

BELLEVUE ARTS COMMISSION
REGULAR MEETING
MINUTES

April 1, 2008
4:00 p.m.

Bellevue City Hall
Room 1E -109

COMMISSIONERS PRESENT: Chairperson Shepherd, Commissioners Holder, Kiselev, Ptacek, Tremblay

COMMISSIONERS ABSENT: Commissioner Donkin, Finley

STAFF PRESENT: Mary Pat Byrne, Tamar Benzikry-Stern, Department of Planning and Community Development

OTHERS PRESENT: Paul Heppner, Lynne Allison, Jeffrey Hirsch, Terry Coe, Encore Media Group

RECORDING SECRETARY: Gerry Lindsay

The meeting began without a quorum present at 4:05 p.m. Chairperson Shepherd presided. All Commissioners were present with the exception of Commissioners Tremblay and Ptacek, both of whom arrived at 4:14 p.m., and Commissioners Finley and Donkin, both of whom were excused.

IV. ACTION ITEMS AND DISCUSSION ITEMS

A. Encore Publications *CityArts Eastside*

Representatives of Encore Publishing presented information on a new magazine, *City Arts Eastside*, which will begin publication in July of 2008. Paul Heppner, president of Encore Publishing, said the magazine will be about the Eastside community and will highlight the creative people and energy evident on the Eastside. Also presenting were Terry Coe, Jeffrey Hirsch and Lynne Allison.

Chair Shepherd noted that the launching of the magazine coincides largely with the opening of the Bellevue Sculpture Exhibition. Jeffrey Hirsch said projects of that sort will be critically important to the magazine. Lynne Allison noted that the magazine could help sustain interest in the Exhibition once the initial media press is completed by publishing a story later in the summer.

Answering a question asked by Commissioner Ptacek, Mr. Heppner said that while the Eastside will incorporate wide boundaries, the starting focus will be on Bellevue. Kemper Development will be distributing the magazines in all its properties and will support the venture through the purchase of advertising. That level of support will allow the magazine to expand in concentric circles without paying particular heed to county or jurisdictional boundary lines.

Commissioner Tremblay said IndieCade is a festival for independent game developers. The event will include a contest and showcase for gaming. The host for the July 10-15 event is Open Satellite, which is the gallery that just opened in the John Su building. The focus will be on the pioneering spirit and technological savvy along with a mix of culture. Mr. Heppner allowed that very creative things are happening in the technology field.

I. CALL TO ORDER

A quorum having been reached, Chair Shepherd called the meeting to order.

II. APPROVAL OF AGENDA AND MINUTES

A. Approval of Agenda

Motion to approve the agenda was made by Commissioner Ptacek. Second was by Commissioner Tremblay and the motion carried unanimously.

B. Approval of Minutes

Chair Shepherd referred to the penultimate paragraph on page 2 of the minutes and suggested it be revised to read "Commissioner Holder pointed out that in the future when the Bellevue Arts Museum and KidsQuest are folded back into the mix, the smaller organizations could lose out, unless there is more money to allocate by then.

Chair Shepherd also called attention to the second sentence of the second paragraph on page 3 and suggested the word "curtailed" should be changed to "managed."

Motion to approve the March 11, 2008, minutes as amended was made by Commissioner Ptacek. Second was by Commissioner Tremblay and the motion carried unanimously.

III. ORAL COMMUNICATIONS – None

IV. ACTION ITEMS AND DISCUSSION ITEMS (continued)

B. Budget Planning

Chair Shepherd reported that the operating overview and citizen survey information, long-range financial planning and budget information, and CIP overview will be shared with the Council in April and May.

Ms. Byrne said the key reason the Commission was successful with its request for the public art program in the last biennium was because there was an overarching vision for where the program.

Ms. Byrne said mentioned various opportunities coming across her desk that would that are potentials for new funding: the new jazz festival the Bellevue Downtown Association is launching; the TEN20 Theater; the Bel Red arts district will need planning dollars. The new director of the Bellevue Philharmonic indicated they have more square footage than needed and could benefit from subletting the additional space and possibly office equipment to some other arts groups. Those kinds of initiatives would have a beneficial impact on shaping the arts scene in Bellevue.

Commissioner Kiselev agreed that the starting point should be the vision. Secondly, the City Council should be asked if it considers Bellevue to be, or wants to become, a world-class city, and should be shown that art can serve as a catalyst. Art is a necessary component of every world-class city.

Commissioner Tremblay said there are all kinds of things that are happening culturally in the city, but there are some policies that are getting in the way. For instance, Seattle has Art Walk Thursdays with musicians playing and puppet shows happening on the streets; that cannot happen in Bellevue. While trying to rev up and create vitality and activity at the street level, some policies and ordinances are working at cross purposes.

Commissioner Kiselev suggested the Commission should first come up with a list of what makes world-class cities what they are, then work toward developing ideas for how the various components could be implemented in Bellevue. With a vision in hand, it will be much easier to craft policies that will let the vision play out.

Commissioner Tremblay Bellevue already has all kinds of creativity operating in organizations and as independent artists. What the city can and should do is pave the way to allow those organizations and individuals to become visible. There should be periodic steps taken to reevaluate how stringent some of the policies are.

