

BELLEVUE ARTS COMMISSION
REGULAR MEETING
MINUTES

February 2, 2021
4:30 p.m.

Bellevue City Hall
Virtual Meeting

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: None

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 Commissioner Wolfteich who arrived at 4:58 p.m.

2. APPROVAL OF AGENDA AND MINUTES

A. Approval of Agenda

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

B. Approval of Minutes

Motion to approve the January 12, 2021, minutes as submitted was made by Commissioner Gulati. The motion was seconded was by Commissioner Lau Hui and the motion carried unanimously.

3. ORAL COMMUNICATIONS – None

4. ACTION ITEMS AND DISCUSSION ITEMS

A. Committee Assignments

Arts Community Manager Scott MacDonald noted that the Chair has the sole authority for appointing Commissioners to the individual committees. He said there still is work to be done to determine the scope of work for each committee. Committees are limited to no more than three members to avoid triggering an official public meeting that would need to be noticed. Committees are a valuable tool though they got somewhat lost in the Covid-19 shuffle specifically and admittedly were underutilized over the last four years. Commissioners assigned to committees generally serve only a single year. Committees play an advisory role to the staff, who then advise the full Commission.

Mr. MacDonald said there are six proposed committees, beginning with the grants and funding committee. The committee usually has one or two members and focuses largely on the pre-application process that leads up to the work of the allocations committee. Specifically, the committee is tasked with looking at issues around equity and making sure the process is open to all with as few barriers to entry as possible. Any updates to the guidelines must be approved by the full Commission and the City Council. On the funding side of things, there was recently a request made by the Mayor for the Commission to look into mechanisms for additional arts funding. If that work is taken on, the committee would be the initial touch point for all things concerning arts funding.

The three-member allocations committee reviews the grant applications and makes recommendations to the full Commission.

The two-member public art committee has a fairly broad scope in focusing on informing arts policies, advising staff on upcoming public art opportunities, and determining artist and art selection panels. At least one member should be familiar with and passionate about diversity, equity and inclusion methods.

Mr. MacDonald said the Bellwether committee could have either two or three members. The committee advises staff in regard to the planning work for Bellwether and the transition from a city run and produced show to an externally run with city engagement show. One Commissioner on the panel will serve on the creative director selection panel.

The BelRed Arts District committee will focus on what is a major Council initiative that is part of the economic development plan. The committee should have one to two members, at least one of which should be very familiar with how the city's incentive systems in the Land Use Code work. The committee will help plan for and inform implantation of the Arts District and will focus things like issues in the Land Use Code, community organizing, and preparing for the launching of the implementation plan.

Mr. MacDonald explained that the one-to- two-member community partnerships committee will focus on getting the city and the arts program out into the community by working with organizations, developing partnerships, and building the overall capacity of the arts ecosystem in Bellevue and across the Eastside in line with the vision of the Cultural Compass. The city recognizes that it cannot do everyone on its own, thus partnerships are needed along the lines of EastHub and the Eastside Arts and Culture Coalition. The Artspace Market Survey is another partnership that would fall under the work of the committee.

Mr. MacDonald said it can be assumed that each committee will meet no more than three times in 2021. Ms. Stamm added that the allocations committee involves a lot of work. It has roughly a month to read through about 40 applications. Accordingly, members on the committee should be on no more than one other committee other than the public art committee, which has the second busiest scope of work for 2021.

Chair Malkin indicated his desire to serve on the public art and the community partnerships committees. He suggestion attention also needs to be given to the issue of growing the city's portable art collection. Mr. MacDonald said that work will be part of the work done by the public art committee.

Commissioner Gulati said she wanted to serve on the BelRed Arts District committee given that she lives in the area, and also the public art committee.

Commissioner Aldredge volunteered to serve on the allocations committee. She added that she would also like to serve on the public art committee given her background in public art. She noted that she is an architect and knows a lot about the Land Use Code incentive systems, though not specifically in Bellevue.

Commissioner Lau Hui noted her preference to sit on the grants and allocations committee. She said she also would like to serve as part of the BelRed Arts District committee. She said over the last few years she has done a lot of work in Bellevue and is familiar with the city's Land Use Code.

Commissioner Gowdy said she believed it would be good for her to serve on the allocations and community partnerships committees.

Commissioner Martinez said she was willing to serve on any committee but was passionate about the work of the Bellwether committee. She also expressed an interest in serving on the community partnerships committee.

Commissioner Wolfeich noted his preference for the Bellwether and BelRed Arts District committees. He said he has some background in working with the Land Use Code.

Commissioner Gulati offered to serve on the grants and funding committee.

