

Bellevue Arts Commission Meeting Minutes

June 3, 2026
4:30 p.m.

Bellevue City Hall
1E-113 and Virtual

Commissioners Present: Chairperson Aldredge, Commissioners Bhargava, Fripp, McIntyre

Commissioners Remote: Commissioners Hazra, Martinez

Commissioners Absent: Vice Chair Enomoto

Staff Present: Manette Stamm, Lorie Hoffman, Zack Luckin, Justin Panganiban, Department of Community Development

Others Present: Councilmember Sumadiwirya; Carol Vecchio, A Capella Joy; Barbara Hughes, Phyllis White, Bellevue Farmers Market

Recording Secretary: Gerry Lindsay

I. **Call To Order**

The meeting was called to order at 4:32 p.m. by Chair Aldredge, who presided. All Commissioners were present with the exception of Vice Chair Enomoto.

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 McIntyre, and the motion carried unanimously.

B. Approval of Minutes

Motion to approve the April 1, 2026, minutes as submitted was made by Commissioner McIntyre. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Bhargava, and the motion carried unanimously.

3. **Oral Communications**

Chair Aldredge read a statement outlining requirements related to Washington State campaign laws governing the use of public facilities during elections and reviewed provisions of City Ordinance 6752. The statement explained that public comments must relate to City of Bellevue government matters within the Arts Commission's scope and reminded attendees of the rules governing public conduct during meetings.

Alex Tsimerman expressed longstanding concerns about meeting practices, particularly the visibility of participants during public meetings, and criticized the restrictions on public comment, asserting that the limitations on public participation infringe upon free speech rights. In addition, the speaker discussed a previous trespass order and alleged

unfair treatment related to political candidacy and public participation. The remarks included repeated criticism of city leadership and governance practices.

Bailey Fuentes provided an update on an Arts Commission-supported mural project. It was explained that the scope has been revised from decorating an entire building to focusing specifically on a set of south-facing doors located on a red barn structure in the BelRed area. The necessary insurance has been secured, and grant funding previously awarded through the BelRed Arts Grant program will support project implementation. Plans for the coming months include purchasing supplies, organizing logistics, and beginning the installation work. An additional arts-related grant opportunity associated with the BelRed Art Studio has been applied for, although no award decision has yet been made. The speaker reflected positively on the overall experience, noting that the greatest challenge has been the withdrawal of a private business, which required the project team to identify an alternative location. Confidence was expressed that the mural will become a visible and well-received feature for light rail passengers traveling between the BelRed and Spring District areas, and that a public ribbon-cutting ceremony will be held upon completion.

4. Action, Discussion and Information Items

A. New Commissioner Welcome

Arts Program Analyst Manette Stamm formally introduced new Commissioner Brenden Fripp.

Commissioner Fripp expressed enthusiasm for the arts and described interests that include live theater, museums, public spaces, and community events, then noted having followed the work of the Arts Commission. Excitement was expressed about contributing to Bellevue's arts community.

B. Great Neighborhoods: Eastgate and Factoria Neighborhood Area Plan Updates

Senior Planner Zachary Luckin provided an informational presentation on the progress of the Great Neighborhoods Program for Eastgate and Factoria. The work program was launched by the City Council in August of 2025 to update the neighborhood area plans for both communities. Over the preceding eight months, staff have engaged more than 1200 participants through 31 events, gathering community input that informed the development of draft neighborhood area plans and policy recommendations. The draft policies have been shared with the public, and staff is collecting feedback from the city's boards and commissions before returning to the Planning Commission for further review later in the month.

The Great Neighborhoods Program was initiated by the City Council in 2018 to comprehensively update Bellevue's 16 neighborhood area plans, many of which had not been revised in decades. The program seeks to create community-driven plans that reflect both citywide priorities and neighborhood-specific needs. The plans form part of Bellevue's Comprehensive Plan and guide decision-making over a 20-year horizon through policies, partnerships, investments, and regulations. The arts-related policies could ultimately result in public art installations, cultural programming, or the creation of public gathering spaces. Eastgate and Factoria are significant planning areas

encompassing major employment centers, commercial districts, residential neighborhoods, educational institutions, parks, and transportation corridors.

