

BELLEVUE ARTS COMMISSION  
SPECIAL MEETING  
MINUTES

September 23, 2008  
4:00 p.m.

Bellevue City Hall  
Room 1E -111

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

COMMISSIONERS ABSENT: Commissioner Ptacek

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

OTHERS PRESENT: Councilmember Bonincontri

RECORDING SECRETARY: Gerry Lindsay

I. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting began without a quorum at 4:10 p.m. Chairperson Finley presided. All Commissioners were present with the exception of Commissioner Kiselev, who arrived at 4:14 p.m., Commissioner Donkin, who arrived at 4:15 p.m., Commissioner Shepherd, who arrived at 4:26 p.m., and Commissioner Ptacek, who was excused.

III. ORAL COMMUNICATIONS – None

IV. ACTION ITEMS AND DISCUSSION ITEMS

A. Open Satellite

Ms. Abigail Guay, Exhibitions director for Open Satellite, reported that Open Satellite has been operating for a little over a year. She noted that the press has been very positive. Four exhibitions have been staged to date, and the institution of public programs will be the next step. She introduced Laura O'Quinn, public programs manager.

Ms. O'Quinn said she has worked in the arts for the past ten years, most recently at the Seattle Art Museum. She said Open Satellite is making a concerted effort to bring more of the community through its doors by offering events that draw those who might not ordinarily come to the gallery. The public program includes stitchers' gatherings, jewelry shows and trunk sales by local artists, and visual and performance art. Chris Lapone from Los Angeles will be coming to Open Satellite with an exhibition that will offer some surrealist connotations. In conjunction with the exhibition, psychoanalysts will be brought in to talk about Freud and dreams.

Ms. O'Quinn said she will be reaching out to work with Bellevue Community College and local high schools.

Ms. Guay said a number of programs are being developed that will help sustain Open Satellite financially. The Community Partners program will include a coalition for arts students; the program will give them an Artist Trust membership as well as other perks related to artists in residence, in return for which the students must commit to working 40

hours over the course of the school year. Each artist that comes in will make an edition, which is a series of smaller works that are for sale. An edition program will be started to bring in local artists. John Su will be hiring Open Satellite to participate in installing public artwork in the second phase of Mr. Su's 989 Elements project; that pilot program could expand into the organization offering its services for large-scale art solutions to other institutions in Bellevue, particularly developers. The space will also be opened for event rental between shows.

Ms. Guay said one of the programs that has been on the table for a while will be happening soon and hopefully will become an annual event. The program partners with a Los Angeles group which supports independent video game making and independent mixed media. The group approached Open Satellite with the intent of bringing a focus to the artfulness of the technology and artistic accomplishments in video game-making. An open call was issued which resulted in the submission of 125 video games from all over the world; 25 of them will be shown at Open Satellite in October. A video game by a leading game maker will be debuted at the event, and there will be an awards ceremony.

Ms. Guay said Open Satellite is still seeking funding to put the finishing touches on the event. She said three game making companies are sponsoring the event; Digipen is donating computers and student volunteers; and Redmond will sponsor a reception, but another \$5000 is needed.

Answering a question asked by Commissioner Donkin, Ms. Guay explained that Open Satellite is an Limited Liability Corporation sponsored by John Su, the developer who owns the site. Commissioner Donkin asked if the Commission is able to fund for-profit organizations. Arts Specialist Mary Pat Byrne said that most individual artists operate as for-profit businesses; she said it would be necessary to take a careful look at Open Satellite to fully understand the art program to be sponsored. In any case, the project could not be funded this year because the funds have already been allocated.

Commissioner Kiselev asked why Open Satellite chose to focus an event on video games. Ms. Guay explained that the independent films and music have become big in their industries, and independent video games appear to be the next thing. Additionally, the applications used in video game making are all closely tied to other forms of digital art making. Sony, Microsoft and other companies are very interested in what the independent game makers are doing because of their innovative approaches.

Commissioner Tremblay suggested that Open Satellite thriving in Bellevue as it moves from being supported to being self-sustaining will be an important boost for the art scene in Bellevue. Having the support of the Commission will be important. She said a way must be found that will allow the Commission to have its name on Open Satellite programming.

