

BELLEVUE ARTS COMMISSION  
REGULAR MEETING  
MINUTES

March 8, 2022  
4:30 p.m.

Bellevue City Hall  
Virtual Meeting

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

COMMISSIONERS ABSENT: Commissioner Martinez

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

OTHERS PRESENT: Councilmember Stokes; Evan LeSure, EastHUB

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 with the exception of Commissioner Martinez 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 Aldredge and the motion carried unanimously.**

B. Approval of Minutes

**Motion to approve the February 1, 2022, minutes as submitted was made by Commissioner Wolfteich. The motion was seconded was by Commissioner Gowdy and the motion carried unanimously.**

3. ORAL COMMUNICATIONS – None

4. ACTION ITEMS AND DISCUSSION ITEMS

A. Eastside Live

Evan LeSure, director of cultural projects for EastHUB, shared with the Commission information about the recently developed and launched EastsideLive.org website. He reminded the Commissioners that EastHUB is a community development organization dedicated to working for the arts and culture community of the Eastside. The organization brings together the public and private sectors, arts and culture organizations on the Eastside, and individuals to increase the resources available to arts and culture organizations and to bring arts and culture opportunities to the region in general. The focus is on building arts and culture infrastructure and spaces across the Eastside region. Currently under construction is a theater at the Cloudivue site. EastHUB is based in Bellevue and is a 501(C)(3) non-profit.

Mr. LeSure said EastHUB was approached in March 2021 about an identified lack of a comprehensive cultural calendar for the Eastside community to advertise events and activities. The ask was to work on creating a resource for the Eastside as a whole, not just for the city of Bellevue. The solution was the resource called Eastside Live. It is a cultural events calendar for the entire Eastside. The calendar is searchable and can be filtered by different cities, venues and organizers. It included ticketing information as well as venue information. There is also an organizer roster included that gets updated every time an event is submitted. The front page of the site highlights events that are promoted by different organizations.

For purposes of the website, the Eastside region is identified as the area from Bothell to Renton and from Lake Washington, inclusive of Mercer Island, to the mountains. The website is for both in-person and virtual events. Events posted to the site must be broadly culturally based, and they must be open to the public. The submission requirements prohibit overtly political rallies, strictly commercial events, regularly scheduled meetings or religious services or ceremonies. Faith-based organizations are not outright excluded, however, so a choir concert or recital can be submitted to the site. All submitted events are reviewed by EastHUB staff to make sure they fit the broad guidelines.

The long-term project has been funded by the city of Bellevue for a two-year term. That will allow for making improvements as needed, fixing bugs, and adding additional features to assure it will be a good resource. The initial launch is primarily relying on arts and culture groups to submit their events, but currently under development is an aggregation feature that will scrape the internet to find events. Calendar import features are also being worked on. EastHUB welcomes feedback about the site.

Mr. LeSure demonstrated the website for the Commissioners.

Arts Program Analyst Manette Stamm asked where the submission guidelines can be found on the website. Mr. LeSure said they come up when an organization seeks to submit an event. Ms. Stamm suggested it would be good to have them highlighted more prominently.

Commissioner Aldredge asked how the website is being publicized to the Eastside arts community. Mr. LeSure there is a social media campaign in the works. An article recently came out in *Crosscut*, and a couple of press releases have been put out, including one by the city of Bellevue. EastHUB is also communicating directly with arts organizations via its comprehensive email list. Additionally, a group of consensus organizers that works with different cultural communities across the Eastside is reaching out to their contacts.

Commissioner Gowdy asked what the relationship is between the city of Bellevue and EastHUB relative to Eastside Live. Mr. LeSure said the work is being done via a partnership between the city and EastHUB. The city worked with EastHUB to craft a set of requirements and scope of work for the project. EastHUB did the development work and is administering the site. The project is fully funded by the city.

Chair Lau Hui commented that the Eastside Live home page does not specifically indicate the site is a cultural resource or event calendar. She suggested that clarification should be added at the top. She also suggested that the home page should rotate the events banner to show more than a single event. Mr. LeSure said the suggestion was a good one. Chair Lau Hui also suggested the landing page should make it clear that the project is sponsored by the city of Bellevue. Mr. LeSure said that information is prominently displayed on the About page.

Ms. Stamm added that the city's logo could be added to the About page but said she would not want it posted all over the website. The website is distinct from the city, and the city was intentional in contracting out the work.

