

BELLEVUE ARTS COMMISSION
REGULAR MEETING
MINUTES

December 4, 2018
4:30 p.m.

Bellevue City Hall
Room 1E -109

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

COMMISSIONERS ABSENT: None

STAFF PRESENT: Joshua Heim, Scott MacDonald, Mac Cummins, Jesse Canedo, Community Development Department

OTHERS PRESENT: None

RECORDING SECRETARY: Gerry Lindsay

I. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 4:34 p.m. by Chairperson Manfredi who presided. All Commissioners were present with the exception of Commissioners Jackson and Wolfteich, both of whom arrived at 4:37 p.m.

2. APPROVAL OF AGENDA AND MINUTES

A. Approval of Agenda

Motion to approve the agenda was made by Commissioner Lewis. The motion was seconded was by Commissioner Malkin and the motion carried unanimously.

B. Approval of Minutes

Motion to approve the November 6, 2018, minutes as submitted was made by Commissioner Malkin. The motion was seconded was by Commissioner Lewis and the motion carried unanimously.

3. ORAL COMMUNICATIONS – None

4. ACTION ITEMS AND DISCUSSION ITEMS

A. Discussion with the Community Development Director

Arts Program Manager Joshua Heim introduced Planning and Community Development Director Mac Cummins and asked the Commissioners to individually introduce themselves.

Mr. Cummins said he was glad to meet the Commissioners and noted that he had been with the city for a little over a year, having relocated to Bellevue from Westminster, Colorado, where he served as planning director for about ten years. He said prior to his work in Colorado was in Scottsdale, Arizona, and worked overseeing all planning activities in and around the downtown where there was a burgeoning arts scene. He said he received his degree from USC and had his first planning job in Orange County.

Mr. Cummins said the planning department was recently reorganized. He said his job as director of community development involves three primary components: places, people and economics. As communities build over time, some place a higher emphasis on economics and accordingly will seek out large companies and possibly set aside land for manufacturing. Other communities choose to focus on places and the associated physical infrastructure, while others pick a less hands-on approach and spend their time thinking about the people who live there and the types of services they need. It is, however, the confluence of those three elements that adds up to a holistic community. The focus given to each ebbs and flows over time depending on a community's current desires. Currently, Bellevue is struggling with the fact that its economics have almost overnight turned to playing on a world-class level in terms of cost of land. That has had a dramatic impact on what ends up getting built physically, and many long-time residents are calling out the image of what they think the community can or should be, including the places they want to use. He said the challenges he has faced have included the role of the neighborhoods and the desire to keep the feeling of the single family community while also allowing for very dense development in the downtown, including 60-story buildings that are in line for permitting.

Continuing, Mr. Cummins said he keeps on his office wall a reminder of the three major community components. He said it is all about the culture of the residents and what they are looking for from their community, and how the physical places interact. For example, Crossroads Mall as a physical place has nothing special about it, and from an economic standpoint it should be dead. It is purely the social culture of the people who frequent the place that give it life and allow it to be economically viable. The idea that a perfect place can be created to be economically successful is a flawed assumption; it is all about the people and what they are looking for.

Within the planning department there have been disparate services. There is the neighborhood outreach function, which includes Bellevue Essentials, Citizen Academy, the cultural conversations program, the arts, affordable housing, all strategic planning initiatives, the city's Comprehensive Plan, all of the economic development programs, and the environmental stewardship programs. In many jurisdictions, those functions would be divided up into different departments, but for Bellevue it is a good thing they are all in one department in that they can all talk to and coordinate with each other. Recently the department was organized into three equal divisions, each of which is focused on the three elements of people, places and economics. By working together, the divisions will ensure that at the end of the day the sum will be worth more than the whole of its parts.

Mr. Cummins said in conversations with Bellevue residents, it was made known that Bellevue is known as being fairly sterile when it comes to the arts. That is an interesting phenomenon in the face of the fact that the city is operating under world-class economics that includes a high level of disposable income. Currently, should someone with a visitor from out of town be asked where they would be taking their guest to dinner, they would have a specific answer ready. The goal is to make sure the answer is anywhere in the city. The ultimate goal of arts and culture is to create a soul in the community; that work has certainly begun, but where it will end up is the work of the community.

