

BELLEVUE ARTS COMMISSION
REGULAR MEETING
MINUTES

October 6, 2009
4:00 p.m.

Bellevue City Hall
Room 1E -109

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

COMMISSIONERS ABSENT: Commissioner Smith

STAFF PRESENT: Mary Pat Byrne, Department of Planning and Community Development; Camron Parker, Shelley Brittingham, Parks and Community Services

OTHERS PRESENT: Stephano Catalani, Bellevue Arts Museum

RECORDING SECRETARY: Gerry Lindsay

I. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 4:17 p.m. by Commissioner Holder who presided. All Commissioners were present with the exception of Chair Finley, who arrived at 4:30 p.m., and Commissioner Kiselev, who arrived at 4:37 p.m.

II. APPROVAL OF AGENDA AND MINUTES

A. Approval of Agenda

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

B. Approval of Minutes

Commissioner Tremblay called attention to Item II-B on the first page of the minutes and noted that "Brink" should be spelled "Brinc."

Motion to approve the September 15, 2009, minutes as corrected was made by Commissioner Ptacek. Second was by Commissioner Shepherd and the motion carried unanimously.

III. ORAL COMMUNICATIONS – None

IV. ACTION ITEMS AND DISCUSSION ITEMS

A. Bellevue Arts Museum 2010 Season Preview

Commissioner Holder welcomed Bellevue Arts Museum curator Stephano Catalani and exhibitions curator Nora Atkinson.

Mr. Catalani invited everyone to attend the October 9 Pecha Kucha night at the museum. He noted that the Japanese phrase means chitchat and on that day there will be gatherings

around the world with each group focused on its chosen theme. In Bellevue the theme will be "Craft and Punishment." Each of ten presenters will have less than seven minutes to share 20 slides of works on the theme. Commissioner Smith will be one of the presenters.

On October 10 "Symposium: The Legacies of Robert Sperry" will open.

Mr. Catalani said Bellevue Arts Museum has nine shows planned for 2010, and gave a brief description of each one along with images of some of the artists' work that will be included.

Mr. Catalani suggested that 2010 will be a very strong year for the Bellevue Arts Museum, with a focus primarily on Northwest artists.

Mr. Catalani said 2009 has been very interesting. The lecture series done in conjunction with the library has been held every three months; the lectures have been moderately well attended.

Commissioner Ptacek noted that the Bellevue library will be receiving a significant statue from the government of India very soon and suggested that someone should put together a history of art from that country.

Arts Specialist Mary Pat Byrne introduced the topic of potential partnership with the Museum as part of the Bellwether 2010. She explained that the Exhibition in 2010 will run from City Hall to the Downtown Park along the Pedestrian Corridor, with a turn at the Bellevue Arts Museum. The overall theme will be sustainability in terms of content, materials and methods. There will also be a grid of themes expressed as circuits for public art placed throughout the downtown. Both sculpture and installation work will be included.

Ms. Byrne informed Mr. Catalani that because the Bellevue Arts Museum is a pivotal location along the art walk route, the Commission is interested in how work being done by the museum can be incorporated. Mr. Catalani voiced support for the sustainability theme. He said that the museum will not have funds in its 2010 budget to commission a work for the space under the museum awning.

Commissioner Ptacek asked if the building itself could in some way be incorporated into the exhibition as an element; he said one approach would be to use the balcony in some way. Mr. Catalani said the museum has four banners that the city has allowed, and they are serving to make the museum more visible and draw more people in. The banners are changed every six months. He said either the balcony or the courtyard could possibly be used in some way.

Regarding personnel news at the Museum, the Commissioners were informed that Michael Monroe, director of curatorial affairs, will be retiring in February 2010, retaining status as director emeritus. Mark Crawford, who has been serving as interim executive director, has agreed to become the executive director for the organization.

Commissioner Kiselev said it appears to her the quality and interest of the exhibitions planned by the Museum for 2010 will surpass those in previous years.

B. Parks and Open Space System Plan/Cultural Resources

Camron Parker with Parks and Community Services said the department is updating the long-range Park and Open Space Plan. He said the plan was last updated in 2003 and is generally updated every six years. The plan focuses on the parks system specifically and includes a series of goals and objectives and a number of long-term recommendations for waterfront

access, neighborhood parks, recreation facilities, parks in the downtown, and historic, cultural and art resources. The updated plan is slated to be adopted in April 2010.

Commissioner Ptacek asked where things stand with regard to the Meydenbauer Bay waterfront park. Mr. Parker said there is a concept on the table that was developed by the steering committee over a two-year process. The concept is currently undergoing environmental review. Ms. Byrne added that the first consultant team on the project included Nori Sato, a planning artist. Ms. Sato worked with Laura Haddad and Tom Drugan on creating the overall plan, but the part of the plan covering the area between the Downtown Park and Meydenbauer was only a beginning idea. The second set of consultants did not include an artist on the team. Including place holders for art, however, was included in the scope of work.

Mr. Camron said at the current plan discusses public art in parks with a specific focus on outdoor sculpture. He noted that the Bellevue Youth Theater has for some time been a significant program within Parks and Community Services and that the recent park levy includes funding for a facility for which design work is under way; the document needs to be updated to reflect that.

Commissioner Holder pointed out that, in addition to sculpture in parks, people enjoy impromptu events such as dance and music. She suggested that focus should be highlighted in the document as well. Commissioner Ptacek agreed but said the focus should be on experience with the arts. Commissioner Tremblay concurred and said the language ultimately selected for the document should address a more expansive interpretation of temporal arts and creating opportunities for the arts.

Commissioner Ptacek said he would like to see from the department some sense of what the department is looking to have the art achieve in its parks.

