

BELLEVUE ARTS COMMISSION
REGULAR MEETING
MINUTES

January 17, 2012
4:00 p.m.

Bellevue City Hall
Room 1E -109

COMMISSIONERS PRESENT: Chairperson Ptacek, Commissioners Finley, Jackson, Kiselev, Liljeblad, Smith, Tremblay

COMMISSIONERS ABSENT: None

STAFF PRESENT: Mary Pat Byrne, Department of Planning & Community Development Phil Harris, Department of Transportation

OTHERS PRESENT: Barbara Luecke, John Wolzer, Sound Transit

RECORDING SECRETARY: Gerry Lindsay

I. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 4:15 p.m. by Chairperson Ptacek who presided. All Commissioners were present with the exception of Commissioner Smith who was excused.

2. APPROVAL OF AGENDA AND MINUTES

A. Approval of Agenda

Motion to approve the agenda was made by Commissioner Finley. Second was by Commissioner Jackson and the motion carried unanimously.

B. Approval of Minutes

Motion to approve the December 6, 2011, minutes as submitted was made by Commissioner Jackson. Second was by Commissioner Finley and the motion carried unanimously.

3. ORAL COMMUNICATIONS – None

4. ACTION ITEMS AND DISCUSSION ITEMS

A. East Link Public Art, Start Program

Arts Specialist Mary Pat Byrne introduced Barbara Luecke, Sound Transit art program administrator; John Wolzer, an architect with Sound Transit; and Phil Harris, senior planner with the Department of Planning and Community Development.

Ms. Byrne said the East Link art project is in the very early stages and the answers to many questions, including timelines and budgets, have yet to be formulated. She noted that because the city is a financial partner in the project, a Memorandum of Understanding has been adopted by the City and Sound Transit that sets out a collaborative design process. The work of the Commission will represent value added to the project, which will be spearheaded primarily by Sound Transit.

Chair Ptacek pointed out that it took a great deal of background work to even make the current discussion possible. He said it was an honor for the Commission to have any involvement whatsoever.

Ms. Luecke said she was very excited to be working with Bellevue staff on a project that will enhance the region. She said the collaborative design process outlined in the Memorandum of Understanding sets forth some very formal parameters for how everyone will work together. She said her department has participated in all of Sound Transit's major building initiatives; she said she is currently working on the fabrication phase for the University Link that will go between downtown Seattle and Capitol Hill and the University of Washington stadium station; the design for the North Link project, which will run from the stadium station over to the University district, up Roosevelt and on to Northgate; and the South Link project, which will eventually extend the line from the airport to Federal Way.

Ms. Luecke said Sound Transit tries to make its art elements appropriate to their location. That is done by getting to know every community.

Ms. Luecke provided background on the history of the program and the Northwest's long-held leadership position in public art. She shared with the Commissioners photos of several public art projects in the region.

Commissioner Liljeblad commented that the Beacon Hill station has been a spectacular success.

Chair Ptacek asked if Sound Transit will release any kind of general program statement outlining what it is the art is supposed to accomplish. Ms. Luecke said that will be done to some degree. The alignment along Martin Luther King Way was known as the cultural conversation corridor, especially the section at grade that comes out of Mt. Baker where a commonality of design was incorporated. Unifying elements of continuity will be sought for the East Link corridor as well, but that will not rule out including distinguishing features. Time will be spent working with city staff on the degree to which the various segments should relate to each other and how much they should be individualized.

Chair Ptacek noted that much has been said about the fact that not everyone in the community will be inclined to use light rail once it is available to them. It will, however, become part of the infrastructure and thus the community, and the art component may help bridge the gap; while some will still not want to become a light rail user, they could still be an admirer of the art components. Mr. Wolzer said the objective is to have the art serve the function of being visible for riders on the train, as well as for people outside the stations. The Mt. Baker station is a good example of that approach, particularly the glass wall.

Commissioner Liljeblad commented that some of the station areas, particularly in the downtown, will get a lot of traffic. In many cases there will be opportunity to marry function with art. Mr. Wolzer said the entry walkways to both the Sodo and stadium stations along the E-3 busway were for a variety of reasons located quite a ways from the train platform; the determination was made that art was needed to highlight and draw attention to the entryways.