The planning division handles all placemaking issues, including future visioning processes. The group is currently focused on the future of Wilburton and what it will look like; the East Main light rail station area; planning to redo some of the Bel-Red work; and development of an east side of downtown plan called the Civic Center plan that is centered around the downtown rail station and the future expansion of the convention center. The neighborhood planning group is focused on cultural and social planning issues. Their work includes Bellevue Essentials; the quarterly cultural conversations; and diversity programming that

relates specifically to neighborhoods. The economic development division now includes arts and culture on the belief that the future of economic development is about having more than just places to put people at work, which has been the traditional economic development model. The future of economic development is about placemaking and to the extent people can be in third places and work from virtually anywhere, the future of labor attraction is going to be about how awesome the city is. The Creative Edge and Visit Bellevue strategy work is intertwined with the role of arts and culture in community building.

The Creative Edge work was primarily focused on labor retention and attraction, and the types of things that bring labor to a city. It is not surprising that people want to be in fun places. People want their personal spaces, but they also want to be around other people. The Visit Bellevue work spent a lot of time talking about the discrepancy between the demand of weekday/overnight users and the significant drop in hotel rates over the weekends. It is not hard to make the leap that people are coming to Bellevue for business but not for leisure, a market segment that has everything to do with the arts, culture and creating a soul for the city. Going forward the arts will play an enormous role in the placemaking concept. How that will play out specifically is not yet known.

Mr. Cummins noted that a number of the city's strategic master plans are expiring at the same time. The economic development just came due, as did the environmental stewardship plan. The Cultural Compass has been overdue for some period of time. He said the planning department is methodically working through all of them, and a talk about them with the City Manager and City Council will be scheduled to discuss moving forward. The Cultural Compass fits well with the Visit Bellevue and the Creative Edge strategies.

Commissioner Gulati asked if the focus on getting people into the city for more than just work includes having specific things for people to do. She noted that currently other than the Bellevue Arts Museum, there is little by way of the arts for visiting people and current residents to engage with.

Commissioner Lewis commented that things have certainly gotten better. She agreed there should be more but said she was not clear how quickly the city would want to move in that direction. She said she was scared about the City Council's recent move to allow buildings in the downtown to reach 600 feet in height.

Commissioner Jackson noted that the increased downtown building heights speaks to who owns the city and what matters to them, which clearly is economics. Commissioner Malkin agreed and asked how resources in the plans will be distributed away from being heavily weighted toward economics and less toward people and places. Mr. Cummins said that is an issue all communities struggle with. In places like New York City, there are buildings as tall as anywhere in North America just blocks away from four-story buildings and charming neighborhoods. Commissioner Lewis decried the moves to tear down the older and smaller buildings and replace them with taller structures. She pointed out that there is nothing old about the Old Main area. Commissioner Gulati agreed, noting that Old Main has lost its charm. Commissioner Malkin stated that there is in fact nothing charming about Bellevue and the businesses choosing to locate in the city are chains rather than mom and pop stores and restaurants; the latter cannot afford the rents that are charged.

Mr. Cummins stated that Bellevue is a very interesting study. Most of the cities that deal with the things Bellevue is dealing with have four times the lifespan Bellevue has. The cities that allow 600-foot buildings all started in the 1800s and have gone through numerous iterations that involved tearing down the old and building new. Bellevue is still in its infancy but has jumped to the status of much older cities. The cost of land is an enormous factor to overcome and certainly speaks to the issue of mom and pop operations. Land in downtown Bellevue is

currently going for roughly \$25 million per acre for sites that will require tearing down and existing building and redeveloping the site. The typical parcel of between four and eight acres requires an investment of nine figures in land alone, on top of which are the construction costs. That scenario on its face rules out the traditional small businesses. The typical play to create an interesting environment for small businesses is to go into old warehouses and buildings that no one owes any money on, allowing for a lower rent structure. Bellevue has very little that fits that scenario. There is no question that that creates a challenge for the city, but it is also what the community wants to see happen.

Commissioner Lau Hui asked what can be done to incentivize mom and pop operations in the system. Mr. Cummins said one of the things that is most effective in creating the right type of environment is where the community itself calls for such operations and encourages them, as compared to the government dictating them or trying to do it all on its own.

