

BELLEVUE ARTS COMMISSION
REGULAR MEETING
MINUTES

November 2, 2021
4:30 p.m.

Bellevue City Hall
Virtual Meeting

COMMISSIONERS PRESENT: Chairperson Lau Hui, Commissioners Aldredge, Bhargava, Gowdy, Wolfteich

COMMISSIONERS ABSENT: Commissioners Gulati, Martinez

STAFF PRESENT: Lorie Hoffman, Manette Stamm, Department of Planning and Community Development; Councilmember Stokes

OTHERS PRESENT: Raymond Cullom, Sudeshna Sathe-Dixit, EastHUB

RECORDING SECRETARY: Gerry Lindsay

I. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 4:33 p.m. by Chair Lau Hui who presided. All Commissioners were present with the exception of Commissioners Gulati and Martinez, both of whom were excused.

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 Gowdy and the motion carried unanimously.

B. Approval of Minutes

Motion to approve the September 7, 2021, minutes as submitted was made by Commissioner Aldredge. The motion was seconded was by Commissioner Wolfteich and the motion carried unanimously.

3. ORAL COMMUNICATIONS – None

4. ACTION ITEMS AND DISCUSSION ITEMS

A. Welcome New Arts Community Manager

The Commission took a moment to welcome new Arts Community Manager Lorie Hoffman. Ms. Hoffman said she comes from the non-profit world and noted that her last job was as executive director of ShoreLake Arts.

B. EastHUB Update

EastHUB CEO Ray Cullom reminded the Commissioners that EastHUB is a non-profit organization that was formed in the spring of 2020 with the mission of bringing the

community together to make sure that as Bellevue grows it will grow with a cultural heart and soul. The organization works with developers and those who own real estate to carve out cultural spaces, and seeks to bring the community together to realize collectively what cannot be accomplished individually, namely to build and embed an infrastructure of arts and culture spaces in Bellevue and throughout the Eastside, and to make sure local organizations that use the spaces find them welcoming and user friendly. He introduced Sudeshna Sathe-Dixit, director of cultural communications.

Ms. Sathe-Dixit said she has a background in art and currently serves as a member of the Sammamish arts commission. She said her unique team of consensus organizers consists of people from different communities, including BIPOC communities, to bring an understanding of those communities and the arts and culture organizations that exist within them. The process provides insight into the kind of cultural and event spaces they are looking for. The work is being done through Culture Creates Community which hopefully will become a monthly series highlighting different topics. She said her intention was to continue working with the city and others on the Eastside to determine what is needed and what is missing.

Ms. Sathe-Dixit said the work is part of the larger cultural mapping project, which is an attempt to map spaces around the Eastside and to gain a fuller understanding of the existing arts and culture organizations and the communities they serve. The mapping exercise will help to identify the gaps and inform the process of how to fill those gaps. The project is expected to take two or three years.

Mr. Cullom shared that sponsorships have recently been received from Facebook and Amazon to assist with the cultural mapping project. There have to date been two Culture Creates Community events. The first was focused on the South Asian community and the second on the communities from the former Soviet block countries. The project is drawing inspiration from the community. Big beautiful spaces for arts and culture can be built, but if the community does not feel that they own them or feel welcome in them, they will not come to them.

Mr. Cullom reported that the city contracted with EastHUB to do some live music programming, marketing and public relations for the Bellwether arts festival. A sponsorship was generated with Amazon to do the work. The organization is in conversations with the city about being involved in Bellwether 2022 but at a much earlier date. The way it usually works is that as soon as one festival ends, work on the next work begins. In order to turn Bellwether into a prominent local event, the planning work must start much earlier, and the work must include a much larger awareness campaign.

The Commissioners were informed that EastHUB also ran an interesting and fun event called Medina Days in Medina Park in the month of August. The work of soliciting new spaces to turn into cultural spaces for the community continues. Discussions are continuing with Facebook about spaces in their new campus in the Spring District. Work is also underway by EastHUB on an outdoor amphitheater in a master plan community in downtown Sammamish. The city of Bellevue has contracted with EastHUB to create the Eastside Live website, which will serve as a cultural information portal for anyone on the Eastside wanting to find out what is happening in terms of arts and culture.

