

BELLEVUE ARTS COMMISSION  
REGULAR MEETING  
MINUTES

April 6, 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, Department of Planning and Community Development

OTHERS PRESENT: Eric Stelter, Roxanne Shepherd, PACE

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 Aldredge. The motion was seconded was by Commissioner Gulati and the motion carried unanimously.**

B. Approval of Minutes

**Motion to approve the February 2, 2021, minutes as submitted was made by Commissioner Martinez. The motion was seconded was by Commissioner Aldredge and the motion carried unanimously.**

3. ORAL COMMUNICATIONS – None

4. ACTION ITEMS AND DISCUSSION ITEMS

C. BelRed 121st and Spring Artwork

Arts Community Manager Scott MacDonald reminded the Commissioners that the artist Jill Anholt had been selected in 2017 by a panel comprised of community members, stakeholders and professional artists, as well as one Arts Commissioner. Ms. Anholt's selection to be the BelRed Streetscape Plan artist came with a scope that included the public art chapter in the plan and two artwork pre-concepts for early development of the plan. Those two concepts were presented to the Commission in October 2020: *Cut and Fill* located at 121st and Spring, and *Lost and Found*, a quartet of mobile artworks. Under the established vision, public art in BelRed is to respond to the transitional nature of the area as well as the distinct character and experience of the district and the experience of the district and its diverse communities.

Additionally, the public art is to unite geographical, social and cultural contexts while overall enriching the experience of the district and stimulating discourse.

Mr. MacDonald said the recommendation of staff was to proceed with design development for *Cut and Fill*, and to pause further development of *Lost and Found* until both budget and capacity allow. He said the recommendation was predicated on the potential for *Cut and Fill* being a landmark artwork; the expression of support by local community groups; the artist's body of work; and the fact that the pre-concept is consistent with the mission of the public art collection.

The intent is for the artwork to trigger a dialogue with the pedestrians, commuters and cyclists who will likely pass by the piece multiple times a day during their commutes. It is to be interactive and welcoming, and it will spark contemplation and reflection about the work's immediate surroundings and the wider Spring District. If the Commission approves moving forward with design development, updates will be provided and the final design will be brought back to the Commission for approval ahead of contracting for fabrication and installation.

Chair Malkin asked what the prognosis is for the future budget and staff capacity to accommodate *Lost and Found*. Mr. MacDonald said the second element is not current on the schedule or in the work plan, though there is an increasing desire, particularly by the Council to make progress on the BelRed Arts District. Budgeting in terms of specific work plan items covers two years at a time, and the project is not in the budget for either 2021 or 2022. The estimate that the four elements of the work will cost \$100,000 each for a total budget of \$400,000.

Chair Malkin voiced his support for *Cut and Fill* but said he also likes the engagement *Lost and Found* would bring about in the community. Mr. MacDonald allowed that the four elements would not necessarily have to come in as a set. Down the line consideration could be give to doing an additional one or two of the elements.

A motion to approve the artist concept and move forward with *Cut and Fill* was made by Commissioner Gowdy. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Lau Hui and the motion carried unanimously.

Commissioner Gulati asked if breaking up *Lost and Found* into individual elements and bringing them online over a number of years could mean having to use different materials. Mr. MacDonald stressed that each element is currently only a pre-concept. He said he would provide the artist with feedback about wanting continuity between the elements. In the event the project is pursued, approval will be sought from the Commission.

#### A. Performing Arts Center Eastside Update

Performing Arts Center Eastside (PACE) executive director Roxanne Shepherd said she has been part of the project for six years. She noted that Eric Stelter serves as board chair. She allowed that while the project has been in existence for some time, it is really a startup. The unusual circumstance of the pandemic has allowed for stepping back and taking a hard look at the organization, what has worked, and what the challenges have been. Attention has been given to putting all of the pieces in place and the project is now ready to be brought to life.

Mr. Stelter said he has served as PACE board chair for a little over a year. He said he came to the project in light of it being the most important project on the Eastside. The average time it takes to bring a performing arts center online is 20 to 25 years, and PACE has been around for 17 years. He said in visiting performing arts centers in various cities, and in talking with their

executive directors, he concluded that Bellevue has the assets in place to get the project done. The biggest roadblock to date has been the fact that a few elements of the project were misaligned or done out of order. By simply rearranging things, all has come into focus. During Covid, the focus has been on revamping the project's governance; developing a strategic plan; and developing a form of discipline. That work has led to serious negotiations with serious people with seriously large amounts of money about becoming a major naming partner.