Zack Luckin outlined the four phases of the planning process and explained that the project is currently in the refinement stage, during which draft policies are being reviewed by the community and advisory bodies. Staff anticipate presenting the full draft plans, including maps and policy narratives, to the Planning Commission in June, with final review and adoption by the City Council expected before the end of the year. The neighborhood area plans include sections focused on neighborhood identity, mixed-use and neighborhood centers, community gathering spaces, mobility and access, and environmental stewardship. Attention was given to the policy areas most relevant to arts, culture, placemaking, and public gathering opportunities.

There was extensive outreach during both the discovery and definition phases of the project. The engagement efforts included workshops, questionnaires, community walks, tabling events, classroom visits, apartment meetings, and conversations in public spaces. Particular effort has been made to reach individuals and groups that do not typically participate in planning processes. The resulting vision statements and policy priorities are therefore grounded in extensive community input gathered from a broad cross-section of residents, business owners, students, and visitors.

Focusing specifically on Eastgate, Zack Luckin reported that community members consistently identified safety, natural beauty, diversity, and economic vitality as defining characteristics of the neighborhood. Residents valued Eastgate's mature tree canopy, streams, parks, transit access, proximity to outdoor recreation, and convenient access to businesses and services. Community members also highlighted a strong sense of neighborliness and opportunities for informal social interaction throughout the area. Drawing from the themes, staff developed a vision statement describing Eastgate as a convenient, safe, and welcoming neighborhood where diverse residents, businesses, and students can thrive, connect, and enjoy access to natural amenities, recreation, retail opportunities, and vibrant mixed-use centers. Bellevue College and mixed-use areas on both sides of I-90 were identified as important community anchors that support living, working, learning, and gathering.

The major policy themes within the Eastgate draft plan seek to strengthen Eastgate's reputation as a green, welcoming destination while supporting economic development and placemaking initiatives. Emphasis was placed on leveraging the neighborhood's significant concentration of hotels and on creating additional attractions and experiences for both visitors and residents. The objectives will be supported through public art, streetscape improvements, and enhancements at neighborhood gateways and entry points. The policies related to mixed-use and neighborhood centers focus on improving access to housing, transit, shopping, services, and gathering places while fostering partnerships that strengthen the local business environment. Community gathering space policies encourage collaboration with schools, churches, private developers, and other organizations to expand opportunities for recreation, cultural programming, and public events, and to support the creation of new parks and public spaces. Environmental policies emphasize enhancing natural assets by improving trail connections and expanding environmental education opportunities.

The Commissioners were shown conceptual gathering-space maps illustrating opportunities for future neighborhood improvements. It was noted that the maps are intended to provide a vision rather than identify specific projects. The concepts include enhancements to natural features, new neighborhood parks, public art installations,

neighborhood markers, signage, and improved pedestrian and bicycle connections linking key destinations.

Zack Luckin clarified that the green symbols represented potential new park spaces, particularly in areas south of I-90 lacking walkable access to parks. The orange symbols identified locations where residents expressed interest in indoor and outdoor gathering spaces, including schools, shopping centers, community facilities, and campuses. The purple symbols represented neighborhood thresholds or gateway locations where public art, signage, or other visual elements could strengthen neighborhood identity. The blue dashed corridors indicated opportunities for improved walking and bicycling connections between destinations throughout the neighborhood.

Zack Luckin invited the Commissioners to identify important neighborhood entrances or gateway locations to prioritize for future placemaking efforts, and to offer feedback on whether the draft Eastgate policies provide sufficient direction to support future arts and cultural projects, investments, and programming consistent with the neighborhood's long-term vision.

Chair Aldredge suggested that the conceptual map was particularly helpful in illustrating how the proposed policies could be implemented. Support was expressed for the emphasis on additional parks, trails, gateways, and public art installations. A public art project is already underway at a site near Factoria Boulevard and 136th Avenue SE.

Commissioner Bhargava praised staff for the thoroughness of the community engagement process and observed that accessibility, convenience, and the need for intentional gathering spaces emerged as prominent themes through the outreach effort. While Bellevue is often characterized as a city in a park, residents appear to desire more places specifically designed for community interaction and gathering. Asked if there will be more surveys and follow-up activities, Zack Luckin said the engagement phase is largely complete, and the process has moved into review and refinement. The extensive efforts undertaken to ensure broad representation included online mapping tools, workshops, visits to housing facilities serving individuals experiencing homelessness, outreach to senior residents, and classroom sessions at Newport High School. The resulting plan reflects a wide range of community perspectives. Commissioner Bhargava stressed the importance of including business and retail perspectives and observed that thriving businesses can also serve as important community gathering places.