Commissioner Bhargava asked if the website is showcasing a single event on the landing page for any sponsorship reasons. Mr. LeSure said the resource is free and there is no sponsorship involved. The showcased events are currently rotated every couple of days. Commissioner Bhargava cautioned against having to scroll vertically too much to explore the various events. She recommended that the Explore the Calendar link should be moved to the top of the page.

With regard to accessibility, Commissioner Bhargava questioned the color choices for Submit An Event, Find Events and Ticket Pricing. She said persons with impaired vision need starker contrasts.

Commissioner Wolfeich asked if there is a similar website advertising Seattle events. Mr. LeSure said *The Stranger* has an event calendar and there are a few others. Different cities have their own calendars. The difference for EastsideLive is that it takes a regional viewpoint.

Arts Community Manager Lorie Hoffman suggested the site could be made cleaner if the photos were non-text and uniformly sized.

Mr. LeSure thanked the Commissioners for their suggestions and he said he would work with his team on implementing them.

#### B. Bellwether 2022

Ms. Hoffman reminded the Commissioners that Bellwether 2021 was a hybrid event with some events held in-person and some virtually. In-person events were held at the Bellevue Botanical Gardens and in Downtown Park. Many events were based at the Bellevue Art Museum. Bellwether 2020 was canceled altogether because of the pandemic and many of the artists who presented in 2021 had been scheduled for 2020. After the 2021 event, city staff met with the partnering organizations, including EastHUB, the Bellevue Art Museum and the creative directors SuttnerBeresCuller to discuss how to move forward.

Lake Hills noted that Bellwether is a very expensive and time-consuming event. Ms. Hoffman said staff are currently working with a consultant and all partners to develop a transition strategy for 2023. The desire is to take the time needed to do it right. The proposal for 2022 is to have a Bellwether lite, including digital residencies and workshops. Many arts organizations are going to be hitting the ground heavy during the summer months as things return to in-person. Having a smaller event will allow for focusing on the things that were done well. The workshops were incredibly well received and they do not require a heavy lift.

Ms. Hoffman sought feedback from the Commission on the notion of launching a digital residency focused on four areas: sculpture/public art, music, film and digital/augmented reality. In February the city hosted artist Natasha Marin for a two-week digital residency on the social media feed. Her body of work, called *Sites of Power* was focused on Black History/Futures Month. All of the videos created are works of art that talk about issues in the Black experience. Each is an unabashed exclamation of joy. In the arts world, arts residencies typically involve artists going somewhere for a time to produce and share art with a community. The idea is to test the same approach in the digital world. All of Ms. Marin's body of work was pre-made, which allowed for testing the concept fairly quickly. The program primarily relied on the Instagram channel though some content was posted to Facebook as well. There were 13 posts in all which generated 715 video views and 113 likes, and which gained the Instagram channel 25 new followers. In all, the project reached 2700 accounts. The communications team will circle back in the coming weeks to see how even more could be reached.

Ms. Stamm noted that Ms. Marin's body of work was entirely video. The atmosphere around what Instagram promotes is always changing and it will be interesting to explore all the various types of posts in the future. Some cross-promoting has been done on Facebook, but primarily the event was on Instagram.

Commissioner Gulati asked if the Bellwether momentum will be lost by going to a lite version of the event in 2022. Ms. Stamm noted that even though there was no Bellwether 2020, the 2021 event went just fine. She said she did not get the sense that people were confused about the scheduling of the event. Ms. Hoffman added that Bellwether used to be a biennial event and it is only fairly recently that it became an annual event.

Chair Lau Hui asked if consideration has been given to having an inauguration event to kick off the series of video workshops. Ms. Hoffman allowed that the digital event could certainly be promoted more through all partners. She added that when it comes to Bellwether, there will be more of a budget for paid promotion.

Commissioner Aldredge urged the staff to share links to events with the Commissioners to then pass on to their groups and associations. Ms. Hoffman said there will be far more lead time for Bellwether. Hopefully there will also be a selection panel of Commissioners from which to issue a call.

There was consensus in favor of having a lite year in 2022 to allow for taking the time to build for 2023.

Commissioner Gulati asked if there will be a creative head chosen for 2023. Ms. Hoffman said that would be one of the big differences. Instead of having a lead partner model, the idea would be to contract with a partner organization via an RFP.

Ms. Stamm noted that Chair Lau Hui and Commissioner Wolfteich are currently on the Bellwether committee. She said as Commissioner Wolfteich transitions off the Commission, his seat on the committee will need to be replaced.

