

Bellevue Arts Commission Special Meeting Minutes

January 8, 2025
4:30 p.m.

Bellevue City Hall
1E-109 and Virtual

Commissioners Present: Chairperson Aldredge, Commissioner Chen

Commissioners Remote: Commissioners Bhargava, Enomoto, Nederlander

Commissioners Absent: Vice Chair Martinez, Commissioner Hazra

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

Others Present: Not Present

Recording Secretary: Gerry Lindsay

I. **Call To Order**

The meeting was called to order at 4:42 p.m. by Chair Aldredge, who presided. All Commissioners were present with the exception of Vice Chair Martinez and Commissioner Hazra.

2. **Approval of Agenda and Minutes**

A. Approval of Agenda

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

B. Approval of Minutes

Motion to approve the December 4, 2024, minutes as submitted was made by Commissioner Bhargava. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Chen and the motion carried unanimously.

3. **Oral Communications**

Alex Tsimerman mentioned public comments recently made at a City Council meeting.

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

A. Crossroads Park Public Art Final Design

Public Art Specialist Scott MacDonald presented the final design of the Crossroads Park project by the artist Anna Mlasowsky, noting that the proposal for a public art project came from a Crossroads community member as part of the Neighborhood Enhancement Program (NEP). While the proposal received many votes, it did not meet the threshold for funding through NEP. Several years later, in 2021, Amazon offered the city a gift of \$100,000 for the project, which was officially launched in late 2023. The project was fashioned as a pilot with the goal of helping an emerging artist expand or develop a body of work and learn how to create public art in an outdoor setting. The plan was to pair the artist with a mentor who would guide them through the process.

The selection panel chose Anna Mlasowsky, a glass artist living in Seattle. Originally from Eastern Germany, the artist's work explores belonging, the immigrant experience and similar themes. The initial artwork concepts and more developed concept design were previously reviewed by the Public Art Committee and the Commission, and the concept design was approved in September 2024. For the final design, the focus has shifted to fabrication, maintenance and engineering details. The concept is the same as that previously approved by the Commission. The artwork is called *River* and is inspired by the phrase: "It takes more than two to form a river." The soundwave of that spoken phrase forms the diameter of each ring. Each spine around the light pole represents a part of the phrase.

After the concept design was completed, Amazon was informed regarding the progress. They were pleased and offered another \$100,000 to expand the project. With that, and with some additional city funds, there are now three poles instead of one and a fabrication budget of \$200,000. The project serves as a model that created an opportunity for an emerging artist who hadn't created a previous project above \$25,000 and now is able to demonstrate their proficiency as a public artist. It is a testament to the pilot program approach.

Installation is planned for later in the year, likely in August. A very detailed maintenance plan has been drawn up, addressing materials and methods to clean and repair the artwork. A template has even been created for maintenance plans for future artworks.

Scott MacDonald said there are three installation sites: one near the Bellevue Youth Theater, one near the trail loop and community center and one by the dog park near a bench where people can sit and view the art.

The Commissioners were shown renderings depicting the swirling colors in the daylight and with projected light at night. The color patterns will vary from pole to pole. Under the river concept, the colors will change continuously throughout the day. The artwork is kept out of people's reach; the bottom is eleven feet off the ground, going up to twenty-three feet at the top of the pole. There is an exclusion zone for maintenance crews to access and service the lights using a cherry picker. In each location, the artwork shifts to the opposite side of the pole where the bucket would go, allowing for maintenance of the lights. From the top view, a spiral shape can be seen. Standing below, the overlapping color will create a layered cloud effect, similar to the original small test models.

Each spine is complicated. Every other ring of glass has a breakpoint so that small sections can be removed if repairs are needed on an individual glass piece. Everything must fit and curve precisely, which is very challenging. The artist is working closely with the fabricators, and there will be test fitting before installation. Attachment to the pole is accomplished by having two pieces tighten around the pole with a rubber lining, preventing damage and stabilizing the artwork. A similar technique was used on the light pole art piece, *Delight in Green*, near Larson Lake.

The glass utilizes a laminated arrangement, with the dichroic glass sandwiched between two pieces of safety glass, preventing any shattered glass from falling if hit by a projectile. It will remain mostly intact and allow for the replacement of a single laminated section if necessary. The total thickness of the three-layer system is about one-third of an inch. The final material samples will be reviewed to confirm color vibrancy and safety prior to fabrication.

Scott MacDonald said staff recommended that the final design of the Crossroads Park Public Art Project by artist Anna Mlasowsky be approved.

Commissioner Chen asked if all three poles were already in place. Scott MacDonald said that they are existing poles and were selected based on sun exposure, the desired light effects, and locations that appealed to the artist and the community.

Chair Aldredge said it should be viewed as a credit to the artist that Amazon doubled their donation amount. It shows that the concept is strong. Having the works on multiple poles enhances the idea and understanding of the work. It is beneficial that there are existing light poles to use so that new infrastructure does not have to be created at an additional expense.

Commissioner Chen said it is exciting to see an emerging artist given such an opportunity.

Chair Aldredge stressed that using glass is somewhat risky, but many people love it. Hopefully, it will remain safe and undamaged, with spares available for replacements as needed. Scott MacDonald said the artist plans to store extra pieces should there be a need.

Commissioner Bhargava also expressed delight to see the additional Amazon funding.

A motion to approve the fabrication of the artwork *River* was made by Commissioner Chen. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Enomoto and the motion carried unanimously.

B. 2025 Work Plan

Arts Community Manager Lorie Hoffman explained that the 2025 work plan covers everything the arts program staff will focus on in partnership with the Arts Commission, including grants, the BelRed Arts District, public art, cultural spaces, cultural tourism, the creative economy, and cultural planning. Owing to increased staff capacity and alignment with the upcoming Economic Development Plan, cultural tourism and the creative economy will be approached more deliberately this year.

