

BELLEVUE ARTS COMMISSION  
REGULAR MEETING  
MINUTES

April 3, 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, Dan Stroh, Department of Planning and Community Development

OTHERS PRESENT: None

RECORDING SECRETARY: Gerry Lindsay

I. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 4:12 p.m. by Chairperson Ptacek who presided. All Commissioners were present.

2. APPROVAL OF AGENDA AND MINUTES

A. Approval of Agenda

There was agreement to amend the agenda by moving item 4.D to 4.A.

**Motion to approve the agenda as revised was made by Commissioner Finley. Second was by Commissioner Liljeblad and the motion carried unanimously.**

B. Approval of Minutes

Commissioner Liljeblad referred to the third paragraph on page 5 and said the statement he was trying to make was that while there is a lot of interest in art in the Downtown Park, the city should also pay attention to city-owned facilities citywide, including the parks. He asked to have the first sentence truncated to read "Commissioner Liljeblad stated that much is said about art in Downtown Park."

**Motion to approve the March 13, 2012, minutes as amended was made by Commissioner Liljeblad. Second was by Commissioner Finley and the motion carried unanimously.**

3. ORAL COMMUNICATIONS – None

4. ACTION ITEMS AND DISCUSSION ITEMS

A. Presentation on Arches of St. Petersburg

Following up on a previous Commission conversation about public art and gateways. Commissioner Kiselev shared with the Commission photos of the famous arches of St. Petersburg, Russia, and provided some historic details regarding each one.

Commissioner Finlev said she recently was contacted by a representative from the Eastside Heritage Center regarding the Union S arch that is sitting in storage. The question asked was if there is any way the Commission could repurpose any of the arch that originally was at the old Bellevue junior high school torn down when Downtown Park was constructed. Ms. Byrne said the work is more appropriately classified as an historical work, which would be appropriate for the Historical Center to look into.

## B. Bel-Red Update

Planning Director Dan Stroh said the Bel-Red subarea finance plan was adopted in 2009 in the midst of the worst economic downturn since the Great Depression. Even so, because there hasn't been any development there people are asking whether the city intends to follow through with realizing the vision for the area. One primary difficulty has been generating the funding needed to support the infrastructure improvements. An update regarding the Bel-Red plan will be presented to the Council in May; the report will include information regarding interim uses and re-tenanting of buildings in the corridor. This should also address anecdotes circulating about uses that have wanted to locate in the area but have not been allowed to under the new Bel-Red zoning.

Mr. Stroh said questions are being asked about what the city can do to help catalyze investment opportunities during this interim period. The whole infrastructure plan has a price tag of hundreds of millions of dollars and therefore cannot be implemented in its entirety, but there could be some critical components that should be funded to keep things moving forward.

Very soon after the plan was adopted the City moved to acquire several parcels of land to aid in developing the new NE 15th Street/NE 16th Street, though significantly more right-of-way is needed to fully realize the design. About seven acres of the land is open space and Parks and Community Services has been looking at park concepts for the space. A lot of work has been done to design the NE 15th Street/NE 16th Street, and the work has been instrumental in assuring that the light rail line will continue through the Bel Red area instead of going from the hospital district and then north to SR-520.

The station locations in the corridor virtually confirmed. The Spring District station will be in a retained cut with a plaza above it. The station between 130<sup>th</sup> Avenue NE and 132<sup>nd</sup> Avenue NE will be on the surface.

Answering a question asked by Commissioner Jackson, Mr. Stroh said there continues to be a cluster of light industrial uses in the Richards Valley area of the Eastgate/I-90 corridor. The Bel-Red plan resulted from the natural evolution away from light industrial uses in Bel Red. The corridor lies between downtown Bellevue and Overlake and the Microsoft campus. The rezone study was given a push when Safeway decided to move its distribution facility to Auburn, and as other warehouse uses have migrated away from the corridor. The plan takes advantage of light rail moving through the area and seeks to create new neighborhoods. Some elements of light industrial will survive the changeover, though others clearly will not be compatible.

Commissioner Tremblay pointed out that there is a vibrant arts community within the corridor and said she hoped those uses will not eventually be displaced.

Mr. Stroh commented that in many ways the Bel-Red plan is an attempt to create a more environmentally sustainable and balanced future for the area, with new neighborhoods around transit stations, the reopening of piped streams, parks and open space, and employment and housing opportunities. The increased residential and employment capacity are needed by the city to meet its growth targets. Aspects of the plan were debated strongly during its creation, and gentrification of the area was one issue. There was even a discussion about forcing densities and

property values to stay down in order to keep space available for arts organizations, but it was concluded the city could not do that. He said it will be many decades before the area completes its transition and the areas furthest away from the transit stations likely will ideally offer less expensive land.

