

**Bellevue Arts Commission  
Regular Meeting  
Minutes**

December 6, 2023  
4:30 p.m.

Bellevue City Hall  
Hybrid Meeting

Commissioners Present:	Chairperson Gowdy, Commissioners Aldredge, Enomoto, Martinez,
Commissioners Remote:	Commissioners Bhargava, Gulati, Nederlander
Commissioners Absent:	Commissioner Aldredge
Staff Present:	Manette Stamm, Lorie Hoffman, Department of Community Development; Karen Phu, City Attorney's Office
Others Present:	Councilmember Stokes
Recording Secretary:	Gerry Lindsay

**I. Call To Order**

The meeting was called to order at 4:34 p.m. by Chair Gowdy who presided. All Commissioners were present with the exception of Commissioner Aldredge.

**2. Approval of Agenda and Minutes**

A. Approval of Agenda

Motion to approve the agenda was made by Commissioner Martinez. The motion was seconded was by Commissioner Enomoto and the motion carried unanimously.

B. Approval Of Minutes

Commissioner Bhargava pointed out that her arrival time at the meeting should be shown as 4:27 p.m. rather than 4:57 p.m.

Motion to approve the November 8, 2023, minutes as corrected was made by Commissioner Gulati. The motion was seconded was by Commissioner Martinez and the motion carried unanimously.

**3. Oral Communications – None**

**4. Action, Discussion and Information Items**

A. Bylaws

Assistant City Attorney Karen Phu explained that the Commission is governed by Chapter 3.56 of the Bellevue City Code. One of the code's requirements is that the Commission adopt bylaws consistent with the requirements established in the city code. Recently, the City Council amended the code for all boards and commissions regarding

certain rules pertaining to meetings. The rule changes are already affected in the code, and the purpose of updating the bylaws is to conform with the new code provisions. Under the current bylaws, a two-step process is needed to make any changes. First, proposed amendments must be noticed and presented at a meeting. The second step involves voting at the next regular meeting, and a two-thirds majority vote is needed to adopt changes formally.

Continuing, Karen Phu said two specific changes are required to conform with the code. The first relates to the remote participation rules in Article 3, Section G. The proposed amendment adds greater flexibility to the remote participation rules. Under the new rules, Commissioners are only required to notify the presiding officer or the staff liaison about participating remotely no later than noon on the day prior to a meeting. The same limits as to the number of Commissioners allowed to participate remotely still apply, which is three. If more than three members request remote participation, it will be up to the staff liaison to decide who to approve.

The second change updates the rules relative to public participation in Article 7 Section E of the bylaws. The change updates the rules of decorum for public comment. Under the proposed change, public comments must be related to matters related to the City of Bellevue government and the subject matter encompassed in the powers and duties of the Commission. There are also new rules regarding conduct that may potentially be considered disruptive to meetings. Certain categories of prohibited conduct are more clearly identified, and the process for enforcing rules violations has been clarified.

Karen Phu added that a few non-substantive typographical changes are also proposed to be made to the bylaws.

Arts Program Analyst Manette Stamm said the proposed changes to the bylaws will be before the Commission for final adoption at the first meeting in January.

## B. Arts & Economic Prosperity 6 Final Report

Arts Community Manager Lorie Hoffman said the Commission received an update in May while the data collection process was underway. Data collection continued into June. American for the Arts, the partner for the study, has spent the last many months crunching the data and incorporating it into the final report.

Arts & Economic Prosperity 6 is a study of arts and culture non-profits and their audiences. The study takes about a year and is conducted every five to six years on the national level. Bellevue was one of 373 participating municipalities or regions. In addition to the Bellevue study, there was an Eastside study in partnership with Renton, Redmond and Issaquah. Traditionally the state of Washington has had incredibly low participation, with only Tacoma participating in the past. Accordingly, the study compares Bellevue to similar cities across the nation. The study shows that the arts are critical for both economic and social reasons.

New to the current study is an increased focus on the BIPOC and ALAANA communities, organizations that particularly serve BIPOC communities. For the first time, the study had a minimum number of surveys that had to be gathered from those organizations, and overall, the respondents were 55 percent BIPOC.

The takeaways from the national study include that the sector generated \$150 billion of economic activity in 2022. Nationally, 2.2 million jobs were created by the arts and

culture sector, and \$101 billion in personal income was generated. As an industry overall, almost \$30 billion was generated in taxes to federal, state, county and local municipalities. The study affirms that arts and culture non-profits are businesses that buy goods and services and hire employees. Arts and culture drive commerce to local businesses. When local non-profits conduct business, they are doing it in their communities, contracting with local trades persons, using public transportation, and doing everything businesses do.

Arts and culture strengthen the visitor economy. Nationally, one-third of attendees at events are visitors from outside the local county. In general, there is a strong desire for travelers and tourists to engage in arts and culture in the communities they visit. A vibrant arts and culture community keeps residents local. Where there are no local events, people travel to where there are arts and culture events.