Ms. Byrne pointed out that Parks is the largest landowner in the city and controls the areas with the most potential for art experiences. What is needed are basic principles that are broad enough to avoid constraining choices. There is currently an operating principle that says any art that gets sited permanently must be carefully reviewed to make sure it is consistent with the design and use of the park in which it is located.

Commissioner Holder said it would seem that the Park Board would want the opinion of the Arts Commission relative to siting specific works of art in parks.

Commissioner Kiselev commented that any guidelines for siting art in parks should not be overly prescriptive. There should be some leeway allowed.

Commissioner Holder pointed out that the Cultural Compass was written a year after the last parks plan update and is therefore not mentioned at all in the current plan. Ms. Byrne observed that the parks plan is used as a guide for developing capital resources in the future. Much of what is in the Cultural Compass will not have an impact on that. Some of what is in the Cultural Compass could, however, affect master plans, especially where permitted uses are discussed.

Mr. Camron said the plan could include as an objective developing criteria for how art is to be displayed in parks at the system-wide level. Ms. Byrne said that would be very helpful.

Commissioner Kiselev said she did not see anything in the document about the role art plays with regard to economic development. Ms. Byrne suggested language of that sort would more appropriately be located in the Economic Development Element of the Comprehensive

Plan. Commissioner Kiselev said art is more than a quality of life issue. Parks are good attractions for local citizens and serve to bolster quality of life, but they also serve to attract people to Bellevue. In trying to prove the point that the arts are integral to more than just quality of life, the message must be embedded in all city documents.

Commissioner Tremblay said it all boils down to cultural assets, whether it is a sculpture, a historical site, or a new opportunity for siting art in a park. Even without saying it specifically, there is an economic benefit involved. Any language that can enable community engagement and educational opportunities by way of wayfinding and the like should be included.

Commissioner Ptacek said he would like to see the park plan reference the Cultural Compass directly. He added that a review of the Cultural Compass could yield specific language that would help to strengthen the park plan.

Mr. Parker invited the Commissioners to let him know of any additional issues that should be included.

Ms. Byrne pointed out that the Council has indicated it is time for the Cultural Compass to be updated as well.

C. Wayfinding Kiosks Phase II

Ms. Byrne said in originally putting together the work plan, the thinking was that there was a limit of \$400,000. To stay within that budget, only three art elements were planned for the five kiosks, with the idea that perhaps more could be commissioned in a future year. As it was revealed there was more money for art than first thought, the work plan was revised and presented to Council as including “up to five art elements”; that language opened the door for the Commission to recommend either staying with the three or including all five.

Ms. Byrne added, however, that the documentation showed to the Council indicated that five kiosks at \$15,000 each would come to \$60,000. In fact the total should have been \$75,000. She said it should not be a problem to move ahead with all five, though it will be necessary to point out the math error when bringing the contract to Council.

Ms. Byrne said each kiosk has two faces. One face includes a map, while the second face of each kiosk will have a different story with pictures. The themes for each kiosk, as well as the location for each, have been selected.

Commissioner Kiselev suggested that the kiosks as they have been designed and built are readily recognizable. She noted her support for doing all five.

Motion to support the idea of expanding the artist-made topos for the additional five wayfinding kiosks was made by Commissioner Ptacek. Second was by Commissioner Kiselev.

Commissioner Tremblay commented that technology is quickly moving in the direction of cell phones providing all the information their users may want, obviating the need for physical kiosks. Commissioner Shepherd pointed out that iPhones have only a six percent market penetration among cell phone users in the United States, though she said she thought the percentage is estimated to be somewhat higher in the Pacific Northwest. She suggested that a percentage that small, while it may grow over time, should not be used as the basis for doing away with physical kiosks and the information they display.

The motion carried unanimously.

V. COMMISSION QUICK BUSINESS

Commissioner Tremblay announced a panel discussion around the topic of art and technology scheduled at the Kirkland Arts Center on October 7.

Commissioner Ptacek said he participated in the groundbreaking ceremony for the sculpture being offered to the library as a gift from the government of India. The ceremony included the sprinkling of coconut juice, the burning of incense, and offerings of sacred rice. There were more than 150 people in attendance.

VI. REPORTS

A. Commissioner Reports

1. Bridle Trails

Commissioner Holder said the Bridle Trails group will be meeting with artist Bruce Meyers on October 20.

B. Staff Reports

1. Project Status Update

Ms. Byrne said dedication ceremonies for the Gandhi sculpture will be held on October 17 from 2:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m. The celebration, which will last most of the day, will include the ambassador from India and other dignitaries.

Ms. Byrne explained that the city has been building relationships with various East Indian groups through the Economic Development Department. An organization in India creates statues of Gandhi and gives them to cities around the world as symbols of peace. The Indian Government has asked the US government to open a consulate in Bellevue, and we are waiting for the decision. The consulate main purpose would be to deal with business issues. The library was chosen as the site for the Gandhi statue because it occupies an honorable place in the community, can offer a beautiful site, and the library graciously accepted the offer.

Ms. Byrne reported that Michael Levine has been selected to serve as the sponsorship consultant for the Bellevue Sculpture Exhibition. She said the people on the committee can be expected to be called into action as soon as an agreement with him can be approved.

Answering a question asked by Commissioner Holder, Ms. Byrne said the Bellevue Philharmonic has announced its season. She said she has not had a recent update regarding fundraising activities.

2. Maintenance Project List – As Noted

VII. INFORMATION AND UPCOMING EVENTS

A. Written Correspondence – None

B. For Your Information – As Noted

1. Artech Preparations for Possible Flooding
2. Upcoming Agenda Items
3. Calendar
4. CIP Public Art Program Commitments Update

VIII. ADJOURNMENT

Commissioner Holder adjourned the meeting at 5:59 p.m.