

BELLEVUE ARTS COMMISSION  
REGULAR MEETING  
MINUTES

June 3, 2008  
4:00 p.m.

Bellevue City Hall  
Room 1E -109

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

COMMISSIONERS ABSENT: Commissioner Donkin

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

OTHERS PRESENT: Shelley Brittingham, Assistant Director, Parks and Community Services; from Wright Runstad: Greg Johnson, President, Greg Misenaar, IT Director; Betty Spieth, principal, Langton Spieth

RECORDING SECRETARY: Gerry Lindsay

I. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 4:05 p.m. by Chairperson Finley who presided. All Commissioners were present with the exception of Commissioner Ptacek who was excused.

Chair Finley took a moment to thank former chair Commissioner Shepherd for her passion and dedication. She presented her with a gift on behalf of the Commissioners.

Arts Specialist Mary Pat Byrne reviewed the list of accomplishments during the years of Commissioner Shepherd's reign as Commission chair.

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 – None

III. ORAL COMMUNICATIONS

Parks and Community Services Assistant Director Shelley Brittingham invited the Commissioners to attend the grand opening of the Crossroads water spray playground on June 7. She noted that a grant was received from 4Culture that will be used to have live dancers present for the opening event.

#### IV. ACTION ITEMS AND DISCUSSION ITEMS

##### A. Spring District Update

Greg Johnson with Wright Runstad introduced Betty Spieth, a member of the Spring District team, and Greg Misenaar, director of IT for Wright Runstad.

Mr. Johnson said Wright Runstad has been developing in Puget Sound for the past 36 years, including buildings in downtown Bellevue. The company is committed to including works of public art in its projects but also in using the buildings themselves as artistic creations. The Spring District in the Bel-Red corridor will be the largest project ever undertaken by Wright Runstad.

The Commission was provided with some historical background regarding the Bel-Red area in general and the Spring District site in particular, along with a synopsis of the Bel-Red corridor project that began with the steering committee and is now working its way through various boards and commissions in preparation for handing the City Council a package to discuss and approve. Mr. Johnson gave the commission an overview of the current plans and ideas on how the project may be phased.

Commissioner Ptacek asked if Wright Runstad is actively involved in the efforts to bring light rail to the Bel-Red corridor. Mr. Johnson said the company is active to the extent possible. Wright Runstad is aware that over the next 25 years the region will have to accommodate an additional 1.7 million people and 1.2 million jobs. The company supports the notion of Sound Transit taking action to bring mass transit to the Eastside as quickly as possible.

Commissioner Ptacek asked if Wright Runstad has given consideration to what part of the overall budget might be devoted to art. He added that too many projects in the city have gotten started without the Commission having the opportunity to weigh in regarding the benefits of having art included. Mr. Johnson said the company has brought projects online in other jurisdictions where one percent of the budget had to be earmarked for art. Currently the Planning Commission is reviewing an incentive zoning formula that Wright Runstad believes should include an art component. The proposed tier system should be revised in favor of allowing access to the full list of incentives right from the start.

Ms. Spieth commented that at the public hearing before the Planning Commission held on May 28 there was a considerable push-back regarding the tiered incentive system. While everyone agreed that the vision for the corridor is exciting, there was general agreement that the proposed FARs and incentive system will not deliver the vision. She said staff was responsive to the feedback.

Answering a question asked by Chair Finley, Mr. Johnson said developers naturally resist requirements that introduce uncertainty and risk. If there is an incentive system, or a requirement for public art, it should be transparent and easy to figure out. Art selection can be tricky, so to the extent there is a well-defined process with clear criteria, Wright Runstad would be willing to participate.

Commissioner Ptacek asked if Wright Runstad would have any interest in partnering to bring about a significant piece of public art. He said the Spring District development will serve as the introduction to the whole Bel-Red area and represents a great opportunity to send a signal to all who will ultimately be involved. Mr. Runstad said Wright Runstad would entertain that notion, commenting that the opportunities the site offers are nearly limitless. The type of partnership that works in such situations is one where the developer is left to focus on what they are best able to deliver.

Mr. Johnson shared with the Commissioners a model of the proposed Spring District development.

## B. Eastside Arts Allocations Recommendation

Ms. Byrne provided an overview of the process to date for developing annual funding allocation recommendations and securing Council's approval. This year, a new consideration was raised during the Commission's Eastside Arts Partnership funding deliberations. Two of the groups up for funding had already received a substantial amount of funding directly from the City Council. The questions raised by the Commission were whether or not the City Council intended that these allocations fully fund both groups for the year, and how should the funding for the two organizations be redistributed to the other funded groups as a one-time increase.

Commissioners had varying opinions of what should be done. The general opinion was that the Council should be given two options. The Commission voted on a preferred option, which was to partially fund the groups.

At the study session where the information and preferred option were presented to the Council, a number of questions were raised, including whether or not the Commission had talked to the groups or set up any kind of guideline or criteria beforehand that would preclude them from being funded if directly funded by the Council. Council members Balducci and Noble held that absent any prior expectation of funding disqualifications because of previously received funding, going forward with the preferred option would be acceptable. At the regular session of the Council, however, at which the Council was set to vote on the matter, commissioner Shepherd and chair Finley attempted to clarify the position of the Commission, which led to some confusion among Council members, additional questions, and Council direction to staff to return with a clarifying memo.

