

BELLEVUE ARTS COMMISSION
REGULAR MEETING
MINUTES

November 2, 2010
4:00 p.m.

Bellevue City Hall
Room 1E -109

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

COMMISSIONERS ABSENT: Commissioner Kiselev

STAFF PRESENT: Mary Pat Byrne, Department of Planning & Community Development; Shelley Brittingham, Department of Parks & Community Services

OTHERS PRESENT: Jim Pratt, Bob Decker, Bellevue Youth Theatre Foundation

RECORDING SECRETARY: Gerry Lindsay

I. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting began at 4:19 p.m. without a quorum. Chairperson Holder presided. All Commissioners were present with the exception of Commissioner Finley who arrived at 4:23 p.m.; Commissioner Shepherd, who arrived at 4:28 p.m.; Commissioner Smith, who arrived at 4:34 p.m.; and Commissioner Kiselev, who was excused.

3. ORAL COMMUNICATIONS – None

4. COMMISSIONER COMMUNICATIONS

Commissioner Tremblay reported that earlier in the day she and Arts Specialist Mary Pat Byrne attended a meeting with economic development representatives from around King County. Matthew Kwatinetz talked about the importance of the arts relative to economic development. His presentation was well received and included a number of good talking points that should be shared with the City Council.

5. ACTION ITEMS AND DISCUSSION ITEMS

A. Wintergrass Festival

Chair Holder introduced Patrice O'Neill, Stephen Ruffo and Wendy Tyner, Wintergrass Festival organizers.

Ms. O'Neill explained that the festival was held in Tacoma for 16 years. For a variety of reasons, the festival was moved to Bellevue in 2010. The move was controversial, but the experience in Bellevue has been outstanding.

Ms. O'Neill said about 60 percent of the audience has annual incomes of at least \$75,000, and about 40 percent have annual incomes over \$140,000. Most who attend play music themselves, so one of the hallmarks of the event is the jam sessions. The bulk of the

attendees come from the Puget Sound area; the rest come from about 28 states and six different countries. In all, the festival is good tourism and good for Bellevue.

The anticipation is that the festival will grow in Bellevue. It is already outgrowing the Hyatt, so everyone is looking forward to playing at the Tateuchi Center when it opens. Consideration is being given to having Meydenbauer Center become a part of the mix as well.

Ms. O'Neill described the festival's extensive music education activities for all ages at the festival.

Commissioner Tremblay asked the event organizers if they put on any small outdoor events during the summer months. Mr. Ruffo said none are held in the Puget Sound area. Ms. O'Neill said there has been talk of doing something. She said Wintergrass was one of the first indoor bluegrass festivals in the nation. It has become very popular, in part because it is held during the winter months and there is little competition for artists. Mr. Ruffo said hiring is already under way for the 2012 festival. For the 2011 event, the rooms at the Hyatt have nearly all been booked and the focus has turned to the Westin.

Answering a question asked by Commissioner Ptacek, Ms. O'Neill said space for the 75 workshops is pretty tight. The workshops are slated for Thursday night, all day Friday and most of the day Saturday. Adding rooms at the Westin and possibly the Marriott and Meydenbauer Center would help to relieve the pressures. There has been talk about including live bluegrass music in downtown restaurants during the festival as well. There have also been talks with the Bellevue Arts Museum about having a display of instruments and possibly bringing in luthiers to showcase their art.

B. Bellevue Youth Theatre Update

Jim Pratt, Bellevue Youth Theatre Foundation Board President, said the focus of the Foundation currently is on the construction of a new theater at Crossroads Park. A capital campaign is well under way that stresses how important the program is to the community.

Mr. Pratt gave an overview of the Theatre's programs and activities, explaining that Bellevue Youth Theatre (BYT) is operated as a non-profit by the city of Bellevue. The program includes all ages, including those participants who have disabilities. The program uses theater to inspire future audiences; kids that might not otherwise engage in theater are given the opportunity to become lifelong consumers and participants in the arts. One of the hallmarks of the program is its family atmosphere. The program is free for all participants. It is set up that way to make sure there are no barriers to entry.

Mr. Pratt said the building project will be a good asset for the city and the community. It will allow for expanding the scope of the program in a green building custom designed for it. The building has also been designed especially to accommodate the physically challenged participants.

The partnership between the city and the program serves as a model for how the community and the public sector can work together. The program currently operates out of the old Ivanhoe school building. During the times when the theater is not being used by the program, other theater groups use the facilities. BYT will continue to program at Ivanhoe, even after the new theatre opens.

Mr. Pratt provided some background on the Foundation and its partnership with the City and City Council.

Architect Bob Decker described the site selection considerations. In the selected site at Crossroads Park the building is built in to the landscape as an environmental sculpture and includes an outdoor amphitheatre. As designed, the building is very close to receiving platinum LEED status; to receive that status, the city will have to commit to paying for the computer monitoring required to make sure the systems are all running at peak efficiency.

