

BELLEVUE ARTS COMMISSION
REGULAR MEETING
MINUTES

September 7, 2021
4:30 p.m.

Bellevue City Hall
Virtual Meeting

COMMISSIONERS PRESENT: Commissioners Aldredge, Bhargava, Gowdy, Gulati, Martinez, Wolfteich

COMMISSIONERS ABSENT: Chair Lau Hui

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

OTHERS PRESENT: Scott McDonald, Ambergris Project

RECORDING SECRETARY: Gerry Lindsay

I. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 4:31 p.m. by Commissioner Gulati who presided. All Commissioners were present with the exception of Commissioner Aldredge, who arrived at 4:48 p.m., and Chair Lau Hui who was excused.

2. APPROVAL OF AGENDA AND MINUTES

A. Approval of Agenda

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

B. Approval of Minutes

Motion to approve the June 1, 2021, minutes as submitted was made by Commissioner Wolfteich. The motion was seconded was by Commissioner Martinez and the motion carried unanimously.

3. ORAL COMMUNICATIONS – None

Arts Program Assistant Manette Stamm took a moment to introduce new Commissioner Bhargava. Commissioner Bhargava said she brings to the table a background of fine art and UX design, and is an oil painter and mother.

4. ACTION ITEMS AND DISCUSSION ITEMS

A. 130th Final Design

Consultant Scott MacDonald reminded the Commissioners that in late 2018 the artist Po Shu Wang was selected by an artist selection panel to design the 130th project. The selection panel included a member of the Transportation Commission; two Bellevue-based artists; and a community member who runs an art-based child care facility. The total budget for the project

is \$200,000, 20 percent of which is allocated for design and engineering to get ready for fabrication and installation. The Commission approved the concept in late 2020, which is derived from the BelRed declination between magnetic north and true north. The declination was applied to a tonal circle used to develop a unique sound element. The design involves a stainless steel sphere with a trumpet-like shape with a point coming closer to the user. A light above the piece turns on when a person approaches. The final design budget fits within the overall project budget.

Mr. MacDonald shared with the Commissioners the site layout along 130th Avenue NE where the work will be sited. He noted that the artist has been working in collaboration with the design team that is focused on 130th Avenue NE between Bel-Red Road up to Northup Way. The selected site intersects with the western edge of the coming light rail station. The sidewalk paving pattern was developed by the artist and the urban designers for the streetscape project and it is derived from the tonal scale and the unique signature assigned to BelRed. A sample of the sound was played for the Commission and it was explained that singers from BelRed will ultimately lend their voices to the project for layering into a unique soundscape. The sound will play only a someone approaches the artwork, and it will only be loud enough to be heard by persons immediately adjacent to the piece. All of the necessary technology will be included in the sphere, where there is also an access panel. System resets will be able to be done remotely via wi-fi. The overall structure will be easy to maintain.

If the Commission recommends approval of the final design, work will begin on contracting for the fabrication and installation. The contract will need to be approved by the City Council, which can take some time. Installation of the piece is anticipated for 2023 following completion of 130th Avenue NE ahead of the light rail station opens. While the Commission will be kept updated as the project moves forward, no additional action will be required by the Commission.

Commissioner Gulati asked if there have been discussions with the artist about how the sculpture will be maintained in terms of wear and tear. Mr. MacDonald said the recommendation is that the work should have an annual cleaning as part of the maintenance plan. Nationally within the huge array of stainless steel objects in public spaces, the 130th work falls on the lower end of necessary maintenance. Some structures, like Cloud Gate in Chicago, require weekly cleaning. Stainless steel is a very durable material.

Commissioner Aldredge commented that while stainless steel is one of the most expensive components artists work with and is difficult to work with, it is extremely durable. She said she uses stainless steel often when bringing together different kinds of metals because it does not have galvanic action.

