

BELLEVUE ARTS COMMISSION  
REGULAR MEETING  
MINUTES

April 20, 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: Manny Cawaling, Inspire Washington

RECORDING SECRETARY: Gerry Lindsay

I. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 4:30 p.m. by Chair Lau Hui who presided. All Commissioners were present with the exception of Commissioner Martinez.

2. APPROVAL OF AGENDA AND MINUTES

A. Approval of Agenda

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

B. Approval of Minutes

**Motion to approve the March 8, 2022, minutes as submitted was made by Commissioner Aldredge. The motion was seconded was by Commissioner Bhargava and the motion carried unanimously.**

3. ORAL COMMUNICATIONS – None

4. ACTION ITEMS AND DISCUSSION ITEMS

B. 2023 Grant Guidelines

Arts Community Manager Lorie Hoffman noted that the last update to the application process was completed in 2018. Currently there are there programs: Eastside Arts Partnership, Special Projects and PowerUp. The City Council sets the overall guidelines and approves the annual awards. It is the responsibility of the Arts Commission to review the applications and make recommendations to the Council. The staff manage the day-to-day administration of the programs.

Continuing, Lori Hoffman said there are five guiding principles that were approved by the Council on March 28, 2022. Staff uses the guiding principles in conjunction with the feedback received from past applicants and the Commission to make sure the applications reflect the

current needs of the community, ensure equitable access, center underserved communities, activate the BelRed Arts District, and explore multi-year support to streamline and reduce the workload.

Information and feedback from gathered during the months of January and February. There were feedback sessions with previous grant applicants, the Commission's grants subcommittee, legal staff and the city's DEI staff during the month of March. The Council was provided with a briefing on the scope of the work on March 28 at which time they set the guiding principles. Once the Commission makes its formal recommendation, the package will be presented to the Council for final approval. The guidelines will be released to the public in July and in August the collection of applications will begin.

Lori Hoffman said the list of changes included a change from Special Project Grants to Project Grants. Instead of three separate program, the approach will involve just the Eastside Arts Partnership and the Project Grants. The PowerUp for Equity program will fall under the Eastside Arts Partnership category and will focus on underserved communities. The add-on for the Project Grants program is the BelRed bonus where additional funding will be made available to help activate the arts district. Other changes include a simple checklist for those wanting to apply for a grant; the letter of intent requirement has been dropped. The more substantive changes are within the application which do not require Council approval.

Chair Lau Hui asked if the two levels of funding of \$1000 and \$2000 in the Project Grants program is new. Lorie Hoffman said a lot of feedback was given by applicants about wanting to know the specific funding levels. In the past the applications have been reviewed by the panel, and the panel has tried to give everyone something. The artists, however, need more certainty in regard to what funding they might receive so they can scale their projects accordingly. Chair Lau Hui asked if there would be any flexibility, pointing out that it might not be possible to give each applicant that level of funding if there are insufficient funds to award. Arts Program Analyst Manette Stamm said it could be that not all applicants will be funded.

Commissioner Aldredge added that in the past some applicants have asked for more than they need while others have asked for less than they need. Those reviewing the applications often have a pretty good idea about what would be an appropriate amount to award. Lorie Hoffman said the new approach would leave the reviewers with the option of awarding either \$1000 or \$2000. Manette Stamm added that the feedback from past applicants indicated that knowing the available funding levels would be helpful in drafting the applications. The funding levels could change depending on the amount of money available to allocate.

Lorie Hoffman suggested the Commission could choose to add a \$500 level.

Chair Lau Hui said knowing what the average request and award has been for the past few years would be helpful in setting funding levels.

Commissioner Aldredge suggested anything less than \$1000 would not be worth it for someone going to the effort of submitting an application. The suggested levels are appropriate and it will be interesting to see how it will affect the number of applicants receiving a grant.

A motion to approve the guidelines was made by Commissioner Aldredge. The motion was seconded by Chair Lau Hui and the motion carried unanimously.

