

BELLEVUE ARTS COMMISSION
REGULAR MEETING
MINUTES
(As corrected April 3, 2012)

March 13, 2012
4:00 p.m.

Bellevue City Hall
Room 1E -109

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

COMMISSIONERS ABSENT: Commissioner Kiselev

STAFF PRESENT: Mary Pat Byrne, Patti Wilma, Department of Planning and Community Development, Kam Szabo, Department of Transportation

OTHERS PRESENT: None

RECORDING SECRETARY: Gerry Lindsay

I. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 4:14 p.m. by Chairperson Ptacek who presided. All Commissioners were present with the exception of Commissioner Tremblay, who arrived at 4:17 p.m., and Commissioner Kiselev, 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 January 17, 2012, minutes as submitted was made by Commissioner Liljeblad. Second was by Commissioner Jackson and the motion carried unanimously.

3. ORAL COMMUNICATIONS - None

4. ACTION ITEMS AND DISCUSSION ITEMS

A. Utility Box Wraps Project

Community Development Manager Patti Wilma said the Urban Boulevards Program has adapted to current budget realities by partnering with other City projects. In 2011 the program undertook the creation of three midblock crossings in the downtown that have leaves stamped into the asphalt.

Ms. Wilma said there are some 500 utility boxes at intersections under the control of the city, based on the fact that there are two to three boxes at each of 184 signalized intersections. The boxes could be decorated in a number of ways, calling attention to the city's diversity, recognizing the "city in a park" theme, environmental stewardship, or a number of other ways. As a test case, the utility box at the intersection of SE 7th Street and the Lake Hills Connector recently received an artistic

treatment in the form of a graphic wrap. Initial focus should be given to heavily traveled areas, both by pedestrians and vehicles. There are a few locations in Bellevue that are high mark areas for graffiti, including areas near the high schools.

Commissioner Liljeblad said people trying to put their initials onto a wrap would not meet with success. He asked if the wraps can easily be washed off when tagging occurs. Ms. Wilma affirmed they could; the material has a slick service that is more difficult to mark than a painted surface. Some cities do custom paint their utility boxes, so that option should at least be explored. Surfaces painted with images that are lively and busy are less inviting as tagging platforms.

Commissioner Tremblay suggested there would be some benefit to creating a protocol whereby the artists involved in the project all learn the same process. That would provide for some degree of approach continuity and would keep the focus on the designs to be used on each individual surface rather than the materials and process to be used.

Ms. Wilma said the cost of the wrap per cabinet is around \$400. It is possible that ramping things up into a larger program could facilitate bringing the cost down per unit.

Kam Szabo with the Department of Transportation said the leadership in the Transportation Department believes the wraps are wonderful in the way they simultaneously beautify and discourage graffiti, but they should not become something that will distract drivers.

The Commissioners were shown photos of utility box wraps done in other cities. Chair Ptacek noted that some of the photos obviously represented visual themes and asked if branding or gateway elements, and possibly neighborhood identity, could be utilized in Bellevue without getting too tricky or involved. Ms. Wilma said given the number of options those elements should be involved.

Commissioner Tremblay said where neighborhoods are concerned the focus should be on the way the geographic puzzle pieces fit together rather than hard and fast neighborhood delineations. Ms. Wilma agreed and said there are a sufficient number of fuzzy edges that split neighborhoods. One example is 148th Avenue which is a planted boulevard that could provide some visual breaks between neighborhood themes.

Answering a question asked by Chair Ptacek, Ms. Wilma suggested that if the Commission is interested in the project, she will get together with Arts Specialist Mary Pat Byrne to work on details for how the program might work. She noted that the City of Berkeley recently undertook a similar program and they put out a call for artists. They saved a certain number of boxes for a youth event, and if the same approach were to be taken in Bellevue boxes around schools could be identified for student designs. There may also be opportunity to incorporate some private funding in which neighborhoods or businesses could sponsor boxes using themes previously selected; she stressed that corporate branding would not be appropriate. The program should not hinge on obtaining private funding.

