

Bellevue Arts Commission
Regular Meeting
Minutes

May 8, 2024
4:30 p.m.

Bellevue City Hall
Virtual Meeting

Commissioners Present: Chairperson Gowdy, Commissioners Aldredge, Enomoto, Gulati, Nederlander

Commissioners Remote: Commissioner Bhargava

Commissioners Absent: Commissioner Martinez

Staff Present: Manette Stamm, Lorie Hoffman, Jesse Canedo, Scott MacDonald, Department of Community Development

Others Present: Councilmember Stokes

Recording Secretary: Gerry Lindsay

1. Call to Order

Chair Gowdy, who presided over the meeting, called it to order at 4:30 p.m. All Commissioners were present except Commissioner Martinez.

Commissioner Aldredge opened the floor to nominations for Chair.

Commissioner Gulati nominated Commissioner Aldredge.

No other nominations were made.

The nomination of Commissioner Aldredge to serve as Chair was carried unanimously.

Chair Aldredge opened the floor to nominations for Vice Chair.

Commissioner Aldredge nominated Commissioner Martinez to serve as Vice Chair.

The nomination of Commissioner Martinez to serve as Vice Chair carried unanimously.

2. Approval of Agenda and Minutes

A. Approval of Agenda

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

B. Approval of Minutes

Motion to approve the March 6, 2024, minutes as submitted was made by Commissioner Enomoto. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Nederlander and the motion carried unanimously.

3. Oral Communications - None

Chair Aldredge noted for the record that the Arts Commission does not condone hateful or offensive speech from any individual. While the Commission prefers that people refrain from making such comments, the Commission respects individuals' First Amendment free speech rights. Individuals are allowed to express their thoughts and feelings whether the Commission agrees with them or not.

4. Action, Discussion and Information Items

A. Public Art Policies

Arts Community Manager Lorie Hoffman stated that the draft policies are intended to focus on the Commission's primary role as assigned by city code, namely the acquisition of artwork and making recommendations on the suitability of any gifts of art to the city. While not explicitly defined in the code, it is also assumed the Commission has the authority to make recommendations on the deaccession of works. The role of the staff is to make budgetary and work plan decisions; to develop artist calls consistent with the board Council direction via policy and adopted plans; make recommendations to the Commission on artwork acquisitions, including donations; and to manage the care of the collection.

The policies are intended to create a consistent process for how staff manages projects and how the Commission is to be keyed in at critical points, specifically relative to recommending artworks for acquisition. A lot is guided by historical knowledge of how things are done. Having the processes written down will assure public transparency and will enable new staff to do their jobs consistently. The focus is on the consistency of roles, processes, panel size, and eligibility. The policies are also intended to summarize the adopted City Council direction to create a collection of goals for artists, staff, and the Commission to use in developing projects, artwork designs, and the background for staff and Commission recommendations for acquisition, donation, and deaccession.

Historically, long-term staff knowledge has been relied on to determine how projects are managed and to help the Commission move through its role of acquiring public art. Policies allow the public art program to be resilient and consistent regardless of staff or commission changes and help to weather those changes in personnel. Having policies will end reliance on being guided by vague institutional knowledge. Staff has made several attempts over the year to finalize writing down policies. The work has progressed in 2024 in concert with the public art subcommittee.

The draft policies address deaccessions for the first time. Typically, deaccession actions have triggered the need to finalize the policies, given the specific rules regarding the removal of city property.

Lorie Hoffman said the policies are straightforward, but there are critical elements for the Commission to be aware of. The Public Art Mission statement has been one of the most helpful tools for staff, artists and selection panels to use in the development of artworks. It also serves to illustrate to the community what the collection does. The current statement was a bit long and functioned as both a mission and vision statement, but it wasn't easy to quickly summarize the mission to the community. There are also collection goals in the draft, with some applying to all projects and others selected for specific projects. They are derived from city policy and Council-adopted plans, and they serve as a direct link to what is called out as a role for the Arts Commission.

A significant driver in the draft was a need for consistency across projects, so focus was given to tying project types to the eligibility and selection panel minimums. For more significant projects, more eligible artists are pulled from a wider area and the selection panel composition shifts accordingly.

Maintenance is often a big concern for staff and the Commission, particularly as the collection ages, so the focus is on incorporating maintenance throughout the policies.

