

BELLEVUE ARTS COMMISSION
REGULAR MEETING
MINUTES

November 1, 2011
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, Department of Planning and Community Development

OTHERS PRESENT: Ingrid Lahti, artist; Michelle Hilhorst, Newport Hills/Lake Heights art panel member

RECORDING SECRETARY: Gerry Lindsay

I. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 4:13 p.m. by Chairperson Ptacek who presided. All Commissioners were present with the exception of Commissioner Smith, who arrived at 4:15 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 Tremblay. Second was by Commissioner Liljeblad and the motion carried unanimously.

B. Approval of Minutes

Motion to approve the October 4, 2011, minutes as submitted was made by Commissioner Liljeblad. Second was by Commissioner Tremblay.

Chair Ptacek pointed out that the minutes should reflect Commissioner Smith was absent from the meeting.

The motion carried unanimously.

3. ORAL COMMUNICATIONS

Ms. Shelley Brittingham with the Department of Parks & Community Services noted that at a previous meeting the Commission was updated regarding the month-long regional festival called Arts Crush. She reported that Arts Specialist Mary Pat Byrne recently facilitated a meeting with local arts groups and the city's community center managers to talk about the kinds of art events that could happen in the community centers during October. Three arts events were held during the month as a result, with the possibility of presenting more in future years.

Ms. Byrne said it truly was a group effort and it would not have happened at all without Parks & Community Services support.

4. ACTION ITEMS AND DISCUSSION ITEMS

A. Deaccession of 9/11 Memorial Sculpture

Referring to information in the meeting packet, Ms. Byrne reviewed the history of the 9/11 Memorial Sculpture which was included in the Commission packet. She noted that the work was constructed by artist Ingrid Lahti and several community volunteers to commemorate the first anniversary of the 9/11 attacks. The Commission allocated the majority of the funding for the project, making it a City project. After the showing the temporary sculpture was put into storage. Following the tenth anniversary of 9/11, the conclusion was reached that the piece should be deaccessioned.

According to the city's purchasing policies, anything deemed to have value cannot be given away. The 9/11 Memorial Sculpture was built as a temporary artwork and would take considerable funding to restore the piece to its original and pristine condition as well as making it sturdy and safe enough to be on long-term public display. While the sculpture was on display, discussions with the mayor, members of the Arts Commission, staff and representatives from Parks were held to decide what would happen with the sculpture after the display was over. There was a clear feeling that beyond the first anniversary of the event, future commemoration activities should be something constructive, such as a day of service. It was unlikely that the work would be shown again. The work was stored in case circumstances changed.

Ms. Byrne said after so many years in storage with no prospects for future public viewing on the part of the City the time is right to consider deaccessioning the piece, and noted that Ms. Lahti has expressed an interest in receiving what remains of it.

Ms. Lahti said it took about five months to construct the work under her guidance. Everyone involved donated their time but there were hard costs for materials and for professional fabrication of the frame. She said it is possible some group may want to turn the sculpture into a permanent work, and she said if she had the piece in her possession she could facilitate that happening.

Answering a question asked by Chair Ptacek, Ms. Byrne said she spoke with the city's purchasing manager, explaining that the piece no longer has any value to the city. Its condition is too poor to display. He gave the permission to dispose of it. If the Commission votes to deaccession the piece, Ms. Lahti can take possession of it.

Commissioner Liljeblad asked what it would take to restore the sculpture. Ms. Lahti said the work is made of aluminum which at the time of its construction was very reflective. Over time the metal has lost much of its reflectivity. Before it could be made into something permanent it would have to be shined and sealed in some way. The individual tags on which the names of 9/11 victims were written were attached to closet rods with plastic cable ties; the rods and method of attachment would need to be revised. In addition, the names on the tags were handwritten with permanent markers and would need to be engraved.

Ms. Lahti said the sculpture was her first foray into the world of public art and as such has a lot of meaning to her.

Motion to deaccess the 9/11 memorial sculpture was made by Commissioner Jackson. Second was by Commissioner Smith and the motion carried unanimously.

Answering a question asked by Commissioner Tremblay, Ms. Lahti said she has on her website the story of the piece, including how it came to be. She suggested that if a wider audience wants access to the story, a link should be included on the Commission's website.

