

BELLEVUE ARTS COMMISSION
REGULAR MEETING
MINUTES

August 4, 2015
4:30 p.m.

Bellevue City Hall
Room 1E -109

COMMISSIONERS PRESENT: Chairperson Manfredi, Commissioners Lau Hui, Jackson, Madan, Malkin, Wolfteich

COMMISSIONERS ABSENT: Commissioner Lewis

STAFF PRESENT: Mary Pat Byrne, Scott MacDonald, Department of Planning and Community Development

OTHERS PRESENT: Barbara Luecke, Kurt Kiefer, STart; Paul Marioni, artist; Benjamin Ball, Ball-Nogues via Skype

RECORDING SECRETARY: Gerry Lindsay

I. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 4:35 p.m. by Chairperson Manfredi who presided. All Commissioners were present with the exception of Commissioner Hui, who arrived at 4:38 p.m., and Commissioner Lewis, who was excused.

2. APPROVAL OF AGENDA AND MINUTES

A. Approval of Agenda

Motion to approve the agenda was made by Commissioner Jackson. Second was by Commissioner Malkin and the motion carried unanimously.

B. Approval of Minutes

Motion to approve the June 6, 2015, minutes as submitted was made by Commissioner Madan. Second was by Commissioner Malkin and the motion carried unanimously.

3. ORAL COMMUNICATIONS – None

Commissioner Lau Hui took a moment to introduce herself. She said she is an architect and works for a local developer.

4. ACTION ITEMS AND DISCUSSION ITEMS

A. East Link Public Art Update

STart manager Barbara Luecke reminded the Commissioners that Sound Transit will be constructed six stations in the city as part of the East Link light rail project. She noted that two artists are working on the newly named Bellevue Downtown station adjacent to City Hall and Meydenbauer Center.

Project Manager Kurt Kiefer, STart staff with Sound Transit, briefly explained the alignment between the East Main and the Wilburton stations. Artist Paul Marioni has been tasked to address the glass wall facing Meydenbauer Center, and the Ball-Nogues team will focus on the area above the portal.

Via Skype, Benjamin Ball with Ball-Nogues Studio detailed the inspiration behind their proposal for the area above the portal opening. The natural history of the area, particularly past glacial activity to the east of the city, offers rich material for inclusion in the work. Their concept is to create a three-dimensional representation of the glaciers that shaped the landscape as forms extending from the wall above the portal and floating over the tracks.

Continuing, Mr. Ball said his preferred material is stone, explaining that when stone is cut thinly enough to allow light to pass through, it can be used to create a fantasy glacier. The intent is to light the work from below via electrical conduit run through the mounting struts. The use of stone connects with and speaks about monumentality and the history of sculptures, as well as prestige, luxury and value.

Answering a question asked by Commissioner Madan, Mr. Ball said he would not be able to determine the exact weight of the piece until all the engineering studies are done. Ms. Luecke added that approval of the concept will be needed before moving toward doing the engineering work necessary to determine what it would take to mount the work.

Artist Paul Marioni shared pictures of some of his works, including faces in glass at the Bellevue downtown library, a terrazzo floor installation for the Love Field airport in Dallas, a wall and terrazzo floor installation in the Seattle City Light building depicting a waterfall and a river, a terrazzo floor installation for the Burien city hall/library, and a sky bridge between university buildings in Houston.

Mr. Marioni said all of his public projects create a welcoming environment and include the public by incorporating fundamental concepts. For the façade along the platform of the downtown station he proposed using glass in the various sections in a basket-weave design of woven light. Unlike stained glass which looks best only when there is an abundance of light shining through it, rippled glass captures light and magnifies it even on gray days. As the viewer moves in relation to the work, light will wriggle through the glass.

With regard to the east entrance to the station, Mr. Marioni proposed a dark gray terrazzo floor with design elements suggesting the ripples created when a pebble is dropped in a pond. The ripples lead to the stairs and elevators. The use of gray will avoid conflicts with other colors used in the station, and the iridescent glass elements embedded in the terrazzo will sparkle with light. The semi-gloss finish will appear soft, will not glare, and will require less maintenance.

Mr. Marioni went beyond the station in his design proposals and showed the commission his proposal for the mid-tunnel access shaft head house. The design uses glass blocks of different colors arranged in a curving wall. The curved wall will create a shadow that will move as the sun moves throughout the day.

Mr. Marioni also suggested that cedar trees should be planted as part of the landscaping for the downtown station as a reminder of what Bellevue once looked like.

Ms. Luecke said the landscape designers are working to make sure the glass windscreen for which Mr. Marioni is designing art work will be visible. Cedar trees cannot be located immediately adjacent to the station, but the park associated with the mid-tunnel access facility would be a good location for them.

Regarding the Ball-Nogues proposal, Commissioner Wolfeich voiced support for the concept of evoking the natural history of the region in the artwork.

Chair Manfredi noted his support for making a bold statement, which the concept does.

Commissioner Madan suggested using something lighter than stone, like acrylics or even glass. Ms. Luecke said she would keep the Commission briefed as the process moves forward.

