

BELLEVUE ARTS COMMISSION  
REGULAR MEETING  
MINUTES

December 1, 2020  
4:30 p.m.

Bellevue City Hall  
Room 1E -109

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

COMMISSIONERS ABSENT: None

STAFF PRESENT: Scott MacDonald, Manette Stamm, Community Development Department

OTHERS PRESENT: Councilmember Stokes, Ray Collum, EastHUB

RECORDING SECRETARY: Gerry Lindsay

I. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 4:30 p.m. by Chair Malkin who presided. All Commissioners were present.

2. APPROVAL OF AGENDA AND MINUTES

A. Approval of Agenda

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

B. Approval of Minutes

**Motion to approve the October 27, 2020, minutes as submitted was made by Commissioner Gowdy. The motion was seconded was by Commissioner Wolfteich and the motion carried unanimously.**

3. ORAL COMMUNICATIONS

Arts Program Assistant Mannette Stamm noted the receipt of a written communication from the Bellevue Arts Museum which noted for the benefit of the Commission that applications are currently open for their 2021 show on architecture and design. The exhibition will showcase artists and makers working in architecture and design who will be invited to take a creative approach to architecture and design to integrate questions surrounding equity in the built environment during the pandemic. The applications are open to those working in the Northwest. The exhibition will be on view at the museum November 5, 2021 through April 24, 2022.

4. ACTION ITEMS AND DISCUSSION ITEMS

A. EastHUB

Councilmember Stokes said he was excited to talk about the new arts-focused organization EastHUB. He said he met Ray Cullom when working on the Performing Arts Center Eastside. He said the proposed approach to arts and culture in Bellevue and on the Eastside is exciting. There are a number of themes embraced by EastHUB, many of which have been discussed by the Commission over the years. The arts are integral to the creative economy and contribute to the city in many ways. Bellevue is growing and the arts community needs to grow on pace with the city.

EastHUB executive director Ray Collum said he has been working in the cultural and performing arts arena for some 30 years. He said his focus over the last 15 years has been on the development of new performing arts venues both stateside and internationally, and on the structures that will own and operate the venues as well as the programming for them. He said he came to Bellevue two and a half years ago to work on the Performing Arts Center Eastside and in the course of taking on that job a number of unique circumstances that currently exist in Bellevue were identified.

Mr. Collum said a number of folks got together on their own and formed the group called EastHUB. They formed a board of directors and filed for 501(C)(3) status and brought him on as acting CEO in June. The unique circumstances are that the Eastside is so diverse, so energetic, so young and rich in resources, and is also largely devoid of cultural infrastructure. Bellevue is facing a huge influx of development, and the fastest and easiest way to get performing arts and cultural venues constructed is to piggyback them with large mixed use developments. EastHUB realizes the time is right to do what it is doing. The idea is connect the community and to build cultural gathering spaces, including theaters, galleries, rehearsal studios, music halls and dance venues. While active in the arts and culture sphere, EastHUB is not actually an arts group, rather it is a cultural and community development group with a focus on placemaking for the Eastside. Towns have cultural centers, while great cities have cultural districts. EastHUB seeks to focus the pent-up desire for arts and culture facilities into a single effort.

Developing projects from the ground up is where all the expenses are. Piggybacking onto an existing mixed-use development simply takes advantage of spaces that already exist. The goal of EastHUB is to bring together business and community leaders, arts and culture organizations, civic leaders, developers and residents to accomplish the goal. The number of projects in the pipeline for Bellevue for the next three to five years is amazing. The danger is that once development happens the city will be alive from nine in the morning until six in the evening and then just shuts down. In order to have an active 18-hour economy where people want to live and work, it is very important to put in cultural infrastructure as development occurs. That will not happen naturally; it must be planned and executed.

EastHUB will work with the city. In fact there have been some good conversations with City Manager Brad Miyake, Economic Development Strategist Jesse Canado, and Arts Community Manager Scott MacDonald to determine what incentives already exist for developers to include cultural spaces, and to work toward engendering new incentives to make working with the arts and culture community more attractive to developers. It has always been a fairly easy sell, but with the decline of in-person retail as pedestals for buildings, it has become even more attractive. The developers are being promised activated spaces that will boost their parking garages, cafés and restaurants, and indeed the entire neighborhood around buildings. EastHUB works with the city to develop and publicize the incentives, with developers to make the case for donating space, and with the community to design and develop the kinds of spaces desired.

