

BELLEVUE ARTS COMMISSION
REGULAR MEETING
MINUTES

February 5, 2013
4:00 p.m.

Bellevue City Hall
Room 1E -109

COMMISSIONERS PRESENT: Chairperson Smith, Commissioners Cole, Fateeva, Jackson, Liljebblad, Manfredi, Tremblay

COMMISSIONERS ABSENT: None

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

OTHERS PRESENT: None

RECORDING SECRETARY: Gerry Lindsay

I. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 4:38 p.m. by Chairperson Smith who presided. All Commissioners were present.

2. APPROVAL OF AGENDA AND MINUTES

A. Approval of Agenda

A motion to approve the agenda was made by Commissioner Liljblad. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Jackson and it carried unanimously.

3. ORAL COMMUNICATIONS

Shelley Brittingham, Assistant Director, Department of Parks and Community Services, provided the Commissioners with information about Chop Shop, a program supported by the Commission through special projects funding. She said parks department staff works with the producer of the show to do some free community outreach programs in the community.

4. ACTION ITEMS AND DISCUSSION ITEMS

A. Lake Washington Symphony Orchestra

Lake Washington Symphony Orchestra Board President Beverly Setzer, along with Board Vice President Mary Cantor said following the closing of the Bellevue Philharmonic, the musicians determined they wanted to continue playing. They have organized into a new orchestra that is managed by the musicians. They plan to give a concert in September, and while not yet booked, the hope is that it will be at Westminster Chapel in Bellevue. The current fundraising goal is between \$25,000 and \$30,000 in order to put on the September concert, twice that amount in 2014 to put on two concerts, and eventually have a regular season with educational outreach.

Chair Smith asked how many musicians are planning to participate in the new orchestra. Ms. Setzer said the new orchestra will be made up of about 60 musicians who played as part of the Bellevue

Philharmonic under the direction of Michael Miropolsky. Other conductors may eventually be used for other events, and some collaborations are planned as well.

Commissioner Cole asked what steps are being taken to become financially viable going forward. Ms. Setzer said the orchestra has no overhead costs currently. The office space is free courtesy of the musicians union. No commitments to spend money will be made until the funds have been raised. She said she and Ms. Cantor constitute the staff and nothing is being charged for those services.

Ms. Cantor agreed that eventually the group will need to have a paid executive director, though it is possible that person could be shared with another organization.

Commissioner Tremblay asked if a new model has been sketched out, or if it will be the same with the exception of the debt. Ms. Setzer said as incorporated the musicians are in charge and will retain control of the organization. There is no intention of ever letting the organization fold or run up debt.

Answering a question asked by Ms. Byrne, Ms. Cantor said other orchestras in the country have assumed the same operating model, including groups in Oklahoma and Minnesota. Internationally, the Vienna Philharmonic also operates on the same model and has for many years; they hire conductors on a concert-by-concert basis and the musicians run the orchestra.

Commissioner Liljablad asked how the group will be able to stay networked without a central paid staff. Ms. Cantor said she and Ms. Setzer are in constant contact, and a Facebook page has been set up to keep the musicians linked and informed.

Ms. Setzer said the current board will eventually be increased in size to include 60 percent musicians and 40 percent non-musicians. Ms. Cantor said the group has received encouraging reactions from other organizations, including the Bellevue Youth Symphony (BYSO). Many of the musicians work for various organizations, including BYSO that have kindly offered to share their libraries and resources.

Answering a question asked by Commissioner Liljablad, Ms. Setzer said the organization will eventually seek financial support from the city as part of its fundraising activities.

B. Cultural Demographic Survey Update

Ms. Byrne said she has been working with Ms. Brittingham to put together a scope of work and interview several potential consultants. She introduced SuJ'n Chong who was selected to conduct the survey. Ms. Chong described her background and education.