Commissioner Gulati pointed out that Crossroads Mall continues to have some small mom and pop stores, and said that is something that has existed for decades. It is, however, about the only place where mom and pop stores are seen in Bellevue; in all other areas, they seem to be disappearing, likely because of expensive rents. Those wanting to visit something other than a chain restaurant go somewhere like Kirkland.

Commissioner Malkin commented that the Bel-Red neighborhood was supposed to serve as the city's art district. The coming of light rail, however, has triggered rent increases that are actively displacing artists from the area. One way in which the city could help stop that trend is by essentially becoming a landlord for artists.

Commissioner Jackson said the basic fallacy of the Bel-Red arts district was that upzoning the area to allow for taller and bigger buildings would not result in artists being displaced by rent increases. City planning has in effect destroyed the arts in Bellevue. More than just lip service needs to be paid to the arts. Much of what has made Bellevue sterile when it comes to the arts has been planning and economic decisions. Mr. Cummins allowed that those are struggles the city has. He said there is more demand than the city has ever contemplated supplying. The zoning code artificially limits what can be built in the city and when there is a discrepancy between supply and demand there will always be cost differences that serve as major inhibitors to things like mom and pop stores and artist studios. There is a natural tension between property owners and what they would like to do and planning for a particular character for an area. In a place like Aspen, Colorado, if all planning were to be focused solely on the highest and best use of property, there would be nothing there but 45-story condominium buildings facing the sky slopes, completely eradicating the charm of the city. The planners there purposely chose to cap height limits to three or four stories, a move that was focused on visitors and not on economics. Colorado allows for transfer taxes on such things as the sale of properties, a move which allows jurisdictions to gain revenues to be spent on things like creating places. The state of Washington limits the ability of government to incentivize or subsidize in ways that would allow money to flow to private businesses, thus restaurants as placemaking or culture building entities crosses a no-no line. Arts groups and non-profits can be assisted with public funds. Bellevue recently hired a public/private joint venture manager to specifically look at some of those concepts to the degree the state constitution allows.

Chair Manfredi said he appreciates the fact that there are limits to what government can do, and that any approaches undertaken by government should come from the community. The answer to the question about what is needed, however, is to protect those things that are not as economically viable for developers. That is the simple reality the Commission wrestles with all the time. The fact that there are pedestrians on downtown sidewalks after hours can be addressed by having more venues for music and the like; it is as simple as that. Those things

cannot happen if the economics are not in their favor. The Commission does what it can to move the community in a particular direction, but the Commission is limited in what it can do. Mr. Cummins said cities really cannot control economics; demand and supply curves move up and down depending on market forces. There are, however, things government can control, such as any regulatory barriers to entry. For example, where it is difficult to get a permit for a live music venue because of some specific rule, the community should work to identify the barriers and engage in deliberate discussions about removing them.

Commissioner Malkin commented that there are tradeoffs in the development world relative to building square footage and parking spaces. He asked if there could also be an equivalent tradeoff in which more square footage is allowed for accommodating an arts venue. Commissioner Jackson said the revised Land Use Code incorporates incentives, but the developers get to choose from a list of incentives. Those incentives were recently recalibrated, but in the end the powers that be got what they wanted. It all comes down to economics. In the downtown there are empty sidewalk storefronts that were created in line with code requirements, yet the developer does not care about those spaces because the numerous floors above the ground level are all making money. That is what is in part leading to the sterility of arts and culture in the downtown.

Commissioner Jackson noted that Seattle was in the process of revising its land use code to deal with the McMansion problem, the same issue that is affecting Northtowne, an area that used to be nicely wooded and plenty of tree canopy. The McMansions that are coming in are taking up every square foot of property and the old trees are all getting cut down. She asked if anything can be done to preserve the neighborhoods and Bellevue as a city in a park. Mr. Cummins said the neighborhood area planning program is contemplating that specific issue, and the neighborhoods themselves will one at a time be weighing in on McMansion issues as the process unfolds.

Commissioner Wolfeich asked about the status of the Tateuchi Center. Mr. Cummins said the funding agreement expired but the city remains committed to the project. A new CEO, Ray Cullom, for the center has been hired and staff have been meeting twice a month with him to get the funding extension back in place. It is hoped the project will be able to break ground in two or three years.