Mr. Cullom said his experience of building a theatre in Istanbul, Turkey, was an incredible opportunity. He said had he simply built the type of theater he has built in other places, it would not have been culturally resonant, because the expectation of the Turkish audience for pre-show, intermission and post-show is much different. The result was the construction of a different type of facility through a process of talking with the community, learning about their wants, and incorporating them into the design of the building.

Once spaces are in hand, EastHUB will raise the money to outfit them and go on to operate them. The key lies in having robust incentives for developers to come on board. One concern of boards of directors and cities is the question of whether or not they will be asked for operational support funding on an annual basis. The answer to that question has to be no, which means operating in the black and not in the red. A model for how the operations will be supported is being developed. While there will be room for government support for programs, it will not be for operational support.

Key to the success of the program will be community collaboration and forming the alliances between businesses, government and cultural groups, all working toward the same goal of activating the Downtown core. EastHUB believes in sustainable arts and culture, which includes running operations in reasonable and efficient economic ways, and with an eye on equity, diversity, inclusion and anti-racism. Microsoft provided the initial funding and put forward the challenge of not just reinvent how cultural space is developed, but also how cultural organizations are begun and structured.

Mr. Cullom said a process called consensus organizing, which came from Microsoft's challenge, lies at the base of the formation of the organization and how the board has been grown. It will also dictate the first six months of operations in 2021. The goal is to work with folks in the community, not just to seek their opinions but to actually hire them and bring them onboard the team to gain real and genuine engagement with all the different communities on the Eastside.

The vision for the first five years is to have anywhere from 12 to 16 spaces, depending on how many developers come onboard, centered in Downtown Bellevue but also with spaces in the community in the Bel-Red corridor. The facilities will be for music and dance, black box theaters, music venues both for classical and pop music and immersive art installations. Hopefully space will also be found for an outdoor amphitheater/green market. Along with a network of spaces, the focus will be on developing a shared services model for providing resources to organizations, allowing them to freedom to spend less on functions that can be shared across several organizations and to spend more on producing art and engaging with their communities.

Some very preliminary conversations have been had about EastHUB entering into a partnership with the city. The specific issues discussed fall into the areas of the city helping to make connections with developers in the all-important early phase; working with the city and the Bellevue Downtown Association to promote Bellevue as a destination for arts and culture; managing cultural events for the city, such as the arts fairs and the Grand Connection experiences; and including some existing cultural spaces in the infrastructure.

Mr. Cullom said the organization's 501(C)(3) status has been approved. Microsoft's funding spurred working with developers to get some buy-in. Buy-in from the city is also a major goal. On the financial side, the aim is to raise \$1.5 million in the first year of operations, which runs through September 2021. To date, \$1.1 million has been raised with the robust fundraising efforts still to come. The organization will soon do some hiring of staff to engage in fundraising and community engagement.

The organization's first major success was with the developer of Cloudevue across the street from the Bravern. The project includes three towers with a hotel, an apartment building and an office building. The developer has committed to donating land along with the associated infrastructure, valued at some \$75 million. It will be up to EastHUB to build from the ground up at that location. Work is under way with a Seattle-based architecture firm with strong theater roots. The focus is on constructing a flexible use space with seating for 1000 that will serve as the center of the arts and culture for the Downtown.

Chair Malkin asked what role the Commission could play in the overall plan. Mr. Cullom said the Commission knows the desire for arts and culture venues and the players better than he does. The energy and enthusiasm exists, it just all needs to be pulled into a coherent and workable plan. That is where the Commission could be of most help.

Commissioner Gulati asked if there are funds available from King County or the state. Mr. Cullom said the organization's 501(C)(3) designation only recently came through, clearing the way to officially fundraise and seek grants. It is believed that there is funding available from the county, from the state and from the Eastside municipalities. There is a general consensus that Bellevue is the downtown of the Eastside and if it is made a cultural attraction, everyone will benefit.

