

BELLEVUE ARTS COMMISSION
REGULAR MEETING
MINUTES

June 2, 2009
4:00 p.m.

Bellevue City Hall
Room 1E -109

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

COMMISSIONERS ABSENT: None

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

OTHERS PRESENT: None

RECORDING SECRETARY: Gerry Lindsay

I. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 4:04 p.m. by Chairperson Finley who presided. All Commissioners were present.

II. APPROVAL OF AGENDA AND MINUTES

A. Approval of Agenda

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

B. Approval of Minutes

Motion to approve the May 19, 2009, minutes as submitted 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. 2010 Funding Guidelines Recommendation

Chair Finley said the committee had reviewed the proposed funding guidelines and recommended them for approval by the full Commission.

Two typographical errors in the document were pointed out by a Commissioner.

Motion to approve the 2010 funding guidelines as corrected was made by Commissioner Ptacek. Second was by Commissioner Holder.

Ms. Byrne explained that the proposal carries forward the guidelines developed with the Council. That means if an organization applies through the Eastside Arts Partnership (EAP) and also gets direct funding from the Council, the allocated funds cannot be used for the same

project. Because the Bellevue Philharmonic received a direct allocation from the Council to fund a fourth of July performance, and another from the Commission under the Eastside Arts Partnership, the organization cannot use the funding from the EAP Program for their Fourth of July performance.

The motion carried unanimously.

B. Bellevue Sculpture Exhibition

Ms. Byrne asked for comments on the follow-up report received from Michael Levin regarding the sculpture exhibition.

Commissioner Ptacek said the Arts Program has a certain amount of money available. The focus should be on using them to yield the greatest impact in a way that's aligned with city goals and desires. Highlighting investment in the Bel-Red area would be a good idea, especially if it would help generate excitement or interest in that area. According to an article in the *Wall Street Journal*, Bellevue has the most land available for development of any city in the nation, so clearly the Bel-Red corridor offers marvelous opportunities for art. Maybe the Commission should take a break from what it has done traditionally and refocus, if only for a little while, on something that will help further the Bel-Red area.

Commissioner Kiselev suggested that if the Commission intends to change its focus away from the exhibition, it should have in mind something as major and large scale as the exhibition. She said if she were a member of the Council and saw that the Commission had decided to put aside its major project, she said she would be interested in seeing how the allocation of money could otherwise be used, and not necessarily for art. She said she personally could support using the funds for something non-traditional, but only if the Commission invests in something more exciting that will generate a similar or more significant impact in the community.

Commissioner Tremblay said the exhibition has brought real value to the city over the years, but it could use some retooling. No retooling will occur, however, unless the Commission sets aside the time to do it. Taking a hiatus would open the window to projects that are more time-based and focused on city priorities. The city is clearly focused on environmental issues in the Bel-Red corridor and there may be some opportunity to collaborate on that theme. Of course it will take time to incubate new ideas, but if no time is allocated the default will always be what is known and comfortable. Another thing the city is currently interested in is Initiative India, an initiative for promoting trade and cultural cooperation for Bellevue and the Puget Sound region. The center of Indian culture in Bellevue is in the Bel-Red corridor. Artist Don Fels got a Fulbright scholarship to produce billboards in India on trade with India and the idea of outsourcing; it is possible he or other artists could be engaged to create mural art for the corridor.

Commissioner Tremblay said she participated in a real estate development class at the University of Washington. The property her team chose to focus on was adjacent to the idle cement hopper and gravel pit operated by Cadman in the Bel-Red area. Cadman owns nine acres there but uses only ten percent of the site. It is possible the company could be approached about constructing an amphitheater on the site, or a gathering place for the workers to have lunch. The hopper itself is iconic and could become the focus of some artistic endeavor.

Chair Finley agreed with the notion of aligning the arts program with key city priorities and agreed Bel-Red is among those priorities.

Commissioner Kiselev said no matter what direction the Commission takes relative to the sculpture exhibition and other projects, there should be some sort of transformation or evolving so the public can see the work of the Commission is not just skipping from project to project. Focusing on the Bel-Red corridor would be okay provided the Commission does not forget about the rest of the city.

Chair Finley agreed that taking a hiatus from the traditional exhibition would provide the Commission with the opportunity to think about ways to be more viable into the future.

Commissioner Tremblay noted that Open Satellite was given three years to develop and become anchored in the community. That time period will be up in 2010 and from there it is unclear what model they will use going forward. It might be good to form a partnership with them in developing permanent public art works for the development community.

Commissioner Ptacek suggested the Commission might want to investigate connecting with developers who are going to bring in art and somehow incorporating it in something before it is permanently placed. The mission of the Commission could change from getting the art to organizing the art coming into the city.