Mr. Decker shared the schematics of the 14,000-plus square foot building with the Commissioners. He said the estimated construction cost is a little over \$5 million, though with incremental costs such as fees and taxes the overall total will be close to \$7 million.

Answering a question asked by Commissioner Finley, Mr. Decker said the seating capacity of the indoor theater will be 150.

Mr. Decker said all of the construction documents and drawings have been completed and the project is ready to file for a building permit. The construction project will be open to public bid.

Commissioner Ptacek asked where the fundraising efforts stand. Parks & Community Services Assistant Director Shelley Brittingham said on the public side there is money in the parks levy for building the theatre. The Council also approved a challenge grant a couple of years ago, and there are some matching CIP funds. Along with the capital campaign, \$4.8 million is in hand and the Foundation must raise an additional \$1.2 million.

2. APPROVAL OF AGENDA AND MINUTES

A quorum having been attained, the Commission returned to Item 2 on the agenda.

A. Approval of Agenda

The agenda was approved by consensus.

B. Approval of Minutes

Motion to approve the October 5, 2010 regular meeting minutes, and the October 13, 2010 special meeting minutes, as submitted was made by Commissioner Ptacek. Second was by Commissioner Finley and the motion carried unanimously.

5. ACTION ITEMS AND DISCUSSION ITEMS (Continued)

C. Budget Discussion

Ms. Byrne reported that on October 18 Commissioner Ptacek addressed the Council along with three members from the arts community about the importance of supporting the arts funding programs. She said both the public art program and the grants program have been added to a list of topics the Council wants to discuss further, though there is no date yet for when those discussions will occur. The general thinking is that the Council will add November 29 to its meeting schedule as the date for having the discussion.

Ms. Byrne said it would be appropriate for the Commission to testify at the budget public hearing on November 15th and to inform the community of the upcoming hearing.

Chair Holder commented that all of the pertinent points were made by Commissioner Ptacek in his testimony before the Council on October 18. She suggested that on November 15 those points should be reiterated.

Commissioner Finley observed that the groups receiving the most attention by the Council are those that show up every week for Council meetings. She suggested the arts groups should be informed that having them attend on a regular basis would be a helpful way to keep the arts in the minds of the Councilmembers.

Commissioner Tremblay suggested that some information about the Wintergrass festival should be shared with the Council, especially given that the event is an economic plus for the city.

Commissioner Tremblay said she would support sending to the arts groups both notice of the public hearing and a quick blurb about what messages have been and should be shared with the Council. Ms. Byrne said she could send out the notice but could not tell anyone what to say. The Commission or others, however, could help shape the messages.

Ms. Byrne reported that on November 18 from 1:00 p.m. to 3:00 p.m. at the Stimson-Green Mansion in Seattle Mayor Davidson will be one of several city leaders who will be talking about effective advocacy. She said she would attend. Following the event, the Arts Alliance will publish all of the comments.

D. Bellwether Exhibition Purchases Discussion

Chair Holder said she along with members of the Bellwether 2010 committee which includes Commissioners Shepherd, Kiselev and Smith, met with Ms. Byrne on November 1 to develop a recommendation regarding potential purchases from the exhibition.

Commissioner Shepherd presented the recommendation of the committee and suggested that the works would add value to the city's collection. The two recommended art works were *Truth* and *107063*. She stressed that the Commission will not recommend purchasing anything without first knowing exactly where it will be sited.

Commissioner Smith shared that Commissioner Kiselev had some reservations about *107063*. Her specific concern was that the Russian-speaking community would not find the work to be art, though she indicated that she personally liked it.

Commissioner Smith said the interior siting options appeared to be Meydenbauer Center and City Hall.

Commissioner Ptacek said his concern was that both sculptures are interior works and siting them in City Hall would not help support the Art Walk.

Asked what would happen to the available funds if they were not spent on buying art, Ms. Byrne said they would go back into the general CIP if Council adopts the current CIP proposal. She said there is so much that is unknown currently. It is possible that unspent funds from projects under way would carry forward, but it is unlikely sculpture exhibition funds not spent would roll over. She added that City Hall is a terminus for the Art Walk and works sited there draw people in.

Motion to adopt the recommendation of the committee to send both of the works to a panel for review was made by Commissioner Shepherd. Second was by Commissioner Finley.

Commissioner Tremblay suggested that 107063 would perform better in the public realm.

Commissioner Smith commented that technically there is no money to make the purchase. If allowed at all, the funding will simply come from leftover funds from the exhibition. He said he would in the future favor including a line item in the budget for purchasing works from the exhibition.