Commissioner Gulati asked if the Performing Arts Center Eastside (PACE) project in the Downtown is still going. Mr. Cullom said he served as the CEO of the project for a time. The organization is continuing and if EastHUB can be successful, it will only make what they are doing more successful. The building under consideration has evolved over the years, but the goal of having a 2000-seat venue has not.

Mr. MacDonald said the PACE organization is seeking a naming donor before restarting its larger fundraising campaign. The organization remains active with staff pursuing a model that is complementary to but different from EastHUB.

Commissioner Lau Hui asked if the Cloudevue site project is currently engaged in schematic design. Mr. Cullom said the focus is on concept design currently. Commissioner Lau Hui asked if EastHUB will be expected to raise the money needed for the building. Mr. Cullom explained that Cloudevue is an anomaly in the EastHUB model in that rather than just facilitating arts and culture organizations, EastHUB will build the building from the ground up. The good part is that EastHUB will not have to pay for site preparation and the underground structure of the building, including the parking garage. All of that will be covered by the developer, leaving EastHUB to raise the money to build the structure from the ground up. Several scenarios are in hand predicated on the level of success in fundraising for it. The developer is visionary in his understanding on a gut level the association between art and the success and activation of a building. The developer and the city are working closely to make it all come together.

Commissioner Lau Hui noted that the city has put money into the pot for the PACE project, though there were some constraints relative to execution and timing. She asked if those funds are still in play or if they could be reallocated to something like the Cloudevue project. Councilmember Stokes said he got involved with the PACE project in 2012 as a member of the City Council. He said championed the project, though he stressed that at that time Bellevue was a far different place. He said he supported the city earmarking \$20 million last-in money. The city cannot, of course, just give money to a private concern without getting something of value to the city in return. What was worked out was that the return value would be in educational programs and the like. The funds were never handed

over and the agreement has ended. If the Cloudevue project moves ahead, the city could look at a similar approach. PACE has always been about large, high-level cultural events, and it is not incompatible to the approach of EastHUB.

Commissioner Aldredge asked what incentives the city is offering to developers; who owns the spaces, the developer or the non-profit; and how change is dealt with where something does not succeed. Mr. Cullom answered that intrinsic in the model is the fact that the space is donated to the non-profit. The only way to raise capital dollars from donors is to have ownership, or at the very least a 30-plus year lease agreement for the space. The city has a range of incentives it offers involving credits for including cultural spaces, most of which center on being allowed additional building square footage.

Mr. MacDonald clarified that in most cases buildings are not allowed to have a bigger footprint but may be allowed to be taller up to a maximum. There are incentives in the amenity incentive system specific to the Downtown that are priced appropriately to how expensive the land is. The incentives offered in the BelRed district have a lower incentive ratio because property there was less expensive when the incentives were approved; they are relatively outdated now in terms of cost. In BelRed, if a developer provides space for a non-profit, the space provided is not counted toward the floor-area ratio calculations, and additional bonus square footage is allowed.

Mr. Cullom said the goal is to engage with the community on the development of the spaces. Part of that process involves lining up users for the available spaces. Of course there is always the unexpected, like Covid-19, which triggers the need for plans to change. Part of the tech challenge EastHUB will focus on involves identifying ways to covid-proof buildings, giving them the ability to have virtual performances, and the ability to operate on a much smaller capacity with different layouts so that people come into contact with each other differently. The pandemic has presented many lessons in the building and design of theaters.

Commissioner Gulati noted that the news is full of big companies like Amazon and Google that are coming to the Eastside. She asked if consideration has been given to how to tap into their buildings that will be built from the ground up. Mr. Cullom said that is part of the first stage of the plan. Support is being built up with key individuals in the different communities that make up the Eastside, but there are also ongoing conversations with the large corporations like Microsoft, which provided EastHUB with initial funding. There have also been meetings with Wright Runstad which is building the Facebook campus in the Spring District. Big companies with lots of employees want communities that are attractive to their employees.