Commissioner Martínez questioned the policy language of S-EG-N1 regarding recreation, tourism, cultural facilities, and related activities, noting that it appears quite broad and needs clarification. Zack Luckin acknowledged having received similar feedback from community members and explained that the language is intended to reflect requests for a wider variety of activities, entertainment opportunities, and experiences within Eastgate. Revisions to the wording are being considered to focus more specifically on the mixed-use areas north of I-90 where transit access, hotels, and other amenities are concentrated. The broad language is intended to avoid excluding potential opportunities while recognizing that refinement or separation into more focused policies might improve clarity.

Regarding policy S-EG-N6, Commissioner Martínez asked if future cultural spaces or facilities will be identified on planning maps. Zack Luckin stated that the policies are intentionally written at a high level and are not intended to designate specific projects or locations. Instead, the policies are meant to establish values and priorities that can later guide investments, programs, and projects to be undertaken by departments such as

Parks, Arts, and Economic Development. The goals related to celebrating neighborhood history and cultural diversity could be implemented through a variety of public spaces, performance venues, cultural facilities, public art installations, and placemaking initiatives. The policy language may benefit from additional refinement, but the objective is to create flexibility for future implementation.

In response to a question from Commissioner Martínez regarding S-EG-N23, Zack Luckin said there are opportunities to collaborate with institutions such as Bellevue College and other community partners to strengthen neighborhood connections through events and programming.

Chair Aldredge referenced a previous Arts Commission grant awarded to support a theater project at Bellevue College and explained that one of the Commission's objectives in providing funding has been to increase community access to performance space in recognition of a shortage of venues for performing arts activities citywide. Future partnerships could similarly encourage public access while supporting institutional facilities.

Commissioner McIntyre observed that neighborhood plans provide valuable opportunities for residents to shape the future of their communities but asked how the city balances localized priorities with broader citywide objectives and identity. Zack Luckin explained that Bellevue's Comprehensive Plan consists of citywide policies contained in Volume 1 and neighborhood-specific policies contained in Volume 2. Citywide policies serve as the foundation for all neighborhood planning efforts, ensuring consistency across Bellevue while allowing individual neighborhoods to express their unique character and priorities. The neighborhood plans localize broader policy goals, such as placemaking or public art, by emphasizing themes that are particularly meaningful to a specific community, such as cultural diversity or neighborhood history. While neighborhood plans may guide future projects such as signage or public art, all proposals remain subject to established design review processes, regulations, and citywide standards. Maintaining alignment with the overarching city policies while recognizing neighborhood distinctiveness is a central objective of the planning process.

Commissioner Fripp remarked that year-round usability should be a consideration when planning parks and gathering spaces, though the Pacific Northwest climate can limit outdoor activity at times. The importance of designing spaces that remain attractive and functional beyond the summer months was emphasized. The South Bellevue Community Center remains very popular, and it was suggested that greater effort be made to market the existing community assets. Zack Luckin agreed and explained that improved wayfinding and signage are considered tools to help residents discover community resources. The enhanced promotion of existing facilities aligns with broader economic development goals. Future policy language could place greater emphasis on both creating new amenities and improving public awareness of existing ones.

Commissioner Fripp also remarked that younger residents appear somewhat underrepresented in the outreach results and suggested that future engagement efforts should include repeated visits to schools and colleges. Zack Luckin responded that Bellevue College was engaged on multiple occasions during the planning process. One outreach effort involved a neighborhood walk with students, which revealed that many commuters were unaware of nearby parks, businesses, and amenities located just beyond the campus. The experience has reinforced the importance of better wayfinding and stronger integration between Bellevue College and the surrounding neighborhood. Additional engagement was conducted on campus through policy review displays and feedback opportunities. While acknowledging that college students remain a difficult

population to engage due to their commuter lifestyles and varying levels of connection to Bellevue, it was agreed that continued outreach to younger residents remains an important opportunity for improvement.

