

BELLEVUE ARTS COMMISSION
REGULAR MEETING
MINUTES

November 6, 2012
4:30 p.m.

Bellevue City Hall
Room 1E -109

COMMISSIONERS PRESENT: Chairperson Smith, Commissioners Cole, Fateeva, Jackson, Liljeblad, Manfredi, Tremblay

COMMISSIONERS ABSENT: None

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

OTHERS PRESENT: None

RECORDING SECRETARY: Gerry Lindsay

I. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 4:31 p.m. by Chairperson Smith who presided. All Commissioners were present.

2. APPROVAL OF AGENDA AND MINUTES

A. Approval of Agenda

A motion to approve the agenda was made by Commissioner Cole. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Liljeblad and it carried unanimously.

B. Approval of September 4, 2012, Minutes

A motion to approve the September 4, 2012, minutes as submitted was made by Commissioner Liljeblad. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Tremblay and it carried unanimously.

C. Approval of October 2, 2012, Minutes

A motion to approve the October 2, 2012, minutes as submitted was made by Commissioner Cole. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Manfredi and it carried unanimously.

3. ORAL COMMUNICATIONS

Chair Smith thanked the Commissioners for attending the meeting on November 1 with representatives from various arts organizations. Many good comments were made, though it was obvious that most of the groups are facing situations similar to those reported in 2010.

4. ACTION ITEMS AND DISCUSSION ITEMS

B. Musica Sacra Presentation

Arts Specialist Mary Pat Byrne noted that Musica Sacra applied to the Commission for funding for the first time in 2012 under the special projects category. They were not funded but they would like

to continue performing in Bellevue. She said she invited them to visit with the Commission to respond to questions about the program and to talk more about their plans.

Bob Ingalls, artistic director and conductor of Musica Sacra, said he is a second-generation Seattleite. He said after completing his degree at Julliard spent some 20 years playing with the Seattle Symphony and other local organizations, all while maintaining a position with St Madeleine Sophie Catholic Church in Bellevue as the choir director. He said for the past 30 years he has lived in Bellevue.

Mr. Ingalls said he formed Musica Sacra in January 2011 with Bellevue in mind as one of the venues. The semi-professional group is composed of 16 singers and is focused on performing music that is of a special nature to many different cultures. The piece that will be performed for the concert in December is a processional based on a Buddhist chant from the 5th Century B.C.

Musica Sacra generally partners with non-profits such as food banks to help raise money for their partners' endeavors as part of the concerts' goals. The intent is to offer great music while at the same time positively impacting the community. The application submitted to the Commission in 2012 was turned down in part because fundraising activities are excluded under the guidelines. Mr. Ingalls expressed a desire to apply again in the spring of 2013 and to alleviate the problem by eliminating all such partnerships for concerts done in Bellevue.

The first concert series for Musica Sacra was in December 2011 at two different locations, one in West Seattle and the other in Kenmore. Both of the concerts were successful with strong attendance. Plans were made to repeat the concert series in the spring of 2012 at a venue in West Seattle and at St. Luke's in Bellevue. However, on the weekend of the Bellevue concert SR-520 was closed and the attendance was very low. The concert in the spring will again be at St. Luke's.

Answering a question asked by Chair Smith, Mr. Ingalls said six of the group's members are paid and serve as sectional leaders. The other ten singers are all volunteers, in fact they pay dues. There is a waiting list of people wanting to join. The members come from all over the Puget Sound area. Many are young prospective opera singers. The goal is to ultimately be able to pay all of the members.

Commissioner Tremblay asked if Musica Sacra is considered a religious group. Mr. Ingalls said it is not. He pointed out that the group has received a grant from the Washington State Arts Commission, which it could not have received if the group had a focus on any specific religion.

Ms. Byrne said the Supreme Court ruling on the separation of church and state says that government cannot be seen to be supporting one religion over another. When the Musica Sacra proposal is received and the selection committee reviews the list of songs to be performed, if questions are raised there is the option for staff to consult the City Attorney.

Chair Smith pointed out that groups funded by the city have performed in the past in churches, so the issue is not the venue necessarily. Commissioner Manfredi agreed but pointed out that the connection between the venue and what the group is is quite strong. The selection committee likely will focus on that issue.

Commissioner Cole pointed out that the level of funding available for allocation may be reduced in 2013. She stressed that even if Musica Sacra avoids partnering with non-profits, there is no guarantee that the group will be selected to receive funding. Mr. Ingalls and the Commissioners agreed that the discussion was helpful.

A. Staff Appreciation

Chair Smith expressed to Arts Program Assistant Scott MacDonald the appreciation of the Commission for his work for the Arts Program.

Commissioner Liljeblad said the Bellwether schedule was high pressure and having someone on board to do the heavy lifting was a great help.