Mr. MacDonald said the final list of committee assignments would be compiled and sent out in the next couple of weeks ahead of the Commission's March meeting. He said for some of the committees some background work will need to be done ahead of their first meeting, while for others things are queued up and can get right to work. The first committees up will be Bellwether, potentially community partnerships, and grants and funding.

Commissioner Gulati asked for more information about the Mayor's request to study potential new sources of funding for artists and arts organizations, or the arts in general. The city has what is called an eight-hour rule, which means any work directed by the Council that will take eight hours or more of staff time must be approved by the full Council. Chair Malkin and Commissioner Lau Hui are in conversations with Councilmember Stokes to bring up the issue before the Council, but there is no guarantee the Council will give that direction. Through HB-1058, the legislature gave all counties in the state the ability to impose a sales tax of 0.01 percent without a vote of the community. That is one possible mechanism for increasing funding. King County has until the end of the year to decide whether or not to approve the tax, and if the decision is positive, the City Council would then need to authorize it locally. Other possible sources of funding include increasing the admissions tax for ticketed events, which other cities regionally use.

B. Art Policies

Mr. MacDonald said most major or established public art collections have adopted art policies. He said Bellevue's collection, while not major, can certainly be considered to be established given that it has works of all different lifespans coexisting within the collection, and a series of different media and materials.

Policies guide the general processes and should aid in the decision making process. Policies should be descriptive without being specifically prescriptive. Policies are not rules, rather they serve to help administrators and the Commission through the process of a public art process in order to achieve the best possible outcome within given

parameters. Where policies are overly prescriptive, the result can be a collection that all looks the same. Works with long lifespans are important to have, but it is also important to have works that have short lifespans. Policies should be drafted in a way so as to remove any barriers to opportunities. Too often an unfortunate quality of many public art collections, including Bellevue's, is that they tend to favor artists of the male and Caucasian demographics.

More broadly, the policies should clarify what representation within the collection means. Representation could be about Bellevue's population, or the population of the Eastside, but it could also be about the broader region. It could also be that representation of traditionally underrepresented groups actually means they will need to be overrepresented in the collection.

Mr. MacDonald shared with the Commissioners a list of issues to be considered. He stressed the need to be consistent with the city's procurement guidelines. The maintenance and lifespan of works should be considered and documented for incorporation into the maintenance budget. An example is *Long Boat Reed Rookery* at City Hall, the repairs for which are estimated to be \$75,000; the question for that work is whether it might make more sense to deaccession the work, given that it still has value, and replace it with a different work for roughly the same amount of money. Maintenance is not a bad issue; it is only bad when it cannot be afforded.

Continuing with the list of issues, Mr. MacDonald said sites have not always been identified before accession. The result is acquired works sitting in storage facing deterioration issues. A policy is needed to help make decisions about when to accept the donation of a work. Given that there currently is little or no guidance, all such requests are currently brought before the Commission for consideration.

The mission of the collection should drive the selection of artists. The Commission-approved mission has proved to be very helpful and valuable in the public art process. Panels have found it helpful to their decision making. It should be incorporated into the policy for accessions, whether by donation or purchase.

The collection should feature a mix of local, regional and national artists. Bellevue is an international city, but that does not mean only internationally known artists should be hired. Temporary artworks should be expanded to include anything with a lifespan of less than ten years, and they need to have their own policies. Temporary works serve as opportunities to try new things and test new media. New media should not be precluded from permanent works provided they are added via informed decisions.

General policies are needed about understanding the lifespan of a specific kind of work, particularly those that include any kind of electronic component. Purchasing and stockpiling supplies that may become obsolete and no longer be made should be part of the project budget up front.

Chair Malkin asked about art located on private property that is obviously accessible to the public. He asked if those works should be considered by the Commission as part of the policies in terms of how a work may or may not fit in with the city's bigger goals. Mr. MacDonald said that is an issue that will come down to the discussions specific to the Land Use Code.

Commissioner Aldredge made reference to the Amazon collection in Downtown Seattle, or the works located in Freemont which were brought about by the Freemont Arts Council and private dollars rather than by Seattle Arts Commission. Private works certainly can

have an impact on the character, look and feel of a neighborhood and the only way to manage that is through land use policies.

Commissioner Gulati said Microsoft's collection is very enjoyable and well chosen. As their construction work progresses, they will be added more works. The works are easily accessible by the public, and all of it is paid for by Microsoft.

Mr. MacDonald said the Council is particularly interested in the formation of partnerships to fund public art. That may or may not need to be addressed through a separate policy.