Ms. Byrne said work has begun to compile a list of people and groups to contact. The focus is on artists of diversity, with a particular interest in first and second generation immigrant artists who live, work, or live and work in Bellevue. The survey will include some basic questions to determine what language is spoken at home and what art disciplines they engage in, and some core questions about how welcomed or isolated they feel in the community. The survey respondents will also be asked if they would be willing to participate in a focus group. More in-depth questions will be asked in the focus groups about their experiences working in the arts in Bellevue. The information gathered will be used to reshape the arts program to better respond to the needs in the community. A by-product will be the creation of a network of artists who may or may not know each other, and who are not necessarily known by the city, and a means by which communication will continue.

Ms. Chong said the survey draft has been finalized and has been submitted to an interpretation service for translation into five different languages: Russian, Spanish, Chinese, Korean and

Vietnamese. Once the work of translating is completed the survey will be launched. Ms. Byrne said the languages were selected based on information from the city's demographer regarding the most frequently spoken languages in the city.

Commissioner Liljablad asked if the survey was beta tested with anyone. Ms. Byrne said beyond staff and Ms. Chong it had not been. Commissioner Liljablad suggested it might be a prudent thing to do prior to investing in the translation service.

Answering a question asked by Chair Smith, Ms. Chong said the artistic categories chosen are based those which are creative first and utilitarian second. As such, an architect would not be chosen but a filmmaker or poet might be.

Ms. Brittingham said the Parks & Community Services department offers many community services and programs, including arts-related programs. Every attempt is made to reflect the communities that frequent the city's centers. She said her department will benefit from the survey data by knowing who is out there and who might be available to participate in arts-related programs. Additionally, it will be a good opportunity to let those in the arts community know about venues in which they can perform.

Arts Program Assistant Scott MacDonald asked if any distinction will be made between artists involved in the production of traditional fine arts and those involved in crafts. Ms. Chong said there will be no such distinction.

Ms. Chong said if things go as planned the survey could be ready in about a week and information will be collected through the end of February. The focus groups will be conducted in March, and during April the data collected will be subjected to a fine-grain analysis. If suggested by the initial data, there could be some additional focus groups or specific informant interviews. Ms. Byrne said the schedule is aggressive and may need to be extended somewhat; she added that surveys may be collected throughout the focus group phase. While the survey and focus group work is going on in Bellevue, a subcontractor will be doing some national research on best practices. That information along with the survey and focus groups information will be used to formulate a series of recommendations. The information and recommendations developed will also be used to inform the city's Diversity Plan, which is currently being updated.

Commissioner Cole asked if help will be offered to artists who may need assistance in filling out the survey, and how those artists will be identified. Ms. Chong said while the translating work is going on outreach flyers will be distributed. The flyers will indicate that anyone wanting to can go to mini City Hall in Crossroads for assistance.

C. Comprehensive Plan Update

Ms. Byrne noted that a number of the Commissioners had attended the Comprehensive Plan planning session on January 24. She said a number of topics were raised at the various tables and asked what kinds of comments were made related to the arts.

Commissioner Cole said she was surprised to see so much emphasis placed on keeping things the way they were and the way they are currently. There was a strong "not in my backyard" sentiment voiced. Airing a different point of view proved to be somewhat tricky. There was agreement that good streets have a lot to do with livability, and that the arts have a place in creating good streets. The group was also able to agree that there is a lack of space for young new artists to use in carrying out their work of creating art, and that such places are needed and should be located in the Bel-Red corridor.

Commissioner Jackson said her group voiced opposition to the Bel-Red plan because they concluded it will destroy the smaller mom and pop uses and the existing warehouse spaces. Their fear was that the Bel-Red plan will take away economic and business diversity.

Commissioner Manfredi asked how prevalent that opinion is in the city. Commissioner Liljablad said that tenants currently located in the Bel-Red corridor are concerned about being priced out of the market, while Bel-Red property owners are anxious for the opportunity to capitalize on an economic return. Commissioner Tremblay suggested finding a plan that is aggressive and modern while also making room for some of the existing tenants would serve best.

Commissioner Liljablad stressed that the plan does not require a wholesale wipeout of what exists in the corridor; it simply creates the opportunity to pursue other choices.

Commissioner Cole said actions taken in the corridor that will eventually help advance Bellevue's identity and attract people to the corridor will pay off over time.