Commissioner Jackson commented that the stone work, which likely will be beautiful when viewed from above, may not be well-received by people looking up at it from the station platforms. From that angle they will see the lights, the structure holding it all up, and possibly smoke holes in the ceiling. The concept is fantastic but it may not work for the space.

Chair Manfredi suggested the artists are probably aware of that and much will depend on how the work is executed.

Commissioner Malkin said the strongest view of the work will be from above it. He agreed that the “back-stage” look that will be the view from the platform will be less intriguing, though the structural elements could become part of the piece itself. The fact is the more time one spends with a work of art the more they begin to understand it and learn from it.

Ms. Byrne pointed out that the struts will in reality be far more complex and heavier than they appear to be in the initial drawings.

Commissioner Lau Hui agreed and that the work will include both the floating planes and the structural elements. She agreed that the work will be far different when viewed from below. She also disagreed with the artist and suggested that the construction of highrise buildings east of City Hall will in fact change the view dramatically; there should be more thought put into that response. Overall the piece is very dynamic.

Answering a question asked by Commissioner Malkin, Ms. Luecke said a specific color scheme has not been determined. The artists are exploring materials and their findings will have much to do with the colors.

Commissioner Malkin said the proposal made by Mr. Marioni is very exciting and will work well. Commissioner Jackson agreed and commented on how subtle the artist chose to be in the proposal compared to some of his other installations. Commissioner Malkin added that as the city changes and generates more of a nightlife, the wall will be even more exciting.

There was general agreement not to plant tall trees close to the station.

Ms. Byrne commented that the Ball-Nogues work will have two faces, one above and one below. It will need to be purposefully done so that both views are equally successful. Commissioner Jackson said the work as presented simply does not accomplish that goal.

Chair Manfredi agreed. He stressed that while he liked the approach, he was most bothered by the view from below. At the same time, the work may in fact challenge those who view it and as such it could become a learning experience about art, and that is encouraging.

Commissioner Madan suggested that there are many opportunities to explore in regard to making the piece work from all angles.

Commissioner Madan commented that when people do not have the vocabulary to understand the art they simply pass it by. However, even though the piece is complex it also has some simple elements that most viewers will understand.

Chair Manfredi suggested if works are made too easy by incorporating the lowest common denominator, the resulting works will never stand out.

B. Bellwether Committee Recommendations

A motion to endorse the Bellwether Planning Committee recommendations for theme, goals, and budget for Bellwether 2016 was made by Commissioner Malkin. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Jackson.

Mr. MacDonald said that the Bellwether Committee met over the last month to update the theme, goals and budget for the 2016 exhibition. Critical to all the goals is the notion of developing metrics for success. While measuring success is relatively easy for most of the goals, for some it is admittedly more difficult.

With regard to the theme, the group came up with the idea of “confluence,” which they described as the coming together of great ideas and people.

Mr. MacDonald said the City Hall plaza area will not be available for displaying works in preparation for the East Link project. Additionally, several projects will affect the movement of people in the Downtown and a lot of construction fencing will be in place.

The locations inside City Hall that have traditionally been used to display works will be available, as well as the Pedestrian Corridor and Downtown Park. A category of new temporary works has been created, allowing artists to submit proposals with the option of having a materials budget in addition to their honorarium. The temporary works would be on display in the Pedestrian Corridor and Downtown Park.

Answering a question asked by Commissioner Madan, Ms. Byrne explained that several years ago the Arts Commission recommended several goals for the Arts Program which were adopted by City Council. One was using art to create and/or enhance an urban walkway from City Hall to the Waterfront. In 2010, the Commission realized that the sculpture exhibition was so large an investment of time and resources, it could only be justified by directly serving that goal by using art to trace the future permanent route of the art walk. To identify other locations for use during Bellwether would not be in line with accomplishing that goal. The Pedestrian Corridor route offers a number of interesting challenges for artists and interesting ways to partner with property owners.

Ms. Byrne provided the Commissioners with copies of the budget.

The motion carried unanimously.

C. 2016 Funding Guidelines

Ms. Byrne said the timeline for the annual funding cycle is being moved up. By seeking Council approval by November, the groups that have applied for funding will be able to know much sooner if they have been approved, and that will assist them with their budgeting for 2016.

Ms. Byrne said no major changes were made to the existing guidelines. The criteria remain the same, though the Committee chose to change the weighting of the collaboration criteria from 0.5 to 1.0. Additionally, the Committee chose to eliminate questions added in 2010 that were aimed at understanding the impact of the recession. In their place is a single question asking what steps the organization has taken over the last year to strengthen its long-term viability.

A motion to recommend the Council adopt the 2016 Funding Guidelines was made by Commissioner Jackson. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Malkin 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 – As Noted
 - i. Monthly Project Update Report
 - ii. Neighborhood Public Art Project Updates
7. CORRESPONDENCE, INFORMATION – As Noted
 - A. Written Correspondence – None
 - B. Information
 - i. Future Agenda Items
 - ii. Committees
8. ADJOURNMENT

Chair Manfredi adjourned the meeting at 7:05 p.m.