

BELLEVUE ARTS COMMISSION  
REGULAR MEETING  
MINUTES

February 1, 2022  
4:30 p.m.

Bellevue City Hall  
Virtual Meeting

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

COMMISSIONERS ABSENT: None

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

OTHERS PRESENT: None

RECORDING SECRETARY: Gerry Lindsay

I. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 4:31 p.m. by Chair Lau Hui 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 Gowdy and the motion carried unanimously.**

B. Approval of Minutes

**Motion to approve the January 11, 2022, minutes as submitted was made by Commissioner Gulati. The motion was seconded was by Commissioner Aldredge and the motion carried unanimously.**

3. ORAL COMMUNICATIONS – None

4. ACTION ITEMS AND DISCUSSION ITEMS

A. Arts Grants Funding

Arts Community Manager Lorie Hoffman commented that since 2001 the City Council has allocated annual grant funding generated by the general fund. Every year, the Commission makes a recommendation to the Council for how to spend those funds through the three grants programs of Eastside Arts Partnership, Special Projects and Power Up Bellevue. In recent years the Commission has expanded its outreach effort by very purposefully targeting new organizations and reaching out into the cultural communities seeking applications. The approach has met with great success. In just the last two years there have been 12 first-time applications, and between 2017 and 2022 the applicant pool has been doubled. The 2020 audience engagement survey showed that 82 percent of the respondents attended arts and

cultural experiences in Bellevue. She stressed the need to keep in mind that economic pressures and a lack of affordable space continue to put pressure on the arts and culture sector.

Zeroing in on just the Eastside Arts Partnership, Ms. Hoffman shared with the Commissioners that between 2017 and 2022 the average award went from \$4700 to \$3140, due in part to the increased number of applicants and the fact that the Commission has chosen to continue funding most applicants at some level. Comparing Bellevue to jurisdictions in the region, she noted that Bellevue's per capita arts and culture grants funding stands at \$0.94. Renton comes in at \$0.51 and Redmond at \$0.19. Issaquah, however, is at \$3.74 and Seattle is at \$5.34.

As part of the biannual budget process, staff will be looking for several potential funding sources. The list includes increases to the general fund and CIP budget; admission taxes; a possible public levy; and corporate sponsorship and foundation grants. Research needs to be done with respect to each of those options to determine which are the most viable. The city's budget process will kick off in March, and the Commission will be updated again mid-year.

Commissioner Aldredge pointed out that Issaquah is substantially smaller than Bellevue and said her suspicion for why that jurisdiction spends more on arts and culture grants is due to the fact that they have a percentage for the arts program in place for all public projects. She said a percentage program is something Bellevue should consider. Ms. Hoffman said Issaquah has a fairly aggressive admissions tax that goes to fund arts grants. Their percentage program is only for public art projects, not grants.

Commissioner Aldredge noted that the report provided at the Commission's January meeting indicated a deep interest on the part of the Council in having more art in the city. She said the Commission needs to capitalize on that enthusiasm. There are many places to look for funding. Currently there is a lot of corporate money flowing in from companies wanting to ingratiate themselves with the city. Bellevue is riding high and growth is occurring at a rapid rate. There needs to be caution, however, about going too far; she said she was hesitant to consider an admission tax at a time when performance venues continue to struggle. Ms. Hoffman agreed with the need to explore all options. She said she met earlier in the day with a gentleman with a similar position to hers in Scottsdale, Arizona, who reported that one approach that jurisdiction uses is to impose a small arts fee for every construction permit.

Commissioner Gulati said it was her understanding that the Councilmembers are all generally in favor of increasing funding for the arts, but they simply have not done anything about it. She asked what the likelihood is seeing the allocation to the arts increased. Ms. Hoffman said it appears that the Councilmembers are open to having that conversation, and that the time is right to have the conversation. The city's budget remains tight, however, and any new requests for funds without an associated revenue stream might be complicated. Even so, making the ask would not be inappropriate.

Chair Lau Hui asked staff to keep the Commission updated with regard to the issue. Ms. Hoffman said she would be happy to provide a monthly update.

## B. Committee Assignments

Arts Program Analyst Manette Stamm said the committees are a useful tool for working closely with the Commissioners without having to bring everything to the full Commission every month. Committees must be composed of three or fewer members to avoid quorum issues. The committees are generally tied to specific components of the annual work plan. Most committees enjoy limited time commitments, with the exception of the Allocations Committee, which reads all submitted grant applications and makes a recommendation to the

full Commission. New members are encouraged to serve at least one year on the Allocations Committee. The Chair has final approval for making all committee assignments.

