

BELLEVUE ARTS COMMISSION
REGULAR MEETING
MINUTES

July 18, 2023
4:30 p.m.

Bellevue City Hall
Virtual Meeting

COMMISSIONERS PRESENT: Chairperson Lau Hui, Commissioners Aldredge, Bhargava, Gowdy, Martinez

COMMISSIONERS REMOTE: Commissioner Gulati, Enomoto

COMMISSIONERS ABSENT: Commissioner Bhargava

STAFF PRESENT: Manette Stamm, Lorie Hoffman, Michael Kattermann, Jesse Canedo, Thara Johnson, Justin Panganiban, Scott MacDonald, Department of Planning and Community Development

OTHERS PRESENT: Councilmember Stokes; Lora Unger, Annie DiMartino, PACE

RECORDING SECRETARY: Gerry Lindsay

I. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 4:37 p.m. by Commissioner Gowdy, who presided. All Commissioners were present with the exception of Commissioner Bhargava.

A. Election of Chair and Vice Chair

Commissioner Aldredge nominated Commissioner Gulati to serve as Chair. Commissioner Gulati indicated the need to continue serving virtually for the next year, making it impossible to serve as either Chair or Vice Chair.

Commissioner Aldredge then nominated Commissioner Gowdy to serve as Chair. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Gulati.

Absent additional nominations, Commissioner Gowdy was elected unanimously.

Commissioner Gulati nominated Commissioner Aldredge to serve as Vice Chair.

Absent additional nominations, Commissioner Aldredge was elected unanimously.

2. APPROVAL OF AGENDA AND MINUTES

A. Approval of Agenda

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

B. Approval of Minutes

Motion to approve the May 3, 2023, minutes, as submitted, was made by Commissioner Aldredge. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Martinez, and the motion carried unanimously.

3. ORAL COMMUNICATIONS – None

4. ACTION, DISCUSSION AND INFORMATION ITEMS

A. Comprehensive Plan Periodic Update: Draft Arts and Culture Policies

Senior Planner Justin Panganiban reminded the Commissioners that in November 2022, the Commission was provided with an update regarding the Comprehensive Plan and the update process, along with an overall scope of the arts and culture policies. Under the Growth Management Act, the city is required to have a Comprehensive Plan, which is an important tool to guide growth and development over the next 20 years. The goals and policies in the Comprehensive Plan guide decision-making around various topics, including arts and culture. The policies lead to regulations, specific long-range strategic plans, and specific programs.

The Comprehensive Plan Periodic Update work is focused primarily on policy amendments to get at the language needed to support the city's ability to implement, among other things, a range of arts and culture opportunities. The work includes weeding out outdated policies that no longer reflect the city's changed conditions and future needs. It also provides new guidance on the different types of arts and culture opportunities that have emerged since the previous update.

Staff, the community, and the Commission have identified several emerging opportunities. For example, interest has been expressed in providing a greater mix of uses within the residential neighborhoods, defining a unique identity across the city, and a desire for gathering spaces. Housing, especially affordable housing, is increasingly important to the city, and the Commission has identified the need for affordable housing for artists.

The feedback received to date has been valuable in drafting arts and culture policies to support better the needs of the arts community and the broader Bellevue community that is partaking in the experiences. There has been feedback regarding emphasizing the BelRed Arts District and arts and culture in Neighborhood Centers. The Commission has also noted the need to consider the recent art space survey and the need to preserve affordable space for artists to live and work. Partnering with private interests in the progression of arts and culture opportunities throughout the city has also been emphasized; the murals and utility box wraps are examples of those partnerships.

Justin Panganiban noted that the staff's preliminary recommendations for arts and culture policies had been included in the Commission's packet. It was stressed that the work was only an initial draft and that much more was needed. The new policies provide a framework for the BelRed Arts District. Three new policies are proposed for inclusion in the Urban Design and Arts Element, which, at a high level, will guide key investments for the area. They focus on arts, culture, innovation and nightlife; the use of bold and innovative visual identifiers; and creative business attraction and retention.

There are only three policies in the Urban Design and Arts Element. Staff will come before the Commission later in the process to provide an update on the BelRed subarea plan policies. One way to view the Urban Design and Arts Element policies is that they articulate a broader vision for arts and culture in which the BelRed Arts District plays a

unique and key role. As part of the subarea update, the policies for the BelRed Arts District will more specifically articulate the vision and goals for BelRed as a neighborhood. That is where greater specificity regarding the BelRed Arts District will be housed.

The staff are also preliminarily proposing several new policies in support of emerging arts and culture opportunities throughout the city, including in Neighborhood Centers. The policies will support different arts opportunities on city facilities and equipment; the utility box program is one such opportunity. The policies will also support the development of festival streets, a concept expressed in the BelRed streetscape plan. There is also new policy language around cross-cultural programming.