Chair Ptacek said he had heard rumors that the city's commitment to the transit tunnel in the downtown would take away from the city's ability to bring about the Bel-Red plan. Mr. Stroh discussed issues related to that question – how much revenue the city will generate and how much will the City ultimately need to pay for the tunnel.

Mr. Stroh described station area planning efforts for the 130<sup>th</sup> – 132<sup>nd</sup> station and e of discussion with Sound Transit. The station area planning work has focused on how to achieve the right environment around the station and advancing good connections for all modes of travel.

Commissioner Liljeblad asked if either the city or Sound Transit have taken the opportunity to acquire distressed parcels. Mr. Stroh said that has not happened yet, in part because the collaborative design process is not yet completed. The only acquisitions Sound Transit will make in the interim will be protective acquisitions to preserve properties they will need.

Chair Ptacek asked if the city will be looking to construct NE 15th Street/NE 16th Street or 120<sup>th</sup> Avenue NE first. Mr. Stroh said the key infrastructure needed was part of the discussion with the Council at its meeting on April 2. A lot of work has been done with the Department of Transportation to figure out the key pieces that need to be in place. Construction of the entire NE 15th Street/NE 16th Street corridor will be expensive. The key moves will be in getting 120<sup>th</sup> Avenue NE constructed up to NE 20<sup>th</sup> Street, which will connect to the new ramps the state will build at 124<sup>th</sup> Avenue NE.

Mr. Stroh said the case is being made with the Council for building the critical infrastructure needed to keep the plan moving forward in the Bel-Red corridor within realistic funding assumptions. There are three phases for the development of 120<sup>th</sup> Avenue NE: first from NE 4<sup>th</sup> Street to NE 12<sup>th</sup> Street, second NE 12<sup>th</sup> Street to just north of NE 15<sup>th</sup> Street, and third continues all the way to NE 20<sup>th</sup> Street. The extension of NE 4<sup>th</sup> Street across the freeway connecting to 120<sup>th</sup> Avenue NE is a major element and is already funded in the CIP. Constructing NE 15<sup>th</sup> Street from 130<sup>th</sup> Avenue NE to 136<sup>th</sup> Street is an important facet as well.

Chair Ptacek asked if early on in the process consideration could be given to include art components as part of 120<sup>th</sup> Avenue NE. He noted that the roadway will ultimately carry a lot of people and will in a sense become a gateway.

Commissioner Tremblay said one way to approach it would be to work temporally and affordably by incorporating movable or modular art elements, then coming along later with something more permanent.

Chair Ptacek said it was great to hear that the Bel-Red area plan is still alive.

Commissioner Tremblay informed the Commission that KING 5 television planned to run a story on April 4 about the technology incubator located in Bel-Red and run by University of Washington students. They are getting all kinds of coverage for the entrepreneurial direction they are headed in.

### C. Arts Education Month Resolution and Proclamation

Ms. Byrne said May is arts education month. ArtsEd Washington has done an excellent job of generating materials and has recommended adopting a resolution supporting arts education. She

said she edited the draft supplied by ArtsEd to make it better fit the Bellevue community, and proposed that it be taken to the Council the first Monday in May and that an Arts Commissioner and someone from the school district be present to accept the proclamation.

**Motion to adopt a resolution supporting Arts Education Month in May and to recommend that City Council proclaim May as Arts Education Month in Bellevue was made by Commissioner Jackson. Second was by Commissioner Liljeblad and the motion carried unanimously.**

Commissioner Finley said she was aware of two schools that during the month of May would be doing plays through Studio East and suggested it would be a good thing to have some of the kids attend the Council meeting as well.

Chair Ptacek suggested a “whereas” paragraph should indicate that the city maintains funding for and is supportive of arts groups since in order to teach the arts in the schools there has to be art in the community.

Commissioner Jackson observed that the fifth whereas in the draft talks about school boards, district administrators, educators, parents, artists and arts organizations. She suggested something could be added to that paragraph that reaffirms the city’s support of arts organizations.

Chair Ptacek agreed to be the Commission’s representative at the Council meeting on May 7 to accept the proclamation. He urged the other Commissioners to attend as well.

