

BELLEVUE ARTS COMMISSION  
REGULAR MEETING  
MINUTES

November 3, 2015  
4:30 p.m.

Bellevue City Hall  
Room 1E -109

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

COMMISSIONERS ABSENT: None

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

OTHERS PRESENT: None

RECORDING SECRETARY: Gerry Lindsay

I. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 4:32 p.m. by Chairperson Manfredi 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 Jackson. Second was by Commissioner Malkin and the motion carried unanimously.**

B. Approval of Minutes

Commissioner Madan pointed out that in several places Karen Abel's last name was misspelled as "Able."

**Motion to approve the October 6, 2015, minutes as amended was made by Commissioner Jackson. Second was by Commissioner Malkin and the motion carried unanimously.**

3. ORAL COMMUNICATIONS - None

4. ACTION ITEMS AND DISCUSSION ITEMS

A. Wilburton, Grand Connection and the Planning Work Plan

Department of Planning and Community Development Director Chris Salomone said the city has never had a workload as large as the one it is now shouldering. The City Council has reviewed and made recommendations on the work plan.

Mr. Salomone briefly discussed each project within the work plan and updated the Commission on planning projects that are currently in progress.

With regard to the Wilburton Study Area and the Grand Connection concept, Mr. Salomone said the Council has given the go-ahead to do the planning work. The two issues are separate but interconnected. The Wilburton study area includes the old auto row from the freeway to 120th Avenue NE between Main Street and NE 8th Street. The area is currently underzoned. It has a height limit of 75 feet and the allowed uses have been on the books for 30 years. An advisory committee will be appointed to study the area. The Council does not want to see big box or low-rise development given its proximity to the Downtown, light rail, and the freeway.

The Grand Connection is envisioned as a facility connecting the Wilburton area with the Downtown through the Pedestrian Corridor and the Downtown Park and on to the waterfront. The Council has earmarked resources to conduct the study. The connection across the freeway would be via a lid. There will be opportunity for the Arts Commission to look at the inclusion of artistic elements as well as the programming of art and events. An international search for architectural design firms will be done, and the selected firm will be asked to provide a design for the facility, and the Arts Commission will be involved in the selection process. The city owns the landing sites on both sides of the freeway and as such controls the opportunity in a way that is significant.

Mr. Salomone shared with the Commissioners a drawing of how the Grand Connection could look in linking the Pedestrian Corridor across the freeway to the Wilburton area. He noted that the rendering and others were what caught the imagination of the City Council. They were particularly moved by the notion of creating a multimodal facility connecting the Downtown to a future commercial area and to the Eastern Rail Corridor that connects North to the Spring District and Redmond.

Commissioner Malkin asked if consideration has been given to turning the Connection into a sculpture park similar to the Olympic Sculpture Park in Seattle. Mr. Salomone said that has been discussed.

#### B. Allocations Recommendations

Arts Specialist Mary Pat Byrne said the allocations committee worked diligently to develop its recommendations. She outlined for the Commission the process of considering the recommendations and noted that Commissioner Jackson would be asked to leave the room when the Eastside Arts Partnership recommendation was considered given that she is the executive director of one of the EAP groups, the Bellevue Youth Symphony Orchestra.

Ms. Byrne said the panel was so pleased by what it heard from both the EAP and Special Projects groups that it came up several thousand dollars short of the funding recommendations. The 25 special project applications received was the most ever, and the upward trend can be expected to continue in the coming years. A representative of 4Culture was present as part of the panel, which is the usual practice. 4Culture was able to offer additional funding to help close the gap.

Continuing, Ms. Byrne said the committee heard from the Bellevue Arts Museum that attendance continues to grow, and that the organization is taking a position of leadership to influence how architects look at the development of the community. No other museum in the area is taking on architecture as part of its interest and mission, and in making it an ongoing part of its program. Additionally, the committee learned that the people who are engaging in the programs offered by Music Works Northwest and Bellevue Youth Symphony Orchestra are highly diverse; for Music Works Northwest, between 40 and 50 percent of its students are from diverse populations, and for the Bellevue Youth Symphony Orchestra, 76 percent of the students are diverse.

