

BELLEVUE ARTS COMMISSION
REGULAR MEETING
MINUTES
(Approved as corrected 09-07-2010)

August 10, 2010
4:00 p.m.

Bellevue City Hall
Room 1E -109

COMMISSIONERS PRESENT: Chairperson Holder, Commissioners Kiselev, Ptacek, Smith, Tremblay

COMMISSIONERS ABSENT: Commissioners Finley, Shepherd

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

OTHERS PRESENT: Councilmember Balducci

RECORDING SECRETARY: Gerry Lindsay

I. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 4:10 p.m. by Chairperson Holder who presided. All Commissioners were present with the exception of Commissioner Ptacek, who arrived at 4:11 p.m., and Commissioners Finley and Shepherd, both of whom were excused.

2. APPROVAL OF AGENDA AND MINUTES

A. Approval of Agenda

There was agreement to revise the agenda to indicate the minutes to be approved were from June 1 not May 4.

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

B. Approval of Minutes

Motion to approve the June 1, 2010, minutes as submitted was made by Commissioner Tremblay. Second was by Commissioner Smith and the motion carried unanimously.

3. ORAL COMMUNICATIONS – None

4. COMMISSIONER COMMUNICATONS

Commissioner Smith said he attended a recent program at Studio East in Kirkland. He noted that the program specifically mentioned the Bellevue Arts Commission as a supporter.

Commissioner Ptacek reported that on August 11 he would be representing the Commission at the Bel-Red follow-up meeting with the architects the city has hired to do some work. The focus of the meeting will be on the drafting of general development standards for the Bel-Red area.

Chair Holder said she attended the recent successful Bellevue Arts Museum fundraiser event.

Chair Holder said also recently led former Arts Commissioner Donnie Wilburn on a tour of the art in Downtown Park. Because Ms. Wilburn has lost her eyesight, she touched all the works to gain an understanding of what they look like. Ms. Wilburn is currently working with the Seattle Art Museum to develop a program in which docents are trained to take visually impaired persons through the museum. Only six museums nationwide are involved in the program.

Commissioner Tremblay said the work she has been doing with the Bellevue Youth Theatre on building a new facility includes an accessibility component. She said a partnership has been formed with VSA (Very Special Arts), the Kennedy Center's organization on arts and disabilities, and will be conducting a dialog and teacher training workshop.

Commissioner Tremblay said she also attended an arts leadership lab put together by 4Culture.

Commissioner Kiselev said she distributed Bellwether 2010 information to Russian-owned medical, dental and insurance offices. She said she has also been working Circle of Friends to get the word out about the exhibit to the Russian community. She has had reports back that the community has responded well, with many coming to the Park to see the art work.

5. ACTION ITEMS AND DISCUSSION ITEMS

A. Bellevue Youth Symphony Orchestra

Chair Holder introduced Ruth Brewster who has been executive director of the Bellevue Youth Symphony Orchestra (BYSO) for many years. She congratulated the organization on its 45th season.

Ms. Brewster provided the Commissioners with an overview of the growth of the orchestra since it received its first funding from the City in 1995 (\$500.00) and how its program has expanded. In 1995 there were 75 students and today there are 330. In 1995 there were about 2000 people in the total audience; in 2010 that number increased to over 9000. Additionally, the makeup of the orchestra has become increasingly diverse ethnically, and the makeup of the board has followed suit.

Ms. Brewster described programming initiatives enhancing the work of the existing orchestras, each of which is geared to a different level of student expertise. BYSO is encouraging small chamber music ensembles to develop and play at free events in the community. Each year BYSO collaborates with another arts group. In 2010 they collaborated with Columbia Choirs. This year an additional orchestra was started for beginning musicians. Ms. Brewster also described BYSO's summer camp program which began in 1998 with a grant from the City. Today the camp runs 3 sessions over a period of three weeks.

When the orchestra started it was called Olympic Youth Symphony and was located in another city. A conscious decision was made to move the organization to Bellevue, which is centrally located on the Eastside. More importantly, Bellevue is a city that gets it art wise. Bellevue understands that the arts make for a vibrant community.

Commissioner Ptacek asked what Bellevue should do in order to become a more arts-friendly community. Ms. Brewster said she would like to see a single large facility, possibly in the Bel-Red corridor, that orchestras, choirs, theater and all manner of kids groups could have as

their base of operations. There is a great deal of synergy that is possible by having different kinds of groups together, each of which is working toward making great art for great people. Space is clearly the most pressing need.

Commissioner Tremblay recommended including a form for feedback on the organization's website.

B. Commission Self-Evaluation Follow-Up

Chair Holder said she and Arts Specialist Mary Pat Byrne had met once for a couple of hours and had had a couple of phone calls focused on how to improve the Commission in light of Commissioner responses in its recent self-evaluation. Part of the conversation focused on improving communication between the Commission and the Council and other commissions, as well as with arts partners.

Chair Holder said the talks also focused on the Commission's meetings. She said she has done her best to align the interests of the Commissioners with the subcommittees that are operating. Some of the committees will not go forward if funding does not happen; the Cultural Compass and the allocations committees are good examples.