Ms. Byrne said she sat at the same table Commissioner Manfredi was at and the talk there focused on the importance of supporting small businesses of all kinds. That issue is clearly in the mix for future discussions, and as those issues arise it will be important for the Commission to stress how it fits in with the vision for the arts.

Commissioner Jackson said those sharing her table had a clear idea of what streets are and what water treatment is, but few had a clear idea of what art in the city of Bellevue is.

Commissioner Cole suggested the Commission should identify ways to make the notion of art more concrete. Ms. Byrne said it could be helpful approach to start by showing people what is already in place in terms of art in the city. Identifying model programs and building the vision of where things ought to be could follow.

Commissioner Liljablad agreed that building the profile of the arts will entail crafting a message people can remember. He said those around his table were clear about the need to have quality schools, a quality transportation system, and quality parks in order to have a high quality of life. The arts were not mentioned as often.

Commissioner Manfredi suggested that Bellevue residents have not necessarily connected all the dots, one of which is the arts, that collectively improve a city's quality of life. Growth is going to happen and the focus should be on how the growth will be accommodated. Once that is established, all of the various vision pieces can be worked into the mix.

Mr. MacDonald said the Bel-Red corridor is the area most often touted as the place where much of the new growth will occur. Of concern is that the corridor is also the place where a number of small arts businesses like music stores, schools and dance studios are located. As they are pushed out, some may move to the Richards Road area, but a large number will seek space outside of Bellevue where they can afford to ply their trade.

Commissioner Cole commented that critical mass is an important draw. If there is a general scattering, patrons will have a more difficult time accessing the arts.

Commissioner Tremblay suggested that the Storefronts Bellevue project being developed could dovetail nicely with the notion of Bellevue as a shopping place; the more entrepreneurial artists could ply their craft in those spaces, and that could help to make the arts in Bellevue more concrete. Commissioner Jackson agreed that would be an excellent way to inform the community about the arts existing in Bellevue today.

Commissioner Liljablad pointed out that between the East Link light rail corridor and the city's plans to construct a new arterial in the Bel-Red area there will have to be quite a lot of right-of-way acquired. In the process some buildings likely will be acquired that will remain vacant for a time, and they could be used by artists.

Commissioner Manfredi suggested that at the very least information about artists already operating in the Bel-Red corridor should be collected. Commissioner Tremblay agreed and noted that some time back the suggestion was made that the arts community in Bel-Red should start a blog to let everyone know what is going on in that area. While that has not happened yet, it is still a good idea and something the city could foster. Ms. Byrne said if the city is to be involved it will require resources that are in limited supply. The potential is there, but it will need someone to stand there to keep the effort going.

Chair Smith commented that few city residents even know about the arts district idea in Bel-Red. The designated area has a lot of light industrial multi-use space that exists. For the immediate future the storefronts project will help draw attention to arts and artists. For the long term, however, every opportunity should be taken to keep the focus on the arts district.

Mr. MacDonald said there is an area of the downtown in Providence, Rhode Island, called Down City. It takes up roughly half of the downtown area. The arts community worked with the city and the state to exempt arts-related businesses from both state and city sales taxes. The result was that within just a few years the Down City area was chock full of galleries, art supply stores, and everything related to the arts, and the area is heavily visited by pedestrians.

Ms. Byrne asked the Commissioners to continue giving thought to what things will look like in 2035 and what needs to be put in place in terms of policies in order to get there.

D. Cultural Compass

Ms. Byrne reported that the committee had plans to meet on February 8. She said there should be something to report at the next meeting.

5. COMMISSION QUICK BUSINESS

Ms. Byrne informed the Commissioners that the March meeting would be held at KidsQuest museum in Factoria at the usual time.

6. REPORTS

A. Commissioners' Committee and Lead Reports

i. East Link Public Art Process

Chair Smith reported that on February 1 he and Ms. Byrne met with Sound Transit Start program staff and station architects for the 120th and 130th street stations. These stations are at the right point of design development to begin focusing on art approaches and themes. For instance, they discussed the Bel Red Art District and its emphasis on art making and education.