On average, attendees at events sponsored by organizations primarily serving BIPOC residents spend on par with the national average. In Bellevue, the numbers are slightly inverted; attendees to BIPOC-led organizations spend slightly more than the average.

The arts engender a huge sense of pride in the community. Eighty-nine percent of attendees agreed that activities and venues are a source of pride in their neighborhoods. Inversely, about the same number indicated that if the venue were gone, it would create a sense of loss.

Arts and culture build livable communities. Eighty-six percent said arts and culture are important to the quality of life of their communities, and 79 percent of the American public believe the arts are essential to their community's business economy and local jobs.

The data shows that the arts improve personal well-being. Sixty-nine percent of the population believes the arts lift them up beyond their everyday experience, and 71 percent feel the arts give them pure pleasure and experience in participation.

The arts build empathy and understanding. Seventy-two percent of Americans believe the arts provide shared experiences with people of different races, ethnicities, ages, beliefs and identities, and 73 percent believe the arts help them understand other cultures better.

Lorie Hoffman said that post-Covid, audiences have been spending more but traveling less. The number of tourists and out-of-state visitors to arts events went down. Spending per person has increased but is on par with inflation.

The arts spark creativity and innovation. The business community is always looking for employees who exhibit elasticity and creativity in their thinking. It is one of the top five applied skills sought by business leaders, 72 percent of whom rank creativity high when hiring.

Turning to Bellevue-specific data, Lorie Hoffman noted that in 2022, arts and culture organizations generated \$54 million in economic activity, of which \$10.8 million was direct spending by those organizations. An additional \$43 million was events-related spending by audiences. Those numbers were drawn from the more than 800 surveys that were gathered over the last year. People go to events like Kelsey Creek Sheep Shearing, a free event, and spend, on average, about seven dollars for a latte or a snack. For events like Tasveer or Wintergrass, where folks stay in hotels for a week and visit Bellevue's luxury retail establishments, the attendees spend much more. Overall,

Bellevue's arts and culture industry supports 600 jobs in the community, from which \$10.5 million is returned in federal, state and local government revenues.

In Bellevue, the average attendee at an event spends \$49 per event beyond the ticket cost. That is \$10 higher than the national average. Slightly less of a percentage of attendees are from out of county than the national average. Still, those who do come from out of county are massively overspending the national average. Bellevue is almost unique in that its out-of-town visitors spend over a hundred dollars per event they attend. Forty dollars is the amount of overnight lodging that can be credited to a specific arts and culture event.

Across the Eastside, arts and culture supports some 1,200 jobs, including those in Bellevue. Attendees at Bellevue events spend more than attendees at other Eastside events. A larger percentage of attendees at Bellevue events are from out of the region.

Boulder, Colorado, and San Jose, California, are two cities often used as comparables to Bellevue. The numbers show that Bellevue performs quite well compared to those cities.

Arts & Economic Prosperity 6 looked particularly at organizations serving communities of color. Bellevue's BIPOC communities tend to spend just a little bit more than all audience numbers.

The more than one hundred dollars per event spent by tourists attending Bellevue events is incredibly high. It pares well with the current work on the tourism promotion area and shows that Bellevue is queued up for a big leap forward in the coming year. Tasveer was a vital contributor to those numbers. Folks attending the event came from nationwide and international locations, and they spent really big. When asked if they would attend a different event in Bellevue or a similar event elsewhere, they indicated they would go elsewhere if the event they want is not in Bellevue.

Lorie Hoffman said the study is concluded, and all the data is in hand. The press release has been put out, and there will be follow-up with the arts and culture organizations to make sure the data is in their hands.

Commissioner Martinez praised Lorie Hoffman for presenting the data to the Council on December 4.

Commissioner Gowdy pointed out that as each Councilmember commented on the data, they called for adding more to the arts budget.

Commissioner Bhargava asked what Tasveer does to generate such spending locally and what other events Bellevue could host that would have the same impact. Lorie Hoffman said Tasveer and Wintergrass are in the same category because they both present world-class programming. Tasveer is an Oscar-qualifying film festival, and it is specifically focused on the South Asian community. The quality of the films showcased at the event is phenomenal. Both events have a national and international draw, which is reflected in their marketing. Both organizations have expansion plans. Tasveer has looked at including a film summit in addition to the film festival, where they would bring in A-list celebrities to have conversations about the film industry and the specific challenges of being South Asian in the film industry.

Commissioner Enomoto asked how the study results and data will be used. Lorie Hoffman said the study is conducted every five to seven years and is used a lot by organizations wanting to show their economic impact.

Councilmember Stokes said one exciting thing about the study is the resulting clear evidence of the value of arts and culture in Bellevue. Where events generate both revenues and satisfaction for event attendees, they are valuable. Having the data in hand will help bolster the notion that the more events Bellevue hosts, the more revenue the city will see. Lorie Hoffman added that an amount far exceeds the dollars invested by the city in the arts is returned via tax revenues.