The PACE project will be located in the Downtown at 106th Avenue NE and NE 10th Street thanks to a generous gift from the Freeman family, which is currently valued at between \$45 million and \$50 million in cash and land, the largest gift made to the arts in the history of the Pacific Northwest. While located in Bellevue, the mission of PACE is to serve the entirety of the Eastside. The project will be transformative to the culture of Bellevue in general, both the arts culture specifically and how Bellevue sees itself. Bellevue is the heart of the Eastside, is internationally known, and it a vital tech center.

It has taken 50 years for Bellevue to grow into what it is currently. In just the next seven years, the number of jobs, office space square footage and number of residences will all double. That is an astonishing fact. Two of the world's biggest companies, Microsoft and Amazon, are headquartered in Bellevue, and the gaming industry on the Eastside is bigger than all of Hollywood. With all the development, the question on the minds of many is what is being built culturally that will be meaningful and that will enhance livability on the Eastside. It is huge that the Council and the department heads are all on the same page in terms of building an astonishing city. Having a shared goal helps everyone move past all differences. The city has done a number of studies that land under the umbrella of the creative economy. There is much the PACE project does to help address all of what the city has identified as needing to happen. There is also the realization on the part of the city that it cannot go it alone and things must be done in partnership with others. The project will be critical to the city given the degree to which the great companies headquartered in Bellevue are operating in a world market for employees. Attracting and retaining those employees is a big part of the city's work through the provision of amenities.

PACE is more than a 2000-seat performing arts venue. It is in fact five separate venues that work together or separately. The main hall is a formal setting with an orchestra pit and a stage, but it also converts to a flat floor and has a movable stage. The hall does not have to be full to work given the electronic architecture that can accommodate everything from a single cello on stage to a rock band, a musical revue or a single speaker. The hall is meant to provide for a wide variety of uses. The lobbies have been designed to serve as meeting places in and of themselves. Before and after shows they will be filled with people interacting. The indoor space alone is 41,000 square feet, which is the equivalent of two full floors of a typical highrise. The lobbies can also serve as their own space given that the main hall will be wrapped with multiple high-resolution LED screens that can be curated with fine art, film or other presentations, in addition to marketing upcoming shows in a way that can be seen from outside the building.

The facility includes a studio space that can be used for recitals and black box productions. It is also a tech risk space in which someone in a motion capture suit can dance and appear simultaneously on a stage somewhere else, such as Beijing, or even as an avatar on the PACE main stage. The studio will also be used for arts education purposes when performers are in town. It also includes a community flex space that has been included in response to input from arts organizations on the Eastside, most of which do not have space for classrooms, meetings and what amounts to small conventions. The 9000-square-foot space is designed with flexible walls that can be divided down to as many as 15 individual rooms. Additionally, the donor lounge and conference room is a space that will be used during shows by the many wonderful

donors, but it will also play host to cocktail parties for non-profits, and as the PACE boardroom.

Some of the work that is currently underway includes a community engagement effort. Given the mandate to serve the entire Eastside community, steps are being taken to engage with arts and community groups across the Eastside with an eye on building relationships and trust. The intent is to have all programming and the use of the building reflect the entire community. The programming that pays will allow for programming things that do not pay as well, and that will help to serve the entire community.

Mr. Stelter said prior to Covid it was clear how much everyone on the Eastside was looking for advanced experiences for full evenings, something that can be traced back to the very first study conducted 20 years ago. The city recognized early on that the best location for the facility would be right in the core of the central business district, and noted that ideally it should be attached to a mixed use project. Often performing arts centers go places trying to catalyze real estate developments or a part of town that is not overly busy, but in the case of PACE exactly the opposite is the aim given that the Bellevue Collection collectively comprise the second busiest location in the entire state, behind only SeaTac. To date 12 studies have been done and each reaches the conclusion that PACE will be serving the top unserved arts market in the United States given the combination of the propensity of people on the Eastside to participate in the arts and the demographics. There is no venue larger than a thousand seats on the Eastside, and 67 percent of the seats in all facilities regionally between Tacoma and Everett are in Seattle, yet that same region has only 27 percent of the total population. In cities across the nation, a multiuse facility is their first project.