Ms. Byrne said the next day she emailed the Commissioners and asked a series of questions to determine why each Commissioner voted the way they did. She found that some Commissioners voted for Option B largely because they did not want to offend the Council, not because they believed that partial funding was the right way to go. Others voted for Option B because they believed the zero funding approach was the wrong approach; still others voted for a mix of reasons.

Ms. Byrne advised the Commissioner to discuss what they want to do in light of Council's desire for the Commission to come together on a recommendation, noting that it may be necessary to vote to rescind the previous vote and put a new proposal on the table for vote.

Chair Finley clarified that Option B was for decreased funding and Option A was for no funding for either of the two groups. Ms. Byrne explained that the preferred option when presented to the Council is listed as Option A, so it was necessary to switch the two, making Option A the partial funding approach.

Commissioner Holder asked why the Council needed clarification given that the Commission did forward a recommendation and given that the Council has the right to act in whatever way it determines with regard to a recommendation. Commissioner Shepherd said her understanding of the Commission vote was not that it was a recommendation of the decreased funding approach, but rather that it was a recommendation to send the decision to the Council. She said it was her fault that it all got confused.

Commissioner Ptacek suggested that the Commission at the time of the vote really wanted to give neither organization additional funding. The Commission did not want to put the Council in a bad position, but Council's additional direction to make a recommendation and let them deal with it opens the door for the Commission to make the recommendation it really wants to make.

**Motion to rescind the earlier motion was made by Commissioner Shepherd. Second was by Commissioner Ptacek and the motion carried unanimously.**

**Motion to recommend no funding for either KidsQuest or BAM, and to fund the other organizations as previously determined, was made by Commissioner Ptacek. Second was by Commissioner Shepherd.**

Commissioner Kiselev suggested the recommendation to the Council should be accompanied by a detailed explanation. Ms. Byrne said staff will explain the recommendation in whatever way the Commission wants.

Commissioner Holder said she would vote against the motion. The allocations committee has always acted in accord with the established criteria. Both organizations meet the funding criteria; they do a very good job in the community. While it may be the right decision to not fund them given the exigent circumstances, to follow the criteria would mean funding the organizations. She also urged the Commission to be very clear in giving a funding bump to the other organizations that the funds are one-time funds only.

Commissioner Ptacek agreed. He added that while KidsQuest and BAM are two very well-established groups that everyone knows about, the Commission has the opportunity to send the message that there are other very worthwhile organizations in the community that are also worthy of funding. To include the two groups for funding would send the wrong message in light of the subsequent discussion that has taken place. The real fact is that none of the arts organizations in the community are getting the level of support they need and deserve; they all need the money. The Council needs to understand that there is more need than resources available.

Commissioner Tremblay agreed. She said even the well-established organizations need to understand that the funding they receive from the city is not an entitlement, and as such they need to provide the city with a compelling reason to be funded during each allocation cycle.

Ms. Byrne explained that the philosophy behind operational support, which is what EAP is, is that it is healthier for established organizations to receive a predictable level of support from funders. This helps stabilize their business operations and respects organizations professionalism, allowing them to do what they do best. Operational support counters the stress put on organizations by funders who want to see new programs every year or who reward poor management by funding based on who's in the worst crisis.

Commissioner Kiselev commented that as the city grows it will see more and more arts organizations coming in for funding. Without an increase in the number of dollars to allocate, either the city will have to continue funding the established organizations at their traditional levels and turn down the new organizations, or it will have to take funding from the established groups in order to have something to give the new organizations. The city simply cannot guarantee stability and predictability. Ms. Byrne explained that new groups that come to the fore do not get into EAP funding right away; they are usually funded with special projects dollars for a few years while they build their reputation and standing in the community.

Commissioner Ptacek suggested it simply does not make sense for the groups to assume that because they have always received EAP money that they are due it after taking the extraordinary step of going directly to the Council and lobbying for a special allocation.

Commissioner Shepherd said KidsQuest and BAM have the savvy, the wherewithal and the contacts to go straight to the Council and make their requests happen. By spreading around to those organizations that do not have that expertise, the Commission will be giving better value to the taxpayers.

**The motion carried 5-1, with Commissioner Holder voting no.**

V. COMMISSION QUICK BUSINESS

A. Change of Date for the July Meeting

There was consensus to change the date of the July Commission meeting from July 1 to July 8.

VI. REPORTS

A. Commissioner Reports

1. Geocaching

Commissioner Tremblay reported that she recently participated in a geoteaming event sponsored by Playtime in which a downtown course was created involving hidden treasures. She said her team included Chair Finley and Public Art Program project coordinator Tamar Bensikry-Stern. There were nine teams altogether, each with eight players. Several public art assets were incorporated into the game as clues and destinations. The team took first place in each of the three categories. Everyone had a great deal of fun.

2. *Seasons Shelters*, 140<sup>th</sup> Art Project Dedication

Chair Finley reported that at the dedication on May 31 artist Karen Guzak presented her completed works. She said they are incredible and may in fact become works beside which people will want to have their pictures taken. Councilmember Balducci said a few words on behalf of the City Council, and there were several present from the community.

B. Staff Reports – None

VII. INFORMATION AND UPCOMING EVENTS – None

VIII. ADJOURNMENT

Chair Finley adjourned the meeting at 5:48 p.m.