Commissioner Aldredge asked if the work will be coating with an anti-graffiti coating. Mr. MacDonald said that has not been determined yet. He noted that Bellevue has not traditionally used anti-graffiti coating on steel sculptures, and pointed out that where it has been used it has failed. Commissioner Aldredge said she felt the sculpture could be vulnerable to being tagged, and with such a highly polished surface it would be challenging to clean. Mr. MacDonald suggested that given the sculpture's location and its call for personal interaction, tagging will be far less likely to occur. Where tagging with paint occurs, a light polishing can remove it. If someone gouges their name into the piece it will be more difficult to address.

A motion to recommend the approval of final design of the 130th Streetscape Artwork by Po Shu Wang was presented was made by Commissioner Wolfteich. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Gulati and the motion carried unanimously.

B. Downtown Utility Box Wraps

Ms. Stamm said the first phase of the utility box wrap program would conclude during the month of September, weather permitting. She said there have been many positive comments received to date about the wraps that have been completed in BelRed. The call that went out greatly assisted in getting more artists on the Eastside Artist Roster.

The Downtown phase of the project will involve a similar call for high-quality digital or scanned artworks. The submissions to the call will be restricted to King County if so desired, though it could potentially be opened to other counties as well. The project budget for the Downtown is \$40,000, funded entirely through a donation from Amazon. Artists selected will receive a stipend depending on the box size. It is possible the call could cover additional service boxes in various parks in the Downtown. Boxes set to be replaced with upcoming development will not be wrapped. In all, eight to ten boxes will be wrapped.

Ms. Stamm said she would present the call at the Commission's meeting in October. If approved, the call will be advertised and submissions will be collected. The call will close in November and the review panel will begin its work and make selections in December. The recommended artists will be presented to the Commission for approval in January. Production and installation will span the months between February and June.

Commissioner Gulati asked if the comments received from the public were in regard to certain utility box wraps as opposed to others. She also asked if artists who were selected for wraps in BelRed could apply again for the Downtown project, and she asked about opening the call to other counties. Ms. Stamm said her thinking was that the call should include artists in King County and the immediately surrounding counties, though she said it could also be limited to just King County. She said artists who previously were selected to do wraps in BelRed would still be eligible for the Downtown phase of the project. The response to the first call was very strong; even though it was limited only to Eastside artists, between 80 and 100 applied. In the end, six artists were selected to wrap eight boxes.

Commissioner Aldredge asked what the response was on the part of the artists to being involved in the experience. Ms. Stamm said the artists selected ranged from having done similar projects in the past to having no public art experience in the past. For those with past experience, they had set ideas for how things should be run. For the most part, the feedback was very positive. The feedback from the artists without public art experience was all positive. Feedback from the public has also been positive overall.

Commissioner Aldredge commented that the task of the Commission is to encourage art in Bellevue. It has been a struggle to create and expand the Eastside Artists Roster. The utility box wrap project is a great way to reach into the local arts community. She said she was inclined to keep the call restricted to those on the Eastside Artists Roster, which by definition limits who can apply. Commissioner Gulati agreed.

Commissioner Gulati pointed out that the pandemic has pushed some Eastside residents out of their homes and therefore out of the Eastside zone. She asked if limiting the call to those on the Eastside Artists Roster would be doing some artists a disservice. Ms. Stamm said she did not have the capacity to take on the task of verifying that artists who apply used to live on the Eastside and were pushed out by the pandemic. She said she would give the issue some consideration and report back at the next Commission meeting.

Economic Development Strategist Jesse Canedo said he would work with Ms. Stamm to see what would be possible from a logistics and administrative perspective. He stated, however, that it would be very difficult to include folks who have moved, and noted that including them could become a slippery slope in terms of where to draw the line. The city could also be

exposed to some legal liability by going down that path. He proposed keeping the focus to those who are actively registered on the Eastside Artists Roster or opening the call to the surrounding counties.

Commissioner Bhargava said she has seen the boxes that have been wrapped and said they have been done very well and look very good.