Shifting the presentation to the Factoria neighborhood, Zack Luckin explained that community members consistently described it as safe, diverse, accessible, and affordable. The participants identified the area's international retail offerings, diverse dining options, and strong employment base as defining assets. Residents and visitors alike remarked on the convenience of being able to work, shop, dine, and access services within the neighborhood. Factoria's connections to major highways and regional trail systems were also highlighted as important strengths.

Building on the feedback, Zack Luckin presented a vision statement describing Factoria as a globally connected yet locally rooted neighborhood and major employment center. The statement emphasized a vibrant commercial core supported by local businesses, diverse retail opportunities, affordable housing, and nature-oriented gathering spaces that foster interaction among people from different backgrounds. The vision also highlighted walkability, pedestrian-oriented design, and strong transit connections as key components of the neighborhood's future development.

Summarizing the major policy themes proposed for Factoria, Zack Luckin said the neighborhood identity policies focus on reinforcing the area's character through public art, placemaking, and improvements to the pedestrian environment. The mixed-use center policies seek to transform Factoria into a more accessible and vibrant destination by integrating plazas and flexible public gathering spaces into the commercial core. The community gathering space policies encourage partnerships that support cultural programming, public events, and the development of both indoor and outdoor spaces capable of serving a growing and diverse population.

Commissioner Bhargava remarked that Factoria Mall functions as an important gathering place. There have been successful cultural celebrations, such as Lunar New Year events, that have attracted large crowds. The Commissioner asked whether the mall owners were in discussions about expanding the property's use for community activities. Zack Luckin reported meeting twice with Kimco, the mall owner, and said they were receptive to hosting additional events. While the mall currently accommodates some community programming, both community feedback and staff analysis suggested substantial opportunities for expansion. Given the relative lack of other public gathering spaces within Factoria, the mall is viewed as a particularly important venue for future community-building efforts.

Zack Luckin also pointed out that the youth participants frequently expressed concern that Factoria offers few activities specifically designed for younger residents. While many students gather in the area after school, the available attractions are limited, primarily centered on restaurants and fast-food establishments. A broader range of cultural, recreational, and community events could make Factoria more appealing to residents of all ages while supporting the neighborhood's anticipated growth and evolution.

Commissioner Bhargava asked if the outreach efforts had included individual businesses located within Factoria Mall. Zack Luckin said a series of business walks had been conducted during which every business in the neighborhood was visited and invited to provide feedback. Business owners primarily discussed operational challenges, concerns about foot traffic, and issues related to maintaining commercial space. The conversations helped to shape the draft policies and neighborhood narrative by

providing insight into the opportunities and challenges facing local businesses. While implementation partnerships have not yet been developed, the information gathered from business owners will help inform future actions by other city departments.

Chair Aldredge highlighted Factoria's potential as a community gathering space, noting that several Arts Commission-supported projects have taken place at Factoria Mall, including exhibitions and collaborative programming with students from DigiPen. The Commission funded at least two grants centered on activities at the mall. The Chair expressed continued support for such efforts, emphasizing the city's ongoing shortage of publicly accessible venues for arts and cultural events, and further observed that while the mall's extensive indoor space makes it particularly valuable in the region's climate, the surrounding exterior environment remains dominated by parking lots. Future planning efforts should encourage the development of more inviting outdoor public spaces rather than relying solely on the parking areas. Zack Luckin agreed and highlighted policies supporting flexible outdoor gathering spaces capable of accommodating farmers markets, performances, concerts, and other community activities. Community members and business owners expressed interest in greater activation of the area but suggested that local artists and performers may sometimes feel intimidated about approaching mall ownership directly to organize events. The city could serve as an intermediary by creating programs, partnerships, or artist residency-style opportunities to connect artists with property owners and facilitate cultural programming. Chair Aldredge agreed that such an approach could help bridge existing gaps and further establish Factoria Mall as an asset for arts and culture.

Chair Aldredge also highlighted the recent arrival of the T&T Supermarket as a transformative development for the neighborhood. The new grocery store has significantly increased activity within the mall and has become a major regional destination that reflects Bellevue's diverse community. The city should consider how to build on that momentum to further activate the area and strengthen its identity as a gathering place.

