

BELLEVUE ARTS COMMISSION
REGULAR MEETING
MINUTES

June 4, 2013
4:30 p.m.

Bellevue City Hall
Room 1E -109

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

COMMISSIONERS ABSENT: None

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

OTHERS PRESENT: Brad Smith

RECORDING SECRETARY: Gerry Lindsay

1. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 4:36 p.m. by Chairperson Tremblay who presided. All Commissioners were present with the exception of Commissioner Manfredi who arrived at 4:42 p.m.

2. APPROVAL OF AGENDA AND MINUTES

A. Approval of Agenda

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

B. Approval of Minutes

A motion to approve the March 5, 2013, minutes as submitted was made by Commissioner Cole. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Fateeva and it carried unanimously.

A motion to approve the April 23, 2013, minutes as submitted was made by Commissioner Cole. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Jackson and it carried unanimously.

A motion to approve the May 7, 2013, minutes as submitted was made by Commissioner Cole. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Fateeva and it carried unanimously.

3. ORAL COMMUNICATIONS – None

4. ACTION ITEMS AND DISCUSSION ITEMS

A. East Link Art Opportunities

Arts Specialist Mary Pat Byrne reminded the Commissioners that at the May 7 meeting the staff took the opportunity to describe the East Link system and to outline items to consider as they developed their ideas about art opportunities. She said the next step was to have the Commission discuss the art opportunities as well as themes and locations for art that Sound Transit should

consider. She reminded them that any recommendations from the Commission would be in an advisory capacity only for Sound Transit to consider.

Commissioner Cole suggested that before talking about the opportunities surrounding the individual stations the Commission should step back and look at the philosophical positions that are important. She asked what entity will be managing the art piece on behalf of Sound Transit. Ms. Byrne said Sound Transit has staff and their staff has hired a lead artist team. It will be the job of the lead artist team to think about the overall East Link light rail system and to hone in on opportunities. The lead artist team has been on board for only a month or so but has been working rapidly to get up to speed. Given that information, Commissioner Cole suggested the Commission can best contribute by offering a philosophical point of view. That view could help to define what is true about the heritage of Bellevue and how it can be manifest in art at the various stations.

Commissioner Jackson commented that each station area has its own unique characteristics. The environment surrounding the South Bellevue station is Mercer Slough, and the Commission could ask Sound Transit to honor that fact and recommend that the artwork there will have a dialog with Mercer Slough. On the other hand, the focus could simply be on honoring transportation in general.

Chair Tremblay said the Commission will serve as eyes on the ground and should focus on gathering information about what is going on in each specific area as well as citywide. There should, however, be an overall concept that will provide for continuity, such as environment or culture.

Commissioner Manfredi noted that ideas are continuing to circulate and develop. One that continues to be strong is the desire to see the natural environment represented. Another is recognizing Bellevue's relationship to technology, and a third is recognizing Bellevue's diversity.

Commissioner Cole cautioned that highlighting Bellevue's ties to technology could in the long run prove a bad choice given how industries change over time. Bellevue's diversity and the natural environment, however, likely will not change.

Commissioner Manfredi commented that to say Bellevue has a strong relationship to technology is not to say what it looks like. Hopefully, Bellevue and the Eastside will continue to develop as model for the region with smart development in many respects. The technology issue could in fact be focused on smarter urbanization, and that is something that would continue even if technology companies ultimately choose to move elsewhere.

Commissioner Jackson agreed that technology is an important part of the lives of those who live in Bellevue and on the Eastside, and as such local art will reflect that fact. Chair Tremblay agreed. She said technology is less of a thing and more of a culture of innovation and a pioneering spirit, something that is not likely to go away.

Commissioner Manfredi suggested that education could be an overall philosophy.

Commissioner Fateeva said Bellevue's reputation as a city in a park would also be good to focus on. Ms. Byrne said that certainly would tie into Bellevue's relationship to the natural environment.

Commissioner Jackson said a lot can be done with integrating art into landscaping. Chair Tremblay agreed and added that the scale demands that the artistry gets folded into the placemaking design work. Ms. Byrne concurred but stressed that art dollars should not be spent on something like landscaping alone. She added that landscape architects like to blur the lines between landscaping and art and they should be encouraged to do so.