Commissioner Martinez commented that the arts are valuable yet often undervalued in budgeting.

### C. 2023 Year in Review

Manette Stamm said the grants had a tremendous impact, partly due to a one-time conversion of funds from the Council. There was a total of 77 allocations, adding up to \$281,000. A grant from the National Endowment for the Arts helped bolster the awards. For 2024, the expectation is that there will be 51 allocations to distinct organizations and artists.

Continuing, Manette Stamm said 2023 was a big year for public art. *Piloti* was finally installed in Downtown Park. Other works commissioned or otherwise acquired included *Emerging Radiance*, which will hopefully be installed before May; the 130<sup>th</sup> streetscape artwork that will be installed once the street work is completed; and *Rooted* by Jill Anholt. Artist Anna Milowsky was selected for the Crossroads Park project and design will begin by mid-December.

Public Art Specialist Scott MacDonald is working on the BelRed Look Forward subarea plan and looking to solidify policies that will advance arts and culture in the arts district. The policies will be before the Planning Commission on December 13.

Maintenance and restoration work was done on several critical artworks during the year, including *Longboat* and *Guan Yin*. Utility box wraps were installed in partnership with the school district, and some murals were completed.

The BelRed Arts District has officially been granted 501(C)(3) status.

Lorie Hoffman said work with the Tourism Promotion Area, which covers Bellevue and Redmond, continues. Contracts for the administration of the dollars will be before the Council in January, and some large marketing campaigns will follow. The new tourism promotion board has met three times and will meet next January. The board comprises hoteliers in both Redmond and Bellevue, and they set the budget and strategic plans. Money for festivals and events is included in their budget so arts and culture providers can apply for funding from them.

Councilmember Stokes said it was a good thing to recognize Wintergrass formally. They earned the recognition, and it was also crucial for the community to understand their impact. Bellevue has, over the last two or three years, made a major shift toward getting arts in the parks.

Manette Stamm said Bellwether was passed off to a consultant for the first time in 2023. While there were some very successful elements, the decision was not to continue the

contract with PACE in 2024. The Commission needs to circle back and decide what the event is and how it can better serve residents with the festival.

Councilmember Stokes asked if another organization could be found that could head up the festival. Lorie Hoffman said reopening the RFP could be re-explored, though given the tight timeline, the earliest would probably be 2025.

Manette Stamm noted that during the year, the Commission said goodbye to Maria Lau Hui, who now serves as a member of the community alliance for the BelRed Arts District. The Commission also welcomed the new Commissioner, Richard Nederlander. The hiring of Public Art Specialist Scott MacDonald has helped the work of the staff and Commission.

Manette Stamm said the work plan for 2024 will be presented to the Commission in January or February. While details are still being worked out, the grant program may look slightly different from the existing one. The work will include getting some public art in the ground, including in Crossroads.

Commissioner Gulati asked if a certain rhythm would be lost without Bellwether in 2024. Lorie Hoffman pointed out that the event has historically been held biannually rather than yearly. Yearly presentations are relatively new but remain the outlier rather than the norm. Bellwether currently does not have much momentum in the view of the community. In the future, the focus should be on starting anew.

## **5. Commission Quick Business – None**

## **6. Reports**

- A. Commissioners' Committee and Lead Reports – As Noted
- B. Project Updates from Staff

Manette Stamm reported that the 2023 grant program has closed. All grantees have been invoiced. The 2024 grants were presented to the Council on December 4 and approved. Notifications will be sent out soon.

The BelRed Arts District held a meet and greet on November 9 that was very well attended and fun. Both Commissioner Gowdy and Commissioner Enomoto attended.

The 130<sup>th</sup> streetscape art has been created and secured. It will be stored until the streetscape project nears completion in 2025.

Bellwether will be removed from future project updates until there is any new news.

Creative Crosswalks, a new program, has had 29 applications submitted. The selection panel met on December 1 and selected an artist who will begin outreach later in the month. Final designs should be ready by February, though given the separate process, they will not be approved by the Commission.

The Crossroads artist is currently in the contracting process.

The Eastside Artist Roster has 147 submitted applications, of which 49 are in progress.

There was consensus to push back the January 3 Commission meeting by a week to January 10 to facilitate improved attendance.

Manette Stamm informed the Commissioners that all future meetings will be Zoom recorded, not just audio recorded.

Councilmember Stokes said Doors Open had been signed, sealed, and delivered. It will change things. There has been general support for it.

Lorie Hoffman explained that Doors Open King County is a .1 percent sales tax increase for arts, culture, science and heritage. The tax will go into effect and collections will begin on April 1. The first grants to the arts and culture community will begin near the end of 2024 and will be handled by 4Culture. Once in full swing, the tax, which was 20 years in the making, will generate about \$100 million annually.

## **7. Adjournment**

Commissioner Gowdy adjourned the meeting at 5:19 p.m.