

BELLEVUE ARTS COMMISSION
REGULAR MEETING
MINUTES

May 19, 2009
4:00 p.m.

Bellevue City Hall
Room 1E -109

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

COMMISSIONERS ABSENT: None

STAFF PRESENT: Mary Pat Byrne, Department of Planning and Community Development

OTHERS PRESENT: Michael Levin, IdeaLogik; Larry Pennings, Grace and Associates

RECORDING SECRETARY: Gerry Lindsay

I. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 4:08 p.m. by Chairperson Finley who presided. All Commissioners were present with the exception of Commissioner Ptacek, who arrived at 4:10 p.m., and Commissioner Kiselev, who arrived at 4:12 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 Donkin and the motion carried unanimously.

B. Approval of Minutes

Motion to approve the April 1, 2009, minutes as submitted was made by Commissioner Shepherd. Second was by Commissioner Tremblay and the motion carried unanimously.

Motion to approve the April 14, 2009, minutes as submitted was made by Commissioner Donkin. Second was by Commissioner Tremblay and the motion carried unanimously.

III. ORAL COMMUNICATIONS – None

IV. ACTION ITEMS AND DISCUSSION ITEMS

A. Review of Bellevue Sculpture Exhibition Marketing Materials

Arts Specialist Mary Pat Byrne reminded the Commissioners that the future of the Bellevue Sculpture Exhibition has been under discussion. Some marketing numbers were reviewed and it was found that there was some disagreement as

to what the numbers meant. She said that prompted her to talk with Michael Levin with IdeaLogik who has broad experience in marketing, including arts organizations. She said Mr. Levin was asked to review the Exhibition marketing materials, to find some comparables to the phone survey done by the Commission, and to provide some comments for what might be done in the future.

Ms. Byrne said she also asked Larry Pennings, a professional meeting coordinator with Grace and Associates, to facilitate a discussion regarding goals and priorities related to the Exhibition with the goal of deciding whether to continue the Exhibition and if changes are desired, what kinds of changes. Finally, Ms. Byrne said if possible measures for success would also be outlined.

Mr. Levin said he was a member of the Seattle Arts Commission at the time the one percent for arts program was launched. Public art was a relatively new item at the time and the Commission was seen by many as pioneers. Mr. Levin said he has also been involved in marketing and strategic planning for large-scale events like the Goodwill Games.

Mr. Levin pointed out that there are very few local events that replicate the Bellevue Sculpture Exhibition. Area jurisdictions, including Bellevue, have permanent collections of public art, and there are annual arts events held in the area. The biennial Bellevue Sculpture Exhibition is, however, unique to the area.

The Bellevue Sculpture Exhibition is several years old, has some traction and equity in the community. The 48 percent awareness level uncovered by the Elway survey is extremely high for any event, but particularly for an art event. An awareness campaign to promote public art often takes several months to achieve the kind of results the Exhibition received. Campaigns focused on public health or safety risks generally achieve the highest awareness, usually in the 75 percent range. For most campaigns, the benchmark of success is an awareness level in the 20 to 30 percent range.

The survey questions did not, however, seek to clarify if the respondent understood exactly what the Bellevue Sculpture Exhibition is. In other words, it could be confused possibly with the Arts and Crafts Fair or with Bellevue Square in the minds of the persons taking the survey. One survey firm he consulted thought the survey results are rather high with regard to recognition of the event.

Random digit dial surveys used to be held up as a barometer of awareness levels. The problem today, however, is that the calls are made to land lines only. Those with land lines in today's world tend to be older people who are at home when the phone rings. The younger people, who for the most part use cell phone instead of land lines, might very well be attending the Bellevue Sculpture Exhibition, but they are not being surveyed. The older survey respondents might be aware of the exhibition through the fact that traditional media outlets were used to advertise it, but they may not attend the exhibition.

Mr. Levin urged the Commissioners not to be overly concerned over the numbers that indicate a high awareness level and a low attendance level. He said the attendance numbers likely would be much better had the survey been able to tap into a wide cross section that included a younger audience.

Mr. Levin said the differences between the June and November survey results indicate a successful media campaign. The public relations plan was excellent, as were the visual materials. The media mix was also very good. The June numbers reflect all that, whereas by the time the November survey was conducted the exhibition had been closed for two months and it was no longer high on the awareness counter.

Mr. Levin said his qualitative research included talks with a variety of key opinion leaders. Matthew Kangas reviewed the 2002 and 2004 exhibitions and suggested the event has great value for the area. He noted that the exhibition was cut back in 2004 and said that was too bad.