Commissioner Jackson said her preference would be not to try making every box wrap different. A selection pallet should be drawn up from which to choose. Commissioner Liljeblad concurred. He said utility boxes by their very nature are less than attractive, and the simpler the design process and the less money spent on each one, the quicker they will be beautified.

Ms. Szabo commented that some of the boxes, especially those in the downtown, could be wrapped with wayfinding features; the ones near elementary schools could have safety images or messages on them.

Commissioner Finley pointed out that at a cost of \$400 each and with two or three boxes at each of 184 intersections, the total program cost could be between \$150,000 and \$200,000. Ms. Byrne said

it could be a bit more than that given that there would still be the cost of having artists create the designs. Ms. Wilma said the City of Berkeley paid artists \$200 for their designs, and she added that some of the utility boxes are located in areas where it would not be appropriate to wrap them, bringing the overall number down.

Commissioner Smith asked how many boxes or covers get replaced each year in the city. Ms. Szabo said the largest cabinets are on a standard replacement schedule, so a certain number of them are replaced every year. The other cabinets are not typically changed out on the same schedule. She said she could find out how many replacements are made in the typical year. Ms. Wilma said it could become the requirement that all new boxes include wraps.

The Commissioners were supportive of the idea of including wayfinding on boxes in appropriate areas.

Motion to request a proposal from staff to have the Commission partner in the utility box wrap project was made by Commissioner Tremblay. Second was by Commissioner Finley.

The motion carried unanimously.

B. Gateways

Ms. Wilma informed the Commissioners that because of the economy the enhanced rights-of-way and urban boulevards program is no longer looking for standalone opportunities to create dramatic gateways. Rather, the focus has turned to partnerships with other city departments, including parks, transportation, utilities and the arts program to bring about enhancements for the work that is being done.

Ms. Wilma said the city entry gateways were identified and the original charge was to develop a program to address them. Things go only as far as developing some guiding principles and completing one pilot installation before pulling back and focusing on enhancing rights-of-way where work is being done, and opportunities where something serendipitous presents itself.

The Commissioners were shown a map indicating the designated urban boulevards and the intersections that have been highlighted for special treatments in the City's Comprehensive Plan. She said the map would serve as one of the tools for proposing where utility box wraps and other projects would be appropriate.

Commissioner Liljeblad asked why the intersection at Bellevue Way and 112th Avenue SE was not highlighted on the map. Ms. Wilma said she did not know why it had been left off of the map and agreed it would be a logical location. It is not a Bellevue border, but it is a very important intersection, particularly because of the pending Sound Transit investment. She pointed out that nothing had been done yet to address the Bel-Red area either.

Ms. Wilma said the guiding principles for the gateway project have to do with sense of place, common and simple elements, similar fonts, graphics and color schemes, and the use of landscaping, lighting and art in simple ways. Designs should be practical to construct and repair, and they should be repeatable.

Ms. Wilma shared with the Commissioners a sketch of a Bellevue entry sign done for the Main Street/NE 2nd Street enhancement study. She reminded them that the downtown has an entertainment street, a shopping street, a commerce street, and a green street, and suggested that the two offset rectangles design done for the study could be embellished in a variety of ways to express a particular location. With the colors, shape and materials always the same, the design could easily be repeatable.

Commissioner Tremblay made the comment that while the design is elegant and understated, it is somewhat corporate. With something having such hard lines, the only way to soften it would be with graphic treatments. It would not be iconic in the form shown.

Commissioner Finley observed that preparations are under way to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the Seattle Center, and as part of that a design competition was launched. A similar approach could be used in Bellevue that would yield a far more Bellevue-appropriate design.

Chair Ptacek asked about the idea of identifying neighborhoods as well as gateways. Ms. Wilma said the program has not taken on the neighborhood element. Neighborhood signs are usually handled through the Neighborhood Enhancement Program or the Matching Fund Program.

C. Budget One Startup/Work Plan 2012-213 Discussion

Ms. Byrne said the original Budget One process two years ago began as an internal staff project. The process did not include a clear role for the city's boards and commissions, and it was not until the rankings were submitted to the Council that the budget proposals became public information and the boards and commissions were able to discuss the particulars. The second iteration of the process, which is currently under way, is taking a similar approach.