Start has put out a call for a systemwide artist, which is what they have done for each light rail segment. Each stop will have its own character, but each should also have a tie to the other stops along the line, which the lead artist is charged with ensuring. The lead artist will interact with the architects, engineers, and the other artists and may also be involved in creating art for one of the projects. Once the lead artist is hired Start will start assembling artist rosters.

The next step will be to pull together a roster of artists. Ms. Byrne said she and Chair Smith were asked by Sound Transit staff to respond to dozens of art images in terms of their general suitability for the various stations. The idea was not to identify artists or artworks but rather to give Start staff an impression of art styles and materials that might be best suited to each station.

There will be a Sound Transit public open house on station design on March 28. Art will be highlighted as one element of the system.

Answering a question asked by Commissioner Tremblay, Ms. Byrne said the Council's idea to have a citizen advisory committee assigned to working with Sound Transit on station design is to make sure the stakeholders associated with each station will have a say in the overall design for each station. Nothing has been determined yet about the charter or guiding principles for the groups. Ms. Byrne said she would make sure the Commission is involved.

ii. Transit Master Plan Forum

Commissioner Liljablad reported that he represented the Commission at a Transit Master Plan forum on January 30 conducted by city staff and Jarrett Walker, a transit professional and author of the book *Modern Transit*. The attendees were given opportunity to provide feedback on a series of questions regarding how the transit system should be developed in the future and what service priorities should be. Sound Transit and King County Metro representatives were present along with a broad spectrum of developers, service organizations, and board and commission representatives.

It was reported that there has been more growth in transit use than most people expected. Access to the system is more dispersed than was first thought, with boardings at street stops comprising the majority of the ridership in Bellevue. It was also noted that while the system was originally developed to get people to and from Seattle, destinations within the city are increasingly important and they are accounting for a large share of the overall ridership.

Commissioner Liljablad said the attendees at each table were tasked with coming up with an allocation of resources given certain budget considerations.

Mr. MacDonald said there were six tables in all and each table had their own map to work with. The maps from tables five and six were the most glaringly different; table five showed only the major corridors and buses running along them at fifteen-minute or less intervals, whereas table six showed buses on nearly every arterial aimed at giving the city total coverage, though with less frequent service.

B. Staff Reports

i. Project Status Report

Ms. Byrne informed the Commissioners that construction on the Bridle Trails public art project has begun. Some of the rocks are at the saw shop to be cut and engraved, but work on the signature stone at the 120th Avenue NE location will be done on site by the artist.

ii. 2013 Funding Process Calendar

Ms. Byrne reported that the funding guidelines were presented to the City Council on February 4 and they were approved as part of the consent calendar.

iii. Arts and Heritage Day Reminder

The Commissioners were reminded about the annual Arts and Heritage Day.

7. CORRESPONDENCE, INFORMATION

- A. Written Correspondence -- None
- B. Information
 - i. Upcoming agenda items

Ms. Byrne said at a recent meeting she visited with two members of the Kirkland Arts Council. She explained that while arts commissions operate under the auspices of a city, arts councils are private organizations. The Kirkland Arts Council members are appointed by the city and work closely with the city, but they have a lot of constraints. The group would like to meet with the Arts Commission to talk about experiences and interests, possibly in April.

- ii. Commission Committee Chairs and Leads for 2012-13

Ms. Byrne reported that the Council had decided it wants to have a citizens advisory committee for the Downtown Livability Initiative. The group will include representatives from some city boards and commissions as well as major stakeholders. Ms. Byrne said an Arts Commissioner will be appointed to the committee.

- iii. Cultural Compass Update Basics -- As Noted
 - iv. Public Art Program Budget Update -- As Noted

8. COMMISSIONER UPDATES ON LOCAL ACTIVITIES

Commissioner Manfredi said he recently visited the new Brian James gallery across from the Bravern. He said he was impressed by the fact that at the opening a large number of people signed the guest book.

Commissioner Tremblay reported that she attended the Chop Shop workshop and said it was outstanding.

9. ADJOURNMENT

Chair Smith adjourned the meeting at 6:38 p.m.