For the first time, the draft policies establish donation policies to address critical problems that have been faced in the past, including the lack of site and maintenance planning. The intent is to make sure the city will not see donations accepted without having a home for them, landing them in storage where the public cannot view them.

The policies' deaccession process is critical, especially since many of the works in the city's collection are nearing the end of their serviceable lives. Deaccession is a healthy part of the collection process. It ensures that a collection will remain a meaningful asset for the community.

Lorie Hoffman said the policies highlight key Commission decision points, including reviewing the policies themselves, establishing the Public Art Collection Mission and Vision, identifying individual project goals at the conception of each public art project for inclusion in the artist call, direction for the Public Art Committee to review preliminary art concepts and provide feedback to staff, with the conceptual design of artworks going to the full Commission for a recommendation before proceeding and clarifying that the Commission will be asked to recommend artworks, including donations, for inclusion into the collection at the final stage of design, excepting for temporary works.

Lorie Hoffman said the policies will be brought back before the Commission at a later meeting to be discussed and finalized.

Commissioner Nederlander asked about the current state of the deaccession process. Lorie Hoffman allowed that the process has been ad hoc as various works have come up. However, the process has not been undertaken very frequently. It is likely to come up more often going forward as multiple pieces from the earlier phases of the city's collection reach their end of life. End of life is defined as no longer being able to reasonably maintain a work. That can occur when a piece fails as a physical structure. Some pieces have a known end of life, particularly tech works.

Chair Aldredge noted being a member of the Public Art Committee and being happy to see maintenance taken into consideration much more seriously during the selection process.

Commissioner Gulati asked if the projected maintenance costs over the next five to ten years will be considered up front in the accession process. Lorie Hoffman said a maintenance plan can be requested from the artists earlier in the process. Of course, that will involve an educated guess, as no one can account for everything that might happen to a piece once it is out in the environment. Known maintenance can and should be planned for. A good example is *Piloti* in Downtown Park, which, before installation, it was known the work would require a twice-a-year cleaning.

Commissioner Gulati highly recommended including maintenance costs upfront, especially for big pieces, and doing regular maintenance on them to give them longer lives. Lorie Hoffman said that the policies go hand in glove with the city's increased investment in maintenance in recent years. Maintenance plans are not necessarily in hand for many of the older pieces, but plans can be developed.

Public Art Specialist Scott MacDonald said there is no intent to say what the maintenance budget will be for a work before it is even designed. The artists should feel free to be creative in coming up with ideas that will then become a judgment for the Commission to address, with recommendations from the staff. During the design process, including during conceptual design, the Commission should make maintenance a core part of its decision. The idea is to develop a template every artist will need to fill out in terms of a maintenance plan. A contractor will be tasked with reviewing the maintenance plans and giving an accurate idea of what the expected maintenance will be. The Commission will have that in hand when making decisions about accession. Some works, new works in particular, have a two-year warranty period. Where regular maintenance is carried out on those works in accordance with the maintenance plan, it makes it easier for the city to make any warranty claims if there are issues. Maintenance plans can extend the lifespan of artworks.

Commissioner Enomoto asked what opportunities exist for the Commission to acquire works from public exhibits in an equitable manner. Lorie Hoffman said equity is a big reason why accession visits are not done. The city does not generally look to acquire unsolicited proposals; rather, the process is led through an open call, which could be referred to as a request for proposals or qualifications. That is done for larger works and, in more recent years, for portable works. The process allows for community members to apply.

Commissioner Gulati asked if the process is open only to local artists or to artists more generally. Lorie Hoffman said it depends on the size of the project. The larger the project, the larger the call region. Typically, the larger the project, the fewer artists can do the work, making it necessary to reach out wider. The policies reflect that.

Chair Aldredge said the Public Art Committee received a breakdown by dollar value showing the breadth of calls based on the size of the work. The call for an artwork in Downtown Park was made internationally because it was for the most significant commission the city has ever undertaken.

Commissioner Gulati said the call for the work at the new men's shelter in south Bellevue was also international, given the size of the project. It is not always possible for local artists to deliver large, long-lasting works.

Commissioner Enomoto asked how panelists are chosen to serve on selection committees. Lorie Hoffman said the Chair appoints the Commissioners who serve on those panels. For the community members, the staff looks for those with technical expertise, starting with the Eastside Artists Roster. On occasion, folks who recently have worked with the city are tapped to serve on panels.