Mr. MacDonald said he enjoyed working for the City and hopes to return.

C. Comprehensive Plan

Ms. Byrne provided general background information on why cities in; Washington State have comprehensive plans and the function the plans perform.

Senior Planner Nicholas Matz said the Comprehensive Plan is supposed to be updated every seven years. However, because of the recent budget crisis, it has been ten years since the last update. The Arts Commission will be asked to participate in the update as it moves along. How parks are located within communities, how the city interacts with the school district, how art is infused into urban design, and how intersections are designated for special treatment are examples of how policies in the Comprehensive Plan direct City action. The update will focus on where there are gaps in the existing plan.

Bellevue had a plan in place long before it was required to have one. One key element of the plan is to concentrate growth and development in the downtown. The plan includes vision statements, one of the most famous of which is the notion of Bellevue as a city in a park. The plan talks in lofty terms but also in very specific terms.

All of the city's boards and commissions will be invited to engage in updating the Comprehensive Plan. A joint boards and commissions forum is under consideration for a date in January. At that meeting those who attend will participate in a scoping exercise. The framework for the plan update will be laid out, issues will be discussed, and a to-do list will be developed related to how the plan should be updated. The combined list of things to address as part of the update should be ready to share with the Council by February.

Commissioner Tremblay said the integrated approach will be far better than just asking what the Arts Commission thinks about the arts, or what the Transportation Commission has to say about transportation issues.

Commissioner Liljeblad asked if the planning horizon year will be advanced by the update beyond 2025. Mr. Matz said the Comprehensive Plan looks forward 20 years, so the existing 2025 horizon will be advanced to 2035.

Mr. Matz said the outreach process will involve the use of web-based tools and social media in addition to the more conventional face-to-face approach.

Commissioner Liljeblad noted that much has changed since the Comprehensive Plan was last updated. He said his sense is that the plan is at a high enough level that the changes seen have been generally consistent with the plan, but he asked what gaps have been identified that will need some focus. Mr. Matz said one of the biggest gaps is the degree to which the community has become more diverse. That diversity is having an effect on jobs, on the choices people make about where they live, and on housing issues.

Commissioner Tremblay suggested the need to figure out a compelling way to share with the citizens how the city thinks with the help of the community. Such meta exercises help to make the process tangible.

Chair Smith said the teeth of the Comprehensive Plan lies in the functional plans. He suggested it will be important to understand the relationship between the various functional plans.

Commissioner Tremblay said she knows an artist and Cornish professor who focuses on knowledge mapping. He is internationally known both for his illustrations and his teaching. He makes visual how knowledge is bundled, stored and disseminated. She asked if the city has any money that could be used to bring him in to help map the update process in a colorful way that will engage the community. Mr. Matz said the idea is interesting. A transparent knowledge mapping exercise certainly would help give everyone a broader understanding of the plan's impact.

D. Funding Guidelines

Ms. Byrne said she did not yet have a date for presenting the funding guidelines to the Council. Absent any changes to the guidelines, the request and approval process should be fairly quick and easy. City Council, however, is fully engaged in the budget and major East Link issues through the end of the year, so there may not be room on the agenda until January.

Ms. Byrne said the allocations committee focused their work on the guidelines by looking at the application evaluation process. This resulted in some adjustments to the evaluation form. One of the issues that came up at an arts and social change conference that occurred earlier in the year was applicants' desire to know how things are weighted so they can know to emphasize specifics; it would be good to include the evaluation form in the guidelines or information about how each criteria is weighted for that reason.

Commissioner Jackson said the committee elected to specifically separate highlight collaboration and diversity and put those things on an equal par with fiscal and management competence in terms of weighting.

Commissioner Liljeblad said the committee also talked about having an appeal process. Ms. Byrne said there never has been a formal appeal process, though there have been instances in the past where an applicant has expressed concern about the decisions made by the panel. Musica Sacra is a case in point. The conclusion reached, however, was that the process works well in its current format and should not be made any more complicated than it has to be.

A motion to recommend that Council adopt the 2013 Funding Guidelines for Eastside Arts Partnerships and Special Projects as advised by the Allocations Committee was made by Commissioner Cole. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Tremblay and it carried unanimously.

E. State of the Arts Discussion Recap

Ms. Byrne said the Commission is scheduled to be before the Council on November 13 to talk about the budget, and at that meeting the Council will be presented with a memo outlining how the budget either supports or hinders the work being done in the arts community. The Council will be informed that the Commission has been engaged in two activities from which on-point information has been collected, the recent meeting with artists and arts groups, and the cultural demographics survey.

The Council may or may not offer comments in response to the presentation. As the time comes closer to finalizing the budget, however, there will be a moment when the issue will be addressed.