Ms. Byrne said the projects on the Commission's horizon are similar to those in the past. Another Bellwether exhibit is scheduled for 2014. There hasn't been much activity supporting the program goal to encourage private developers to include public art in their projects, primarily because it appears the developers are doing a good job of incorporating art on their own, especially in the downtown. Engaging developers to display temporary art projects, however, is a good alternative step, and rather than becoming a teaching opportunity for developers, the city is becoming more of a partner.

Commissioner Smith suggested a Commission representative should attend a Planning Commission meeting to get them to think about ways in which public art could be required or highly suggested as a mitigating measure. Ms. Byrne agreed that approach should be explored. She said the staff has become very aware of public art as a tool and they are including it in many city planning documents, including the Bel Red design guidelines, the Great Streets program, in subarea plans and others.

Ms. Byrne said the anticipation is that the two ongoing neighborhood projects will be finished during 2012. That will open the schedule to allow for looking at two or three additional neighborhood projects for the next biennium.

The East Link project is going to have a substantial impact, but the Commission will not begin to feel it until toward the end of 2012 when the art program starts to ramp up. The Sound Transit design team will be taking the East Link design from the 30 percent level to 60 percent by the end of 2014, and that is the window during which art is typically integrated. There will be different art at every single station, and at points in between stations. Other Sound Transit projects have included temporary art as construction mitigation, and it's safe to assume the same will be true for East Link. There will be opportunities in terms of the way the project art is communicated to the public as well. The process will be both challenging and fun, but it will be a lot of work and will take a lot of time. While the major responsibility will lie with Sound Transit, the city will serve as the consultant in providing Bellevue-specific input.

Commissioner Smith asked if the city will have approval authority over the artwork to be sited at the transit station. He suggested that the themes that come out of the stations might spill over into the local neighborhoods. Ms. Byrne said the neighborhood projects might also influence the station art. A memorandum of understanding has been signed between the city and Sound Transit regarding

design issues, so in that regard it will be a cooperative effort. In the end, however, the projects will belong to Sound Transit so they will have final authority. Sound Transit has a very good track record of seeking consensus with regard to art.

Answering a question asked by Commissioner Tremblay, Ms. Byrne stressed that Sound Transit looks for continuity throughout their systems. Each station within the East Link system will have its own personality that will refer to the surrounding neighborhood and at the same time relate to the whole system.

Chair Ptacek said he recently was in Los Angeles and experienced their transit system. He commented that their art installations are stunning and help to identify the system.

Commissioner Liljeblad stated that there is lots of interest in helping Sound Transit spend art dollars in Bellevue, as we should. But we should pay more attention to city-owned facilities city-wide such as parks. He suggested that in addition to talking to the Planning Commission about art as mitigation, the Commission should talk with the Parks and Community Services Board about including art elements in all the parks. Ms. Byrne said the Parks Department is amenable to having art in the parks, but what comes first for them is the design of the park itself; any art that goes into a park must be harmonious with the design.

Ms. Byrne noted that outreach will continue to be listed as a project for the Commission. In terms of Budget One proposals it will show up as a supporting note in the plans for how to go about achieving success in large projects.

Ms. Byrne said every effort will be made to restore the funding for the Eastside Arts Partnership and Special Projects programs. The city's revenues have been trending upward, but not that much. Additionally, there is a lot of pending legislation at the state level that could severely impact the funds the city will have available to it.

The work to update the Cultural Compass will be completed in 2012. The implementation work will be taken up next.

D. 4Culture Grant for 2012

Ms. Byrne reported that 4Culture will be providing funding at the \$13,000 level, though it may be the last time the funding will continue at that high level until after 2020. Traditionally the funds have been directed towards special projects, though the funds can be used to support the Arts Program in any way.