C. "How Else Can We Help?"

Ms. Byrne reminded the Commission that a lot of information had been gathered from local artists and arts groups regarding ways in which the Arts Program might provide them with non-monetary support. The issue first arose when the Commission was facing the possibility of having the grant program entirely eliminated through budget cuts. While the program was ultimately restored by City Council, the Commission maintained its interest in how else it might help artists and arts groups. The question was added to the 2011 funding applications and most applicants responded. Their responses were collated and presented to the Commission at a previous meeting. Commissioners Kiselev and Tremblay were appointed to go through everything and come up with ideas and suggestions for what should be drawn from the list.

Ms. Byrne said the suggestions first were reviewed and sorted in terms of relative feasibility. A list was made of things that possibly could be done in the near term, things that could be done in the future, and things that were not feasible at all. It was determined that most of the things mentioned could be done in one way or another.

Commissioner Tremblay remarked that one of the things the region boasts is its entrepreneurial nature. Business and non-profit groups alike operate on entrepreneurial principles, and arts groups could as well. One thing the Commission could do is sponsor a pitch night event that would bring arts groups together with the community and possible funders. The artists and arts groups could describe their missions and outline funding proposals for potential funders to consider. Such events could help to create community around supporting the arts.

Commissioner Finley asked if the format would be artists making presentations, having booths, or some other approach. Commissioner Tremblay said she envisioned formal presentations like any business would do when seeking funding partners.

Commissioner Liljeblad asked if the city has ever taken a similar approach. Ms. Byrne said for several years Standing Ovation, a fundraising group made up of local business leaders, worked with the city and annually conducted funding interviews jointly with Arts Commission allocations committee members before Standing Ovation disbanded.

Commissioner Finley asked where patrons would be enticed to join in. Commissioner Tremblay said steps should be taken to avoid locking in on the traditional patron.

Commissioner Liljeblad commented that the opportunity would need to be maximized beyond a single event. Organizations could create businesses plans and post them to their websites or Facebook pages for access by the non-traditional patrons.

Commissioner Finley pointed out that the arts fairs draw wide audiences and suggested there may be opportunities associated with those venues for bringing together artists, audiences and patrons. Commissioner Tremblay said the approach would not need to start out big and grand; it could start with just a few groups that are developing something special and a few funders who want to get involved in something. Association with the arts fairs or some other big event could actually obscure the process.

Commissioner Finley suggested the Commission could work behind the scenes with businesses and asking them to be a sponsor of an arts organization for a year. Commissioner Tremblay said in her opinion the focus should be on empowering the arts groups to develop their fundraising skills.

Chair Ptacek proposed using the burgeoning social media network in Bellevue as a means for getting the word out about artists and arts groups that have specific projects in mind but are in need of funding.

Commissioner Liljeblad said he would not want to see an approach taken that would create more work than either staff or the Commission had the capacity to handle. He favored an approach that

would give groups a guideline or template to follow in getting out their information, but the individual groups should have responsibility for selling their own ideas.

Commissioner Finley suggested that a public notice should be issued by the city for the meetings in which applications for funding are to be reviewed. That way, funders would be able to learn more about organizations they have an interest in by attending the meeting. It would be good to have the *Bellevue Reporter* or the *Seattle Times* do an article on the process.

Ms. Byrne suggested the subcommittee should be asked to meet again to come up with specific things to add to the work plan. She pointed out that the Commission's current work plan is quite full and will be through 2012.

Commissioner Smith commented that with a way to consistently bring the message out, people will start doing a better job of developing their stories and messages.

Chair Ptacek observed that it is not an easy thing to get the word out to the right parties about the allocations process. The suggestion to go beyond that in an attempt to bring together patrons, funders and arts groups will increase the task by a factor of two or more.

Commissioner Liljeblad asked if there could be a baby step that could be taken, such as developing a short survey for funders to answer seeking to know the kinds of information the Commission might compile that would help them make funding decisions.

Commissioner Tremblay suggested the first baby steps should be to identify who the arts patrons are and in essence create a new breed of patrons. Rather than focusing on the large donors, attention should be paid to those patrons who might be able to give no more than a hundred dollars.