Chair Manfredi said he served as a member of the search committee for a new CEO. Mr. Cullom has experience around the world in developing things like the Tateuchi Center. He has some cutting edge ideas and he is working hard to see developed a space that fully reflects what is happening in Bellevue currently. The design that is on the books is already a bit outdated.

B. 2019 Grant Allocations

Mr. Heim said the Allocations Committee met on November 9 and developed its recommendations. He said overall the allocation amount is \$145,000, including \$130,000 from the 2019 General Fund, and \$15,000 from a grant from 4Culture. As recommended, \$118,600 would be allocated to 31 non-profits for Eastside Arts Partnerships; \$11,900 would be allocated to seven special projects; and the balance would be allocated as three awards under the Power Up program. He noted that each community partner organization received a minimum of \$1500; Chop Shop and Ballard Civic Orchestra were awarded \$3000 each given that they ranked very high relative to the other partners. A total of nine new Eastside Arts Partnerships applicants submitted applications, and in reviewing the applications the panel focused on equity in relation to how all of the partners are treated.

Commissioner Malkin commented that for some allocations, the awarded amount appears to be too low to allow the organization to accomplish the stated program goals. Theatre33 is a case in point where the total program budget is shown to be \$6100 but the award is only \$1500. Commissioner Lau Hui noted that some of the applications were project based while others were organization based. Theatre33 sought funding for a specific project, which is not included in their operations budget.

Mr. Heim pointed out that the Bellevue Community Band application fell into a similar vein. He clarified that the allocations can be used to address operating funds and do not have to be aimed at a specific project.

Commissioner Jackson commented that there is not and likely never will be enough money to go around. She said it is better to generally support arts organizations than to fill just a few buckets and leave the rest empty.

Mr. Heim clarified that while the panelists attempted to view the process through an equity lens, equity was not part of the guidelines the panel was charged with following. He suggested the equity topic might be one for the Commission to discuss at its retreat.

Chair Manfredi asked if the organizations essentially self-selected which category, community partner and pro partner, they would be in. Mr. Heim allowed that they did by virtue of the amount they requested. The community partner category is for awards up to \$5000, while the pro partners category is for awards up to \$10,000.

Answering a question asked by Commissioner Jackson, Mr. Heim said the new process was a lifesaver for staff internally from an administrative point of view. The previous paper-based system took a lot of time; the new electronic format streamlined everything and put it all in one place. Additionally, it enabled contracting out to the technical assistance folks the work of essentially acting like grants administrators. A total of 25 hours of technical assistance was used, of which just over six hours was for language assistance for seven different clients. Technical assistance per applicant averaged 22 minutes per applicant, while the language assistance averaged 95 minutes per applicant.

Commissioner Lau Hui commented that from the panel's perspective, the new electronic format offered several challenges. Commissioner Wolfteich agreed and said he found it to be quite cumbersome, adding that with some streamlining it would have been much quicker to work through all of the applications. Commissioner Lau Hui said it would have been better to have had a single master format for all applicants to follow.

Before taking a vote on the recommendation of the Allocations Committee, Commissioner Jackson recused herself and stepped out of the room.

A motion to approve the recommendations of the Allocations Committee was made by Commissioner Lau Hui. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Lewis and the motion carried unanimously.

Mr. Heim informed the Commissioners that the interim director of the Cultural and Economic Vitality office allocated economic development funds to pay for both the technical assistance contract and the online application portal. Not having to pay those fees made it possible to allocate \$130,000 for Eastside Arts Partnerships and special projects.

Commissioner Lewis asked for clarification of the Power Up allocation requests that were not funded. Mr. Heim explained that the Bellevue Arts Museum asked for capacity building funds to participate again in Bellwether; those funds can be allocated from the Bellwether budget.

Bellevue College 91.3 KBCS is a project and is not core to their organizational capacity; the same is true of the Eastside Heritage Center. KidsQuest Children's Museum was given the equivalent of a Power Up allocation for 2018 and the committee felt that an organization with fewer resources could use the funding. For Lake Washington Symphony Orchestra, the Power Up request was the same as the organization's core programming and as such was not for capacity building.