C. Bellwether 2021 Review

Ms. Stamm said Bellwether 2021 was under way. She noted that prior to 2018 the Bellwether exhibition was held every other year and was limited to sculptures located in and around Bellevue during the summer months. In 2018 as the Grand Connection began to play a more prominent role, a new vision was developed which included Bellwether becoming a yearly exhibition encompassing a full range of exhibits from visual to performing and spoken word. Following two successful years, the event was not held in 2020 due to the pandemic. The 2021 show will be two shows in one with a myriad of two- and three-dimensional art and events around the city. The event will be live from September 9 to September 19 at venues including the Bellevue Botanical Garden, the Bellevue Arts Museum, Downtown Park and Meydenbauer Center Theatre.

Ms. Stamm said on September 10 artist Catherine Cross Uehara will present *Strawberry Fields Forever*, an amorphous exploration of embodied ancestry and self-discovery. The event is slated for Downtown Park at 3:00 p.m. The artist has an in process approach to her art. The event will be filmed but the audience is encouraged to interact. From 1:00 p.m. to 3:00 p.m. that same day there will be an in-person discussion on Power and Censorship in the arts at the Bellevue Arts Museum. A panel discussion involving artists Erin Shigaki and Anida Yoeu Ali will be moderated by artist Ploi Pirapokin.

On September 11 artist Jesus Benavente will present *We Built This With The Weapons You Gave Us* from 11:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. at the Bellevue Arts Museum. The collaborative and interactive event will involve brick painting which will then become an installation in the Court of Light on the third floor of the museum. At about noon the same day artist Anida Yoeu Ali will host a procession through the Downtown, starting at the Bellevue Arts Museum. The artist, along with six other artists all dressed in long sequin chadors, will focus attention on Islamophobia and homophobia. The event will also be filmed. Artist Gustavo Martinez will be in the gathering space at the Bellevue Botanical Garden near the entrance. Beginning about noon, he will offer a demonstration which will be followed by a workshop where attendees can either watch or engage in throwing their own ceramics. During the evening hours, EastHUB Live Music will present an evening of local music at the Meydenbauer Center Theatre in honor of first responders, EMTs and essential workers.

On September 18 there will be a pop-up art show/market highlighting works on the theme "Exposed," uncovering the methods of making and exploring the processes of sketching, planning, handling materials and executing different art forms. Artists will be present making art during the event, and works will be available for purchase. That afternoon EastHUB Live Music will present four different performances in Downtown Park on the theme "Community – Celebrating the Eastside's Rich Cultural Diversity."

Ms. Stamm said once the Bellwether event concludes, staff will sit down with the various partners and debrief to better understand what worked, what did not work, and what could be done better and differently in future iterations of the event.

Commissioner Martinez commented that she had been in contact with Jesus Benavente who asked for creative ideas of what to do with the bricks afterwards. She said he was open to suggestions.

5. COMMISSION QUICK BUSINESS – None

6. REPORTS

A. Commissioners Committee and Lead Reports – None

B. Project Updates from Staff

Ms. Stamm said the grants program is open and currently accepting letters of intent. Once the applications period closes on September 20, the Allocations Committee will meet to review the submissions.

Commissioner Aldredge asked what the best place is to find information about the grants program. Ms. Stamm said there is a page on the city's arts and culture website that is specific to the grants program.

Commissioner Gulati asked if the amount of funding for the grants program had been increased. Ms. Stamm said the grants budget remains the same, though other parts of the budget have been reduced. Applications for grants to improve the grants program have been made and depending on how that plays out, the grants program could be larger in the future.

Ms. Stamm noted that the BelRed Arts District report from Katie Miller had been posted to the Commission's website. With regard to updating the Cultural Compass, she said the city applied for a grant last year but was not successful. An updated and improved application for the grant was prepared and submitted.

The portable art collection is up in City Hall as a full body of work from the call made in 2020. Some 20 works were added to the portable collection.

7. ADJOURNMENT

Commissioner Gulati adjourned the meeting at 5:48 p.m.