Commissioner Martínez pointed out that the high school has a great theater, which is another significant cultural asset within the community. There needs to be continued exploration of opportunities to make the theater more available for community use and cultural programming. Zack Luckin acknowledged the facility's value and agreed that partnerships among community organizations, private property owners, and educational institutions present important opportunities. While staff did not directly discuss theater access with school representatives during the planning process, future programming partnerships could be explored.

Regarding the next steps for the Great Neighborhoods planning process, Zack Luckin explained that feedback from the Arts Commission will be considered as staff refines the final draft policies for both Eastgate and Factoria. The completed draft plans will then move forward to the Planning Commission for review beginning in June. Appreciation was expressed for the Commission's time, careful review of the materials, and thoughtful feedback.

C. Partner Presentations

1. Farmers Market

Barbara Hughes explained that while many people view the farmers market primarily as a place to purchase local food and products, the organization sees it as a broader community gathering space where food, culture, music, and community interaction

converge. Grant funding from the Eastside Arts Program (EAP) has strengthened that mission by bringing arts programming directly into a setting where people already gather, volunteer, shop, and socialize. Rather than supporting a single isolated event, the grant enabled arts experiences to become an integrated part of an ongoing community tradition that serves residents, workers, families, seniors, youth, and visitors throughout the market season. The Bellevue Farmers Market is operating in its 23rd season and remains committed to supporting Washington-based farmers, food producers, artisans, and small businesses.

Barbara Hughes explained that live music and arts programming play a critical role in transforming the market from a shopping destination into a vibrant public gathering space. Grant funds have supported a wide variety of local musicians, performers, and family-oriented creative programming throughout the season and have also provided paid opportunities for both emerging and established artists. Because performances are intentionally located within the heart of the market, they become a shared public experience that encourages visitors to linger, interact with one another, and engage more deeply with the community. The grant also helped relieve the financial pressure on the nonprofit organization by funding arts programming without diverting resources from operational necessities such as permits, insurance, sanitation, marketing, vendor support, and site logistics.

During the 2025 season, the market supported approximately 115 individual performers and creative participants through paid arts opportunities. The market welcomed roughly 30,000 in-person visitors during the season, with additional engagement occurring through online channels. Because the market is free and open to the public, the arts programming has reached many individuals who might not otherwise attend formal arts venues such as concert halls, theaters, or galleries. Arts programming strengthened the market's economic impact by encouraging visitors to stay longer, return more frequently, and support local farmers, food vendors, artisans, and nearby businesses. The grant created a multiplier effect by simultaneously supporting artists, enhancing the visitor experience, strengthening small businesses, and enriching a free public gathering space. The importance of the market's intergenerational and multicultural environment was emphasized. The market is a place where people of all ages can experience creativity together in an accessible setting.

Arts programming has become central to the identity and atmosphere of the Bellevue Farmers Market. Positive feedback from visitors has highlighted the diversity of performers and artistic styles represented throughout the season, reinforcing the market's role as a place where the broader Bellevue community can gather, connect, and feel represented. The Commission and the city were thanked for their investment in local culture, artists, and community placemaking. Without grant funding, the market will likely be unable to sustain live music programming because of the significant costs involved. Prior to receiving grant support, the organization had been forced to cancel performances due to budget limitations. While a small number of student groups perform in exchange for volunteer credit, most performers are compensated, and live music is essential to both the market's atmosphere and the success of participating vendors.

Commissioner Bhargava said it was encouraging to see how effectively the grant had been utilized and noted that the market's vendors clearly recognize the value that live music brings to the overall visitor experience. Music contributes significantly to creating a welcoming and vibrant atmosphere. Barbara Hughes commented that unlike some markets that benefit from institutional support, the Bellevue Farmers Market operates

as a very small nonprofit organization with limited staffing and resources. The organization intentionally keeps vendor fees low to support farmers and small businesses, making grants and sponsorships essential to sustaining operations.

Chair Aldredge asked if the market maintains a roster of artists who have participated through grant-supported programming. Barbara Hughes confirmed that such records exist and offered to provide them with them to the Commission. Chair Aldredge asked if the participating artists had been informed about the city's Eastside Artist Roster, which could connect them with additional opportunities. Barbara Hughes welcomed the suggestion.