The scope of work will also focus on reviewing the existing policies and identifying ways to strengthen the city's role in implementing arts and culture opportunities. The proposed modifications utilize more direct and action-oriented language around where there still is work to implement the opportunities. Words such as "support" and "encourage" will be swapped with terms like "cultivate" or "provide for."

The existing policies support arts and culture opportunities in terms of arts and arts programming implementation and engagement; development of arts and culture facilities; affordable artist space; and recognition of diverse heritages within the community. Within the BelRed subarea plan, the primary arts and culture policy topic areas are focused on providing a partnership framework; providing identity through buildings and infrastructure; creating arts and culture space needed for a driving arts district; and providing opportunities to connect communities.

Commissioner Gulati asked how the public would know about the arts and culture opportunities around the city and in the arts district. Justin Panganiban said community feedback will be sought in the fall. Communities will be engaged around the policies to gain feedback on how they can be improved. Their feedback will help inform future refinements of the policies. Communicating opportunities is a foundational element of the policies, given that they serve as a guiding framework for the city.

Commissioner Gulati commented that the community must be involved to have successful events. The question asked was how those who work from home or do not have kids in school will know what they can be a part of and how to participate.

Commissioner Aldredge suggested that is a good policy question. The city has provided financial support for a website with a calendar featuring community events, but it is not known how well it is publicized. Communication through various means should be a key component of the plan.

Justin Panganiban agreed to examine how that could be expressed in the policies.

Commissioner Gulati noted the city has some regulations against putting up posters and banners. The putting up of posters and banners is a good way to inform the public about events, and prohibiting the approach does not foster community engagement.

Commissioner Gowdy said there are opportunities for partnerships with various established organizations that could help put together programs.

Commissioner Enomoto asked about the mixed-use spaces and if there are any requirements for prioritizing who gets to tenant those spaces, including giving consideration to ethnic and economic diversity. Also asked was whether the city offers

assistance to help small businesses navigate the various processes associated with obtaining business licenses and siting their businesses. Justin Panganiban allowed that that level of specificity does not exist at the policy level. However, policy language can provide guidance for how to look at different plans and elements that can get at things such as art spaces and affordability.

Comprehensive Planning Manager Thara Johnson added that the Economic Development Element will include policies around support for small businesses. There could be a tie-in between the two elements.

Chief Economic Development Officer Jesse Canedo suggested there is an opportunity at a future Commission meeting to have members of the small business support team come and talk about the programmatic work they do.

Commissioner Aldredge noted that the Commission has worked diligently over the last couple of years to build an artist's roster and inform Eastside and Bellevue artists about opportunities. It would be good to see the approach encouraged by having more support behind it.

Commissioner Martinez noted having heard from organizations wanting to host events in Bellevue that there are quite a few barriers and hoops to jump through. Removing some of those barriers and providing transparency would foster more events in the city. Some groups have chosen to hold their events in other cities whose processes are easier to navigate.

Manette Stamm encouraged the Commissioners to submit any additional comments and suggestions.

Justin Panganiban said the next presentation to the Commission would be in the fall when the focus will be on reviewing the full draft of the arts and culture policies and providing policy recommendations to the Planning Commission.

B. Bellwether Arts and Tech Festival 2023

Lora Unger, the new executive director of PACE, was joined by deputy director Annie DiMartino. PACE is being relaunched, and three new board members have been brought on; another will be seated in July, and three more are in the queue. The objective is to grow the board to show a broad cross-section of community stakeholders.

PACE will have four venues. Three of them will be dedicated to serving the local community. A 2000-plus seat multiuse auditorium will host everything from dance to opera, orchestras, lectures and family programs. There will also be a black box community theater with between 150 and 300 seats with a tech focus and a focus on local grassroots performances. A grand stage in the lobby will also be dedicated to local artists and performing arts groups. The fourth venue will be an education department, whose vision is to have every child in the region serviced by PACE via curriculum partnerships with the school districts ranging from field trips to after-school programs, summer camps and art therapies for children with disabilities and aging adults. The four different spaces will feed off of each other. For example, three of the venues will be open to the community and used by the community, and each will benefit from cross-marketing with the main stage and the 2,000-seat hall, increasing awareness and attendance for local arts groups. Most of the main-stage programs will start around 7:30 p.m. or 8:00 p.m. An equally important and parallel schedule will be crafted between 5:30 p.m. and 7:30 p.m. to host opening acts and performance schedules in the grand lobby before each show. The

aim is to have the center be a true civic resource, and the objective is to make sure it is utilized as much as possible by as many local community groups as possible throughout the year.