Tina Hogget with 4Culture had very positive things to say; she said the exhibition is the single most important public art event on the Eastside in that it makes an important connection between the city, its residents and visitors. She went on to say the wonderful thing about an ongoing sculpture exhibit that is temporary is that it allows for viewing new works. Having a theme also challenges artists to come up with specific works in their respective media.

Stefano Catalani indicated support for the exhibition, adding that anything that helps bring traffic to his door is a good thing.

Midge Bowman, director of the Fry Art Gallery, said she has known about the exhibition for a long time but attended it for the first time in 2008. Mr. Levin said the fact that the exhibition has generated a lot of traction, coupled with a spectacular new City Hall that serves as a house for the city's permanent works, is motivating people to start taking the Eastside and Bellevue in particular seriously when it comes to visual and public art. Artist Nori Sato had very positive things to say as well.

Mr. Levin pointed out that Mercer Island has its sculpture corridor, an ongoing permanent installation with rotating works, and both Kirkland and Issaquah have outdoor works. However, no one has an art museum like Bellevue has, no one has a City Hall like Bellevue has, and no one has a downtown park like Bellevue has where a true footprint for art has been created. Bellevue is clearly starting to emerge as a serious hub of culture on the Eastside. Bellevue owns the space, as it were, and the question is how to extend the mastery of the space.

Mr. Levin reiterated the fact that the public relations work for the 2008 exhibition was very good. The publicity was very good, and the idea of embracing geocaching as a new media was very intriguing.

Mr. Levin said there are great advantages in using social media. With social media, information is spread virally. The virtual affinity meeting groups all overlap, and getting the word out that way reaches far more people.

Mr. Levin said he had been talking to Ms. Byrne about bringing in corporate and media partners to help spread the word and to maximize the opportunity for information dissemination, volunteer opportunities, and fundraising. That could lead to having all the public relations and media for the exhibition donated. There are ways to involve community and corporate partners that have a presence in the downtown; by looping them into the marketing efforts, everyone can benefit.

Commissioner Tremblay pointed out that the number of hours it takes over the course of a year to produce the exhibition from start to finish is substantial. She suggested that the effort to seek community and corporate sponsors would at least initially take even more time.

Commissioner Donkin suggested that a non-profit could be formed with the sole purpose of putting on the Bellevue Sculpture Exhibition every two years. Instead of the city doing the work, the city would help fund the effort but the non-profit would be responsible for the fundraising and making it all happen. Mr. Levin agreed that that could be a very good idea. He added that corporate sponsorships often tap into huge amounts of volunteer efforts along with direct dollar outlays. He said there are also companies to which finding corporate sponsors can be outsourced.

Commissioner Tremblay commented that the Bellevue Sculpture Exhibition has a community grassroots look and feel that could be lost if a major corporate sponsor were to get involved. There is a heavy corporate hand in so much of what goes on on the Eastside, and preserving the simple approach would be refreshing.

Mr. Levin said the Goodwill Games gave exclusive sponsorship to a bank. That is one approach the Bellevue Sculpture Exhibition could take. That gives the sponsor the opportunity to advertise themselves as the proud sponsor of the exhibit and show themselves to be good corporate citizens while promoting their business.

Commissioner Ptacek commented that many arts organizations are struggling in the current economic climate. The last thing the Commission should do is compete with them for corporate sponsorships. The Commission traditionally has used its allocation of tax dollars to bring art to the citizens, and that has worked very well.

Ms. Byrne agreed, but pointed out that if the corporate sponsorship through non-monetary means is developed to help raise awareness or tap into loaned executives so that more work can be accomplished, there would be no competition; the partnership would not be taking away anything from other arts organizations.

Mr. Levin said the Institute for Public and Private Partnerships has written a white paper that highlights ways to sensitively raise money.

Commissioner Donkin said the Bellevue Sculpture Exhibition is a cultural tourism mechanism, but no one has looked specifically at how many people it brings in from out of the area and what the resulting positive economic impact has been. Mr. Levin said the Bellevue Arts and Crafts Fair certainly has that effect. He said there is a good article by Andrew Taylor that talks about measuring the value of an arts experience.

Mr. Pennings said his company, Grace and Associates, focuses on values-based leadership and inspiring courage, hope and action for just communities. Organizational consulting, training and meeting facilitation are all offered by the firm. He noted that from the previous conversation he gathered that the Commission had questions about how to move forward with the exhibition, what the load would be on the staff, if the exhibition is the right way to use the

taxpayer money, and how to best utilize resources to achieve the Commission's stated purpose.

Mr. Pennings asked each Commissioner to think about what most excites them about the mission and work of the Commission.