Ms. Guay said Open Satellite intends to start a lecture series focused on the interests of the Eastside, and the organization will be seeking funding for that project.

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

## II. APPROVAL OF AGENDA AND MINUTES

### A. Approval of Agenda

**Motion to approve the agenda was made by Commissioner Donkin. Second was by Commissioner Holder and the motion carried unanimously.**

B. Approval of Minutes

**Motion to approve the August 5, 2008, minutes as submitted was made by Commissioner Donkin. Second was by Commissioner Holder and the motion carried unanimously.**

Chair Finley welcomed Councilmember Bonincontri, the Council Liaison to the Arts Commission. At Chair Finley's invitation, Councilmember Bonincontri described her background and her interest and experience in the arts.

IV. ACTION ITEMS AND DISCUSSION ITEMS (continued)

B. Bel-Red Area Draft Incentives

Comprehensive Planning Manager Paul Inghram said the Planning Commission's recommendation to adopt the Bel-Red subarea plan was presented to the City Council on September 22. The Planning Commission and chairs of the other boards and commissions that were involved in the update process, including Chair Finley, gave the Council some brief introductory comments. Their comments included their support and concerns regarding the draft subarea plan policies. Staff reviewed the technical aspects on the Planning Commission's recommendations. Several study sessions are scheduled with the Council to review the Bel-Red proposal components, including the Land Use Code, the financing system, and the interlocal agreement with Redmond.

Mr. Inghram provided the Commission with background on the key issues addressed by the Planning Commission. Regarding the incentive system, Mr. Inghram said it is designed to work with the increase in density. A base FAR increase from the current zoning is proposed under the new plan. Developers can exceed the base FAR using the proposed incentive system. There are two tiers in the incentive system, and in order for developers to use any second-tier incentives they first must provide amenities from the first tier. First tier amenities include creation of parks and open space, stream restoration, and affordable housing. Second tier amenities include active recreation areas, natural drainage features, public access to privately developed plazas, community and non-profit space, child care facilities, arts and cultural uses, public art, public restrooms, workforce/affordable housing (for commercial development), and regional transfer of development rights. The use of gold and platinum LEED standards are included in the second tier, and some Council members have questioned including them since at some point they may in the long term become building code requirements.

Commissioner Tremblay said her vision for the corridor is of an area that will be a magnet for sustainability and a destination for green uses. Mr. Inghram said definite and deliberate actions will be taken to encourage green development and practices. There has been no attempt to focus only on green businesses, however. The reality is the 900-acre area is just too big to try and achieve a focus of that sort.

Commissioner Donkin asked if there has been any significant interest regarding the public art incentive. Mr. Inghram said staff and the consultants have gone through a number of scenarios factoring in the cost of incentives to developers, the idea being that the cost of using the incentives versus the value they bring to the development generally determines whether the incentives will be used. The studies have not zeroed in on specific incentives, however, so there is no information specific to the public art incentive. The tier system has been designed to offer enough incentive that developers will want to use all the incentive

opportunities they can in order to maximize their developments, especially where the benefits outweigh the cost.

Commissioner Donkin suggested that there really is not much of an incentive for public art if a developer can select from any of the items in the second tier and receive full benefit for them.

Commissioner Kiselev asked what incentives there will be to keep the area affordable and therefore attractive to artists. Mr. Inghram said one component of the incentive system is affordable/workforce housing. The more affordable commercial spaces likely will be in the areas that will not have the higher zoning.

Commissioner Tremblay asked if affordable live/work space could be included as an incentive in the second tier. Commissioner Shepherd suggested it would not be possible to achieve that without affordable housing. Commissioner Tremblay agreed but suggested the particular use should be highlighted in some way. Mr. Inghram stressed that nothing has been adopted yet, and noted that even after they are adopted the regulations could be revised.