Commissioner Ptacek said purchasing sculptures from the exhibition did not feel right given all the budget discussions that are currently ongoing. He said it felt like a step backwards in terms of the Commission's position with the City Council. For about \$40,000 the city could make arts groups in the city happy by continuing their funding; it would not be appropriate to use about half that amount to purchase art to be hung in City Hall. Commissioner Tremblay concurred.

Commissioner Finley respectfully disagreed. She said the exhibition is produced biennially. The artists show their works and there is an expectation that something will be purchased. She said if it were up to her, she would select 107063. The Commission is facing the loss of all the money it has been saving up for works along the Art Walk, and to purchase a piece to be located in City Hall, or Mercer Slough, or eventually even Meydenbauer Park, would be the right move.

Chair Holder pointed out that the artist, Jae Hyo Lee, has been featured in *Sculpture Magazine* and is nationally known. She said 107063 would add significant value to the collection.

Chair Holder said that during the committee meeting Commissioner Kiselev indicated very strongly her desire to see the city make a purchase, though her choice was *Truth* for both its aesthetics and its meaning. Her reasoning was that if the city is not willing to make purchases, it will in the future be unable to attract the type of artists that will excite the public.

Commissioner Shepherd commented that even though the times are tough, art leads the way as a the beacon and backbone of the community.

Chair Holder said if the motion were approved the works would be reviewed by a panel and a recommendation would be brought to the Commission. At that time the Commission will have the option of voting whether to accept the recommendation of the panel.

The motion carried 4-2, with Commissioners Ptacek and Tremblay voting against.

E. Bel-Red Arts District Discussion

Commissioner Ptacek reported that he recently received an email from Milenko Matanovic of The Pomegranate Foundation asking what he could do in terms of follow-up.

Ms. Byrne said there are multiple planning and design efforts underway. At some point it will make sense to draw them altogether. There is work with staff and consultants on identifying an overall brand for Bel Red. The work to develop the design guidelines, which include the public art component, is under way and will be ready for feedback from the Commission in December. Design work for 130th Ave. NE is underway; that roadway is home to some some strongly arts-oriented businesses such as Bellevue Art and Frame, and Maison de France. Additionally, in his talk before the economic directors' forum, Matthew Kwatinetz gave a convincing presentation on the value of art in economic development; he

also talked about how to go about developing a district. Understanding all these elements is important to deciding how the Commission can proceed having the greatest efficiency and impact.

Ms. Byrne said Mr. Matanovic's philosophy of building affinity through a variety of arts projects is very much in tune with the direction the Commission has taken so far. He should be kept in the loop and then at some point he should be brought back for some follow-up.

Ms. Byrne said an open house for Bel-Red activities is planned for November 9. She said she would be there with a table promoting the development of an arts district.

Commissioner Ptacek said he would share that information with Mr. Matanovic.

6. COMMISSION QUICK BUSINESS

A. December Commission Meeting

Ms. Byrne reported that the December 7 Arts Commission meeting would be held at the Francia Russell Center at the Pacific Northwest Ballet building in the Bel-Red corridor.

7. REPORTS

A. Commissioners' Committee and Lead Reports

1. East Link Percent for Art

Chair Holder reported that she attended the most recent Sound Transit board meeting. She reminded the Commission that the policy regarding the Central Link project was that one percent of the budget, excluding tunnels, would go for public art. At the meeting the board was focused on what percent of the East Link budget should be earmarked for art, and the range discussed was between one percent and 0.5 percent. Sound Transit CEO Joni Earl had recommended 0.75 percent. Chair Holder said she was one of five persons who testified, including Cath Brunner of 4Culture, a representative for Seattle Opera and an artist. In the end, the board voted to include art in the East Link project at the one percent level.

2. Vice Chair Ptacek's Report to Council on the Budget

Commissioner Ptacek was praised for his report to the Council on behalf of the Commission.

3. Bellevue Downtown Association Breakfast

Commissioner Tremblay reported that she and Ms. Byrne attended the Bellevue Downtown Association breakfast. Yoko Ott, director of Open Satellite, spoke about the organization and did an excellent job.

B. Staff Reports

1. Project Status Report

The Commissioners were provided with hard copies of the report.

Ms. Byrne said she and Commissioner Tremblay have been working on the Rotary grant, following up on the Commission's interest in finding alternative ways of supporting the arts

community. She said a meeting has been set up for November 4 to talk with Putter Bert, a member of the grant committee.

Ms. Byrne reminded the Commission that the work plan includes an art element for midblock crossings in the downtown. She said the city has installed two midblock crossings already, one by the library and the other near Civica, both of which include leaf patterns. Banners with a similar pattern will be put up at those midblock crossings as well.

2. Bellwether 2010 Update – As Noted

8. CORRESPONDENCE, INFORMATION AND UPCOMING EVENTS

- A. Written Correspondence – None

- 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 6:18 p.m.