### C. BelRed Mural Program Call

Ms. Stamm noted that the full call had been included in the Commission packet. She said the call seeks artists for several different opportunities to cover walls in BelRed owned privately and by the city. The focus is on qualifications not proposals. The overall budget is set at \$135,000 and artists will be paid \$25 per square foot in addition to any necessary wall prep. Artists will be required to have insurance for the installation period. Mural experience is preferred. The initial focus was on seeking artists from King, Pierce and Snohomish counties, but Kitsap was added to the draft given feedback from the island communities on the portable art collection call. Applicants will be asked to include a statement, a bio and five images of example artworks. Submittal of a resume will be optional.

The selection criteria are artistic merit, mural experience, and compelling artwork examples relevant to the project. Artists living in Bellevue will be given additional consideration by the selection panel. The panel will consist of the Arts Commission Chair or designee, and two arts professionals. City staff will present the recommendations of the panel to the full Commission for approval before working with artists on locations and designs.

Ms. Stamm allowed that the summer months are ideal for mural installations. She said the timeline has been set to allow for that, with the call closing on April 6 and panel review following during the month of April. In May the selected artists will be reviewed by the Commission, following which the artists will be notified. Contracting and development of

designs will occur in May and June, and the final decisions will go before the Commission and wall owners on July 12. Permitting will take place in July and wall preparation and installation will occur in August and September.

Commissioner Gowdy said she presumed staff had already identified some appropriate walls. Ms. Stamm said Ms. Hoffman walked around the area and found a number of options. While no permissions have yet been sought or granted, there are several walls along the light rail route that are city owned. Ms. Hoffman allowed that the walls she identified primarily are those that can be seen from light rail, which opens in 2023.

Commissioner Gulati informed the Commission that she along with a team completed a mural project and artist selection for the new men's shelter in Eastgate. She admitted that it was very difficult making a final selection. There were a number of local Northwest artists in the running that should be invited to submit applications for the BelRed mural project. Ms. Stamm said she would reach out to those who put together the call for the men's shelter.

With regard to opening the call to King, Kitsap, Pierce and Snohomish counties, Councilmember Stokes pointed out that that is the membership of the Puget Sound Regional Council. He said it is great that all areas are interested.

Ms. Stamm stated that notes will be taken at all future panels to satisfy those artists in the past who have asked for comments back on their submissions.

A motion to approve the BelRed mural program call as outlined in Attachment A was made by Commissioner Gowdy. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Wolfeich and the motion carried unanimously.

Ms. Hoffman clarified that a third of the budget will come from the arts budget, a third will come from Urban Boulevards, and a third from a private sponsorship.

#### D. 2023 Grant Guidelines

Ms. Stamm stated that the city has been funding non-profits and artists since the early 2000s. The last major changes made to the program were in 2018. Feedback from reviewers, applicants and a consultant highlighted various changes to better serve the applicants in a world that is forever changing. In association with the city's Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) team, the focus has been on having an application that is equitable and which serves Bellevue's diverse population. The goals are to accurately reflect the needs of applicants, and making changes to ensure it does; and making the application process easier. The current approach has many steps and in some instances applicants have taken full days to fill out an application. The proposal includes some branding and name changes to the different programs to make sure they are clear and communicate the purpose and goal of each.

The proposal includes changing the letter of intent to an eligibility checklist. The letter of intent essentially is an invitation when in fact the program is actually open to anyone who is eligible. Consideration has been given to expanding on the Eastside Arts Partnership name and changing it to Eastside Arts Partnership Support Funding to better clarify the purpose of the program. Likewise, Special Projects is proposed to be changed to Project Grants. Consideration has also been given to changing Power Up to BIPOC Power Up, though a final title has yet to be determined. A new grant titled BelRed Arts District bonus would be for an artist or organization wanting to do an event or activate a space in BelRed. Like Power Up, the BelRed Arts District bonus would be an add-on to project grants.

Ms. Stamm said the ultimate goal is to simplify things by removing the special project renewal application, which is confusing for many. As proposed applicants can apply for grants as many times as they want. The Eastside Arts Partnership grant application has also been simplified and shortened after getting feedback from the DEI team that the original application involves a lot of written work. Consideration has also been given to making the Eastside Arts Partnership grants a two-year application, with selected applicants receiving the same amount in both years.