#### C. Public Art Collection Care Update

Manette Stamm reminded the Commissioners that 4Culture had been hired to conduct an assessment of the city's public artworks. That work was followed up by contracting with Artech in 2021 to begin some much-needed maintenance. A total of seven works were either fully restored or cleaned and polished that year. The contract was subsequently amended to allow for additional restorations in the current year. Two works, *Thumbprint* and *Longboat.Reed.Rookery* will require specialized work. *Thumbprint* will have its surrounding bricks, many of which are broken, to be removed and replaced with a concrete pour. *Longboat.Reed.Rookery* needs to have its fiber optics repaired so the piece will light up as it is supposed to. The associated pond has been drained owing to a leakage issue, and the entire plaza area near the parking garage will be redesigned to do away with the pond. It is possible that a reflective surface will be installed instead. There are also an additional nine works that will be addressed during the year.

Chair Lau Hui asked if the *Longboat.Reed.Rookery* artist will be engaged in the process. Manette Stamm explained that the artist now lives on a coco farm in Hawaii and does not want to be involved beyond being kept informed as the work moves forward.

Commissioner Gulati asked about Bellgate, the beautiful interactive artwork on 106<sup>th</sup> Avenue NE near the Doxa church. Lorie Hoffman said the work is one of the oldest the city's collection of public art. The issue is that the city does not own the land the sculpture sits on, nor is there a long-term easement in place. The city is working with the developer who owns the land to find a new home for the work. It is likely the piece will be moved up one block where it will continue to be accessible to the public, though in the interim it likely will end up in storage for a few years until redevelopment of the site is completed.

Commissioner Aldredge asked if the city offers developers any bonuses for siting public art in plazas. Lorie Hoffman said there are a number of bonuses offered to developers in the Downtown area, one of which is public art; performance space is another bonusable amenity. Commissioner Aldredge expressed a desire to see the city receive real value for the bonuses it hands out, which in the case of public art should extend to permanent ownership by the city. Lorie Hoffman clarified that works that are privately owned do not get entered into the city's collection and can be bought or sold.

#### A. Cultural Access Update

Manny Cawaling, executive director of Inspire Washington, the state's cultural advocacy organization, noted having been raised in the King County arts and cultural community. A career in the arts was pursued following high school, primarily in theater and in arts education, culminating in arts and culture leadership. Cultural programming has the power to inspire kids like nothing else.

Inspire Washington works in partnership with organizations and programs that have missions in science, heritage and the arts, including the zoo and aquarium, Friends of the Issaquah fish hatchery, Kids Quest Museum and other children's museums statewide, historical societies, and a broad array of arts organizations.

Inspire Washington builds coalitions and forms partnerships to tear down the obstacles that stand in the way of cultural organizations. The organization pursues opportunities that will make the work easier. While individual organizations, like Kids Quest, have communities to serve, Inspire Washington works behind the scene adding the voices of all organizations together to become a loud and powerful chorus with the goal of accomplishing big tasks. The coalition includes partners who care about the success of the cultural sector, including the Washington Tourism Association which operates on the understanding that cultural destinations drive tourism.

Inspire Washington is heavily involved in the work of advocacy, both at the state and county levels as well as at the federal level. The advocacy for resources resulted in the saving of valuable cultural organizations during the pandemic. The focus is always on new resources and cultural access. In terms of education, the organization provides professional development, primarily through the Cultural Congress, the statewide cultural conference, and Cultural Futures, the upcoming statewide tour that will educate many about the resources delivered through the last legislative session. Communication, how arts and culture organizations talk about and present themselves, is a key element of the work.

Manny Cawaling said the work of cultural organizations all around the state is important. Communities count on the experiences they offer in that they provoke curiosity, inspire creativity and build critical thinking for the purpose of enhancing positive connections with one another. Inspire Washington is very happy to support the important work.