C. 2019 Arts Commission Retreat Planning

Mr. Heim said over the past year he has been participating in a collaborative with other staff who serve as liaisons to various city boards and commissions. He said he learned that about half of the groups conduct an annual retreat, either at the end of the year or near the beginning of the year. The staff all report having had positive experiences in terms of relationship building and through having discussions that are not driven by an agenda or the need to make a decision. He suggested that if the Commission wanted to hold a retreat, January would be a good time to do it. The retreat could serve as the opportunity for the Commission to broach topics that are educational or strategic; it could also include a general discussion of the 2019 work plan, and topics such as equity. If scheduled, the retreat would take the place of a regular meeting and would not be a second meeting for the month.

Commissioner Jackson said she liked the idea of the educational element. She suggested it would be a good time to receive an update regarding the revised Land Use Code for the downtown relative to incentives and building height limits. It would also be good to receive updates regarding changes to the codes covering other areas of the city that might affect the arts. She added that along with Commissioner Malkin she participated in an equity training event. All Commissioners should attend the next one so that everyone can have a common verbiage to use. Some issues pertaining to equity could be presented at the retreat.

Commissioner Malkin said it would be very useful for the Allocation Committee to have in hand and use some of the tools talked about at the equity workshop. The bar has been moved a little bit, particularly by eliminating the face-to-face meetings with the applicants in an attempt to level the playing field by judging all applicants based solely on their applications. There are improvements still to be made to the process.

Commissioner Jackson commented that the Arts Commission is years ahead of other city boards and commissions in terms of thinking about equity and recruiting diverse groups. She agreed, however, that the Commission could be even better.

Commissioner Malkin proposed scheduling the retreat for a restaurant in the downtown that has a meeting room, allowing for dinner during a break.

Chair Manfredi said the retreat agenda could include a discussion of projects in addition to process and equity.

Commissioner Jackson offered as a suggestion of a topic to add to a Commission agenda in the spring. She said she would like to have Mark Wilbert, the arts curriculum coordinator for the Bellevue School District, visit and talk about arts programs in the schools. Mr. Heim said that would be a good presentation. He said he met recently with Mr. Wilbert by way of getting his head around what the district offers students. He said he and Mr. Wilbert planned to author a white paper together about the state of the arts at the school district and the opportunities for working together with the city and the Commission. Mr. Wilbert is working to put together a tour for the Commissioners of an elementary school, a middle school and a high school. No dates have yet been determined.

Chair Manfredi left the meeting and handed the gavel to Commissioner Malkin.

Commissioner Malkin said one thing that should be discussed is changing the focus from STEM to STEAM to include the arts. Commissioner Jackson agreed but suggested the primary focus should be on fostering a strong relationship between the school district and the city.

There was consensus to move ahead with planning for a Commission retreat focused on the primary topics of space and facilities challenges, land use issues, equity and arts education.

5. COMMISSION QUICK BUSINESS – None

6. REPORTS

A. Commissioner’s Committee and Lead Reports – As Noted

B. Project Updates from Staff

Arts Program Coordinator Scott MacDonald reported that a proposal for the Lattawood Park project would be posted soon to the public art website. It will include where the project has been and the steps taken to get to where things are, along with the artist’s ideas about the project. The comment period for the community will remain open through the end of the month. A vote of the Commission will be scheduled for the meeting in February.

Mr. Heim reported that staff would soon embark on a collections management and care plan. Currently there is no comprehensive and standard care plan for each work in the city’s collection, both in terms of annual maintenance and long-term conservation needs. Development of the plan will take up much of the first half of 2019.

Commissioner Malkin said a discussion of how to expand the city’s collection would be appropriate for the retreat. Commissioner Jackson agreed and said the discussion should include a presentation on what is already in the city’s collection.

With regard to Downtown Park, Mr. Heim said the artist for the northeast corner entrance, which is part of the Grand Connection, was selected a year ago. At the time the budget was set at \$400,000 with half coming from the arts fund and half coming from the Grand Connection project. The artist has been in communication with the design team for the overall project and all are in agreement that the aspiration for the artwork is out of scale with the established budget. It has been accelerated by both the parks and community development departments. Community development has identified an additional \$500,000 for the project, mostly from the Grand Connection project.

7. CORRESPONDENCE, INFORMATION – As Noted

A. Written Correspondence – As Noted

B. Information – As Noted

i. Committees

8. ADJOURNMENT

Commissioner Malkin adjourned the meeting at 6:06 p.m.