Commissioner Lau Hui stressed the need to consider accessibility when considering public art. There are many art works in Bellevue that are provided by private parties that are accessible to the public, though that is not clear in all cases. Signage is needed to make it clear the public has access to the works. Mr. MacDonald pointed out that city policies will need to be specific to publically owned artworks.

Commissioner Aldredge said that could be another tie-in to the Land Use Code. She noted that there is a building in downtown Seattle that has a work by Henry Moore. The development was awarded bonus building height in exchange for the artwork on the front plaza. Over the years works by the artist became more and more valuable, and when the building was sold the new owner tried to sell the piece and ship it out of Seattle. Because of the specific way in which the Land Use Code was written, however, he was precluded from doing so without removing several stories from the top of the building. In talking about public/private partnerships, the city should be very careful in writing code to preserve the public benefits gained in exchange for additional building height and bulk.

Chair Malkin asked if the concept of partnerships with the private sector would extend to organizations like Sound Transit. Mr. MacDonald said only in cases where works are jointly owned. Artworks associated with city building projects would be owned by the city and as such would be included in the public art collection and subject to the normal acquisition process.

Mr. MacDonald said the proposed policy list includes a temporary works policy for works with a lifespan of less than ten years; an accession policy covering the process of acquiring permanent artworks through purchase or donation; and a deaccession policy addressing and guiding the process of removing works from the collection. He said the next steps will include working with the public art committee to review the policies in place in other cities. The staff will generate draft policy language for the committee and ultimately the Commission to review. The full policies will be before the Commission for final approval at some point during 2021.

Commissioner Gulati asked if the policies will be updated on an annual basis or just every so often. Mr. MacDonald said there is no set schedule for reviewing and updating the policies. The policies should be considered to be a framework and as issues come up that clearly do not work within the framework, there may be a need to update the policies. The policies should be thought of as standard operating procedures for staff and the Commission to follow.

C. Utility Box Wraps Program Call for Artists

Ms. Stamm noted that as previously pointed out, there are several existing vinyl utility wraps in Bellevue. Many cities have instituted programs to wrap utility boxes with art, and the proposed call would be the first time the arts program has launched such a program. The goal of the call is to provide opportunities specifically for Eastside artists and to help

bring character, intrigue and beauty to the public realm by covering up to 15 boxes in BelRed. BelRed, which is designated as an arts district, was formerly farmland and an industrial area. It is home to a wide array of arts organizations, businesses, practice spaces, artists and makers. The call will be eligible to all visual artists living in east King County. Applicants will need to submit an artist statement, an artist biography, five images of example artwork, and image descriptions for all submitted works. The artists will have to be registered on the Eastside Artist Roster. The application will have to be completed by midnight March 5. Once works are submitted, a panel will review them and a recommendation will be made to the Commission for artist approval on April 6. The selected artists will be notified on April 7, and then they will need to submit their draft designs by April 28. The final designs will be due by May 5 ahead of the Commission's final design review action in June. Final layout confirmation with the artists will be done in June and July, with installation occurring in July and August.

Ms. Stamm said the criteria for selection will be artistic merit, compelling themes relevant to the call and the BelRed area, and example artworks consistent with the design guidelines. Diverse artists will be encouraged to apply. The review panel will be comprised of one Commissioner who also is a member of the public art committee, one community member and one art professional. Final approval of the artists selected and their final designs will be given by the Commission.

The design guidelines address the content and graphic guidelines, the expected lifetime of the works, licensing of the works, possible acts of vandalism against the works, and identifies the corridor opportunities.

Advertising of the call will begin immediately following approval of the call by the Commission.

Commissioner Wolfteich asked if the history of the BelRed area is included in the call materials. He added that the fact that the area was home to Japanese farmers before they were incarcerated during WWII could serve as a unifying theme. Ms. Stamm agreed that understanding the history of an area is important in the design of artwork. The Japanese history specifically is something an artist might consider and respond to. That specific historical context, however, is not specifically included in the call materials.

Commissioner Aldredge asked if the budget anticipates maintaining the wraps. She said she had been in contact earlier in the day with Sound Transit's head of maintenance and curating who indicated the organization has done a lot of temporary art and wraps in the Kent-Des Moines area, areas that saw a lot of vandalism. Where vandalism has occurred, Sound Transit has chosen to replace the works that cannot be repaired. Works in Kent have constantly been subject to vandalism which have led Sound Transit to discuss how long they should continue to replace the wraps. She asked if the city has plans for addressing vandalized works too damaged to be repaired. Ms. Stamm said the type of vinyl to be used will have anti-graffiti properties. The slicing of wraps attached to a surface has been proven to be common in Bellevue. Artists will need to be made to understand that the timeline for the works will be five to ten years. The budget will not include replacing any works beyond their lifespan.