Chair Malkin asked if EastHUB has plans to support the actual artists themselves, or just the organizations. He pointed out that live-work spaces can be built in combination with performance and exhibition spaces. Mr. Cullom said one of the reasons Microsoft is interested in supporting EastHUB is because the organization aligns closely with their push for affordable housing. He said affordable housing for artists and professionals was part of the first project he worked on on the west side of Manhattan. A group of theaters called Theater Row was constructed across the street from Manhattan Plaza that offered low-income housing for educational and cultural professionals. Now 25 years later, the most expensive apartment ever sold in New York City is just a block away. The live-work concept is not part of EastHUB's first phase, but housing will be part of the second phase.

Commissioner Wolfteich asked what lessons were learned from some of the pitfalls the Tateuchi Center project came up against that could contribute to EastHUB's success. Mr. Cullom reiterated that the Tateuchi Center continues to be a going concern and continues

to have the same goal. One key to the EastHUB approach will be asking the community what types of spaces it wants, rather than telling them what will be provided for them. Spaces that resonate with more than just a small segment of the population will also be key.

Chair Malkin said the Commission stood ready to support the EastHUB effort whenever and however possible. Mr. Cullom said as the process moves into having conversations with the city about potential cultural partnerships, the advocacy of the Commission will be very important.

## B. 130th

Mr. MacDonald reminded the Commissioners that on October 20 the artist Po Shu Wang presented the latest rendition of the artwork, which is still at the project concept stage. He sought from the Commissioners a motion to accept the artwork as presented, which will trigger moving on to final design. The procedural step is an important element of the public artwork process.

Mr. MacDonald said the 130th site starts at Spring Boulevard and 130th Avenue NE in BelRed and runs north to Northup Way. The associated transportation project is somewhat of a placemaking project and is leading much of the development of the area ahead of the opening of the new light rail line in 2023 or earlier. The art project is slated to be completed by late 2022 or early 2023. Mr. Wang was selected to be the artist in 2018 by a panel of five artists and community stakeholders and a single Arts Commissioner. The total budget for design and fabrication is \$200,000, a portion of which is coming from the Urban Boulevards program.

The work includes sound and lighting components. The pad on which the work will rest includes sensors that triggers a chorus of music from the sculpture when someone approaches the piece. Mr. Wang is looking to collaborate with local musicians from the Bel-Red area to create a layered sound that will vary depending on the height of the person viewing the work, giving everyone a unique experience.

The recommendation of staff was for the Commission to approve the artwork concept developed by Mr. Wang for the 130th Streetscape project. If approved, the final design work will progress. Two sites have been identified but a final selection has not yet been made; either will work for the sculpture and both involve rights-of-way owned by the city.

Commissioner Lau Hui asked if the artist could be encouraged to do the fabrication work in Bellevue or Seattle in order to engage the local community. Mr. MacDonald said that could be a possibility. He said his main concern and hesitating in dictating that is that artists have relationships with fabricators who understand what they want. That could also make it challenging to fit the project into the budget. The artist lives in Berkley, California.

Commissioner Aldredge suggested the paving component certainly could be done locally.

A motion to recommend the approval of the artwork concept for the 130th Streetscape project was made by Commissioner Lau Hui. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Martinez and the motion carried unanimously.

## C. *The Man Who Stole the Golden Egg* Artwork Deaccession

Mr. MacDonald explained that *The Man Who Stole the Golden Egg* by artist Carlos Basanta has been in storage for over 16 years.

The mission of the Bellevue art collection rests on the idea of cultural exchange and creative inspiration, and the collective experience of the residents. The collection is more than just a smattering of artworks owned by the city, rather it is a body of work that tells the city's collective story. Works that inevitably live past their life spans, or which are damaged in some way, often need to be removed from the collection.

Deaccession is the opposite of accession. It is a tool used to remove works from the permanent collection for specific reasons. The tool helps to maintain the integrity of the collection and ensures that public funding is used wisely. The most recent deaccession was Pat McVay's *Life Cycle* which had been sited at Chism Beach Park. In that instance, the Commission elected to replace the work after deaccession with a new work by the same artist.

There are a variety of reasons to deaccession works, including, but not limited to, works that are found to be fraudulent or not authentic; works having inferior quality to comparable works by the same artist; works that evoke a significant adverse public reaction over an extended period; works having design faults that require excessive repair, or repairs that are impractical or unfeasible; works that lack of a suitable siting location; and works that are a threat to the public safety. *The Man Who Stole the Golden Egg* is not on display due to lack of a suitable location, and it potentially is a threat to the public safety.