Cultural programs represent \$41 billion of the state's economy. The 17,000 businesses operating cultural programming pre-pandemic directly hired 77,000 people, indirectly driving the employment of 177,000 people through needing to buy props and rent chairs. Beyond the economy the businesses drive is the economy the businesses inspire. When there is a full house at a performing arts center, restaurants are full both before and after the event. A rigorous national event showed that the average event goer spends an additional \$32 after the price of admission on a variety of things, such as on child care and parking. Beyond all that, cultural programming helps kids develop essential 21<sup>st</sup> Century skills. Arts and culture programming has been shown to be the right approach to ensure equity for students in under-resourced areas by providing them opportunities to express themselves. Cultural programming is also key to community building and engagement, and it provides opportunities for civic pride.

The list of partners Inspire Washington has is very large. Collectively they talk about policy and opportunity all the time. One example would be extending the employee retention tax credit, something that would be game changing for organizations in Bellevue. In Washington state alone there are some 2000 advocates who are actively engaged. The educational opportunities pursued include Cultural Congress, Cultural Futures, and Arts Heritage and Science Week. The organization provides a number of tools for the partners to use.

Advocacy lies at the heart of the work of Inspire Washington. It cannot be concluded that legislators are on their own looking at what can be done for the cultural sector. Government is facing numerous priorities. Arts and culture programming is a vital industry that is important to communities. A lot of effort goes into simply telling the story, educating decision making, and highlighting needed resources. A diverse science, arts and heritage coalition can help individuals and organizations move beyond survival mode by building a clear path to more support and resources. The last in-person advocacy day in Olympia occurred in February 2020. Pivoting to virtual advocacy, however, only made it easier as no one had to make the trip to Olympia from all around the state.

Manny Cawaling overviewed for the Commissioners the new resources coming out of the state legislative session. More and detailed information will be shared during the Cultural Futures tour, a statewide event that will involve 15 to 18 in-person meetings along with four or five virtual meetings all across the state. After a lot of advocacy, the state legislature secured \$50 million in relief and recovery funds to be distributed by the Department of Commerce. Of that, \$45 million is allocated for organizations across the state with budgets of less than \$5 million, with the maximum grant level set at \$75,000. The money is for both non-profit and commercial cultural businesses, including music venues and galleries. The distribution portal will open mid to late June, with funds flowing to bank accounts by July.

The balance of \$5 million is earmarked for the Covid-related expenses of cultural organizations with budgets over \$5 million. The allocations will be made through application rather than through a competitive model.

Lorie Hoffman asked if Inspire Washington has a list of creative businesses to do outreach to about the available funds, or if the organization leaves that work to its partners. Mr. Cawaling allowed that to date very little is known about eligibility. The budget was approved by the legislature with very simple language. It is up to the Department of Commerce to craft the program specifics. Once the details are known, they will be widely shared.

Manny Cawaling said there was other support delivered as well. ArtsWA, the state arts agency, envisioned creating a program that would provide \$1.5 million for arts-based services for veterans. Washington state is a leader in creative therapy programs for veterans. The Commission should seek to know if there are programs in Bellevue that provide arts-based services for veterans. The legislature provided \$20,000 for ArtsWA's constituent management system. Another \$150,000 was provided for the state poet laureate program at the rate of \$75,000 per year. The state also invested \$257,000 to maintain state-owned public art, which is the largest and broadest art collection in the state. Many of the pieces in the collection have fallen into disrepair and neglect. Many of the works are located in public schools, exposing students to art but at the same time exposing the works to wear and tear.

Manny Cawaling said it was groundbreaking that the legislature allocated \$15 million for the film incentive bill. There was a time when many movies and television shows that were set in Seattle were actually filmed in Seattle. Lately most films supposedly set in Seattle are filmed in Vancouver. That is because Canada, and specifically British Columbia, has a very robust film incentive program that provides funds film projects can access by filming in their region. Prior to the recent legislative session, Montana had a higher film incentive budget than Washington. For the last 25 years the state has invested \$12 million annually in the Building for the Arts program. The program offers grants for the purchase, rehabilitation and construction of arts facilities. The legislature chose to increase the biennium investment from \$12 million to \$18 million and to reduce the state matching requirement. Another big win was the legislature clarifying the expectation that arts education is basic education. Because the graduation requirements have only been related to high schools, many school districts across the state were granted exemptions for having to provide arts education, leading to inequity. The clarification means every student in every public school in the state at every grade level will be offered a visual or performing arts instruction option, beginning in 2023.