Commissioner Aldredge added that the acts of vandalism of the Sound Transit wraps appear to be specifically aimed at works by the most diverse artists. The resulting message was disturbing and could not go unaddressed. That fact should be on someone's radar in regard to the Bellevue project. Mr. MacDonald said during his tenure on the urban design side his work included installing utility box wraps in Bellevue. He said that was nine years ago and in Old Bellevue. He said he was not aware of any wrap in the

city that has needed to be replaced. He allowed, however, that diversity and artists addressing specific issues could potentially draw out those who normally would not seek to vandalize wraps. He added that the wraps are considered to be one-time installations, but instances of vandalism that appear to involve racist, bigoted or hated intent would be a different scenario and it would be incumbent on the city not to acquiesce to that type of activity by just removing the artwork.

Chair Malkin asked what the thinking was behind limiting the call to just King County and the Eastside, and why it should not be opened up to statewide artists. Ms. Stamm said the clear guidance of the community and the Commission has been in favor of finding more opportunities to represent Eastside artists. Additionally, there is an intent to incentivize people to sign up on the Eastside Artists Roster, which is specific to the Eastside. Chair Malkin said he was thinking of changing the call, but did point out that because the Bel-Red Arts District has the potential of being more of a draw, broader representation would be a good thing.

Mr. MacDonald concurred with the comments made by Ms. Stamm about building opportunities and responding to direction from the Commission. He said in the broader context, the arts district is made up of people and there will ultimately need to be representation at all levels. He allowed that the call, as it is specific to artists living on the Eastside, there could be fewer artists eligible with a direct connection to the Japanese American community and the history of much of BelRed being farmed by Japanese Americans prior to their incarceration during WWII. He said the call could be amended to think about the Spring Boulevard corridor as being open to artists within Washington state, and the other locations being open to Eastside artists. That would allow more Japanese American artists to apply.

Commissioner Aldredge said she preferred the call as written. She said the project is relatively small and it should serve as an opportunity for emerging local artists. There will be other and bigger opportunities in BelRed that could be open to everyone.

A motion to recommend the Wraps Program call for artists as written was made by Commissioner Aldredge. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Gulati and the motion carried unanimously.

5. COMMISSION QUICK BUSINESS

Commissioner Martinez reported that she was recently invited to the Friends of Bellevue cross cultural center meeting. She said citizens are gathering to brainstorm what the center could look like and how to advise the city concerning it.

6. REPORTS

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

Mr. MacDonald reminded the Commissioners that the Bellwether Winter Market would remain up through February 12, which is Lunar New Year. He said the market showcases a wide range of works for sale directly from the artists who have participated in past Bellwethers.

Mr. MacDonald said he is still meeting weekly with the creative director and the graphic designer to talk about the 2021 and 2022 Bellwether events. Ideas around what other partnerships might be pursued are being discussed.

The Lattawood Park public art project is fully functional and operational. The artist is not happy with one non-lit component near the north end of the park and he wants to lower the height of it. A couple of additional LEDs are also going to be installed to help illuminate the path between pieces.

Mr. MacDonald reported that a maintenance contract is under review with the consultant for *Arc with Four Forms*. The work will be restored along with *Garden of Alternatives* in McCormick Park under the same contract.

With regard to the Eastside Artists Roster, Mr. MacDonald said the goal for the year is to grow the roster. That will tie into some opportunities for capacity building across the Eastside. Other ways for Bellevue to show leadership on the Eastside are being investigated.

The city remains in Phase II of the reopening plan. For the arts that means museums are allowed to open at 25 percent capacity, though individual groups are limited to no more than six people. That could potentially allow Kids Quest to reopen though there are currently no plans for them to open at least in the next couple of weeks. With regard to theater companies, it is likely it will be near the beginning of 2022 before they start operations and performances.

A business the Small Business Association just released a new program called Shuttered Venues. The program involves awarding grants specific to arts and culture venues that have been closed during Covid-19. The program is open to arts organizations as well as for-profit arts businesses like practice spaces and recording studios.

At the state level, HB-1058, which gives county councils the ability to implement tax increases specific to the arts, will be out of committee soon. There is also pending before the legislature a bill to create a creative economy advisory group that would be tasked with looking at new and traditional art forms and how they support the statewide economy. That could lead to more state support for the idea of the creative economy.

8. ADJOURNMENT

Chair Malkin adjourned the meeting at 6:27 p.m.