Commissioner Holder said she loves the traditional exhibition in Downtown Park, adding that she is less thrilled with the City Hall part. The exhibit should grow into something bigger and better. Downtown Park is unique in that it is located in the heart of the city; the Bel-Red corridor is just not there yet. Ditching what has been proved to be a good marketing tool for the city does not make sense. It would be too staff intensive to focus on taking another approach.

Commissioner Ptacek suggested it might be a good idea to step back from the traditional exhibition if for no other reason than to let the plans to complete the circle of Downtown Park play out.

Ms. Byrne pointed out the need to focus on what the Commission promised the Council, which was developing the downtown art walk, working with developers to include more art in their developments, and engaging neighborhoods in local art project. It would be better to figure out how to achieve successes in those parameters than to focus all the Commission's creative thought and energy elsewhere. She said she too was excited about the notion of doing something in the Bel-Red corridor, possibly an exciting temporary art project. There could be ways to do some very simple but effective things that will not take huge project management time and expense.

Commissioner Kiselev expressed the opinion that putting off the sculpture exhibition for a year will be significant, especially given that the event only occurs every other year anyway. Two years is long enough for some to forget the exhibition even existed; that could make it even more difficult to restart and bring with it the need to justify it in the eyes of the community. The event needs some retooling, or an evolving into something different. However, putting on the event even in the face of the current economic downturn will give residents some sense of stability and reassurance that things will get back on track. It would not be a bad idea to scale back the exhibition, but it should go forward on track.

Commissioner Shepherd said she likes siting works in City Hall as part of the exhibition, but indicated she was frustrated during the previous exhibition not to have City Hall be more readily available, on weekends, for example. It is a very good idea to bring people into City Hall so they can see what the city has invested in, but the hours of viewing should be expanded. Special events gain momentum with consistency. While the Commission is

conscious of the fact that the exhibition occurs only every other year, it is highly unlikely that the public is.

Commissioner Shepherd said she was not convinced that Bel-Red is ready for a big art focus. She suggested the Commission has not yet gone far enough with the top priority, which is the downtown. Continuing with the exhibition will send the message that there still is a vision to be realized in the downtown.

Commissioner Tremblay agreed but reiterated that putting on the event takes a great deal of time. Having a partner would be a great way to level the load, but finding a partner on short notice may not be easy.

Commissioner Shepherd suggested that finding a partner may not be difficult at all if the right project or idea is chosen. She said she was intrigued with the notion of focusing on India, adding that there are many from Southeast Asia located in the downtown where Microsoft has a big presence. In that sense Microsoft might be the right partner.

Commissioner Holder agreed that the focus should be on the downtown, which is for everybody in the city. Moving ahead with the art walk would be one way to do that.

Commissioner Kiselev suggested that Open Satellite may not be the ideal partner for a variety of reasons, but they would be an excellent organization to contract with to do the majority of the work. Commissioner Tremblay disagreed and said the organization would make a very good partner.

Chair Finley said moving ahead with the exhibition should be done only if there will be sufficient internal support, and with the full realization that the event represents a huge expenditure of funds. Based on the recommendation of the consultant, the Commission should step back from the exhibition and look for partners and ways to make the event more socially relevant.

Asked for her opinion, Ms. Byrne said she was fairly certain the Commission will see a budget cut in the near future; Department of Planning and Community Development Director Matt Terry plans to talk to the Commission in July to discuss the steps the city will be taking. She suggested the Commission should focus its most creative thinking on the commitments already made and on figuring ways to expand in those areas.

Ms. Byrne said the Bellevue Sculpture Exhibition requires a lot of resources. She said the perhaps by looking at parallel planning for this exhibition and the next sponsors could be engaged for 2012. Chair Finley said that taking a hiatus now would set things in motion for planning the next one appropriately.

Answering a question asked by Commissioner Ptacek, Ms. Byrne said although finishing the circle for Downtown Park was funded in the recently passed levy, it will not be occurring soon. There is pressure in the community to resolve a question of parking and the city does not have a solution as yet.

Commissioner Tremblay suggested that the public would not even notice a missed year if the exhibition were to skip a year and then restart on its regular schedule. She drew attention to the Burien fire festival in which a developer allowed an artist group to set up on a temporarily unused patch of dirt. A fire sculpture from Bernie Mann was anchored in the space and surrounded by additional sculptures involving fire. They brought in fire jugglers and fire eaters as well. The whole thing came about on a wing and a prayer as a partnership between

the artist group and the developer who owned the property. While not high art, it is just the kind of thing that can gain the attention of the community without costing much at all.

Commissioner Holder asked how much the special projects fund holds. Ms. Byrne said the funding programs receive a total of \$110,000 from the general fund each year. Traditionally the Commission has directed 20% of that, \$22,000, towards Special Projects.