Chair Ptacek asked how the social justice component mentioned in the award letter should be addressed. Ms. Byrne said that will be addressed at a later date. The local arts agencies have a meeting slated for the morning of March 22 at City Hall to discuss how the social justice element might be integrated into the funding picture.

Motion to recommend that the 2012 4Culture Sustained Support funds be directed towards supporting Eastside Arts Partnerships and Special Projects funding programs was made by Commissioner Smith. Second was by Commissioner Jackson and the motion carried unanimously.

5. COMMISSION QUICK BUSINESS

Commissioner Tremblay asked when would be the appropriate time to begin submitting the names of people to serve on the Commission. Ms. Byrne said the clerk's office will open the application process in April and suggested it was not too early to begin contacting possible candidates.

Commissioner Tremblay said she would like to see a youth appointed to serve with the Commission. Ms. Byrne said Youth Link does have an arts and culture action team, so it might be possible to bring in someone from that demographic who cares about the arts to serve in an advisory capacity.

Chair Ptacek suggested including time on an upcoming agenda to receive a report from the Youth Link arts and culture action team.

6. REPORTS

A. Commissioners' Committee and Lead Report

With regard to Bellwether 2012, Commissioner Smith reported that Scott McDonald, a recent graduate of the Rhode Island School of Design, was selected to assist in planning for the event; he is working part time with Ms. Byrne. The logo from Bellwether 2010 has been updated and is in use. The prospectus has been mailed to 1300 artists and the electronic version has been sent to more than 15,000 artists via list-serves and email lists throughout the United States. One entry has already been received. Marita Dingus has been selected to serve as the teen project artist.

Commissioner Smith said the Committee has identified a list of potential sponsors but urged the Commissioners to bring forward other potential contacts. People who express an interest in participating in one way or another will be sent an information packet. Two of the three jurors have been selected. The two chosen artists are Carol Anderson and Ellen Zeigler, and for the third artist the focus is on a leader in the sustainable arts movement.

B. Staff Reports

1. Project Status Report

Ms. Byrne shared with the Commission photos taken of the newly installed *Topos* sculptures. She noted that Phase I of the project installed four editions of the sculpture as an element of new wayfinding kiosks in the downtown in 2010. Phase two of the project includes five additional kiosks with *Topos* and has been completed.

Commissioner Finley asked what each of kiosks costs to create and install. Ms. Byrne said the art costs \$15,000 each. She said she does not recall the cost of the kiosks and she will find out and report back.

2. Leadership Eastside State of the Eastside Report for Arts and Culture

Ms. Byrne said she contributed information to Leadership Eastside's State of the Eastside Report for the Arts and Culture section. She said she was one of the three sources used for the report along with Caroline Renard, chair of the Eastside Arts Coalition, and 4Culture. She said she gathered information from the administrators of Mercer Island, Kirkland and Redmond and used data collected from Eastside Arts Partnership artists and groups regarding trends.

Ms. Byrne said there are two narratives these days regarding arts on the Eastside. The arts groups report they're doing better on the strength of increased audiences and individual giving in 2011. However, corporate and government funding remains repressed. Governments continue to cut their budgets, however, and local government arts programs' staff have been directing the cuts to wherever they can in their programs to make the reductions less visible to the general community. After several years of cuts however, those options are exhausted and the cuts are going to be noticeably impacting services to the public. In Kirkland the question of whether to continue having a cultural council has been raised.

Answering a question asked by Chair Ptacek, Ms. Byrne outlined the history of lodging tax as a funding source for county arts services, how the sunseting of that revenue stream for arts will impact 4Culture, and the measures they've taken to try to minimize the impacts. The Commission can expect to see smaller funding awards from 4Culture for the foreseeable future.

7. CORRESPONDENCE, INFORMATION

A. Written Correspondence – As Noted

B. Information – As Noted

1. Projects Timeline March Through June
2. Upcoming Agenda Items
3. Commission Committee Chairs and Leads for 2011-2012
4. Calendar
5. Public Art Program Budget Update

8. COMMISSIONER COMMUNICATIONS – None

9. ADJOURNMENT

Chair Ptacek adjourned the meeting at 5:55 p.m.