*The Man Who Stole the Golden Egg* was installed in Downtown Park as part of the Bellevue Sculpture Exhibition in 2004. The work was installed for three months following which the Arts Commission elected to purchase the work for \$18,000. At that time the Bellevue Sculpture Exhibition was the city's main mechanism for purchasing works for the collection. The piece is made of ferro-cement and has an applied patina. It has been in storage since its purchase for a number of reasons. After only three months of being sited in Downtown Park, the base plate was found to be rusting and deteriorating. Mr. MacDonald said he is not confident the work could be installed in a safe way absent replacing the base plate with a different material or somehow lifting the work up out of the ground, neither of which is a strong option. Parks has sited both artistic merit and safety as primary reasons for not locating the work in a park. Early on there was an effort made to site the sculpture at what is now the Lake Hills library; that was ultimately rejected, and no other suitable location has ever been found.

If an artwork is deaccessioned, the city has four options. The work can be sold on the open market; the work can be traded to the artist for a different work; the work can be donated to a non-profit or public agency; and the work can be destroyed. Simply returning a work to the artist is not an option in that public money was used to purchase the work and unless it is sold as an asset, once it leaves the city's ownership it cannot have a monetary value. There is no apparent market for the artist, who is not listed on any online arts market site. Selling the work likely would be protracted given the condition of the piece and the staff time would likely far outweigh any fiscal benefit resulting from its sale. There would be no benefit for the artist to trade the sculpture for another work for which he would not be paid. The work could be donated, but it would immediately become a maintenance or restoration liability for the receiver. Unfortunately, that leaves destruction as the most viable option, an approach that is never taken lightly.

Mr. MacDonald said based on the fact that the artwork is not on display due to the lack of a suitable site, and given that the faults of design require excessive repair without any

guarantee of a long-term solution, the recommendation of staff was to recommend deaccessioning the artwork, removing it from storage and disposing of it.

Commissioner Wolfeich asked if the artist is local. Mr. MacDonald said as of February 2016 he was based in British Columbia. His website has not been updated since that date. There is no evidence that he is still actively engaged as an artist producing works. All efforts to connect with the artist have gone without reply.

Commissioner Aldredge said in her mind there was no question what should be done with the work, particularly given its deteriorated state after having been installed for only three months. Deaccession is the only option. The work shines a light on the need to have better policies around evaluating the fitness, stability and integrity of artworks before they are accessioned. No acquired work should result in a need for constant maintenance, and in fact consideration should be given to the maintenance needs of a piece during the evaluation phase ahead of any purchase. Mr. MacDonald concurred. He said early in 2021 staff would be bringing to the Commission a draft work plan that will include arts policies.

Commissioner Gulati asked about the option of selling the work to a private buyer. Mr. MacDonald said that could certainly be done. Commissioner Gulati said she did not like the idea of having a work destroyed. Commissioner Aldredge pointed out that the city could face liability issues for selling to someone a work that has structural problems. Mr. MacDonald said that fact was one of the reasons he was not recommending selling the work.

A motion to recommend deaccessioning *The Man Who Stole the Golden Egg* and destroying it was made by Commissioner Aldredge. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Gulati and the motion carried unanimously.

#### D. 2020 Year In Review

Mr. MacDonald stated that 2020 had been a year like no other. He said Covid-19 had an enormous impact on arts organizations. The impact that has occurred to date, and which could continue to occur for some time, is incomprehensible. Artists and organizations may be some of the last to get back up to full operations. The focus of the arts program was shifted to almost exclusively supporting organizations and artists, which has proved to be a good practice and something that should be continued. Having moved out into the community, there is now far more engagement on a collective level with organizations and artists, and the level of collaboration across the Eastside cities has increased and has been positive.

Mr. MacDonald noted that through various relief programs the city has employed, an additional \$96,000 in grants have been distributed to arts organizations and arts businesses. Additionally, the Power Up program has been rebuilt to be a learning series for all organizations and individuals that work in the arts on the Eastside. Where normally there have been three new organizations participating each year, 30 to 34 took part in each of the three sessions.