The Commissioners were encouraged to visit [inspirationleague.org](http://inspirationleague.org), the organizing platform that makes advocacy quick and easy.

Commissioner Wolfeich asked if there is a designated film office that will handle the allocation of the \$15 million for film incentives in the state. Manny Cawaling said Washington Filmworks is that state agency. The agency has a staff of about ten to administrate the film incentives and assist in scouting locations.

Lorie Hoffman (inaudible) Bellevue residents part of (inaudible). Manny Cawaling allowed that he did not know. Things are only done equitably or equally when there is actually a diversity of people. If it is only Seattle leaning in to say how things should be, the outcome will favor Seattle. More people from Bellevue should seek to register at [inspirationleague.org](http://inspirationleague.org). The Inspiration League is an important tool for advocating for funds within the county and for future cultural access programs.

Mr. Cawaling said in 2015 the state legislature created a new opportunity for cities and counties, giving them the opportunity to put to their voters the option of a cultural tax. In King

County it is an increase in the sales tax by one tenth of one percent. The tax would mean the average household in King County would spend between \$15 and \$30 annually. The revenues in King County would be used to forge more opportunities for communities to experience cultural programming, driving support to cultural institutions and organizations of all sizes. The initiative narrowly failed on the August 2017 ballot. Some re-envisioning is ongoing and hopefully the issue will be on the ballot in November or in 2023. If approved, the tax will inject \$80 million new dollars into cultural programs. The 2017 ballot measure did not have the support of the city of Bellevue. That was the year the courts ruled the state was in violation of providing the cost of fully educating students in school districts across the state, and the legislature's solution was to increase the property tax of certain zip codes in King County, including Bellevue.

Lorie Hoffman (inaudible) EastHUB organization (inaudible) previous program still in place (inaudible). Manny Cawaling said the original iteration of the cultural access legislation did not set aside funds for capital campaigns. Organizations with annual budgets of under \$1.25 million could use their allocation for capital, but that is not the same as having a capital program. The language has been amended to allow 4Culture to invest cultural access funding into its cultural facilities program.

5. COMMISSION QUICK BUSINESS – None

6. REPORTS

A. Commissioners' Committee and Lead Reports – None

B. Project Updates from Staff

Lorie Hoffman reported that contracts have been executed with Americans for the Arts (inaudible) beginning collection in the summer. (inaudible) \$32 spent outside of a ticket (inaudible) generated from arts and economic prosperity (inaudible). There has never been a Bellevue-specific number. A summer intern will be brought on to help with the work.

Lorie Hoffman said the final version of the BelRed Arts District implementation plan (inaudible) will be shared (inaudible) update (inaudible) moving forward.

The fabrication and installation contract for the 130<sup>th</sup> streetscape public art is on schedule to be carried to the Council for approval, likely in June.

With regard to the 121<sup>st</sup> and Spring artwork, the artist has met with representatives of the transportation department to ensure the installation will not interfere with the streetlights and a bike lane. A site visit is being arranged.

The artists for the Downtown Park public art project have given a tentative install date of September, though it is subject to change. Steps will be taken to ensure that the installation will not impact the Rock 'n Roll marathon event.

Manette Stamm shared that a total of 124 applications for the roster had been received, 93 of which were in progress. It was also noted that the call for the mural program had closed and that the applications would be reviewed by the panel. The call for the portable art collection also closed and the applications are under review by the panel. With regard to the utility box wraps program, it was stated that the artists are working on their final designs.

7. ADJOURNMENT

Commissioner Gulati adjourned the meeting at 6:09 p.m.