Commissioner Ptacek pointed out that trying to work with developers on public art would not be the best approach given that there is virtually no development going on. Ms. Byrne said some attention could be given to temporary projects that could mark the fact that the art walk will be done.

Answering a question asked by Commissioner Tremblay about re-siting existing sculptures in collections to create a park-like setting, Ms. Byrne said the prime consideration is always safety for the pieces, especially those of high value. Commissioner Tremblay said the Socrates Sculpture Park involves a residency program that brings sculptures into an area that previously was the eyesore of the community. The artists are brought in for three- or six-month sessions in which they make work in a forum that is open to the public. Some very fun things happen, and the same could be true for Bellevue by taking an out-of-the-box turn.

Commissioner Holder said she would not want to lose site of the opportunities offered by the gateway projects.

Commissioner Ptacek said whatever direction is taken the steps should be measured against the desire to make Bellevue the cultural center of the Eastside.

Referring to the list of projects on the draft work plan, Ms. Byrne reported that the Paragon site near NE 8th Street and I-405 is at least temporarily off the table. The property belongs to the Washington State Department of Transportation and they do not want it used for anything because they might need it for storm drainage or another use. The site could be available again sometime in the future, however, and staff will continue to track it. The Ashwood Park master planning process is starting up and it would be worthwhile to hire an artist to participate on the design team. The gateway project at Main Street and Bellevue Way is on hold because the development there is on hold. However, site for the gateway will be identified in the drawings and the city will likely develop it after the private project is complete. A gateway master planning process that has a citywide focus will provide the Commission an opportunity to be involved.

Commissioner Holder suggested that the art walk plans are far enough along that it is time to stop planning and start doing something. Commissioner Ptacek asked if resources that would otherwise go into the sculpture exhibit could be redirected into a project that would advance the art walk. Ms. Byrne said that could certainly be done. In fact, appropriately placed pieces could do double duty as both an exhibition and a delineation of where the art walk will be. Commissioner Holder said getting an identity piece in the downtown could serve to get the public very excited.

Commissioner Ptacek proposed spending time looking at ways the art walk could become the focus by transferring funds that would otherwise be spent on the sculpture exhibition. He added that some funding should be earmarked for works of art to be sited in the Bel-Red corridor as well. He suggested having some of the Bel-Red planners and representatives from Wright Runstad visit the Commission to talk about possibilities and partnerships. Sound Transit may also want to be at the table as their project is committed and they will likely be including art along the Bel-Red route.

Ms. Byrne said she would like to take the ideas and develop them into something the Commission could discuss again in a couple of weeks.

There was agreement to have the Commission meet again on June 17 at 8:30 a.m.

Ms. Byrne said if resources that would normally go to the arts program do get reallocated elsewhere, the best thing the Commission could do would be to spend time and energy on getting the word out about what art the city already has.

V. COMMISSION QUICK BUSINESS – None

VI. REPORTS

A. Commissioner Reports

Chair Finley announced that the Meydenbauer Bay park steering committee process is nearing the end. She said the Environmental Impact Statement was released. The steering committee will be meeting three times in June and another couple of times in July.

Ms. Byrne said she recently had a conversation with one of the planners staffing the project about when a planning artist should be hired to finish out the art walk and identify opportunities for art in the Meydenbauer design. She said she was told the best time would be during the master planning process which will be starting during the summer of 2009.

Ms. Byrne reported that she attended the jazz festival that the music she heard was outstanding and the events she attended were well-attended. She said she also went to see the Northwest Sound Men's Chorus performance Renton. She said their singing was excellent and the program was funny and well done.

Commissioner Shepherd said three of the awards handed out at the Bellevue Youth Symphony concert were for composing. She said the works composed by the young people were performed and they were very sophisticated.

B. Staff Reports – None

1. Project Report Status

Ms. Byrne reported that some 450 walkers participated in the recent Volkswalk art walk that was jointly planned by that organization and the Parks Department with help from herself. The walkers each had pictures of segments of the different art pieces along with information on each piece sited along the 10K and 5K walks.

2. Work Plan Development

3. Applicants for Filling Vacant Commission Seat

Ms. Byrne reported that some five or six people submitted applications during the application window. The process of scheduling interviews is under way in coordination with Councilmember Bonincontri's office. She said she and Chair Finley will participate in the interviews.

VII. INFORMATION AND UPCOMING EVENTS

- A. Written Correspondence – None
- B. For Your Information – As Noted
 - 1. Council Adopts Bel-Red Zoning
 - 2. Upcoming Agenda Items
 - 3. Calendar
 - 4. CIP Public Art Program Commitments Update

VIII. ADJOURNMENT

Chair Finley adjourned the meeting at 5:57 p.m.