Admittedly, it has been more challenging to help artists than organizations. Most of the artists who were originally planning to participate in Bellwether 2020 were pushed out early on to 2021. Fifty percent of their stipend funding was released to those artists who filled out an application, a Form W-9 and an artist statement, even though their physical artwork will not be provided until 2021. The portable art collection call was framed by the



pandemic, particularly in light of emerging artists rather than the established artists selling the high-priced works. One work purchased cost only \$50.

Mr. MacDonald said the social movements have been a huge part of the conversations with arts organizations. All of the organizations with whom there have been conversations are taking the social movements very seriously and have seen the arts as a pivotal player in talking about the issues, exposing stories and looking for solutions. Many organizations that were built on a more traditional model are looking for ways to diversify their boards, leadership and staff. The arts program has led a number of those conversations and has pushed organizations to think about equity in hiring and in their programs. The arts program is highly committed to furthering those conversations and reducing barriers any way it can.

With regard to projects and programs, Mr. MacDonald noted that the arts program had a budget of \$145,000, \$15,000 of which came from 4Culture. Grants were awarded to 41 organizations and individuals, 32 in the form of Eastside Arts Partnerships grants, three by way of Power Up grants, and nine special project grants. The public art program has remained active during the pandemic. A huge step was taken in getting approval for the largest fabrication contract approved by the Council. It is for the Downtown Park northeast corner artwork project, which is moving rapidly into completing final engineering. Permits for the project will be applied for prior to the end of the year. The Lattawood Park art project is slated to be fully installed within the next two weeks. The 130th Streetscape project is on pace. The Bel-Red Streetscape plan art concepts were reviewed by the Commission and will be coming back in early 2021 for additional discussion. The portable art collection saw 20 new works added to it during the year. The Bellgate artwork at 106th Avenue NE and NE 6th Street is now fully owned by the city since the other party relinquished its ownership share.

Sadly, Bellwether for 2020 was canceled following the announcement of the most recent restrictions by the Governor. The restrictions included closing all museums. A way forward simply could not be found. All planned artwork has been postponed to Bellwether 2021, which is on the calendar for September, including the suite of digital and projected works. The 2021 version of Bellwether will be half again larger than the normal program.

Artist Katie Miller was hired by 4Culture to conduct research and outreach in regard to the Bel-Red arts district. The work will ultimately inform a future implementation strategy for the arts district. To date more than 200 people have responded to the survey, and there have been 15 one-on-one stakeholder interviews. The findings report is due in early 2021.

In support of Eastside arts, the Eastside artist roster was launched. The roster is open to all Eastside cities, and more than 50 artists have registered to date. Some specific opportunities will be opened in 2021 for artists who are on the roster. The receipt of the additional \$96,000 for arts organizations and businesses served as a boon. The funding was used in part to support the Eastside Arts and Culture Coalition. The Bellevue Arts Museum received funding and played a role in the support of artists. The Eastside Arts Audience survey garnered more than a thousand responses, the most of any Eastside arts survey in history.

Mr. MacDonald said the Council-approved Economic Development Plan carries a lot of weight. The plan includes strategies for linking digital and traditional creative sectors; developing the Bel-Red arts district; expanding festivals, events and activities as part of the city's creative identity; and forming a public and private partnership to construct and manage a multi-purpose arts space.

The pandemic triggered the cancelation of Commission meetings between April and July, following which meetings have been held remotely. The term of former Chair Paul Mandredi ended in May and the Commission never was able to celebrate his eight years of service on the Commission. Additionally, former Commissioner Becky Lewis resigned in order to move back to the east coast in order to be closer to family. Two new Commissioners, Monik Martinez and Judy Gowdy, subsequently were appointed to fill the vacancies.

Mr. MacDonald said staff will come back to the Commission with a work plan in early 2021. The conversation will include gathering from the Commissioners information about areas of interest and topics to pursue.

#### 5. COMMISSION QUICK BUSINESS

The Commission discussed whether or not to delay the first meeting of 2021 until January 12 and concluded that should be done.

Staff shared with the Commission a video compilation involving kids playing music and dancing. It was noted the video was produced by an organization funded with special projects dollars.

#### 6. REPORTS

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

#### 7. ADJOURNMENT

Chair Malkin adjourned the meeting at 6:30 p.m.