Chair Ptacek agreed that the subcommittee should meet again and focus specifically on the summary of comments received and identifying which of the issues is already tied to an item on the Commission's work plan or would make an easy fit.

B. Newport Hills/Lake Heights Public Art Project

Ms. Byrne introduced Michelle Hilhorst, a member of the panel for the Newport Hills/Lake Heights public art project. She proposed getting a motion on the table and then delving into some background information as part of discussing the motion.

Motion to endorse the Art Selection Panel's recommendations regarding the proposed design for the Newport Hills/Lake Heights Neighborhood public art project was made by Commissioner Tremblay. Second was by Commissioner Finley.

Commissioner Tremblay reported that the panel process went very smoothly. After a thorough discussion and review of the public comments received, the panel reached agreement with regard to three art elements: two bus stops with adjacent seating areas and the rain chain.

Ms. Byrne said the artist for the project is Bruce Myers. The project will be done in conjunction with the Enhanced Right-of-Way and Urban Boulevards project that will incorporate and enhance the art; that project will take on the cost of the boulders, so the outlay from the public art program will be less than \$60,000.

Ms. Hilhorst said in the middle of Newport Hills there is a shopping center that has been in decline. The community is old, and the art project has helped the community to enhance the efforts underway to revitalize the shopping center. The project site is along the main Newport Hills street where everyone will see it. The feedback from the community has been very positive.

Commissioner Tremblay said the art selection panel which included mostly neighborhood residents was instrumental in selecting the artist and then working with him to develop a concept and design for the art. Ms. Hilhorst said the art's natural theme fits well with the neighborhood, which is adjacent to Coal Creek and has lots of walking trails and greenery.

Ms. Byrne said the Newport Hills/Lake Heights neighborhood public art project, along with the Bridle Trails art project, is a pilot project that gives people in the community the experience of working directly with an artist creating a design for them. In the end, the influence of the community will be seen in the design. She said Mr. Myers has welcomed feedback and collaboration. The collaboration will continue throughout the construction process because Mr. Myers will invite community participation in creating the project's mosaics.

Commissioner Liljeblad expressed concern over the fragile nature of the artwork, potential vandalism, and possible sharp edges. Ms. Byrne said there will be a requirement for various art components to be engineered. She said that the posts holding up the leaves are made of stainless steel and are very stout. What appears in the drawings to be sharp edges will in fact be blunted, and added that the city has not experienced much graffiti relative to public art. Ms. Hilhorst pointed out that the leaves will be too high off the ground for anyone to easily reach. The bus shelters enhanced with the boulders will actually bring a nice gathering space component to the shelters.

The motion carried unanimously.

Chair Ptacek thanked Ms. Hilhorst for her participation on the panel. Ms. Hilhorst said it was a fabulous experience that led the community to better understand how art is born in the city.

Ms. Byrne said the next step will be to put together a construction contract with the artist and have it approved by the Council. There will be a phased installation process that hopefully will be completed during 2012.

D. 2012 Work Plan

Ms. Byrne explained that the work plan for 2011-2012 crafted through the Budget One process essentially forms a contract with the city. The program promises to produce certain results over the biennium in terms of specific projects and outcomes attached to those projects.

Referring to the outreach section of the matrix included in the Commission packet, Chair Ptacek asked how difficult it would be to include something in the area of social media. He suggested that at the very least it would be good to get something started even if it is only thinking about how to reach out to people in the community. Ms. Byrne said a lot of work has been done in committee on the topic. She said she should be able to put something together based on that work and bring it to the Commission December meeting for discussion.

Commissioner Liljeblad pointed out that if a social media channel is set up, someone will need to spend time every day administrating it. Commissioner Finley volunteered to serve as an administrator at least temporarily, and Ms. Byrne said she would be the City's gatekeeper.

Commissioner Tremblay commented that the ArtMap update could very easily be itself a social media tool. She added the suggestion that in the outreach category social media should be placed at the top.

Commissioner Finley pointed out that the Commission has never sought opportunities to speak to groups. Ms. Byrne said there have been requests for speakers in the past and there is still a year in which to complete items on the work plan.