Commissioner Holder suggested choosing three to five interesting and compelling things the Commission would like to see happen in the community and then get behind them. When the idea of the art walk in Bellevue was shared with the Council, they caught the vision, the passion and the enthusiasm. That same approach should be used in selling the Council on the idea of giving more funding to the arts. The message should be simple, clear, reasonable, compelling, and focused on the long-term vision.

Commissioner Kiselev noted that art is an element of economic development and suggested that the Council should be reminded of that fact.

Chair Shepherd said in the past the argument made in support of increasing the program budget has been on having more to pass on to the arts groups. The case that now needs to be made is for additional funds to do other kinds of projects; so much of the existing dollars are passed on to arts groups that there is very little left. She said she would prefer to ask for increases to both budgets.

Commissioner Holder concurred, noting that the general fund supported programs budget have not been increased for eight years. Since then, the budgets for most of the organizations supported by the city have gone up 20 percent or more.

Commissioner Ptacek stressed the need to use the Cultural Compass as the base for the request.

Commissioner Ptacek said what the city needs is more capability to work effectively with developers in identifying art and cultural opportunities. Investments of those sorts will pay great dividends in the future. The approach used for the Great Streets program is a good model. Ms. Byrne said that work is ongoing at the staff level. Staff is discussing the draft plan with many of the developers involved. Greg Johnson from Wright Runstad has agreed to come to the June meeting to talk about the Spring District, and that will be one way to facilitate an exchange of ideas.

Commissioner Kiselev said the Commission needs to reach out to someone, like the Bellevue Downtown Association, and let them know that the goal of the Commission is the same as theirs, to keep the city attractive, clean, sophisticated, and world class. If the Commission can work in partnership with such organizations, it should be done.

Commissioner Ptacek said it is possible the development and business communities are afraid that the city is pushing in the direction the planners want to go without knowing exactly what the people want to do. If it can be demonstrated that the things the Commission wants to see happen are in sync with what the people really want to see done, the Commission will have a strong leg up. In order to get to that point will take some research.

Chair Shepherd said she will meet with Matt Terry to discuss the Commission's interests.

C. Cultural Compass Event Planning

The Commissioners reviewed the matrix of names to be invited to the update event. Ms. Byrne noted that list included everyone who participated on the Cultural Compass steering committee as well as potentially interested persons. Ms. Byrne said the best bets for scheduling the meeting are a Tuesday or Wednesday night in July.

Commissioner Tremblay suggested inviting some young people to attend.

Chair Shepherd pointed out that the meeting is intended to serve as an update for the Cultural Compass stakeholders; it is not a meeting aimed at developing or updating the Cultural Compass. The update is intended to fulfill the obligation to keep the participants informed.

V. COMMISSION QUICK BUSINESS – None

VI. REPORTS

A. Commissioner Reports

1. Great Streets Developer Conversation

Chair Shepherd said she and Commissioner Ptacek met with Kemper Freeman of Kemper Development. She said Mr. Freeman mentioned his concerns about lack of maintenance for its signature project, the pedestrian corridor. Ms. Byrne said the city knows about the issue and is working on ways to address it. She said the new kiosks will be very attractive once they are installed, but clearly the current kiosks have been allowed to fall into disrepair.

Chair Shepherd said Mr. Freeman also wondered why the sculpture walk should start at City Hall. She said the response given to him was that the suggestion came from the Arts Commission which wants to draw attention to the fabulous public art installed at City Hall.

Chair Shepherd said Mr. Freeman noted his success in Bellevue has come from building what the people want. He questioned whether the Commission really knows whether the Great Streets art element is something that people want. For instance, the most trafficked street in the downtown is NE 8th Street, and, based on the draft diagram he was shown, no focus is being given to that street at all from an art point of view.

Commissioner Ptacek said Mr. Freeman voiced support for some of the very things the Commission is interested in, such as gateways to the community. Commissioner Ptacek said the Commission should acknowledge Mr. Freeman's methods of operating and some of the things that already exist. He seemed to resonate with the idea of keeping a connection between the Pedestrian Corridor and Downtown Park as he continues to develop Bellevue Square. He has money in his project budget for art, and the Commission should find ways to work with him rather than impose a vision on him.

Chair Shepherd said the conversation was well worth the time invested.

Ms. Byrne asked what Mr. Freeman said about supporting the Art Walk. Chair Shepherd said he wanted to know who his people should talk to and that she followed up the conversation with a handwritten note saying who should be contacted.

Noting that Mr. Freeman had said private art should be included when art maps are drawn, Commissioner Holder agreed. Ms. Byrne noted that the ArtMap is being updated this year and has traditionally included all publicly and privately owned public art. Kemper Development's public art works will certainly be included.

B. Joint Staff and Commission Reports

1. Bellevue Sculpture Exhibition

Ms. Byrne said the planning efforts continue to go very well and the risk assessment process for the selected art works is underway. She shared with the Commission photos of some of the selected works.

C. Staff Reports

1. 140th Avenue Project

Ms. Byrne said she is date checking for the community celebration of the art installation. The installation work will begin on May 5.

2. Project Updates

VII. INFORMATION AND UPCOMING EVENTS

A. Written Correspondence – As Noted

B. For Your Information – As Noted

1. Calendar
2. Upcoming Agenda Items
3. CIP Public Art Program Commitments Update

VIII. ADJOURNMENT

Chair Shepherd adjourned the meeting at 6:00 p.m.