Commissioner McIntyre asked for a description of the perfect farmer's market. Barbara Hughes responded that the organization's preferred long-term location has always been Downtown Park. The park's layout and central location would provide opportunities for expanded performances, larger crowds, and a more vibrant community atmosphere. Live music is a critical component of the market's success, as proved true by difficult periods when financial constraints forced the cancellation of performances. A larger, more centrally located venue would create opportunities for more shoppers, higher vendor sales, and expanded arts programming. Musical performances, increased variety, and scale are key aspirations for Bellevue's market.

Phyllis White added that greater visibility in Downtown Bellevue would expand the market's customer base and help move the organization toward greater financial self-sufficiency. The nonprofit begins each season without guaranteed funding and must continually seek grants and sponsorships to support operations. The goal is to reduce reliance on uncertain external funding sources while continuing to provide affordable opportunities for vendors and accessible experiences for the public.

Commissioner McIntyre asked what the event's primary costs are. Barbara Hughes explained that staffing is the largest expense, even though staff is paid very modestly. Additional significant costs include bookkeeping, accounting services, insurance, membership dues with the Washington State Farmers Market Association, health and fire permits, and numerous logistical expenses largely invisible to the public. While visitors often see a successful and enjoyable event, substantial behind-the-scenes work is required year-round to make each market season possible. Also highlighted were the administrative demands associated with food access programs such as SNAP, Market Match, Women, Infants, and Children benefits, and senior nutrition programs.

Chair Aldredge suggested exploring a connection with the Grand Connection project. The project is expected to include significant public and covered gathering spaces. Planners are already considering future programming opportunities. Although the project remains in development, it could eventually provide a valuable venue for market activities and cultural programming. Barbara Hughes reported that the organization has already received a Community Programming Fund grant to pilot a one-day market event along 106th Avenue NE and NE 6th Street. The pilot, which is tentatively scheduled for August 8, will require a temporary street closure and substantial logistical planning. While the project represents a significant undertaking for the small nonprofit, it as an important opportunity to explore regarding future Downtown market possibilities. The costs associated with recurring street closures will likely require ongoing city support or significant sponsorship to become a permanent arrangement.

Phyllis White emphasized the measurable impact of arts programming on market performance. Although visitor counts remain difficult to track precisely, the organization observed approximately \$15,000 in additional vendor revenue associated with the

enhanced atmosphere created by entertainment and longer visitor dwell times. Because the vendor fees are intentionally kept low, increased sales directly benefit participating small businesses while preserving affordability for vendors. The organization's leadership and board members contribute extensive volunteer time to support operations.

Commissioner Martínez expressed personal appreciation for the Bellevue Farmers Market and commented favorably on the experience of visiting the market and returning home with locally purchased goods.

Commissioner Fripp asked why the city had declined requests to locate the market in Downtown Park. Barbara Hughes replied that no specific reason had been provided other than indications that many other organizations also desire access to space. When discussing a Downtown pilot program with the city, several alternative locations were offered, with the 106th Avenue NE site ultimately selected because it could accommodate a larger event footprint. Bellevue could support a significantly larger farmers market, comparable in scale to those in neighboring communities such as Mercer Island and Issaquah. Emphasized was the importance of maintaining a strong, authentic farmers market presence within the city. The market is committed to offering fresh produce, local agriculture, and food access programs that serve lower-income households, seniors, and families.

Councilmember Sumadiwirya asked which city entity oversees the use of Downtown Park for events like the market. Lorie Hoffman explained that inquiries generally begin with the park scheduling office. Larger events exceeding certain attendance thresholds require review by the city's Special Events Committee.

Barbara Hughes said the event organizers are currently working with the Special Events Committee regarding the 106th Avenue NE location. The estimated attendance is based on the participation levels in the existing market. Lorie Hoffman clarified that attendance thresholds apply to the special event requirements. Larger events trigger additional operational and safety requirements. Barbara Hughes remarked that exceeding the highest attendance thresholds would be a welcome challenge.

2. A Cappella Joy

Carol Vecchio shared with the Commission a brief video of a musical performance before explaining that the organization is a chapter of Sing United International, formerly Sweet Adelines International, an international singing organization dedicated to music education and performance opportunities for singers in the treble vocal range. A Cappella Joy is committed to musical excellence, diversity, and creating a fresh approach to the traditional barbershop style. The award-winning chorus consists of more than 60 members representing a wide range of ages and backgrounds, with participants ranging from teens to individuals in their 80s coming from communities throughout the region. The organization values diversity, inclusion, and belonging. The chorus is a community of singers united by a shared love of music.