Asked to highlight the most important items, the Commission focused on placemaking, development, being innovative, and diversity in terms of culture and art forms. Education was listed as well.

Mr. Pennings then asked the Commissioners to write down what specific contribution the exhibition makes toward achieving the issues identified as being most important to the Commission. The comments were ordered into categories.

Mr. Pennings suggested that each comment is a function toward which the exhibition could contribute. He asked the Commissioners to express their thoughts on what they would see and hear in the community if all of the functions were optimally active.

The Commissioners were then asked to describe what the results in the community would be.

Mr. Pennings suggested that if the Commission focuses on the exhibition, the fact that funding is limited may mean that some other function would not be able to be carried out. He asked the Commissioners to keep that in mind.

Ms. Byrne said the next step will be to decide if the Commission wants to continue with the Bellevue Sculpture Exhibition. She suggested the Commission should take an honest look at what it costs to produce the exhibition and what additional resources might be needed in order to do more. That conversation will occur at the regular June meeting, or possibly at a special meeting in June.

Chair Finley said she appreciated the fact that the focus of the discussion was on the positive, but allowed that time needs to be set aside to focus on any negatives as well.

Ms. Byrne said she discussed with Mr. Pennings the idea of the Commission having a retreat to more fully flush out the issues. The Commissioners generally reacted positively to that idea.

Commissioner Donkin asked the Commissioners to look back over what has been accomplished during the past ten years and to focus on what could be accomplished in the coming ten years. The results and outcomes should all be something that will be remembered in a decade.

Mr. Pennings proposed capturing the issues the Commission wants to cover more fully and focus on them at a later meeting before making a final decision about the exhibition. They put down opportunity costs; legacy; permanence versus temporal; being bold, responsiveness and relevancy; level of internal support; the economic climate and leveraging; community outreach; sole versus corporate; and new thinking in terms of social networking and technologies.

C. Arts Commission Elections

Motion to reelect Chair Finley and Vice-Chair Holder to another one-year term was made by Commissioner Ptacek. Second was by Commissioner Kiselev and the motion carried unanimously.

V. COMMISSION QUICK BUSINESS – None

VI. REPORTS

A. Commissioner Reports

1. Presentation at Sunset Club

Commissioner Holder said she was asked to make a presentation at the Sunset Club on Bellevue's public art. She said she worked with Ms. Byrne on the development of a Power Point presentation which was very well received by the group. The overwhelming sentiment was that the presentation needs to be made to groups throughout the city.

Commissioner Tremblay suggested the presentation should be added to the BTV lineup.

Chair Finley said she was in the audience at the Sunset Club and praised Commissioner Holder as a wonderful public speaker. She proposed videotaping the presentation the next time around.

Commissioner Holder noted that a large percentage of the Sunset Club audience was from Seattle. Their response was that they had no idea Bellevue had so much public art and they wanted to know precisely where the pieces are located so they could go and see them.

2. Other Reports

Commissioner Kiselev said the Crossroads Community Center is looking at ways to bring more people in and further development their list of programs and events. She suggested the Commission should look for ways to partner with the community center.

Commissioner Tremblay said she was recently asked to attend a meeting of the steering committee for the Bellevue Youth Theater, which is launching its capital campaign. The conversation turned to venue and the general desire to get away from the more corporate, downtown feel. Several proposed looking for space in the Bel-Red corridor.

B. Staff Reports

Ms. Byrne informed the group that Commissioner Shepherd handed out some awards at a recent Bellevue Youth Symphony concert.

Ms. Byrne said she attended the Bellevue Philharmonic Orchestra benefit concert on May 17. Organizers estimated the concert took in more than \$6000. About 400 people attended the event.

VII. INFORMATION AND UPCOMING EVENTS

- A. Written Correspondence – None
- B. For Your Information – As Noted
 - 1. Staff memo to Council regarding emergency funding impacts
 - 2. Upcoming Agenda Items
 - 3. Calendar
 - 4. CIP Public Art Program Commitments update

VIII. COMMISSIONER RECOGNITION

Retiring Commissioner Donkin was presented with a token of appreciation for his contribution to the Commission during his ten-year tenure.

Commissioner Holder reviewed the list of accomplishments and issues for which Commissioner Donkin advocated during his tenure and said he will truly be missed.

Chair Finley said Commissioner Donkin has left a true legacy. She added that his shoes will be hard to fill.

Ms. Byrne shared with Commissioner Donkin some emails sent in from former Commissioners who served with him.

IX. ADJOURNMENT

Chair Finley adjourned the meeting at 6:19 p.m.