

Bellevue Arts Commission Meeting Minutes

September 3, 2025
4:30 p.m.

Bellevue City Hall
1E-113 and Virtual

Commissioners Present:	Chairperson Aldredge, Commissioners Bhargava, Chen, Hazra, Martínez, McIntyre
Commissioners Remote:	Vice Chair Enomoto
Commissioners Absent:	None
Staff Present:	Manette Stamm, Lorie Hoffman, Community Development
Others Present:	Councilmember Sumadiwiry
Recording Secretary:	Gerry Lindsay

I. **Call To Order**

The meeting was called to order at 4:30 p.m. by Chair Aldredge who presided. All Commissioners were present.

2. **Approval of Agenda and Minutes**

A. Approval of Agenda

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

B. Approval of Minutes

Motion to approve the July 9, 2025, special meeting minutes as submitted was made by Commissioner Martínez. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Bhargava and the motion carried unanimously.

3. **Oral Communications**

Sarah Wagner, Executive Director of the Bellevue Symphony, was introduced along with conductor Brian Davenport. Davenport's long career in music was highlighted, including having established the Federal Way Symphony and later the Bellevue Symphony in 2019. Wagner described the work of the Bellevue Symphony, including holding two concerts per year at the Meydenbauer Theatre, though there was a pause during the COVID-19 pandemic. A concert is scheduled for Saturday, October 25, at 7:30 p.m. at the Meydenbauer Theatre that will include a digital visual arts exhibit featuring four artists from the Bellevue Art Fair. It was emphasized that the orchestra, composed of more than 50 professional musicians, serves a unique role in supporting young artists through six annual competitions that attract about 75 entrants each. Winners gain the opportunity to perform with the symphony, often marking their first professional orchestral performance. The October concert will include two young, featured artists alongside the symphony's major piece, Brahms' Fourth Symphony. Conductor

Davenport's extensive training and career in Europe were highlighted, including a tenure as Kappelmeister at the State Theater and Opera House in Darmstadt. The mission of the Bellevue Symphony is to bridge classical expertise with opportunities for young musicians and deeper community engagement.

4. Action, Discussion and Information Items

A. New Member Welcome

The Commission welcomed Charles McIntyre as its newest member. McIntyre described having family ties to Bellevue going back to a grandfather who settled in the city in the 1950s. The history of the family includes local business ownership and community involvement. Along with living in Bellevue for nearly three decades and raising four children, McIntyre shared having served as president of the Surry Downs Community Club and having a desire to engage more deeply in the broader community through the Arts Commission. Initially, a comic book artist and filmmaker, before transitioning into writing, a master's degree was obtained from the Iowa Writers Workshop. During the pandemic, there was a reconnection with the visual arts, including painting. It was noted that McIntyre's children have been heavily involved in music programs within the Bellevue School District, with the youngest now studying at the New England Conservatory of Music.

B. Partner Presentation

Brian Wallace, Evergreen City Ballet board president, described the organization as a nonprofit dance school based in Renton. It was founded in 1994 by former Pacific Northwest Ballet principal Wade Walthall. The school offers classes for students aged three through adults. There has recently been a growth in adult participation. The organization provides professional quality performances in Auburn, Renton, Federal Way and Bellevue, alongside a pre-professional ballet training program. The organization employs about 12 staff and teachers and benefits from significant volunteer support, with more than 1,800 volunteer hours contributed in the past year. Financial barriers should never prevent a student from dancing; thus, the school provides more than \$10,000 annually in tuition assistance and scholarships. The organization's dual mission of artistic excellence and the creation of a supportive, encouraging environment for dancers was highlighted.

Continuing, Brian Wallace described how the organization has benefited from grants provided by the Bellevue Arts Commission. Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Ballet performed at the Meydenbauer Theatre. In recent years, however, a unique collaboration was started with the Newport High School Orchestra under the direction of Barney Blau. The collaboration has enabled full productions of Coppelia and Hansel and Gretel, involving approximately 150 youth dancers and musicians. The spring performances include three to four shows annually, one of which is offered free of charge to students who feed into Newport High School. Attendance at the free performances ranges between 450 and 650 students, depending on the capacity used. There has been a clear value in providing access to the arts for young audiences.