#### D. How to Help Arts Groups

Ms. Byrne said that for well over a year the Commission has been working on the idea of providing support to arts groups through non-monetary means. A subcommittee was formed to develop suggestions, and many of their ideas are things already available in the community. The ability of staff to take on new programs is extremely limited. She provided the Commissioners with a list of the most doable strategies.

Commissioner Liljeblad suggested the list represents a good summary of what the Commission has talked about, and said it is very well organized.

Commissioner Finley asked if the word is getting out via the Facebook page, and if arts groups are able to post about what is happening with their organizations. Ms. Byrne said the Facebook page is very new and so far it only includes issues related to Bellwether 2012. Arts Program Assistant Scott MacDonald said there is no reason why arts groups cannot “like” the page, and certainly the Commission is free to post items to the page and allow people to comment on them.

Ms. Byrne said arts groups are not barred from posting about their events, but it would be more efficient for them to post their events to the calendars kept by the Eastside Arts Coalition and ArtsFund. There are links to both of those on the Commission’s webpage.

Commissioner Jackson asked if the Facebook page is intended to focus solely on Bellwether or if it is to serve as a general Arts Commission Facebook page. Commissioner Smith suggested that the page should evolve in time into a general arts program page. Mr. MacDonald said ideally it would be nice if the page could become almost a community forum for the arts, not just specific to the happenings of the arts program. Ms. Byrne said one way to do that would be to “like” the various arts groups so that whenever they post something it would show up on the Commission’s page.

Commissioner Tremblay suggested it might be useful to have two Facebook pages, one for the general arts program and one just for the Bellwether exhibit. The two pages certainly could be linked. When people like pages there is a certain predictability for why they want to go there and what content they are looking for; those wanting information about Bellwether may not want to see information about the arts program in general.

Commissioner Finley pointed out that Bellwether only happens every other year. She suggested a single Facebook page would be sufficient, with the exhibition getting the focus at the appropriate time.

Chair Ptacek pointed out that the plan calls for an annual meeting to focus on the state of the arts groups. Ms. Byrne said Leadership Eastside compiled the first State of the Eastside report, which includes an arts and culture section. The intention is to have a new report every year, in which case the question is whether it would be more valuable to have the annual meeting before the report is drafted so the information obtained can be included in it, or if the meeting should be scheduled after the release of the document so its details can be discussed. The arts groups did participate in what went into the report.

Chair Ptacek suggested that given the budget cycle it might be good to have the annual meeting in the early fall. Ms. Byrne agreed and said the information generated could be used in helping to develop the budget.

#### 5. COMMISSION QUICK BUSINESS

It was decided that the Commission would meet again on April 17 at 2:00 p.m. to discuss the budget proposal.

#### 6. REPORTS

A. Commissioner's Committee and Lead Reports – None

B. Staff Reports

1. Project Status Report

Ms. Byrne said VisitBellevue is doing a great job of bringing travel writers to town. She said she recently led a tour in the downtown for some writers who wanted to see public art. The downtown area is now home to some 110 public art works. At least two of the travel writers have indicated they will write stories about the sculpture exhibition. They loved the idea of an art walk.

2. Budget Update

To be discussed on April 17.

3. "Bellwether 2012: reGeneration" Planning Update

Mr. MacDonald said the artist submission period was drawing to a close. He staff were continuing to receive correspondence from artists every day. He said the total number of submissions to date was only 20, which is fairly low, though the number of submitted works is close to 50.

Ms. Byrne said the exact reason for the low number of applicants is not known, but she suggested three possibilities: the fact that the process got a late start and the application period was short; nationwide there is a saturation in terms of art exhibitions; the economy remains an issue and even though artists who participate are reimbursed they still face out of pocket costs. Artists want to sell

their works, but they are not certain they will be able to do so. The schedule has built in the ability to extend the deadline, though only by a week. The decision whether to extend the deadline will be made shortly before the initial submission period closes.

Ms. Byrne reported that due to budget reductions, City Hall is not open or available for events on Saturdays. That means the opening had to be moved to Friday, July 13. The building schedule on Friday night will allow events only until 8:00 p.m.

7. CORRESPONDENCE, INFORMATION

A. Written Correspondence – As Noted

Chair Ptacek asked about the ongoing effort to recruit new Commissioners. Ms. Byrne said the application period runs through April 15, and three persons have applied to date. It will be necessary to select three people to replace Chair Ptacek and Commissioners Kiselev and Finley, whose terms are ending.

B. Information

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.