B. Cultural Facilities

Arts Program Analyst Manette Stamm commented that the city has previously funded cultural facilities in an ad hoc way, with the Council being approached with proposals from primarily large organizations, and the Council has decided to fund them. Examples include Pacific Northwest Ballet's facility in BelRed, the Bellevue Art Museum, and KidsQuest. Recently, staff have been researching more equitable approaches to funding cultural facilities. A common practice involves establishing a cultural facilities grant program. To do so requires the Council to adopt ordinances. The proposal was taken to the Council three weeks ago, and the Council asked to bring the ordinances back to a future meeting.

Two new programs will be recommended. The first is a capital projects grant to assist in acquiring or constructing arts or cultural facilities and constructing or installing permanent improvements to existing buildings to deliver visual or performing arts. The second grant program would involve the repair and maintenance of aging arts or cultural facilities owned or leased by eligible non-profit organizations.

Regarding eligibility, Manette Stamm said the grants will be open to non-profits that have operated for at least two years and can demonstrate financial solvency and a sustainable long-term financial model. For the maintenance grants, the applicants must own the building where the maintenance project involves building systems such as roofs, elevators, and HVAC systems. Where an applicant is a tenant of a leased space within a building owned by another party, the maintenance project must be limited to the applicant's space and a duty of the tenant to address.

The grants will be reimbursable for costs incurred. The funds will not be allowed to pay for any operating costs of the non-profit for its programs, activities or fundraising. Larger capital projects (requests over \$500,000) will be capped at 40 percent of the cost of the project.

Manette Stamm said the review process to be followed will be very similar to the other Arts Commission's grants.

Chair Aldredge asked if the grant programs would be on the same schedule as the other grant programs. Manette Stamm said they will be slightly out of alignment for a few reasons. For one, the desire is to get awards to organizations before Doors Open applications go live. Doors Open is a new King County one-time facility grant program that organizations in Bellevue will be able to apply for. Organizations that can show they have received other grants are often viewed as being more attractive, so if there is a stamp of approval from the Arts Commission and the Council, they will look pretty good to Doors Open.

Chair Aldredge asked if the same grants committee would be used. Manette Stamm said the staff's current thinking is that a separate committee would be needed, given the workload. It is likely that most of the Commissioners will be called on to review one program or another.

5. Commission Quick Business – None

6. Reports

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

Lorie Hoffman shared that the BelRed Arts District is coming off a very successful party for the 2 Lane opening. The BelRed Arts District Community Alliance led a very joyful celebration at the BelRed station, where they had set up a huge stage and brought together a number of community booths. There were large crowds throughout the day.

The Bel-Red subarea plan's Arts, Culture and Creativity policies were presented to the Planning Commission on April 24. An eye is also being kept on the BelRed Look Forward process and the Comprehensive Plan Periodic Update process given the associated policies that affect the work of the Commission.

Regarding *Yonder Sky*, the piece by Po Shu Wang, the Commission was informed that construction of the 130th streetscape from Bel-Red Road to Northup Way is slated to start on May 28 and take about a year and a half. The work to install the artwork will be coordinated with the building of the roadway. The piece is complete and ready for installation.

Manette Stamm said materials have been ordered for the Creative Crosswalks project. They should arrive in a week or so. The tentative schedule calls for installation the week of May 20, depending on the weather. The crosswalk celebrating Pride will be at the south end of Downtown Park. As a temporary artwork, Commission design review approval was not required.

Lorie Hoffman said new artwork is being developed for Crossroads Park by artist Anna Mlasowsky, under artist Jill Anholt as mentor and coach.

Staff are working through the surplus process regarding *When Now Becomes Then*. As directed by the Commission, the asset will be removed from city ownership.

Lorie Hoffman said the final mural for the BelRed mural pilot program will be installed in the coming months. The wall on which the mural is to be installed had a paint defect. Sound Transit filed a warranty claim with the vendor to repair the problem.

Models in Motion & Link in Progress is currently on display on the City Hall mezzanine. In partnership with Sound Transit, the show will run through the fall, especially for the Sound Transit opening.

The Commissioners were informed that the Diversity Advantage Team was coordinating another show highlighting Asian American Pacific Islander and Native Hawaiian artists on the first floor of City Hall that will run through the end of the month.

Manette Stamm reported that staff are also continuing to work with the Bellevue School District on additional student-design utility box wraps.

Manette Stamm added that one written communication had been included in the Commission packet.

7. Adjournment

Chair Aldredge adjourned the meeting at 5:30 p.m.