Ms. Stamm noted that there are six committees and suggested the Commissioners should choose two or three of them to serve on.

Commissioner Gowdy offered to serve on the BelRed and Community Partners committees. Commissioner Martinez said she was interested in serving on the same two committees.

Ms. Stamm told Commissioner Martinez she would be expected to serve at least once on the Allocations Committee.

Commissioner Aldredge said she was willing to serve again on the Allocations Committee. She said she found it to be a lot of work but very interesting. She said she was also interested in serving on the Public Art committee.

Commissioner Gulati stated her desire to continue as a member of the Grants and Funding and the Public Art committees. She said she would also like to serve on the BelRed committee.

Commissioner Wolfteich said he was willing to remain on the Bellwether committee.

Commissioner Bhargava offered to serve on the Community Partners committee.

Chair Lau Hui volunteered to serve on the Bellwether committee and on any other committee as needed.

### C. Utility Box Artists

Ms. Stamm reminded the Commissioners that for the second round of utility and signal box wraps the focus would be on the Downtown. She noted that for the call artists are required to be on the Eastside roster. The applicants were required to submit five examples of their work in any medium that could be transferred to a 2D printed surface. The stipends offered for the program range from \$800 to \$1000 depending on the available boxes and their sizes. The call was open from November through December and a total of 54 submissions were received. The fact that the call went out during the holidays may have contributed to the lower number of submissions.

Ms. Stamm said the panel met to review the application materials on January 21 and pared the total number of applicants down to only ten.

The location of boxes in the Downtown face a number of challenges given that construction is ongoing throughout much the area. Some boxes are behind fences while others are slated to soon be fenced in. Active construction sites will be generally avoided, and steps will be taken to avoid covering any boxes that are scheduled to be replaced. Overall, there are a lot of utility and signal boxes in the Downtown, including some in Old Bellevue that received covers a long time ago. A list of preferred locations has been identified but work is continuing to narrow the list before matching them up with artists.

Ms. Stamm noted that she had included in the packet information about each artist recommended by the panel along with sample artworks.

Ms. Hoffman stressed that the sample artworks are representative of each artist's work and not proposals for what they would use. She noted that box wraps cannot be dark to avoid making the utility boxes hot. Ms. Stamm said the design guidelines included in the call outline the

need to avoid blank space, which can encourage graffiti; the need to avoid the use of dark colors; and the need to avoid the use of any text other than a label with the name of the artist or a signature.

Ms. Stamm said the panel chose two backup artists that will be worked with in the event one of the primary artists is not available.

Chair Lau Hui thanked the panel for recommending a diverse group of artists. Commissioner Gulati agreed and added that she liked the fact that the artists generally are local.

Commissioner Aldredge noted that the Commission will have an additional opportunity to review all proposed artworks before accepting them.

Ms. Stamm said the budget is sufficient to cover ten utility boxes, and with ten artists selected that would mean one artist per location. The individual locations could have a single box or more than one box. If all goes as scheduled, the wraps will be installed during the summer and completed by September.

A motion to approve the ten recommended artists for the Downtown utility box wrap program was made by Commissioner Aldredge. The motion was seconded by Chair Lau Hui and the motion carried unanimously. Commissioner Martinez was not present for the vote.

5. COMMISSION QUICK BUSINESS – None

6. REPORTS

A. Commissioners' Committee and Lead Reports – As Noted

B. Project Updates from Staff

With regard to ArtSpace, Ms. Hoffman reported that she is working on the contract documents.

Ms. Stamm said all public art projects are continuing to move along. Final design for the 130<sup>th</sup> project should be in hand in the next few months. She said staff are still working on the call for the mural program; there remain some questions about the procurement process will be and what kind of insurance will be required of artists. ArtTech has completed all of its maintenance work for 2021, including all of the major restorations. Additional work is slated for 2022 on other works involving restoration and cleaning. The call for the portable art collection has been published and applications are being submitted.

With regard to Bellwether, Ms. Hoffman no creative head for the project has yet been selected. She informed the Commissioners that in February there will be a pilot digital residency with artist Natasha Marin on Black History month. That will be taken as a test of something that might want to be done with Bellwether in terms of having a series of digital residencies with artists.

8. ADJOURNMENT

Chair Lau Hui adjourned the meeting at 5:24 p.m.