Councilmember Bonincontri said her experience with artist live/work space has been focused on converting existing uses. The fact is there are very few buildings in the Bel-Red area that would be suitable to conversion. Ms. Byrne noted that Karen Guzak, a local artist, has developed several buildings for artist live/work space; Ms. Guzak said in a previous Commission meeting that old strip malls work very well given that they offer load-in areas in back and often space on a second story for living.

Chair Finley commented that all of the board and Commission representatives who addressed the Council highlighted the need to have sufficient funding for the various projects. She asked if there are mechanisms in place to help fund them. Mr. Inghram said there are limited revenue possibilities for the city. It is too early to say how any funds might be divided among different projects. There are tools specific to specific types of projects: local improvement districts focus on infrastructure projects; impact fees can be levied for schools, parks, or for transportation projects; and there are a range of other lesser known tools, most of which are focused on transportation improvements. Chair Finley suggested that Council is going to have to think outside the box going forward.

Ms. Byrne said the issue of incentives will be before the Council on October 6. The Commission may want to bring to the attention of the Council the desire of the Commission to have live/work space included in the incentive package. That notion could be conveyed via memo to the Council.

Commissioner Donkin suggested the incentive for public art in the tier system is really no incentive at all. He suggested public art should be a category of its own with a specific benefit attached to it.

Commissioner Holder said one thing that could be done would be to identify a couple of sites that would be appropriate for public art and then have staff keep an eye on them as they progress toward redevelop after the rezone occurs. That may offer the best opportunities for working with specific developers in encouraging them to include public art. Ms. Byrne said a plan for public art in the area should be developed showing priority areas. Kirkland produced a video and distributed it to developers; such a tool could be very useful in Bellevue as a way of getting word to developers about using arts-supportive incentives.

There was consensus to draft a memo to the Council in support of adding artist live/work space to the incentive package and asking for consideration of the fact that artist live/work space can fall under the heading of affordable housing.

Commissioner Donkin reiterated his desire to see public art differentiated in some way on the tier system. He suggested it should constitute the second tier all alone, then have the incentives now shown on the second tier moved to a third tier.

### C. Nominations for Bellevue Sculpture Exhibition Purchases

Ms. Byrne said the Commission has in its long-term budget about \$40,000 it could choose to spend for purchasing art. She stressed that no art can be purchased absent a site identified on which to site the art. She said as the Commission nominates sculptures for possible purchase, staff will do the legwork necessary to find needed sites.

Ms. Byrne said the three sculptures by Lanny Bergner, *Ether Rising*, *Symbiote Red* and *Inside Outside*, have been widely admired. The works are portable and could be placed in storage to make room for another exhibition. This would solve the difficulty experienced in the past of losing places to temporarily site work because a work from a previous exhibition was purchased and left in place.

Commissioner Donkin asked how much weight should be given to the sculptures that received the most positive phone calls from the public. Tamar Benzikry-Stern, Public Art Program coordinator, said some works received phone calls based on their location; the very first sculpture seen by those following the map in fact received the most calls. She added that the City Hall sculptures got more calls than the works sited in the park. It cannot be assumed that the number of calls is a gauge of interest.

Ms. Byrne explained that program guidelines require works proposed for purchase to be reviewed by a jury. The next step after nominations for purchases would be to convene one or more jurors to consider the nominated works and make a recommendation to the Commission.

Commissioner Holder nominated *Round and Round* and *Holiest of Holies* by Bernard Hosey. She said the works were wonderful and had a number of people talking about them. Commissioner Donkin observed that the works received the most phone calls of all the works sited in the park. Chair Finley and Commissioner Tremblay said the works were on their "buy" list as well but had a preference for *Round and Round*.

Chair Finley highlighted the Steve Jensen piece, *Sea Horse*. She said she found it interesting that at the Bellevue Arts Museum auction Kemper Freeman purchased a Jensen piece to be the main centerpiece above the new fountain at Bellevue Square. It would be nice to have a piece along the art walk that would complement it.

Commissioner Tremblay disagreed, noting that Jensen works are showing up all over Bellevue. She suggested that there should be diversity. Commissioner Holder agreed with the need for diversity in the collection.