Senior Planner Mike Kattermann pointed out that there may be opportunities to sculpt landforms, particularly at the corner of Main Street and 112th Avenue NE where the portal will be and where the land will all be turned over to the city for development as a park.

Answering a question asked by Commissioner Manfredi regarding the South Bellevue station, Mr. Katterman said Sound Transit has been asked to minimize the bulk of the structure as viewed from the trails in Mercer Slough. At their open house Sound Transit presented their initial design concepts for that station and it included screening, both structural and vegetative.

Commissioner Cole asked if a rider at the South Bellevue station will be able to see Mercer Slough. Mr. Katterman said the Slough will be visible to riders coming into the station but not from the station itself.

Ms. Byrne pointed out that systemwide there will be a number of major architectural features, including overpasses and elevated structures that will be built. She said the Commission might want to consider treating major repeating features in a certain way.

Chair Tremblay commented that repetition is very important in that it can make an entire journey feel like a coordinated whole.

Ms. Byrne observed that there will be overpasses going over NE 8th Street, 112th Avenue NE, 115th Avenue NE and I-405, all within close proximity to each other. All will be new structures. There was agreement by the Commissioners that they should be viewed as a related cluster and that artistic design elements could be incorporated into the guideway as well as the support structures for the elevated sections.

Ms. Byrne reminded the Commissioners that the Council wants the downtown station to be a major punctuation point.

Commissioner Cole said she had no doubt that the elevated structures will be well engineered but was less confident that it would be well designed. She suggested it would be useful to have a study of the viewshed of the hospital district section done to truly capitalize on the opportunities. Those coming westbound down NE 8th Street will see the elevated transit line in plan view because of its height, and possibly something interesting, playful or fun could be incorporated into the design to make it artistically striking. Mr. Katterman said the viewshed issues have been looked at to some degree in terms of the Environmental Impact Statement, but not in the context of being artistically pleasing.

Chair Tremblay asked how much it would cost to conduct a viewshed study. Commissioner Cole allowed that her understanding was limited but suggested it would not be difficult to accomplish. Mr. Katterman said he was not clear on what the yield of such a study would be. Commissioner Cole said the outcome would be the ability to see what will be seen from various points.

Answering a question asked by Commissioner Jackson, Ms. Byrne noted that one of the lead ideas regarding the two stations in Bel-Red was that they would serve as bookends. While not identical to each other, they should be related.

Commissioner Jackson suggested the South Bellevue and East Main stations should be given an environmental focus; the Downtown and Hospital stations should be treated as urban/high-energy/culture/technology/innovation locations; and the 120th and 130th stations in Bel-Red should be bookends focused on art and possibly neighborhood.

Commissioner Cole proposed taking the three focus types and holding them up as the guiding principles for the Commission to narrow its conversation.

Chair Tremblay reminded the Commissioners that Bel-Red is the one opportunity to create a differentiated urban space. It will have retail, but not the same kind as in the downtown; there is going to be technology there, but it may be in the form of flexible office and incubator space; and there will be a focus on the environment.

Ms. Byrne said she would capture the comments made and integrate them into the worksheet. At the next meeting the process of testing the ideas against the specific experience possibilities within each segment will begin. She said the focus will be on both the stations and on what should happen in between the stations.

B. Cultural Compass

Ms. Byrne said the committee has been meeting weekly and is working on a couple of objectives. One is giving the City Council an update toward the end of June, and the other is getting prepared to talk with the public. The focus has been on what has been done since the adoption of the Cultural Compass that has been strong, where there are gaps, and what are the new issues.

Ms. Byrne called attention to the worksheet included in the packet that outlined the accomplishments that have moved things forward, and identified gaps, issues and questions. She asked the Commissioners to review the items, expand them as needed, and rate them in order of importance on a scale of one to five. Ultimately the information will be used to craft a number of different documents, such as a basic brochure about the update which will include only the top priority items; a more detailed document to show to the various focus groups; and a comprehensive list that will be included in the final document.