Carol Vecchio highlighted the chorus' accomplishments, noting its success in regional and international competitions. In 2024, the chorus earned a first-place finish in its regional division, while several affiliated quartets also received top placements. Because it is difficult to find venues that can accommodate a performing ensemble of more than 60 singers, smaller quartets frequently represent the organization at community events. During the previous year, members performed at locations including Crossroads Mall,

Belle Harbor Assisted Living, East Shore Unitarian Church, Bellevue Botanical Garden, and various Downtown Bellevue venues. One quartet, Highlight, was singled out for its work performing for younger audiences and for receiving recognition as an outstanding live entertainment group. Members of that quartet also play leadership roles in regional educational events and festivals throughout the organization's broader geographic region.

Carol Vecchio described the organization's efforts to foster inclusion within the broader barbershop community. Two years earlier, the chorus began sponsoring a Rainbow Room at regional competitions, featuring karaoke and performances designed to create a welcoming environment for LGBTQ+ participants. The initiative was well received and helped many individuals feel more visible and accepted within the organization. Funding from the Eastside Arts Program grant enabled the program to continue during the current year.

The organization originated in 1958 as the Lakeside Chorus, a chapter of Sweet Adelines International. After many years of competitive success, the members sought a new artistic direction. In 2003, that new vision was launched under the leadership of Director Nikki Blackburn. The organization adopted the name A Cappella Joy to reflect its renewed focus on learning, growth, musical excellence, and enjoyment. Since then, membership and recognition have steadily increased. The director's commitment to continued learning was highlighted, and it was noted that grant funding recently enabled participation in an advanced certification program focused on vocal health and pedagogy. Professional development will strengthen the organization's ability to support healthy and effective singing practices. Appreciation was voiced for the Commission's support. The funding received during the previous two years enabled the organization to expand its outreach and share the joy of singing with a wider audience.

Commissioner McIntyre asked about the location of the chorus' regular rehearsals. Carol Vecchio said rehearsals are held at Temple B'nai Torah in Bellevue.

Chair Aldredge noted that the comments regarding the difficulty of finding performance venues for large ensembles echo concern frequently raised by arts organizations throughout Bellevue. The Commission has a continuing interest in encouraging the development of additional performance and gathering spaces within the community.

Carol Vecchio added that the chorus includes several multi-generational family connections and emphasized a desire to introduce younger people to barbershop music and its uplifting qualities. The chorus is interested in collaborating with other choirs and musical organizations. Suggestions regarding future partnerships that could help broaden awareness and participation are welcome.

D. Bylaw Adoption

Manette Stamm reminded the Commissioners that the bylaws had been presented previously and that the Commissioners had already reviewed both the redlined and final versions. The revisions include updates to membership provisions, decorum requirements, and formatting. Formal adoption of the final version is required for the updated bylaws to be executed. Lorie Hoffman added that the revisions are part of a citywide effort affecting all boards and commissions and were developed in response to the City Council's direction. While some portions of the bylaws may occasionally be tailored to the needs of individual boards, the current revisions are standardized across all city commissions.

Answering a question asked by Commissioner McIntyre, Manette Stamm said that several other city commissions had already completed the process of updating their bylaws. None are known to have rejected the proposed revisions.

A motion to approve the bylaws was made by Commissioner McIntyre. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Bhargava, and the motion carried unanimously.

E. Elections

Chair Aldredge noted that the bylaws require the election of a Chair and Vice Chair at the first regular meeting in June. It was stated that, consistent with Robert's Rules of Order and longstanding Commission practice, nominations do not require a second; that voting would occur in the order in which nominations are received; and that voting on additional nominees would cease once a candidate received a majority of the vote.

The floor was open to nominations for Chair.

Commissioner McIntyre nominated Commissioner Bhargava to serve as Chair.

Chair Aldredge self-nominated for the position of Chair.

Absent additional nominations, a vote was taken, and Commissioner Bhargava received the majority of the vote.

The floor was then opened to nominations for Vice Chair.