Space continues to be an issue for groups. A large number of groups were known to be facing serious challenges during 2014. Things are a little better in 2015 but the issue will need to be followed carefully. Developer John Su has brought Resonance at Soma Tower online. It is a small music venue that is actively hosting various groups ranging from classical music to jazz. The small space can serve a variety of functions. Resonance applied for special projects funding to pilot a program to subsidize the rent for small groups wanting to use the space but unable to afford it; in order to qualify, the groups will need to have annual budgets of less than \$50,000 and have individual ticket prices not exceeding \$20. The panel was very excited about the proposal. If successful, the pilot could be applied to other venues as well.

Ms. Byrne said KidsQuest will open in its new space in September 2016. They are still raising funds but are optimistic about reaching their goal. Music Works Northwest reported that it has landed on its feet in its new space. The organization is strong, was able to find a new place to lease when it had to leave its long-term home, and was able to quickly raise the cash needed to make the necessary lease down payment and make tenant improvements. The group still needs to finish its buildout. Even so, enrollment has increased. A \$75,000 request has been made to the city to help complete tenant improvements; the request is being considered by the Council as part of the mid-biennium budget update. The organization will also be putting on a series of free concerts at Soma.

There are still groups in spaces that will need to find a new home soon, and there are groups currently without space. Pacific Northwest Ballet is still negotiating with Sound Transit to get enough recompense to build a new facility. The executive director believes the organization will prevail, but it has been a very difficult negotiation. At the same time, the organization is having to negotiate a lease with the landlord who wants to double the rent.

Japan Creative Arts/School of Taiko, which started the International Taiko Festival in Bellevue, are situated on the campus of Bellevue College. They have been told, however, that the space they are in will be torn down as part of a reconstruction project. The status of the group remains unclear.

The Eastside Association of Fine Arts is no longer located in the Seattle Design Center and is actively seeking a new space. The organization is easily accessible by those who want to join, but it does not have the funds necessary to pay market rate rent. Additionally, Ballet Bellevue left its site in Downtown Park early in 2015 and moved some of its classes to the Northwest Arts Center.

Commissioner Wolfteich said it was his understanding the organization has found a space across the street from Soma.

Ms. Byrne pointed out that the gap between the amount of funding available and the amount requested has gone up and down over the years. However, the average amount each group is receiving compared to their request has consistently trended upward. More funding needs to be found in order to keep up with the shortfall. One task for the Commission and staff during the coming year will be to look at the special projects applicants and talk about which are likely candidates to move into the EAP category.

A dashboard indicator of the health of groups is which groups are running deficits and which are balancing their budgets. Currently a couple of the groups are in fact running deficits, but they are very small. Overall, arts groups are doing a very good job of living within their means. With each year that goes by it becomes imperative that more funds be found so the groups can continue to be encouraged to be part of the creative expression of the population of Bellevue.

Commissioner Jackson recused herself from the conversation and left the room.

Ms. Byrne commented that one of the essential EAP factors is keeping a fairly stable and predictable level of income. That is why it is important for the panel to always look at the funding history for each group. In most cases over the past five years, the funding amount has stayed the same, but in a couple of cases there have been some significant boosts. The most significant is the Bellevue Youth Symphony Orchestra which was at \$6000 and for which the panel has recommended \$8000. The request scored very high in the panel recommendation, in part because the organization reported the number of requests for tuition assistance has doubled in just the last year. The increase could be tied to the strong relationship the organization has with Jubilee REACH, and the fact that the organization has a policy of not turning away children that want to be part of the orchestra. Supporting that policy is important as one way of making sure opportunities are open to a kids from the economically diverse segments of the population.

Ms. Byrne noted that three different groups talked about working with special needs children, adults or both in their programs.