Commissioner Jackson called attention to the issue of direct funding to arts groups via the Eastside Arts Partnership and Special Projects and said she wanted to make sure that the funding level is compared to population increase from 2001 to the present. Ms. Byrne suggested comparing the amount as a percentage of the City budget in 2001 and today. Commissioner Jackson agreed.

Commissioner Jackson referred to item 1c citing and suggested the Commission should shy away from communicating the fact that emergency funding had to be sought for the Bellevue Philharmonic Orchestra, even though the Commission was successful in its efforts to obtain the funding. Ms. Byrne suggested the item should be given the lowest priority rating.

Chair Tremblay suggested that Stone Dance Production's bringing Chop Shop, a Contemporary Dance Festival, to Bellevue is something that should be highlighted.

Commissioner Manfredi proposed adding to the gaps, issues and challenges category the need for better communication with artists concerning the fact that there is money available, and the fact that the artists themselves do not know each other.

Ms. Byrne said a difficult question to consider is why in various crises situations the community either did not rally or was slow to rally to support an arts organization needing help, specifically in the cases of the Bellevue Philharmonic Orchestra and the Bellevue Arts Museum.

There was agreement that the loss of the Bellevue Philharmonic Orchestra and Open Satellite should be given some focus with an eye on determining what can be learned. Ms. Byrne was directed to tie together the Eastside Arts Coalition, communicating with artists, and improving networking among artists, and to include an opportunities column to the matrix for each of the goals.

Commissioner Jackson commented that one issue Bellevue faces in seeking support for local arts entities is that wealthy donors live in Medina and Clyde Hill and they are not committed to the Bellevue arts scene.

Commissioner Manfredi suggested each paragraph could benefit from having some more specificity with regard to numbers.

Chair Tremblay proposed including a separate paragraph focused on the festivals that are hosted annually in Bellevue.

Turning to the cultural facilities categories, Commissioner Jackson noted that the Bellevue Arts Museum recently received an National Endowment for the Arts award and went over the \$1 million mark in fundraising. She suggested those facts should be reflected.

Chair Tremblay referred to item 3b and noted that while the black box theater is in place, no one is using it. Ms. Byrne pointed out that the group which initially intended to manage the space ultimately declined. A second group encountered some difficulties and pulled out as well. Currently Evergreen City Ballet is actively working with the city and with a realtor to lease the space. She agreed that information should be included.

Answering a question asked by Chair Tremblay, Ms. Byrne explained that in the early 90s a regional study was conducted regarding cultural infrastructure on the Eastside. The conclusion reached was that the Eastside should have a single large performing arts center based in Bellevue because of its central location to the Eastside. Each city should have its own mid-sized theater seating between 350 and 600. They also felt that there could be as many black box theaters as anyone would be willing to build. The large facility will be the Tateuchi Center, and the theater at Meydenbaur Center and Kirkland Performing Arts Centers are both examples of the mid-size facility the study concluded each city should have.

With regard to the Bel-Red corridor, Chair Tremblay highlighted the need to “keep waving the flag.” The fact that the subarea plan includes policies allowing for artist live/work space is a good first step but more will need to be done to make sure the desired outcome is attained.

Commissioner Jackson said if she had to highlight three of the cultural facilities items she would underscore 3a, 3e, and 3f. Chair Tremblay said she would add 3h to the list.

Moving on the public art category, the Commissioners ranked each item fairly high, with the exception of item 4l which was ranked a bit lower. There was agreement that item 4a should be ranked higher than a 1 given its importance.

5. COMMISSION QUICK BUSINESS – None
6. REPORTS
 - A. Commissioners’ Committee and lead Reports – As Noted
 - B. Staff Reports – None
7. CORRESPONDENCE, INFORMATION
 - A. Written Correspondence – None
 - B. Information – As Noted

1. Special Projects Award Thank You on PAFE Web Page
2. Upcoming Agenda Items
3. Commission Committee Chairs and Leads for 2012-2013
4. Cultural Compass Update Basics
5. Public Art Program Budget Update

8. THANKS FOR FORMER COMMISSIONER BRADLEY SMITH

The Commissioners took some time to thank and celebrate former Commissioner Smith for his work on behalf of the Commission and the city.

9. ADJOURNMENT

Chair Tremblay adjourned the meeting at 6:33 p.m.