Commissioner Bhargava nominated Commissioner Martínez to serve as Vice Chair.

Absent additional nominations, Commissioner Martínez was elected by majority vote to serve as Vice Chair.

5. **Commission Quick Business**

Manette Stamm said the next regularly scheduled meeting would fall on July 1. Often, because of the July 4 weekend, the meeting date is moved by a week to July 8.

The July 1 date was confirmed by all the Commissioners.

6. **Reports**

A. Project Updates

Lorie Hoffman directed the Commissioners to the project updates memorandum included in the meeting packet, noting that it contained information on upcoming arts grant-supported events and links to additional details.

The Commission was informed that the Planning Commission recently received an update on the Land Use Code amendments related to the BelRed Arts District. The Commissioners were reminded that neighborhood planning begins with policy development and is followed by code revisions that establish the regulatory tools necessary to implement the policies. Work on the BelRed code amendments is ongoing. A future informational presentation on the efforts could be provided to the Arts Commission.

Lorie Hoffman shared that the Economic Development Plan was adopted by the City Council on April 28. It contains policies related to the creative economy and the BelRed Arts District.

Applications for the Cultural Facilities Grant Program will remain open through June 15. The Commissioners were encouraged to promote the opportunity to organizations seeking to develop arts and cultural spaces within Bellevue.

Regarding the maintenance of the city's public art collection, Lorie Hoffman said the work is ongoing. Attention was given to the recent hand-cleaning of the sculpture *Pelloti*, which has undergone its annual restoration. It looks especially vibrant in preparation for the summer season. The artwork also recently received favorable publicity through coverage in *425 Magazine*.

A ribbon-cutting ceremony for *River*, the artwork by emerging artist Anna Maslowski, is scheduled for June 18 at Crossroads Park. The event will include remarks from the artist and city representatives, refreshments, and a walking tour highlighting all three artworks associated with the project. Formal invitations will be distributed soon.

Lorie Hoffman highlighted the progress regarding a major mural installation underway in the BelRed Arts District. The artwork, created collaboratively by two artists, explores themes of coexistence between people and nature and examines that relationship as an ongoing negotiation rather than a state of perfect harmony. Covering more than 10,000 square feet and requiring over one ton of paint, the mural represents the largest public art project of its kind undertaken in the district. The work is designed to be experienced from the light rail, where viewers will encounter the mural progressively as the train rounds a curve, revealing the artwork as a visual narrative.

Commissioner Martínez voiced appreciation for the social media updates documenting the mural's progress and praised staff for sharing the installation process with the public.

Lorie Hoffman said artwork for the city's creative crosswalk initiative has been completed by artists Kenji Stoll and Nikita Ares. Responsibility for the installation has transitioned to the Transportation Department, which will oversee placement of the thermoplastic designs at four intersections.

The installation of the first utility box wrap project of the year, developed through a Neighborhood Enhancement Program (NEP) initiative, draws inspiration from historic promotional materials associated with the Vuecrest neighborhood and incorporates a distinctive mid-century aesthetic. Manette Stamm said 14 additional utility box wraps will be installed throughout Bellevue, particularly in neighborhoods that historically have had limited access to public art.

Lorie Hoffman reported that *White Ashes No. 9*, a mural by Kenji Stoll on the side of the former dance theater and church building along the Grand Connection corridor, is scheduled for removal as part of the structure's demolition. Although the mural was always intended as a temporary installation, it has remained in place approximately five years longer than originally anticipated. Plans are underway to document the mural's removal for the artist, and the hope is that a portion of the concrete wall might be preserved as a physical remnant of the work.

Regarding the Emerging Artist Program, Lorie Hoffman said the application process has closed. There were 82 applications received for upcoming projects at Lake Hills Community Park and Lewis Creek Park, which is an exceptionally strong response. A seven-member selection panel will review the submissions and recommend finalists for future Commission consideration. The Factoria public art call remains open and has already generated substantial interest, with additional applications continuing to arrive.

7. Written Communications and Other Information

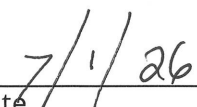
Manette Stamm said the only written communication received had been included in the Commission packet.

8. Adjournment

Chair Aldredge adjourned the meeting at 6:27 p.m.



City of Bellevue staff liaison



Date