Mr. Cullom said CLOUDVUE Playhouse is the big project EastHUB is working on. Since it was discussed with the Commission in February, the progress made has included the selection of architects and the development of a construction schedule for the building. The CLOUDVUE Playhouse will be located on 110th Avenue NE across the street from the Bravern, half a block from City Hall between the new Amazon headquarters and the CLOUDVUE development, which consists of three highrise towers. The CLOUDVUE

developer has made what amounts to a \$45 million donation to EastHUB in the form of land and infrastructure to allow for the building of a playhouse with a capacity of between 250 and 1000 given the configuration of the flexible space. The developer is also generously building the parking garage and all underground structures, is doing all of the site clearing, and making all the connections to light rail and the transit center, all of which will keep the cost of the project way down. The building will be flexible in terms of its configurations through the use of technology and mechanical gadgetry.

As a result of conversations with the community, the space will be accessible and community oriented. The prime users of the space will be local arts and culture groups doing their own work, doing work with touring artists and Seattle-based groups, all of which will uniquely reflect the Eastside and what Bellevue is all about. No attempt will be made to duplicate what exists across the lake in Seattle. EastHUB will also be programming local, national and international artists.

The case will be made to the city that CLOUDVUE Playhouse will be a large public amenity. The facility will be built for the community to use, and Bellevue groups will be given priority in scheduling. There will be a massive indoor lobby space capable of being used as exhibition space focused on local history and heritage.

Mr. Cullom shared with the Commissioners renderings of the concept designs for the CLOUDVUE Playhouse. He said the agreement with the developer for the donation of the land has been finalized. The schematic design work will begin early in the new year and must be completed by April 1 in order to be submitted for administrative design review by the city. The design development phase will kick off in a year. By October of 2022 the permitting process with the city will launch, which is expected to take at least a year. The groundbreaking date for the project is slated for March 1, 2023. All construction documents must be completed by May 1, 2023, and by October 1, 2023, 75 percent of the construction funds must be pledged. Construction on the Playhouse will begin in October 2024, and the project is projected to be completed no later than October 2026. The total project cost is coming in at between \$55 million and \$60 million. The EastHUB team will be going to the city in the coming months to talk about capital funding support to help realize the building.

Commissioner Aldredge asked if the cultural connection meetings held with groups in the community were held virtually. Mr. Collum said they were and added that the hope is that soon they will be held live. The meetings were advertised to the community by the groups themselves with support from EastHUB. Commissioner Aldredge urged Mr. Collum to keep the Commission in the loop.

Commissioner Wolfteich asked if the \$55 million to \$60 million construction costs would be in addition to the \$45 million committed by the developer. Mr. Collum explained that the developer would be doing all of the site work and underground parking work and then would be handing off to the CLOUDVUE projects a closed-up pad on which to build the building.

Commissioner Aldredge asked how the new CLOUDVUE Playhouse would interact and avoid competing with the Meydenbauer Center. Mr. Collum said in talking about an infrastructure of cultural spaces, what is meant is spaces of all sizes and shapes. The idea is to turn all of Downtown Bellevue into a cultural district. The two facilities will not be in competition with each other.

Commissioner Gowdy said she looked forward to see the results of the cultural mapping project. She asked if amenities in Seattle would be included. Mr. Collum said Seattle would be included only as a means of comparison. The goal is to end up with Bellevue and the Eastside as a distinct and separate cultural destination. In order to do that, it is necessary to be

aware of what is happening in the surrounding area. The project is ongoing and is scheduled to go live in the spring of 2022. He said he would be happy to provide the Commission with regular briefings going forward.

Chair Lau Hui asked if the CLOUDVUE Playhouse project would include green designs. Ms. Collum said the intent is to exceed what the city will ask the project to do in terms of LEED certification.

C. Utility Box Wraps Program Call for Artists

Arts Program Assistant Mulette Stamm said the goal for the utility box wrap program was to provide opportunities to Eastside artists to help ring character, intrigue and beauty to the public realm. The program will address up to 13 boxes in the Downtown area using funds provided by Amazon. Artists will be given a stipend of \$800 for a single standalone box and \$1100 for box duos. The program could potentially include boxes in parks. Not all boxes will be addressed given the current level of development; many boxes will soon be replaced, and for others their future is simply unknown.