5. COMMISSION QUICK BUSINESS – None

6. REPORTS

A. Commissioner's Committee and Lead Reports

i. Sculpture Exhibition Committee

Commissioner Smith provided the Commissioners with copies of the preliminary budget figures. He said the committee had not yet determined goals or themes; the group has not abandoned the idea of sustainability but may want to see it tweaked more toward cultural and human values.

With regard to the budget, Commissioner Smith said consideration was given by the committee to increasing the artist honoraria by about 20%, the first increase since establishing the exhibition. The public relations, advertising and graphics line items were also ticked upward over the previous exhibition. He noted that several of the specific line items were retained at their previous levels.

Ms. Byrne said traditionally not all of the budget is expended. The proposed budget of \$225,000 will only be spent if every single artist slot is filled and if every artist takes their complete mileage allowance, neither of which is likely. The number of artists chosen for the exhibition drives many of the other costs, such as the amount spent on installation.

Ms. Byrne said the committee has been talking about how to use social media. She said one possibility involves the company that has been used for the guided cell phone tours. They have expanded their offerings to include texting and mobile web platforms. The mobile web platform looks to be affordable and would make sense to initiate for the full year, not just for the exhibition.

Commissioner Smith noted that a slight increase was given to the line item for the youth component. Ms. Byrne explained that since the youth component was added to the exhibition in 1994, the line item has been \$8000. In 2010, the actual outlay came to only \$4900.

Commissioner Finley suggested that if a social media approach is up and running when the exhibition is set to begin, it may not be necessary to spend money on an opening event invitation mailing. Ms. Byrne said the committee is leaning in that direction. She noted that in a survey conducted some time ago by the city, the top response to the question of how citizens would like to receive information from the city was *It's Your City*, the City's print publication; the second highest response was direct mail. Clearly the right balance of tools will need to be identified.

Commissioner Smith said the committee has also been discussing whether or not a phone survey should be conducted to gain some feedback. Ms. Byrne said she recently spoke with Stuart Elway of Elway Research regarding several questions committee members had. Elway Research calls people who have registered to vote. Because many voters list their cell phones on those rolls, some cell phones do get called. However, phone surveys do tend to be heavily weighted toward households with land lines, and those tend to fall into the older demographic. Callers are instructed to keep calling until they can get a demographic balance in respondents. Foreign language is always a challenge, especially in Bellevue where the level of diversity is very high; to include foreign language surveyors adds to the cost of surveys. Given that a good sampling is about 400 people, the percentages dictate that a proportionately accurate number of some say Russian language speakers would require only about two responses from that demographic group. To get those responses, however, would require spending an exponentially higher amount of money on the survey.

Commissioner Finley suggested that other approaches could be used, such as the 4Culture model that utilizes Survey Monkey.

Commissioner Smith said the committee has spent time discussing the sponsorship campaign. He said the group has recognized the need to get into the 2012 budget cycles of organizations that might be asked to participate.

Motion to accept the preliminary budget for the sculpture exhibition was made by Commissioner Smith. Second was by Commissioner Jackson and the motion carried unanimously.

- B. Staff Reports
 - i. Project Status Update

Ms. Byrne briefly reviewed the art projects in the CIP.

Chair Ptacek commented that once the annexation of the Eastgate area is completed the city may want to demonstrate some good will by bringing an art project online.

Ms. Byrne noted that when light rail comes to the Eastside the one percent for art requirement will generate significant dollars for art elements and projects. The station area planning that is underway may also involve art. Chair Ptacek said it would be helpful to get a presentation from someone at Sound Transit.

7. CORRESPONDENCE, INFORMATION AND UPCOMING EVENTS

- A. Written Correspondence –
- B. Information – As Noted
 - 1. Washington Magazine Article featuring Bellevue's public art
 - 2. Projects Timeline September through January
 - 3. Upcoming Agenda Items
 - 4. Commission Committee Chairs and Leads for 2011-2012
 - 5. Calendar
 - 6. Public Art Program budget update

8. ADJOURNMENT

Chair Ptacek adjourned the meeting at 6:00 p.m.