Lorie Hoffman said staff will administer the 2025 arts grants that were presented to the Council on January 7 by Chair Aldredge and then approved. The grants include the project grants and the first year of the two-year Eastside Arts Partnership (EAP) program. Staff will also contract and administer the first round of cultural facilities grants the Council approved in October 2024. Later in the year, the 2026 project grants will be launched, and the EAP will move to the second year, with each grantee receiving the same award amount as they did this year.

The partnership with the BelRed Arts District Community Alliance will continue. To identify the district, a new sign has been erected in collaboration with the Alliance.

Updates to the Land Use Code regarding floor area ratios are expected to follow the subarea planning work in BelRed done in 2024. Development Services staff have the lead, but the Commission will be kept informed as that work moves forward.

Lorie Hoffman said staff are also continuing to work on the Kelly Parcel with the city's new housing office to prioritize artist housing and affordable creative space.

The focus is on live-work housing, not strictly studio space for rent. A request for proposals is expected soon. Once selected, previous city-led arts studies will help inform the developers.

Regarding public art, Lorie Hoffman said several significant deliveries are expected, including the Crossroads Park artwork, *Emerging Radiance* at the library, Jill-Ann Holt and Po Shu Wang's artworks, both in BelRed. Staff are coordinating with the Transportation Department staff on the timelines. There is also the potential for a donation of a Jacob Lawrence lithograph, which will be presented to the Commission for consideration at the next meeting. Additional utility box wraps and murals may also be perused, and there will be ongoing maintenance of various works.

Regarding cultural space, Lorie Hoffman said the city is partnering with KidsQuest on their proposed sizeable new facility. Discussions with the Performing Arts Center Eastside (PACE) and the Bellevue Arts Museum are also continuing. The partners will be invited to speak with the Commission as needed.

Moving to cultural tourism and the creative economy, Lorie Hoffman said staff are working with Visit Bellevue to highlight the city's exceptional culinary scene. Collaborations are also underway with fashion and nightlife development, combining resources with city colleagues in business retention and attraction.

Chair Aldredge remarked that Wintergrass is an example of a major festival that draws visitors to Bellevue and supports local hotels and restaurants. The festival is seeking to expand its footprint and continues to find new ways to serve the local community. The intent is to continue supporting the festival.

Lorie Hoffman said Scott MacDonald will be working on a cultural facilities inventory, building on the studies and research done in recent years. The broader Cultural and Economic Development team is working on the Economic Development Plan for 2026–2031. Like the Comprehensive Plan, it will come to the Commission for information and input.

The Arts Commission will continue its important role in the coming year. The Commissioners are encouraged to attend community arts events and programs. Because the Commission funds several organizations, it is helpful for Commissioners to experience their programming in person. Tickets can be obtained for events and reports from Commissioners about the events and performances they attended are always helpful for future grant reviewers

5. Commission Quick Business – None

6. **Reports**

A. Commissioner's Committee and Lead Reports

As noted.

B. Project Updates from Staff

Lorie Hoffman reported that staff in the Cultural and Economic Development are working to develop the six-year 2026–2031 economic development plan. The plan will include key strategies, one of which will address the creative economy and tourism, which intersect with the Commission's work. A presentation will be given to the Commission soon.

Scott MacDonald said final interviews for the Grand Connection are scheduled for January 17. The agenda for that meeting will be full. The panel will select an artist in January, and their recommendation will be brought before the Commission in February. Once the artist is under contract, staff will begin working with the artist, engineers, and members of the community to create an art plan for the bridge crossing from City Hall to Eastrail. That is the first component of the scope. The goal is to identify opportunities for all kinds of artists, not just the one selected, such as artists for temporary projects, cultural programs and spaces for them, murals, and large projects. Once a comprehensive plan is made, a preliminary art concept will be developed for their own focal piece or landmark artwork, which will be presented to the Commission for input before a final proceeding decision is made. There will be multiple Public Art Committee meetings about which the Commission will be kept informed. In 2025, there will likely be significant involvement with the Grand Connection Crossing.

Lorie Hoffman said the portable artworks recommended in 2024 by the Commission for purchase have started arriving. Some works are being brought into storage while those in need of framing are being sent out. All necessary conservation steps will be taken. The plan is to display those new works in a show in June or July. The works will be exhibited on the second-floor catwalk of City Hall. Once the show ends, the artwork will be placed around city facilities.

Lorie Hoffman said the Commission will be updated in February regarding a one-off utility box wrap in BelRed. Work with the artist is underway.

Chair Aldredge asked if there was a selection process for the artist. Lorie Hoffman explained that the project is part of the new temporary public works process. The small project has a quick turnaround. The artist previously went through a couple of

selection panels. Scott MacDonald said works that are intended to be a long-term asset for the city must be approved by the Commission. Since a box wrap has a defined life of about five to seven years, it will not become a permanent city asset requiring full Commission involvement and maintenance considerations. When focusing on a larger program, such as six or ten box wraps, a call for artists would be issued, and a selection panel would be convened, including members of the Commission. The wrap in question is for a utility box that sees frequent graffiti.

Chair Aldredge stressed the need to ensure that the public is involved when city funds are used to commission art.

Commissioner Chen voiced appreciation for the grant opportunities and urged the commissioners to spread the work to the various communities.

Lorie Hoffman said that the Council has expressed a strong interest in providing more ways for the Bellevue public to access calendars and event information. The best ways to do that should be sought.

7. Adjournment

Chair Aldredge adjourned the meeting at 5:34 p.m.

City of Bellevue staff liaison

Date