

**Bellevue Arts Commission
Regular Meeting Minutes**

June 4, 2025
4:30 p.m.

Bellevue City Hall
1E-113 and Virtual

Commissioners Present:	Commissioners Bhargava, Chen, Enomoto, Hazra, Martínez
Commissioners Remote:	Commissioner Nederlander
Commissioners Absent:	Chairperson Aldredge
Staff Present:	Manette Stamm, Lorie Hoffman, Justin Panganiban, Thara Johnson, Community Development
Others Present:	Councilmember Sumadiwiry; Erin McEachran, Jennifer Sigl, Emerald Ballet Theatre; Shahrzad Shams, Peyvand; Cindy Ogasawara, Resounding Love Center for the Arts; Eric Passmore, Performing Arts Festival of the Eastside
Recording Secretary:	Gerry Lindsay

I. Call To Order

The meeting was called to order at 4:30 p.m. by Commissioner Enomoto who presided. All Commissioners were present with the exception of Chair Aldredge.

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 Chen and the motion carried unanimously.

B. Approval of Minutes

Motion to approve the May 7, 2025, minutes as submitted was made by Commissioner Bhargava. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Martínez and the motion carried unanimously.

3. Oral Communications

Commissioner Enomoto noted the prohibition against using public facilities for any campaigning.

Alex Tsimerman began with a Nazi salute and called the Commissioners dirty damn Nazi Gestapo fascist pigs, banditos and Mafia and noted having spoken in Council chambers 5000 times, having been given numerous trespasses, and having been prosecuted by the city five times. Multiple derogatory insults were levied against city officials, including referring to them as Nazi pigs. The comments were particularly critical of Mayor Robinson and alleged suppression of public speech during Council meetings by asserting

that public speaking opportunities had been limited, undermining freedom of expression and electoral fairness.

After being called a Nazi pig by the speaker, Councilmember Sumadiwiryra asked for the removal of the speaker from the room due to the escalating hostility.

Commissioner Enomoto acknowledged the speaker's First Amendment protections but stated that the Arts Commission does not condone hateful or offensive speech.

Alex Tsimerman continued to argue that the remarks were not offensive and persisted in using derogatory language.

Commissioner Enomoto indicated the speaker's allotted time was nearly over. Despite being told that, Alex Tsimerman attempted to continue, claiming that interruptions had eaten into the allotted time.

Security ultimately intervened, confirmed that Alex Tsimerman's time had ended, and instructed the man to leave the room.

4. Action, Discussion and Information Items

A. Welcome Council Liaison

Arts Community Manager Lorie Hoffman welcomed Councilmember Sumadiwiryra.

Councilmember Sumadiwiryra remarked on having been a Councilmember for a little over two months and having been unanimously voted to serve as Council liaison to the Arts Commission. Art is a core value of life for all cultures. Belden Cafe, owned by the Councilmember, serves over thirty charitable organizations and supports job readiness for marginalized groups. The Councilmember commented on being involved with the boards of various charity organizations, including the Bellevue School Foundation and BelRed Arts District

B. Great Neighborhood Program: Draft Policies for Crossroads and Newport Neighborhood Area Plans

Senior Planner Justin Panganiban with Community Development said the Great Neighborhoods Program was initiated in 2018 to update outdated neighborhood plans. The program addresses two neighborhood plans per year and began with the Northeast and Northwest Bellevue neighborhoods. The current cycle involves the Crossroads and Newport neighborhoods. Two more neighborhood areas will be taken up in the fall.

Justin Panganiban explained that the neighborhood plans are part of Bellevue's Comprehensive Plan. Volume 1 of the Comprehensive Plan contains citywide goals and was recently updated in 2024. Volume 2 houses the neighborhood-specific plans. It was emphasized that community input is integral in crafting policies that reflect each neighborhood's values while aligning with citywide policies.

The planning process is in the "Refine" phase. The first phase, "Discover," is where community priorities were identified. In Phase 2, "Define," the draft vision was presented and circulated for public feedback. The policies are also being presented to relevant boards and commissions, including the Arts Commission, for further refinement and

review. The final recommendations will be made to the Planning Commission in the summer, with eventual transmission to the City Council for review in the fall.

The primary elements of the neighborhood plan are organized into four central categories: urban design, which refers to the configuration and aesthetic of physical spaces; neighborhood identity, or how the community's character is expressed; improvements to the public realm, such as enhancements to streets, parks, and trails; and neighborhood connectivity, addressing how residents move between destinations. Property owners are allowed to propose land use map changes during the planning process to align better the development of their sites with the neighborhood area planning outcomes. In the case of Crossroads and Newport, however, no such changes were initiated, and therefore, the component is not part of the current scope.