Chair Manfredi noted that KBCS, the radio station affiliated with Bellevue College, received the highest score in the panel process. The organization does more than any other organization to bring the arts to the forefront. Commissioner Lewis added that KBCS does 85 percent of its own programming, all of which is very well done. Ms. Byrne said the station has gradually been increasing its reach by improving its transmitting capabilities and can now be heard as far away as Olympia.

Commissioner Malkin said noted that Pacific Northwest Ballet will have a difficult year, though they do have a solid donor base. Commissioner Madan added that the funding from the city is for their educational programs. Ms. Byrne said the organization is committed to staying in Bellevue. Their education program has gone through a renaissance as the result of teaming up with the school district to run the discover dance programs as well as a series of summer camps, and the result has been a significant increase in the number of students served. Additionally, the organization is actively working to bring performances back to the Eastside. Even if the school itself closes on June 1 as currently scheduled, their summer programs will not be impacted because they are offered in the schools. The organization hopes to stay in the same building but just move over one space, though the cost of rent may be an issue.

**A motion to endorse the Allocation Review Panel's recommendations for 2016 Eastside Arts Partnership funding and present the recommendations to the City Council was made by Commissioner Lewis. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Malkin and the motion carried unanimously.**

Commissioner Jackson returned to the room.

Commissioner Malkin asked if there was any discussion about bringing Village Theatre into the EAP grouping. Ms. Byrne said the problem with doing that is the organization is not Bellevue based, and only a small portion of their programming happens in Bellevue.

Commissioner Jackson asked about the Kai Chen Cello request. Chair Manfredi said his request was funded last year and the conversation was about a student performance culminating with a performance of his own. Thankfully he decided to do a full-scale professional performance with no students. It was very collaborative and he drew in a number of artists from the region. The program offered an unusual blending of Chinese

classical music with western classical music. The requested funds are for the second iteration of the program.

**A motion to endorse the Allocations Review Panel's recommendations for 2016 Special Projects funding and present the recommendations to the City Council was made by Commissioner Wolfteich. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Lewis and the motion carried unanimously.**

**A motion to endorse the Allocations Review Panel's recommendation to use all of the \$13,000 of 4Culture Sustained Support funding as well as an additional \$13,000 for Special Projects funding was made by Commissioner Malkin. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Lewis and the motion carried unanimously.**

#### C. Gifts/Loans Process Technical Update

Ms. Byrne explained that there are policies that dictate how the Public Art Program is operated. They include how art is chosen and how offers of gifts and loans of art are to be addressed. The policies are part of city code and were part of the enabling legislation for the Arts Commission. Under the policies, all offers of gifts and loans of art must be reviewed by the Arts Commission and either recommended for or against approval.

Ms. Byrne said when the procedure was originally drafted, the arts program was located in the Parks department, so there are a lot of references to that department that now belong to the Department of Planning and Community Development, and those references need to be corrected.

Commissioner Jackson Vote pointed out the need to refer to the Department of Planning and Community Development the same in both paragraphs where a change is proposed. Ms. Byrne agreed.

**A motion to recommend the amended technical update to the procedure for reviewing offers to the City of gifts and loans of art to reflect the Department which staffs the arts program and provides the liaison to the Arts Commission was made by Commissioner Jackson. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Lewis and the motion carried unanimously.**

#### D. Offer of Gift of Art from the Blackstock Family

Ms. Byrne reminded the Commissioners that an offer of a gift of sculpture from Betsy Blackstock, a Surrey Downs resident, was received. The work, entitled *Lotus*, is by Verena Schwippert, an artists whose works have been selected for inclusion in past sculpture exhibitions. Two of her works were actually purchased by the city for location in Downtown Park.

Ms. Byrne said following receipt of the offer to gift the sculpture to the city, several steps were taken in line with the established procedures. The first was to determine whether or not there is an appropriate location for the work. The donor actually

conditioned the gift on having it sited in Surrey Downs Park. The Parks department was contacted and they readily identified a location in that park.

