Updates from Staff – As Noted

Ms. Stamm reported that the Allocations Committee is currently reviewing applications. She said there were a total of 13 new applicants. The requests total \$255,000, plus an additional \$25,000 for the Power Up grants. The grants program runs over the course of the year and the application period for 2021 just closed.

A motion to extend the meeting by five minutes was made by Commissioner Gulati. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Wolfeich and the motion carried unanimously.

With regard to Bellwether, Mr. MacDonald reported that the event is still adjusting to living in the Covid-19 world. He said a number of projection projects are being planned with digital works shown on monitors, though the locations are being reevaluated given the complexities of working with property owners. Connections are also being made with Downtown property owners to do some kind of light display with the tower lights of Downtown. That would be more of a special event, like on New Year's Eve, that could be widely viewed from different places. Parks has an effective moratorium on anything happening in Downtown Park that involves people gathering. An update on Bellwether will be given to the City Council on November 9.

Mr. MacDonald reported that the Lattawood Park public art project has faced some technical issues. He said they have been resolved and the current schedule has the installation work being done the first week of November.

Mr. MacDonald informed the Commissioners that the Council approved an \$856,000 contract for an artwork in the Downtown Park. He said they saw the work as essential to economic recovery, Bellevue's brand as a creative place, and a tourism strategy.



Mr. MacDonald added that the city has done two rounds of grant funding to businesses and arts organizations. Between those two rounds a total of \$65,000 of new funding has gone to arts organizations and arts-focused or creative businesses. A new grant is open to non-profits that help other organizations with things like capacity building.

7. ADJOURNMENT

Chair Malkin adjourned the meeting at 6:39 p.m.