Continuing, Lora Unger said work is progressing toward finishing the building design plans. Currently, they are at about 80 percent complete, but improvements and enhancements are needed ahead of getting new cost estimates. The work is hoped to be finished in May 2024, following which a major capital campaign will be launched. If all goes as planned, groundbreaking will occur in 2027. Additionally, there is an intention to create an Eastside advisory council identifying more than 200 community leaders in the business and education sectors, all from diverse communities, to engage with the community's diverse needs purposefully and to inform programming.

Bellevue is the downtown of the Eastside. The PACE team sees the center as bringing a cultural heart to the Eastside while serving both the city and the Eastside. The critical mass of the population that comes to Downtown Bellevue every year is astonishing. Over \$20 million visitors come to Bellevue annually, second in the state only to SeaTac International Airport.

Annie DiMartino said Bellwether will be happening in the month of September and will include a month-long series of digital residencies. Four fantastic artists are lined up, and they will all participate in in-person activities. Their residencies will be companion pieces to each of the in-person events. Each artist will provide two thirty-minute videos that will be hosted on Bellwether's YouTube channel and social media platforms. Instagram takeovers will allow for reaching even more people. The first in-person event will be held on September 9 in the Spring District. The 6:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m. event will have food trucks; Kathryn Van Meter, a local choreographer, leading a demonstration in math, movement and music; and a live performance from Sustain Music Project, who will create an original one hour and fifteen-minute piece that will incorporate coding into original and popular music. The talk will center on how coding and math come together to create music in the digital world.

The second in-person event is slated for September 16. It will be held at Bellevue College in two rooms in two different buildings that are separated by a courtyard. In one of the rooms will be visual artist Cole Devoy presenting *Connective*. This immersive installation combines the interconnected ephemeral and dynamic nature of all things into a seamless integration of dance and digital projects. The work will incorporate music and live dance with QR codes so that as audience members enter the room, they will get a different perspective of the room, allowing them to control where they are in the room and when they want to go there. On the other side of the courtyard, artist Arabella Bautista will present *Groove*, an ode to rave culture digitally via video poetry combining dance and video synthesis. The two artists are working together on a project for the courtyard area.

On September 23, the Marketplace at Factoria event will take place between 11:00 a.m. and 1:00 p.m. There will be at least three, but no more than five, teams of students from DigiPen Technical Institute showcasing their original video game console. Each team will vie for a top cash prize to take their game to the next level. A panel of artists will be chosen to judge the groups. Participants will be able to play and demo the games, and each team will bring with them their storyboards showing how character analysis, costume design, sound and visuals all come together and flow from page to coding to live interactive game console.

The last event will be on September 30 from 1:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m. in Downtown Park. DJ Indica has been booked to host a silent disco. Participants use headphones to hear songs being played that no one else can hear. There will be an all-family hour and an all-play segment to give everyone the opportunity to participate. Interspersed throughout the event will be Kathryn Van Meter working with local dancers. There will also be food trucks and Earth Seed Collective, whose members, in their off time, create pottery and ceramics. There will also be at least three different tech tents that community members can visit to learn more about the tech world.

Commissioner Aldredge asked how the calendar is going to be publicized. Annie DiMartino said Lotus Communications is on board. They are currently working on banner ads and social mirroring. Bellwether is also going to be featured in 425 Magazine and Greek Magazine and a few other channels. Lotus is donating in-kind free PSAs. Lora Unger added that the marketing plan with Lotus will reach more than 300,000 people digitally to create awareness about the festival. The event will also be highlighted VisitBellevue, the BDA and the usual channels.

Answering a question asked by Councilmember Stokes, Arts Community Manager Lorie Hoffman explained that the RFP put out for Bellwether is different from others in the past in which the city outlined the work it wanted to see done and the price. Instead, the RFP listed the price and asked for an arts festival proposal. Included was a question about how the applicant would extend beyond city funding, which was maxed at \$150,000 annually.

C. Crossroads Park Public Art

Public Art Specialist Scott MacDonald explained that the public art project started in 2020 as an idea for the Neighborhood Enhancement Program submitted by a community member. In community voting, it ranked high but was not selected as the top project for the community to fund. Amazon stepped in in 2021 with an offer to fund the project in full up to \$100,000. The timeline attached to the gift was three to five years.

The Crossroads neighborhood is the city's most diverse neighborhood. Fifty-seven percent of its residents were born outside of the United States, and 61 percent speak a language other than English at home. The 34-acre Crossroads Park is located to the east of Crossroads Mall. It includes the Bellevue Youth Theatre, which has both an interior and an exterior stage, multiple kids' playground areas, including a spray playground, a par three golf course, a dog play area, and the Crossroads Community Center. The park is active and very well-used. Diversity is celebrated in the park design.