The city's grant program is ideally suited to support Evergreen City Ballet's work in Bellevue in that it helps stage performances. The Commission was asked to continue considering ways to reach audiences more effectively in Bellevue and other performance communities, noting that raising awareness and ensuring access remain ongoing priorities. When working with Newport High School, the technical crew is largely student-

run, but Evergreen City Ballet also brings in professional technicians. By comparison, districts such as Auburn and Renton operate professional theaters within their systems. Bellevue should consider such an arrangement.

Brian Wallace said the upcoming season will open with The Nutcracker featuring original choreography by founder Wade Walthall. The production has been staged for more than thirty years, is family-friendly, and is performed in Auburn and Renton over two weekends each December. The program offers both abbreviated one-hour shows and full-length performances. In February, the organization will present Elevate, a student-run choreographer showcases in which advanced students take charge of choreography, costumes, lighting, and overall production. In May, the Ballet Nights program will continue the collaboration with Newport High School Orchestra. Last year, Evergreen City Ballet launched the Evergreen International Dance Festival, which brings together professional and student schools for a weekend of diverse dance styles. The inaugural festival was considered a success, and the organization intends to build on it annually. The season will conclude with a finale showcasing dancers from the youngest students through the pre-professional level.

Chair Aldredge asked for comments on the need for performance venues in Bellevue, noting that several supported organizations have raised concerns about the lack of appropriately sized facilities. Many have specifically expressed interest in spaces larger than Newport Auditorium but smaller than the Meydenbauer Theatre. Brian Wallace responded that Newport High School's auditorium, which seats about 500, is a good fit for Evergreen City Ballet. Meydenbauer is smaller. The new Federal Way Performing Arts and Event Center offers a flexible design with a balcony and seating for approximately 700. Its multifunctional capabilities are great for hosting a variety of events, including receptions and workshops. Bellevue could benefit from a similar facility, given the size of the city.

Commissioner Bhargava asked what the Evergreen City Ballet's largest challenge is when it comes to working in Bellevue. Brian Wallace replied that Evergreen City Ballet is based in Renton, and many of the performances take place there. Access to venues is a recurring difficulty. Performances of The Nutcracker were previously held at the Meydenbauer Theatre, but another group now holds exclusive December bookings there. While Evergreen City Ballet could return to the Meydenbauer for other events, the Newport collaboration has provided a consistent solution. Working in high schools requires supplementing student technical crews with professional staff to maintain production quality, and that adds to costs. Cost management in general remains a constant challenge.

Chair Aldredge thanked Evergreen City Ballet for its effective use of grant funding and its strong community contributions.

C. Committee Assignments

The meeting then turned to committee assignments for the coming year. Lorie, together with Manette, led the discussion. They explained that the Commission intends to streamline its structure into three committees to ensure that members' time is used effectively and that each committee has meaningful work.

The first committee is the Grants and Allocations Committee, responsible for reviewing grant applications, studying community organizations, and evaluating proposals. At least two commissioners and one alternate are needed. This year, the committee will focus

solely on project grants, as the current EAP awardees are already secured for the biannual cycle.

The second committee is the Public Art Committee, which requires at least three commissioners and one alternate. This group will review and inform public art policies and will serve as a source for selection panelists. It is expected to continue having substantial work throughout the year.

The third committee is the Community Partnerships Committee, which will handle engagement with partner organizations, potential outreach efforts, and the drafting of letters to encourage collaboration. This committee will also consist of three commissioners and one alternate.

Manette added that newer commissioners are often encouraged to join the Grants and Allocations Committee as an introduction to the breadth of community organizations. She suggested that the two newest members, Commissioners McIntyre and Martínez, consider joining, noting that this year's workload would be lighter and provide a good introduction. Lorie noted that the Grants Committee has a defined timeline over the next few months, while the other committees operate on a more flexible, ad hoc basis.

The commission then began to discuss preferences and experiences with committees to help guide new members in making their assignments.