Commissioner Kiselev indicated her support for *Daphne* by Kate McDowell. She said she found the piece to be both interesting and inspiring. *Aspens* by Crystal Schenk is also a very interesting piece. Commissioner Holder said she liked *Aspens* as well but wondered how it would hold up over time.

Ms. Byrne commented that while public art is generally assumed to have a very long lifespan, not all public art does. She suggested one question the Commissioners should be asking is how long a lifespan a work should be expected to have.

Commissioner Kiselev said that when giving consideration to the purchase of art, the Commission should focus on the quality of the art in addition to its lifespan. Art purchased today will say something to future generations. She said she was disappointed with the works in the exhibition.

Commissioner Holder suggested that art moves people individually. What moved her about certain works may not be what moves others when viewing the same works. She said she likes art that is solid and concrete.

Commissioner Tremblay pointed out that public art is often very different from gallery art in that it must perform at a much higher technical level; it must be very well constructed and made with materials that will stand the test of time. *Round and Round* and *Holiest of Holies* work very well in the public sphere; they are interactive, they are graphic, and they are well constructed of solid materials. The works by Bergner are sculptural, classic and modern, though they are delicate.

Commissioner Donkin commented that the purpose of public art is to create a sense of place. Of all the works displayed during the exhibition, the spheres are the only works that could do that.

Referring to the Public Art Program priorities developed and adopted by the Arts Commission, Ms. Byrne said when the Commission commissions a specific public art work, the intent is to come up with something that will be about the city, its residents and what is being built. She suggested that nothing included in the exhibition was selected for that reason, so the nominated works now need to be evaluated in that light. On the other hand, it is good for the exhibition when works get purchased, because it encourages artists to enter their works. The city does not have to necessarily be the one that is buying.

Chair Finley commented that with the cost and effort the city spent putting the exhibition together, it is almost obligatory to find something from among the works shown to be kept in the collection. Otherwise all of the cost and effort is just a memory.

Commissioner Donkin disagreed. He said the works shown served a very important purpose for the community whether or not pieces are purchased by the city. He noted that the city has chosen not to buy works from previous the exhibition.

Ms. Byrne informed the Commissioners that the city's risk manager would be concerned about the spheres. She said people were climbing on them so signs were posted. Also, because of their scale the works need to be seen from a distance as well as up close. The city has few sites that would work from a distance.

Commissioner Donkin commented that a distinctive piece is needed at the corner of Bellevue Way and NE 4th Street to emphasize the existence of the Downtown Park and the presence of sculpture inside the park.. He asked if one of the spheres could be sited there; people could see them from Bellevue Way and be drawn to the park. Ms. Byrne said the site could be investigated.

Commissioner Tremblay countered that asking an artist, or even the same artist, to create a work for that location might be a much better approach, with far more striking results.

**Motion not to purchase any of the works from the Bellevue Sculpture Exhibition was made by Commissioner Shepherd. Second was by Commissioner Donkin.**

Commissioner Tremblay asked about the possibility of awarding an artist with best of show or a monetary amount. Commissioner Kiselev suggested that it would be very good idea to do that; it would serve as an incentive for artists participating in the next exhibition. Ms. Byrne said the difficulty is in avoiding making a gift of public funds. She also thought it was too late to turn to a corporate sponsor for a monetary award for the show.

**The motion carried 4-2, with Commissioners Shepherd, Donkin, Holder and Tremblay voting yes, and Chair Finley and Commissioner Kiselev voting no.**

Commissioner Kiselev commented that the quality of the next exhibition and who the Commission will be able to attract will depend on the current exhibition. She said *Daphne* is a good representation of fine art, is an interesting concept, and represents the area and the times. The price of the work is quite low given its quality.

Commissioner Donkin said he would not have voted for *Daphne* because it is simply not his kind of art and Commissioner Holder concurred.

V. COMMISSION QUICK BUSINESS – None

VI. REPORTS – None

VII. INFORMATION AND UPCOMING EVENTS

A. Written Correspondence – None

B. Information – As Noted

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

VIII. ADJOURNMENT

Chair Finley adjourned the meeting at 6:10 p.m.