The proposal and the sculpture was then reviewed by a subcommittee of the Arts Commission that included Commissioners Lau Hui, Malkin and Madan. Each criteria was carefully considered in light of the sculpture and the subcommittee concluded that each could be met. As a result, the subcommittee voted to recommend acquiring the work.

Commissioner Wolfteich asked what it will cost to move the work to the Surrey Downs Park. Ms. Byrne said it would cost a few thousand dollars, which is a nominal amount.

**A motion to endorse the Public Art Gift Committee’s recommendation to accept the sculpture, *Lotus*, as a gift by the Blackstock Family to the City’s Art Collection and to place the work in Surrey Downs Park was made by Commissioner Jackson. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Lewis.**

Commissioner Jackson thanked the subcommittee members for conducting the due diligence, including visiting the proposed park site.

Commissioner Malkin recommended that the site ultimately selected in Surrey Downs Park should be clearly visible. Ms. Byrne said the siting of the piece will be worked out with the park architect

**The motion carried unanimously.**

5. COMMISSION QUICK BUSINESS – None
6. REPORTS
  - A. Commissioners’ Committee and Lead Reports – As Noted
  - B. Project Updates from Staff
    - i. Monthly Project Update Report

Ms. Byrne reported that on November 4 the Meydenbauer Bay panel would be taking a look at the models put together by the artists. The next step will be to put them on display for public comment. The Bellevue library has agreed to display the models between November 9 and 16. The panel will be brought back together on November 18 to review the comments and vote a recommendation to the Commission. As the Commission lead for the project, Commissioner Madan will present the recommendation at the Commission’s December 1 meeting. A public hearing will then be conducted, following which the Commission will vote on whether or not the city should proceed to build the recommended art.

Arts Coordinator Scott MacDonald said the application period for the Bellwether exhibition would close on November 8. Close to 250 works have been submitted, and artists are continuing to call and send emails. Confirmation to serve on the jury has been received from Beth Sellars, the curator of Suyama Space in Seattle, and from Mark Anderson, founder and CEO of The Foundry in Walla Walla. Leo Burk, an artist who has done numerous high-profile public artworks in the area, will not be a juror due to a scheduling conflict. Jo-Anne Birnie Danzker, Director of the Frye Art Museum has been asked to serve.

Mr. MacDonald said the lamp post project art has been removed. It was a great addition to the Pedestrian Corridor over the summer months.

The Newport Hills public art project celebrated the opening of *Rain Catchers*. Just one day before the celebration, King County Metro closed off the back of one of the shelters that previously had a panel removed, opening a path leading to the shopping center. It was part of the original plan the panel and Metro approved, but Metro received a single complaint that the shelter was different from the normal design. Metro put the panel back in and closed off the path, leaving a mosaic only three feet from a wall facing the back of the wall, making it necessary to move the stone to a different location. The event itself was wonderful and well attended.

Commissioner Lau Hui said the event was very uplifting and the locals who attended were all very excited. Commissioner Malkin said there were some 40 who attended. Mr. MacDonald said the event was promoted through NextDoor and direct mail to all households in Newport Hills. A local business owner hosted the refreshments.

Mr. MacDonald reported that earlier in the day he reviewed a draft agreement regarding the Lake Hills Puget Sound Energy pole art project. The agreement will go out to Puget Sound Energy and the wireless providers to make sure they will not pull their support for the project.

Sound Transit staff are planning to bring artist Phillip Smith to the next Arts Commission meeting to discuss his concepts for the Wilburton station art.

With regard to the Storefronts project, Mr. MacDonald commented that artist Barbara DePirro, who has been in the last two Bellwether sculpture exhibitions, currently has artwork displayed in the Meydenbauer Center window fronts.

## 8. ADJOURNMENT

Chair Manfredi adjourned the meeting at 6:21 p.m.