Ms. Shepherd clarified that the programmable LED screens will cover the entire outside of the concert hall and will be visible from each level of the lobby.

Commissioner Lau Hui asked if the building is physically connected to the Hyatt. Mr. Stelter said the two main entries on NE 10th Street and from the Wintergarden have access to the Hyatt. Additionally, there are connections directly to the meeting rooms and ballrooms of the Hyatt, but those normally will be closed unless there is a joint event, or unless catering is brought in through that door. Ms. Shepherd added that all underground parking will be networked, meaning that those coming in can park anywhere. Mr. Stelter said PACE will be connected via three skybridges to 12,500 parking stalls, three major hotels, and more than 70 restaurants.

Ms. Shepherd said music educators have long wanted to hold their regional and national conferences in Bellevue but have not been able to due to a lack of a venue large enough to accommodate them.

Commissioner Martinez asked if there is a kitchen or concession stand included. Mr. Stelter said the food handling elements have not yet been fully designed. He said there is no intention of including facilities to prepare food on site. The Hyatt has a massive commercial kitchen in the basement and a plating kitchen on a level across the hall from an opening to PACE. There will be food service, but it will be prepared off site and brought in. Ms. Shepherd said there will be a serviceable kitchen as part of the donor lounge and conference room where previously prepared and delivered food items can be handled. There also will be food service support for visiting artists.

Chair Malkin asked if consideration has been given to having a resident performing group. Ms. Shepherd said there are no plans to have a resident company. The intent is to host arts groups that call Seattle home. Not having a resident company will allow PACE to be more flexible with its calendar, thus maximizing profit-producing nights. Mr. Stelter said PACE

will seek long-term partnerships with groups, giving them a place to play every year. That is actually the new way facilities are doing resident companies. Wintergrass will be one such partnership and Village Theatre is another.

Chair Malkin asked if there will be built-in facilities for making recordings. Mr. Stelter said the facility will be designed to do everything well and nothing poorly. It will have both recording and broadcast facilities. Some of the technology that will be included does not yet exist.

Commissioner Lau Hui said it was her understanding the facility could be built and operational in five years. Mr. Stelter said everything will flow from the partner naming gift that is being sought. Negotiations to land that give are currently under way and things look positive. Should the gift be landed in the spring, and should the remainder of the fundraising go well, and should all permitting issues get resolved, it is possible the center could be opened in four and a half years.

Commissioner Gulati asked if the building will strictly host performing arts or if it will also host other art forms. Mr. Stelter said with the LED screens and the various spaces, the building will be able to serve a variety of purposes, even non-traditional arts.

Chair Malkin thanked Mr. Stelter and Ms. Shepherd for their update and asked that the Commission continue to be updated.

#### B. Utility Box Wrap Program

Arts Program Assistant Manette Stamm reminded the Commissioners that a call was issued to commission artists to design unique works with which to wrap utility boxes. The artists were required to be residents of East King County and to be listed on the Eastside Artists Roster. Artists were permitted to submit up to five example artworks. Depending on the total number of boxes, stipends for the projects will range from \$750 to \$4000. In all, 70 submissions were received, though one was a resident of Seattle and as such was dropped, leaving 69 eligible submissions. The bulk of the submissions, 23, came from Bellevue.

Ms. Stamm said the selection panel chose six artists and two alternates. She shared with the Commissioners the example artworks submitted by the six selected artists: Juliana Kang Robinson from Mercer Island; Marsha Rollinger from Renton; Raili Janese from Kirkland; Vikram Madan from Bellevue; Larine Chung from Bellevue; and Molly Keen from Clyde Hill. Also shared with the Commissioners were the example artworks submitted by the two alternates: Becky Lucas from Issaquah; and Kevan Atteberry from Bellevue.

Once approved, staff will work with the selected artists to create draft designs then a few weeks more to produce final designs. Once the final designs are in hand and approved by the Commission, they will be submitted to the installer for final layout. Installations will occur during the months of July and August.

Commissioner Wolfteich asked what the difference is between a one-box duo and a two-box duo. Ms. Stamm said a two-box duo has a total of four boxes, where a one-box duo has two total boxes. A duo is where two separate boxes share a single foundation. The boxes are not all the same size.