The idea of holding a social event came out of the evaluation process. Chair Holder said the event has been slated for August 27. Guest from the local arts community will be invited to the meetings and two off-site Commission meetings are being planned.

The evaluation highlighted the need to have the Commission be more diverse; that is something that should be worked on as new Commissioners are appointed.

The evaluation also indicated the Commission does not seem to be as focused as it could be, and that the goals and strategic planning are not all together. Chair Holder called attention to the color-coded document titled "Arts Program Strategic Plan 2010-2011" that was included in the packet and said it is intended to show Commission projects and progress in a simple visual format.

Answering a question asked by Commissioner Ptacek, Ms. Byrne said much of the Commission's strategic planning takes place in the process of building its work plan. For the Public Art Program, the art walk, neighborhood public art projects and working with developers are the strategic directions adopted by the Commission and Council. The Commission evaluates each public art opportunity based on its ability to address one of the strategic directions.

Commissioner Ptacek said the notion of helping to create a sense of place is larger than any of the specific projects. He suggested that some element of the Commission's time should be centered on the more strategic overview and on how to incite creativity and art and culture in the community. Chair Holder suggested that that lies within the various goals that are already established. Where there is wiggle room is in the strategies for how to achieve the goals, and that will be the work of the Commission.

Commissioner Kiselev said she recently met with diversity coordinator Kevin Henry to talk about cultural projects. She said he mentioned that Parks & Community Services has a certain level of funding for cultural projects, some of which have to do with the visual arts. She suggested Ms. Byrne should work out a strategy with Mr. Henry whereby the Commission could become involved in those projects. That could help the Commission in addressing some of the items in the Cultural Compass while helping Mr. Henry with his task of reaching out to the community. Ms. Byrne commented that over the years people have

been interested in putting public art into their projects, but less interested in the public process that must be adhered to whenever Public Art Fund dollars are used. As a result, departments often just use their own money.

Chair Holder said the art at the Botanical Garden is a case in point. Over the past couple of years a number of works have been sited there, but only one or two of them by the Commission.

Ms. Byrne said it would be appropriate at some point for the Commission to bring in representatives of other city departments to talk about ways to work together more effectively.

Commissioner Ptacek said he hoped the Commission would have the opportunity to focus on a strategy that fits all the various works into the context of the entire community. The Commission is the only group focused on the bigger picture relative to arts and culture.

Commissioner Smith commented that strategy is measurable. If the Commission is interested in cross-pollinating with Parks, it should learn who is involved, how the work is done, and when the work is done. Each department has the same intent, but until there is some meat on the bones, there will not be a measurable goal. Strategy involves laying out the specific steps involved in getting to a particular outcome.

Commissioner Kiselev pointed out that the Commission held a retreat five years ago and put together an actual who, what, when and where plan relative to the *Cultural Compass*. That document should be revisited and updated.

Commissioner Ptacek asked if it would make sense to assign Commissioners to serve as liaisons to the different city departments that have anything to do with arts and culture. Commissioner Smith suggested that would be helpful if it were made part of an overall strategy.

Commissioner Kiselev said she has signed up to be in the mailing list of all sorts of development and neighborhood projects and as such is constantly being updated. That is an excellent way to stay informed and know when the time is right to get involved.

Commissioner Tremblay pointed out that with the retirement of Matt Terry the department has been left with a void. She suggested the Commission should be involved in helping to choose his successor. Ms. Byrne said she would stay on top of the public portion of the process. At the very least the Commission should draft a letter outlining the characteristics it would like to see in a new director.

C. Budget One Discussion

Ms. Byrne provided a detailed description of the Budget One process thus far.

Ms. Byrne reported that the CIP proposal is going forward as planned, which means that funds accumulated in excess of the annual allocation will revert back to the general CIP. The annual allocation will remain at \$350,000. On the operating side, the recommendation coming out of the results team committee is that the grant amounts should be cut in half. However, an alternative proposal elicited by the results team seeks to cut the grants out completely. Results Teams for each priority were directed to find additional places to cut the budget should the financial outlook require more savings.

The Arts Core Program ranked quite low on every scoring exercise.

The various proposals can be thought of as building blocks that the City Manager will use to construct the draft budget he will present to the Council.

Ms. Byrne said the Commission's role is to communicate its thoughts about the recommendation to the Council. The context for the Commission's response to Council should include what is being heard from the community and the larger budget process.

Answering a question asked by Chair Holder, Ms. Byrne said the Round 1 cut for the two-year period was \$110,000. The Round 2 cut would be double that, or \$220,000. Chair Holder pointed out that in the greater scheme of things \$110,000 is not much money, but it brings about a huge benefit in the community. The fact is that during difficult times ticket sales for arts events actually go up, primarily because the people are seeking a momentary escape from the stresses in their lives.

Ms. Byrne said one rejoinder that has been made to the potential loss of funding has been that allocations of \$1000 or \$2000 are not likely to make or break an arts organization, and that if those funds were to be eliminated the organization would find another way to move ahead. Specific information from arts groups would be helpful in verifying whether this is true or not.