In order to be eligible for the call, artists must be on the Eastside roster and living in East King County. The application requirements will be the same as for the BelRed iteration of the program; specifically artists must submit a statement, a bio, a resume, five images of example work and image descriptions. Completed applications must be submitted by December 8. The selection criteria are also similar to the BelRed program in that all artists must meet the eligibility requirements and must submit a complete application. The applicants will be judged on their merit, craftsmanship and originality, and diverse artists are encouraged to apply. A panel consisting of one member of the Arts Commission, a member of the Bellevue Downtown Association, and two community members and/or arts professionals will make recommendations, and the Commission will have final approval of the selected artists and the final designs.

Ms. Stamm said the timeline will be a bit longer than for the BelRed program. All of the work of printing and installing the wraps should be completed by August 2022.

Commissioner Aldredge asked if artists selected to participate in the BelRed program will be eligible to apply for the Downtown program. Ms. Stamm said typically there are no such restrictions, though the panel is made aware of any works an artist may have in the city's portable or temporary collection.

Commissioner Aldredge said she has really appreciated seeing the new utility box wraps out in the community. She said they are wonderful.

Chair Lau Hui asked if after the BelRed program there had been any feedback from the participating artists about the timeline. Ms. Stamm said she included in the proposed schedule more time for contracting with the artists. She said the first round took longer than expected. However, with an artist agreement established, that element should go a bit faster. More time is also included in the timeline for reviewing the layouts and submittals.

Commissioner Aldredge said she was glad to see more money for the artists. Ms. Stamm agreed with the need to keep up with inflation.

Councilmember Stokes said the wrap program has been very well received and noted that the Council has received many compliments. He said he was glad to see another round being launched and added that he hopes the program will continue for a long time. One benefit of the wraps is that they inhibit if not completely eliminate graffiti being permanent. The wrap

installed on a box at the Lake Hills Connector and SE 8th Street has never been touched and people really like it. While small in scale, the project is very impactful. He said the Commission has done a great job of fostering the program.

Following up on the EastHUB presentation, Councilmember Stokes said he would get together with staff to talk about it. He said he would like to see the Commission have a conversation about what can be done to help the organization. The conversation should include what the city would like to see included. It would be very health for the Commission to have input early in the process.

A motion to approve the wrap program call for artists as presented was made by Commissioner Wolfteich. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Aldredge and the motion carried unanimously.

D. 2022 Grant Allocations

Ms. Stamm said the grant application and allocation process timeline had been switched up a bit to allow for more time to review guidelines for the grantees and work through the various steps. The guidelines were published in July instead of August with only slight revisions made to the language for purposes of clarity. The application was open for two months and as applications were submitted staff worked to verify eligibility. The allocations committee met on October 26 and developed recommendations. If approved by the Commission, the recommended grants will be forward to the City Council for approval on November 22. Following Council approval, staff will alert the applicants in regard to their awards.

Ms. Stamm said the allocations committee consisted of Commissioners Aldredge, Gowdy and Bhargava, along with Bellevue residents and artists Soo Hong and Fred Lisaius. The committee followed a very democratic and efficient process. Each of the more than 40 applications was considered in terms of the quality of their creative engagement, public benefit for residents and visitors, and the capacity and sustainability of the various organizations and individuals. In the end, the allocations committee recommended a total allocation of \$145,000 to 43 individuals and non-profit organizations, in addition to two Power Up grants of \$5000 each. The committee elected not to fund a few special projects given various circumstances ranging from budget concerns to project viability. The breakdown of the allocations by grantee was included in the Commission packets.

Answering a question asked by Chair Lau Hui, Commissioner Aldredge noted that one individual had applied for two project grants. The committee chose to grant one of the two special projects but not both. Overall there were only three applications that were not recommended for funding. She added that by not funding the three projects that had the lowest reviews allowed for getting closer to funding more realistically the remaining projects.

Commissioner Gowdy said she had been impressed by the variety of projects, some large and some small. Commissioner Aldredge added that the applicants represented a wide range of cultural diversity, which was impressive.

Commissioner Bhargava said serving on the committee was a real eye opener in terms of learning how many artists and organizations are operating in Bellevue.

Ms. Stamm said the recommendation from the committee would fund about 53 percent of the total amount of funding requested.

A motion to endorse the allocations committee's 2022 funding recommendations for Eastside Arts Partnerships, Special Projects and Power Up as presented was made by Commissioner

Gowdy. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Bhargava 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

Ms. Stamm reported that the Downtown Park artist is finally working with the fabricator and installer. The Commission will be provided an update on the project soon.

8. ADJOURNMENT

Chair Lau Hui adjourned the meeting at 5:33 p.m.