Chair Malkin said it was his recollection that there had been a discussion about having a single artist do all the boxes in a single stretch. Ms. Stamm said the panel could not reach a consensus on having a single artist address a corridor. Commissioner Gulati said depending

on how things go, in a future phase a single artist may be selected to address a full stretch of corridor.

Mr. MacDonald added that the maximum number of boxes considered for a single artist was eight in the form of four two-box duos. Ultimately those four duos were split between two artists. Looking ahead, there are some interesting opportunities in terms of applying the program to the Downtown. He said his recommendation there would be to seek to cement a district character. Given that the Grand Connection is a cultural corridor, it might make more sense to use a mix of artists along it. The peace meal approach is a good fix for BelRed given that it is a district where a lot of different types of art is made.

Commissioner Aldredge noted that the selected artists have a fairly wide range of ethnicities. She asked if that was done intentionally. Commissioner Gulati said it was part of the deliberative process. She stressed that everyone was given equal opportunity. It just so happened that the artists most liked by the selection committee were in fact quite diverse.

Mr. MacDonald added that the BelRed Streetscape Plan has a vision that will be provided to the artists. The artists will apply their own unique styles to the vision.

A motion to approve the commission of artworks from the selection of artists recommended by the panel was made by Commissioner Aldredge. 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

B. Project Updates from Staff

Mr. MacDonald reported that work to finalize details for the upcoming Bellwether is under way. The recent events at the Bellevue Arts Museum caused the process to step back, though. In a community open letter written by a group of artists and advocates and drafted by the curator of Yellow No. 5, the show currently at the museum, who is the first Black and first female to be a guest curator at the museum, there were various accusations made focused on some dismissive comments made by the executive director, Ben Haywood, during a meeting with the curator. The comments were interpreted as being racist and potentially sexist. In addition to serving as a response to those comments, the open letter was in regard to how the museum responded to the concerns that were voiced by the 400-plus people who signed the letter, namely that the museum's response, particularly by the board, was not open and clear enough. The statement posted to the museum's website was somewhat buried in the website's architecture and was not specific to the occurrence. The executive director subsequently resigned. Bellwether had been planning a big show at the museum and a huge majority of the artists planning to be in the show are people of color. Any conversations that need to happen will be respected before fully committing to working with the museum, and indeed before fully committing to the framework of the show.

Commissioner Martinez noted that she serves as a member of the Bellevue Arts Museum advisory board. She said a meeting was held earlier in the day that included an update from Rebecca Lyman, president of the board of trustees. It was stated that the board will begin the process of looking for a new executive director but will not rush into doing so in order to first heal the relationship between the museum and the community. She allowed that there are a

number of systemic issues to be addressed, and it will be difficult to once again gain the trust of the community.

Mr. MacDonald said from the city's perspective the situation presents the opportunity to get out into the community and talk about the issues. The conversations will not be easy. Bellwether is a good forum for the conversations among a myriad of other programs and forums.

Chair Malkin commented that both Commissioners Martinez and Wolfeich are part of the Bellwether committee and he suggested they should be included in part of the conversations to give the Commission a role in helping to unravel some of the drama with the museum.

Mr. MacDonald reported that the maintenance contract has yet to be finalized given that more works have been added to the scope. He also reported that a new catalog of the portable art collection has been compiled and he said it will be shared with the Commission once it is finalized.

With regard to the Eastside Artists Roster, Mr. MacDonald said it now has 84 fully registered artists. There has been some interest expressed by other cities wanting to use it. The expectation is that it will continue to grow and be a great tool.

Mr. MacDonald mentioned that the May meeting of the Commission will be Chair Malkin's last after serving eight years. Time will be taken at that meeting to reflect on his contributions.

Mr. MacDonald noted that Commission elections for chair and vice chair are slated to occur at the June meeting.

Commissioner Wolfeich asked if there was a timetable for once again holding meetings in person. Mr. MacDonald said he did not expect to see in-person meetings before September.

Commissioner Gulati informed the Commission that the Bellevue Downtown Association has put out a date for an in-person art festival for the first week of September. Mr. MacDonald said the Bellevue Downtown Association is also planning an outdoor music series that may be in person. The Bellevue Arts Museum will hold its arts fair virtually.

## 8. ADJOURNMENT

Chair Malkin adjourned the meeting at 6:08 p.m.