Commissioner Smith said the rap the art takes when it comes to budgeting is that it does not meet the basic need of food and shelter. However, among the higher priorities associated with the budget process is preserving existing infrastructure, and that is where the allocations to arts groups comes in. The proposals of the results team do not appear to be completely consistent with the priorities relative to the rankings given to aquatics, tennis and golf. Housing and human services should be ranked high. Ms. Byrne said the Aquatic Center and Golf Course are part of a group of programs operated as enterprises, that is, they pay for themselves through generating revenue. The funds generated by programs classified as enterprise programs may be used only for supporting enterprise programs. For instance, the profits from the golf course help offset expenses at the aquatic center. They can't, however offset expenses of the Human Services Program, for instance, because the Human Services program is not an enterprise program.

Commissioner Tremblay suggested that every proposal made by the results teams could probably be ~~second-guessed~~ reviewed. The better approach would be to focus on how to respond and move the conversation forward.

Commissioner Ptacek said one option would be for the Commission to just let everything go and focus on starting over. In the political realm, there are a lot of different ways to achieve an objective. It is not always about fighting as hard as one can to preserve what is already in place. The arts clearly did not fare well in the ranking process, and no matter what is said by way of rebuttal the rankings are unlikely to change in favor of the arts.

Commissioner Ptacek expressed the view that there is information the Commission does not have yet. Before coming up with a game team, the Commission needs to better understand where the leadership team stands and what the Council is thinking.

Commissioner Tremblay asked about the Commission getting involved in fundraising to make up what might be lost through the budget process. Ms. Byrne said fundraising is a staff-intensive undertaking for which PCD does not have the resources to staff.

Commissioner Tremblay pointed out that there is a current trend toward micro-philanthropy by which artists are funding themselves through the internet by launching campaigns aimed at taking in small donations. The approach is community based, can become viral, and takes

little effort to launch. She said one option would be to take a little bit of money to fund a micro-philanthropy workshop for the arts community.

Ms. Byrne said the work of the results teams is done. Each results team was allowed to review only their own proposals. The proposals will be reviewed next by the leadership team which will take the wider view and look at all the proposals across all of the priorities; they will consider and reconsider the work already done.

Councilmember Balducci arrived and said the Innovative, Vibrant and Caring Community team was the only results team that elected not to draw a line and to say that the proposals below the line would simply not be funded. The IVCC did, however, shaved funding from individual proposals. She said during the Council retreat she stayed focused as much as possible on the philosophical level; she said she made every attempt to understand how the priorities budgeting approach compared to the old budget. It was clear that programs were being cut, but it was not as clear whether or not actual dollars were being cut.

With regard to the arts program, Councilmember Balducci said she shared with her colleagues and the leadership team the philosophy of thinking about what could be done in terms of permanent damage by reducing or cutting the program. Every department will need to take cuts, and the art program is certainly no exception, but cutting it out entirely could have unintended consequences. She said she stressed the need to agree to austerity but to continue focusing on survival. It would be much better when the times get better to ramp things up than to have to start all over.

Councilmember Balducci allowed that in past years when it appeared the financial sky was falling the city always found a way to meet the challenge, but this time there does not appear to be any eleventh hour solution.

Commissioner Ptacek told Councilmember Balducci that the Commission had been discussing how much time should be spent trying to preserve what has been versus how much the focus should be on changing the way it does business.

Councilmember Balducci said the city manager has not yet made his budget proposal. The Council budget retreat was focused on the work of the results teams. The Council is keenly aware of the projected shortfalls, and the conclusions reached by the results teams helped clarify what the shortfall could mean on the ground. The city manager will continue developing his budget proposal during the August recess; it will be presented to the Council on September 27. The reality is that everything the city funds is at risk. Those with specific concerns should start putting their cases together; it is not too early to begin sharing those concerns with the Council members.

Councilmember Balducci suggested the most effective arguments will be those that include an alternative strategy. Simply asking the Council not to cut a particular program will not be sufficient. To the extent possible, the focus should be on maintaining some level of service the community will appreciate and benefit from, even if the services cannot be offered at the levels they have been in the past.

Ms. Byrne suggested a good first step for the Commission to take would be to call meeting of the arts groups to assist them in getting their arms around the issue. They are the ones best able to say what will be lost if funding is reduced or zeroed out.

6. COMMISSION QUICK BUSINESS – None

7. REPORTS

- A. Commissioner Reports – None
 - B. Staff Reports
 - 1. Project Status Report
 - 2. Bellwether 2010 Update
8. CORRESPONDENCE, INFORMATION AND UPCOMING EVENTS
- A. Written Correspondence
 - 1. Governor’s 2010 Smart Communities Award Certificate
 - B. Information – As Noted
 - 1. Upcoming Agenda Items
 - 2. Calendar
 - 3. CIP Public Art Program Commitments Update
9. ADJOURNMENT

Chair Holder adjourned the meeting at 6:14 p.m.