Ms. Byrne said she is continuing to work at the staff level to see what can be done about restoring the funding.

There was agreement to have Ms. Byrne email to each Commissioner the draft memo to be presented to the Council. Ms. Byrne stressed the need for Commissioners to reply to her directly with any comments or revisions rather than other Commissioners to avoid the quorum issue.

5. COMMISSION QUICK BUSINESS – None

6. REPORTS

A. Commissioners' Committee and Lead Reports

Commissioner Liljeblad passed around copies of a memo from senior transportation planner Franz Loewenherz regarding the transit master plan update. He noted that on November 8 the Transportation Commission will be given a briefing on the update and added that there are many related documents available online. The input received to date has been very helpful, particularly the information gathered from the city's boards and commissions. He briefly recapped the recent transit Network Design forum to which Boards and Commissions had been invited to send representatives. Several Councilmembers attended as well. The attendees were divided into groups of eight to ten to answer set questions about what is valued in terms of directness of service, the network of routes, how precious time is, and quality in terms of community coverage.

With regard to the Cultural Compass update, Ms. Byrne said work is under way to begin the survey.

B. Staff Reports

1. Project Status Report

Ms. Byrne informed the Commission that the print version of the public art map is currently at the printer and should be available in about a week. The map will also be posted online as a PDF. The rollout will be coordinated with a press release. In the first run 5000 copies of the map will be printed, 1000 of which will be given to Meydenbauer Center for their VisitBellevue effort. The online version will be updated regularly as necessary.

Answering a question asked by Commissioner Tremblay, Ms. Byrne said she is aware of a startup company that has developed software that includes a function that allows for mapping anything from historic events to the location of things. The interactive function allows users to access information in the form of text, images, video, audio, and links about each item they click on. 4Culture has organized a meeting and is seeking to form a coalition of cities to go in on it together. She said she will share information about the project as it moves forward.

Commissioner Cole suggested that if such a system is implemented, Bellevue should draft a press release to be sent out to position Bellevue as a leading arts community.

Ms. Byrne reported that she traveled to Portland on November 2 as part of a regional public art administrators meeting where she gave a presentation on Bellwether. It was clear from conversing with those who attended that dealing with diversity is a major issue for nearly every jurisdiction. The discussions talked about how to reach out and engage the various communities, and the conversations mirrored the things Bellevue has been doing and talking about doing.

2. Bellwether 2012 Report

Ms. Byrne said the de-installation process went smoothly. The final tally has not been made, but it appears that overall the exhibit will come in on budget. Feedback about the exhibit has been very positive.

7. CORRESPONDENCE, INFORMATION

A. Written Correspondence – None

1. Upcoming Agenda Items – As Noted
2. Commission Committee Chairs and Leads for 2012-2013 – As Noted
3. Public Art Program Budget Update – As Noted

8. COMMISSIONER UPDATES ON LOCAL ACTIVITIES

Commissioner Cole said she has for some time had on her mind the issue of what Bellevue is all about. To many, Bellevue is known as the town with a great mall, and while that is true there is much more to the city. For one thing, Bellevue is a city in a park and as such it is a great place to raise children. When visiting Bellevue Arts Museum, children are instructed not to touch anything; as a result, their experience is not a positive one. That is representative of a real disconnect between art and children and points out the possibilities for making a strong connection between the two which could in turn help to define what Bellevue is about. Engaging children in art is the best possible way to grow future artists.

Ms. Byrne suggested the first step would be to recognize how much work is already going on in the community. Many of the groups funded by the city are outstanding in their efforts to reach out to and educate children. Clearly the groups that are making it on the Eastside are involved with education, including Music Works Northwest, KidsQuest Museum, and Bellevue Symphony Orchestra. It is difficult, however, but probably not impossible to calculate how many artists are being grown as a result. Ms. Byrne suggested adding the topic to a future Commission agenda for a fuller discussion.

Commissioner Cole said the plans for the children's playground in Downtown Park are fantastic. The project's leader has expressed an interest in including sculpture, especially works that can appeal to senses other than visual.

Commissioner Liljeblad said he attended the Bellevue Youth Symphony session on November 5. He said the information they handed out regarding the number of students they work with was compelling; they currently have some 350 and expect 700 in five years. The problem is the organization is maxed out on space and rehearsal space is very difficult to come by.

Commissioner Manfredi agreed with the need to connect with events for children that are already happening.

Commissioner Cole stressed that while education is vitally important, it is not the only way to connect kids with art. Kids need ways to interact with and experience art in very tangible ways.

Commissioner Fateeva said the Tacoma Glass Museum has a great exhibition that involves glass works made to reflect sketches made by children. Children to visit the exhibition react very positively to it.

9. ADJOURNMENT

Chair Smith adjourned the meeting at 6:31 p.m.