Chair Ptacek asked if the Commission will be allowed to participate in a visioning process for the art. Ms. Luecke replied that nothing yet is set in stone and was willing to throw that notion into the mix.

Commissioner Tremblay said her confidence was running high based on the work already done by Sound Transit and the culture the organization has toward embracing new ideas and the principles of integrating art. She said she is most excited about Segment D in the Bel-Red corridor. What the area offers is a nearly blank canvas on which imagination will be about the only guide. Mr. Wolzer said there is a push by Microsoft representatives for a signature station at the Overlake stop, and they are likely to want to see something digital that will mesh with the Microsoft identity.

Chair Ptacek reiterated his offer to have the Commission work with the Sound Transit art program at any level.

B. 2012 Work Plan Update

Ms. Byrne said she recently participated in an exercise with the Department of Planning and Community Development management group focused on seeing where the Budget One plan items stand. She said she presented a summary of where the Commission's work items are and a timeline for what will be happening during 2012.

Ms. Byrne said the Surrey Downs project continues to evolve. The project was originally identified as a park project that could be started in 2012. However, forward progress was held off pending the Council making a decision relative to the light rail alignment. There is also the complicating factor that the chosen alignment could in fact block the major entries into Surrey Downs from 112th Avenue SE. That could change the nature of Surrey Downs park from a regional facility to a neighborhood park. The design challenges will need to be addressed before the work to design the park can move ahead.

Ms. Byrne suggested the Commission may want to search for another neighborhood project while the Surrey Downs issues get worked out.

Commissioner Jackson asked what would happen if the Commission were to select a community that proves difficult to work with. Ms. Byrne said that is actually built into the established process; the Commission has the full flexibility of being able to determine which project should go forward based on a variety of criteria.

Commissioner Finley suggested that rather than focusing on specific neighborhoods the Commission should widen its vision to the city as a whole by identifying art for gateways. Ms. Byrne clarified that what the Council has bought off on is a neighborhood program, which can be widely described by the Commission. For the city, a gateway project has a certain meaning, in part because the Comprehensive Plan lists specific gateways. Gateway projects are difficult to do unless there is an associated transportation or other construction project. What the Commission needs to look for is the most compelling opportunity outside the downtown.

Commissioner Tremblay said the Commission may find better opportunities if it focuses on neighborhood clusters and does not concern itself the lines drawn between neighborhoods. People associate themselves with where they tend to shop and gather, and such places often serve more than one neighborhood.

Ms. Byrne said the West Lake Sammamish Parkway corridor could be a possibility given the significant transportation projects set to go.

Commissioner Finley said she would prefer to focus on neighborhood identity projects. Signage can be creative, beautiful and artistic.

Chair Ptacek commented that Somerset has a fountain and other neighborhoods have water features as well. Those are elements that announce entry into a neighborhood while going way beyond mere signage. Commissioner Liljeblad said the Somerset community has had to spend a lot of money on the fountain more than once. It was a product of a community process and no one externally offered comment on it. The Commission probably should steer clear of getting involved in projects of that sort.

Commissioner Tremblay suggested the Commission should get involved only where it can add value, possibly by aiding a neighborhood in going beyond what they would be able to do on their own.

Commissioner Liljeblad noted that the roundabout project at the eastern end of the West Lake Sammamish Parkway is keyed up to go. That area could be a possibility for the Commission to focus on.

Ms. Byrne said she would bring to the next meeting information the city has already developed in identifying gateways and entry points.

Commissioner Kiselev told the Commissioners that on the main roads coming into St. Petersburg there are structures similar to the Arc de Triomphe in Paris. Each has different art elements reflecting different cultures. She said she would bring pictures to the next Commission meeting.

5. COMMISSION QUICK BUSINESS – None

6. REPORTS

A. Commissioner’s Committee and Lead Reports – None

B. Staff Reports

Ms. Byrne pointed out that February 1 is Arts Day in Olympia. She invited the Commissioners to participate in talking with the legislators.

7. CORRESPONDENCE, INFORMATION AND UPCOMING EVENTS

A. Written Correspondence – None

B. Information – As Noted

1. Projects Timeline January through April
2. Upcoming Agenda Items
3. Commission Committee Chairs and Leads for 2011-2012
4. Calendar
5. Public Art Program budget update (provided at meeting)

8. ADJOURNMENT

Chair Ptacek adjourned the meeting at 5:51 p.m.