Ms. Stamm said two meetings will be scheduled with previous applicants and with the city's legal team. The legal team will be asked to weigh in on whether or not any of the changes run afoul of what is legally required given that the grants are gifts of public funds. The Council will be briefed on the proposed changes on March 28. The Commission will be asked to vote on the changes on April 5, following which the Council at a meeting in May will act to approve the new guidelines. In July there will be a series of info sessions along with the release of the guidelines, and applications will start to be received in August.

Ms. Stamm allowed that the proposal involves a lot of information. She said she would welcome initial comments from the Commissioners as well as written comments to be discussed in more detail with the grants committee.

Commissioner Gowdy voiced support for simplifying the guidelines. She said it will be great for the applicants as well as for those who review the applications.

Chair Lau Hui suggested the name changes make a lot of sense. With regard to Power Up, she said it was her recollection that there were two elements of the program. Ms. Stamm said currently there is only one and it is open to only three applicants. It cannot be known in advance of the city's budgeting process how much funding will be available for allocation in each grant program bucket. The Power Up grant is intended to bolster the infrastructure of organizations, but there has been a declining number of applicants for the one-time funds. Making the application shorter and more to the point will help. Another change might be to no limit it to a one-time award. There are only so many organizations on the Eastside.

Chair Lau Hui said the capacity building element of the Power Up program is important to her. There are many grassroots organizations that do not necessarily know what needs to be done to make them sustainable. Ms. Stamm allowed that the program was much bigger in the days of in-person meetings. Organizations that had been funded were not allowed to apply again, but they could attend the workshops. The pandemic took away in-person meetings, and the budget was reduced for the program so the supporting workshops on top of the grants were eliminated.

Chair Lau Hui said she would like to see the workshops reinstated. Ms. Hoffman agreed and said at the very least resources should be made available to target the organizations that might have been traditionally underserved.

Commissioner Wolfteich agreed with the need to simplify the application and the process.

Commissioner Aldredge said her experience in reviewing grants uncovered inconsistencies. Some applicants submitted project statements while others did not. It should be a baseline that if four items are required in an application, then all four items should be submitted. Simplifying the application is needed, but additionally the applications need to be screened for completeness. Ms. Hoffman concurred.

Commissioner Wolfeich noted that there were in the past instances in which organizations applied for grants for which they were not qualified simply because of the confusing nature of the application.

Commissioner Aldredge suggested more time may need to be allocated to reviewing the intake of applications. Certainly simplifying the application will improve the system.

Commissioner Gulati said it would be helpful to produce a video for applicants to watch outlining how to apply, the right way to apply, and what is required. Posting the video would allow applicant organizations to watch it in their own time. Ms. Hoffman said that would be a great benefit to the process.

Commissioner Gulati asked if the application would be available in different languages. Ms. Stamm noted that in the past people have been on hand to reach out to specific communities and language groups. She said staff would explore different ways that could be done. There has not been a budget for translating the application, but having shorter and clearer guidelines would make them easier to translate. She added that offering the application in hard copy would also be a good option for some who may not always have access to being online.

Commissioner Gulati added that the training video could easily be dubbed in different languages.

There was general support for the proposed changes to the grant guidelines.

5. COMMISSION QUICK BUSINESS – None
6. REPORTS
  - A. Commissioners’ Committee and Lead Reports – None
  - B. Project Updates from Staff

Ms. Stamm reported that contracting for the Artspace market study was set to begin, as was contracting for a arts and economic prosperity study. Ms. Hoffman added that the latter would launch in May and would run for a year. The partner cities are Bellevue, Issaquah, Renton and Redmond, though the study will encompass the entirety of the Eastside.

Ms. Stamm indicated that the Eastside artist roster now has 121 submitted applications, with 89 in progress. She also noted that the portable art collection call would end on March 11. To date some 90 applications have been received, with 30 in process. All artists selected for the wraps program have accepted and are currently working on placement and draft designs.

Ms. Hoffman reported that the city’s budgeting process is under way. She said she was requesting increases for arts grants even though the city is projecting few new revenues.

Chair Lau Hui asked when City Hall was set to reopen. Ms. Hoffman said the staff are set to return on April 4 for a schedule of three days in the office and two days working remotely. The Council and all boards and commissions are slated to continue meeting

virtually through the month of April. Ms. Stamm added that once meetings return to in-person a hybrid option will be maintained.

7. ADJOURNMENT

Chair Lau Hui adjourned the meeting at 6:04 p.m.