Working hand-in-hand with the Department of Parks and Community Services to develop the project scope, the Jumping Scale project has a \$75,000 budget for art fabrication, design and installation. The additional \$25,000 of the Amazon gift is earmarked for city engineering, permitting and foundation installation. Normally it is the artist that manages the engineering and the foundation installation. By pulling those items off the artist's plate, the timeline can be sped up, creating more of a mentorship opportunity.

The call seeks an artist to create an original, permanent outdoor 3D artwork. The focus is not on a mural or tilework, but rather a 3D piece that can live in space and show a volume of space in some way. The name *Jumping Scale* is intended for the idea of taking an artist out of the studio they have worked in and landing them in the field of public art by taking an existing studio's small-scale body of work and creating a unique work with similar form and aesthetic by jumping the scale of the work and potentially jumping into new materials. The opportunity is being viewed as a catalyst for artists to jump into public art and grow their repertoire and experience.

Eligible artists cannot have completed a previous public art project totaling more than \$10,000 and cannot be established public art artists. The call will be open to artists in Island, King, Kitsap, Pierce, San Juan and Snohomish counties. The selected artist will be required to follow the city's standard insurance requirements for contracting. Applications will be due on September 3. A panel will comprise one Arts Commissioner and a mix of arts professionals, community members and others. The panel will select three finalists with whom to conduct phone interviews. Staff will recommend to the panel, and if the panel agrees, a recommendation will be forwarded to the Arts Commission for approval in October.

Staff availability is the largest constraint. The design guidelines support a streamlined process. Installation is slated to occur before the end of 2024.

Once the call is approved, the application will go live online immediately. Artist selection will occur in September, and the Commission will have a recommendation to consider at the October meeting.

Commissioner Gulati asked if it can be assured that the artist will look beyond the moment to the future to determine what maintenance will be needed over its lifetime, especially if an artist with no prior public art experience is to be selected. Scott MacDonald said the project is fully aligned with feedback received a few years ago about the city needs to do a better job of supporting artists through the process, particularly artists of color and those who have not had such opportunities in the past. That does not mean just giving the artist and budget and setting them loose; rather, it means mentoring the artist by walking them through all of the steps and considerations. The project offers the opportunity to spearhead that kind of effort in the arts program and develop a mentoring-style project.

Scott MacDonald said the project is considered a small public art project. Metals and materials costs have increased by 40 or 50 percent since the start of the pandemic. A similar project at Lattawood Park, completed in 2021, barely fits into the \$80,000 budget.

Commissioner Aldredge praised the idea but allowed that there would be some risk involved by limiting the artist's experience and creating a very short timeframe. One option would be to limit previous art experience to \$25,000 from the proposed \$10,000. That might bring in a slightly more experienced pool of artists from which to choose.

Commissioner Enomoto asked if there would be a contractual obligation with Amazon to deliver the project within the three- to five-year timeline and if there would be a contingency plan in the event that the project runs longer than expected. Scott MacDonald's contract with the city runs three to five months beyond the date the project is set to be completed. Amazon donated the funds for the project, and there is a contractual obligation to deliver it within a set timeframe. The original Neighborhood Enhancement Program project timeline was three to five years.

Scott MacDonald added that the barrier to entry to public art is very high. Artists are selected based on their past work in public art and must essentially find a golden ticket to get into the field of public art. If the desire is to have more diverse artists and to support emerging artists, it will be necessary to develop opportunities that push against that established model.

Commissioner Aldredge proposed revising the proposed motion by lifting the cap on previous public art experience from \$10,000 to \$25,000.

Councilmember Stokes suggested that would depress the notion of looking outside the normal approach. It was agreed that there would be some risk associated with going with a limit of \$10,000, but as proposed, the project will have the capacity to push the boundaries.

Commissioner Aldredge added that increasing the limit to \$25,000 will increase the number of eligible applicants. It will be up to the selection panel to determine the right person.

Commissioner Gulati agreed with Commissioner Aldredge that the cap should be increased. It is somewhat worrisome that an emerging artist will ultimately be able to provide art that will make everyone happy.

A motion to recommend approval of the artist call for *Jumping Scale* in Crossroads Park as provided, except for increasing the limit from \$10,000 to \$25,000, was made by Commissioner Aldredge. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Gulati, and the motion carried unanimously.

5. COMMISSION QUICK BUSINESS

A. Remote Participation

A motion to approve remote participation for Commissioners Enomoto, Gulati and Bhargava was made by Commissioner Aldredge. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Gulati and the motion carried unanimously.

6. REPORTS

A. Project Updates – As Noted

Councilmember Stokes announced that a new Commissioner has been appointed and will be joining the Commission at the next meeting.

7. COMMUNICATIONS – None

8. ADJOURNMENT

Commissioner Gowdy adjourned the meeting at 5:59 p.m.