Commissioner Hazra stressed the importance of having Commissioners from a variety of backgrounds serving on the Grants and Allocations Committee, given that some applications are truly one of a kind.

Commissioners McIntyre and Martínez agreed to serve on the Grants and Allocations Committee. Vice Chair Enomoto volunteered to serve as the alternate.

Chair Aldredge, Vice Chair Enomoto and Commissioner Bhargava agreed to serve on the Public Art Committee. Commissioner Hazra agreed to serve as an alternate.

Commissioners Martínez, Hazra, and Chen agreed to serve on the Community Partnerships Committee, and Commissioner Bhargava was confirmed as the alternate.

5. Commission Quick Business

A. Next Meeting Date

Lorie Hoffman proposed canceling the October commission meeting to preserve time for the Grants and Allocations Committee's intensive work. The next regular meeting was set for Wednesday, November 5.

6. Reports

A. Project Updates from Staff

Lorie Hoffman reported that the 2026 Project Grants cycle had launched, with the guidelines posted online. The application deadline is October 10, and applications are already in progress. The Commissioners were reminded that award amounts are increased for the year to \$3,000, \$5,000 and \$7,000 given an overall increase in the funding pool.

Lorie Hoffman said the BelRed Arts District Community Alliance hosted its first night market on August 23. Despite temperatures above 90 degrees, the community turnout was strong. City staff were present, operating three booths focused on the Creative Crosswalks project, sharing project grant information and guidelines translated into seven languages. A team from Development Services engaged attendees about a BelRed Land Use Code update.

Regarding the Grand Connection Art Crossing plan, the Commissioners were informed that artist Matthew Mazzotta will visit in September to begin planning and will meet with the Friends of the Grand Connection and other partner organizations. Some intentional unstructured time will also be spent exploring Bellevue. Follow-up meetings will occur via videoconference after the initial fieldwork.

The public artwork *Yonder Sky* by Po Shu Wang has been installed. Electricians are finishing the interactive components, which require additional internal work. The artwork features a cornucopia form with a sensor in its mouth, allowing visitors to compose music through hand motions, which then plays through the installation. An opening event is preliminarily scheduled for October pending final testing.

The scheduled installation of the work by artist Anna Mlasowsky has been rescheduled to October due to shipping delays from the fabricator. All components have arrived, have been assembled, and are ready for installation.

Chair Aldredge asked if the work required additional funds due to tariffs. Lorie Hoffman confirmed that the artist encountered substantial, unforeseen tariff costs so high that they would have erased any profit, leaving the artist with a significant personal financial loss. To prevent that outcome, staff amended funding to cover the tariffs from the city's arts budget.

Lorie Hoffman said the art panels along 124th Avenue NE, adjacent to the Safeway ice cream plant, are ready for installation pending suitable weather conditions. An opening ceremony will be held in collaboration with the BelRed Arts District Community Alliance on October 3 at 11:00 a.m.

Lorie Hoffman said the city's art collection is going through its standard maintenance. The standard seasonal maintenance is concluding, and a full report will be provided at the Commission's next meeting. A new multi-year contract has been established to ensure consistent annual investment in upkeep, preventing deferred maintenance. Having a contractor on call has already proven useful, such as when graffiti was quickly removed from the artwork *Rain Catchers*. In addition to routine care, some artworks require significant restoration, particularly *The Root*, located in the City Hall Plaza. The restoration will likely involve tenting the area and is targeted for completion before the World Cup in the summer of 2026.

Lorie Hoffman said the Eastside Artist Roster is transitioning away from Survey Monkey Apply. Staff are looking at other technologies for accepting applications. The roster is now being managed through Microsoft Forms. The city's website has been updated accordingly, ensuring that artists can still register their information without interruption.

Manette Stamm announced that the open call for a large mural project in BelRed, located outside the Pacific Northwest Ballet school, received over 90 applications. Submissions came from across Washington, Oregon and California. The review panel is

currently evaluating them and will select the final artist or artist team within a few weeks. The Commission will receive an update on the outcome at the next meeting.

7. **Adjournment**

Chair Aldredge adjourned the meeting at 5:12 p.m.

City of Bellevue staff liaison

Date