Justin Panganiban stated that the city has an existing framework for planning arts and culture. The framework's elements include the Economic Development Plan, which was adopted in 2020 and is currently undergoing updates. It contains strategies to support small businesses, entrepreneurship, and the creative economy. Complementary strategies are embedded in the Comprehensive Plan. The Urban Design and the Arts Element, which the Arts Commission contributed to in the previous year, offers policy guidance on cultivating arts, promoting partnerships, and advancing cultural diversity. The efforts are bolstered by supportive policies found in both the Economic Development and Neighborhood Elements of the Comprehensive Plan, thereby ensuring an integrated approach to sustaining a vibrant arts and culture environment.

Justin Panganiban emphasized the role of inclusive and equitable community engagement. The planning team engaged residents through a mix of virtual, hybrid, and in-person events. Outreach included direct conversations with neighborhood groups, homeowners' associations, and community organizations that helped disseminate information. Pop-up events were conducted in both neighborhoods to gather interactive input on urban design, placemaking, and mobility. Particular attention was paid to engaging underrepresented groups, including seniors, youth, communities of color, and individuals with limited English proficiency. Cultural outreach assistants provided in-language support to ensure broader participation, which significantly informed the development of the resulting policies.

Regarding Crossroads, Justin Panganiban introduced the draft vision statement, which describes Crossroads as a complete urban neighborhood with convenient access to a variety of destinations that fosters diversity and embraces its natural qualities. Crossroads is already known for its vibrant cultural and social spaces, including the community park, shopping center and schools, most of which are concentrated near 156th Avenue NE and NE 8th Street. The community has voiced a strong interest in expanding such gathering spaces throughout the neighborhood. Kelsey Creek, which runs north to south, was identified as both a natural and cultural asset.

The major themes drawn from the community engagement in Crossroads included a desire for more playful and creative public spaces, increased programming for seniors, and culturally specific public art that reflects the diverse demographics of Crossroads, which includes a high proportion of renters.

The draft policies for Crossroads are grouped into main themes relevant to arts and culture. The first category addresses the support for a culturally responsive built environment and includes policies that affirm the neighborhood's diverse heritage, design elements, signage, and streetscapes to create inclusive, accessible, and

expressive public spaces. Arterial streets are identified as important corridors where such enhancements can be concentrated.

The second policy group focuses on supporting the Crossroads business district. The community feedback indicated appreciation for the neighborhood's diverse small businesses, but also recognized the challenge of finding affordable commercial space. The policies aim to support a more distributed and accessible business district that includes culturally relevant enterprises.

The third group centers on welcoming gathering spaces. While the neighborhood already benefits from facilities such as the Crossroads Shopping Center, a library, mini city hall, and the community park, additional policy support is proposed to strengthen community partnerships, including with faith-based organizations, to foster inclusive and accessible gathering places.

Commissioner Martínez asked if Policy SCX-17 concerning the acquisition of parcels suitable for mini-parks could be incorporated to support public art and cultural uses. Justin Panganiban said the policy calls for acquiring parcels suitable for mini-parks where such parcels can have active transportation access, especially west of 152nd Avenue NE. The acquisition of such spaces certainly presents opportunities for arts and cultural expression.

Commissioner Martínez then inquired as to why the plan did not include mention of school district collaboration for Crossroads as it did for Newport. Justin Panganiban responded that while the Newport neighborhood features two former school district sites that could be transformed into public assets, the context in Crossroads is different. Although Odell and Highland middle schools are in the area, the opportunities for collaboration are less pronounced. Commissioner Martínez pointed out that with increased density in Crossroads may come justification for future partnerships with the school district to provide additional open space. Justin Panganiban agreed that future planning should account for projected growth and space needs, especially given the current facilities' limitations.

Commissioner Bhargava asked for clarification regarding Policy SCX-4. Justin Panganiban said the policy aims to enhance corridors such as NE 8th Street and 156th Avenue NE with aesthetic and landscaping improvements. The arterials, which are often perceived as uninviting, could be transformed into gateways that reinforce the neighborhood's cultural identity and improve connectivity through integrated streetscape and art interventions.

Commissioner Enomoto asked about the policy related to multilingual signage for wayfinding and wondered whether the result would be similar to the signage used in Seattle's Chinatown International District, where the signage reflects the neighborhood's linguistic and cultural composition, or if the signage would be tailored to the most spoken languages within specific community pockets. Justin Panganiban said the intent of the policy is to ensure signage that reflects the linguistic diversity of the local community. The objective is to aid navigation and create a sense of welcome and inclusion. The policy serves as a guiding framework rather than a finalized design and would inform future implementation through investments in parks, open space, and other community infrastructure.

Commissioner Bhargava asked how the plan intends to support the retention of small businesses in Crossroads. Justin Panganiban acknowledged the challenge of retaining

small businesses and explained that the plan would help guide partnerships with the city's Cultural and Economic Development team. Though not within the direct scope of the neighborhood plan, the policy direction could support initiatives such as affordable commercial space through future development standards.

Lorie Hoffman pointed out that the policies provide a foundational framework to guide the next level work of implementation, which can be different in each neighborhood. One example is BelRed, where there is a similar policy focused on affordable commercial space. The methodologies being looked at involve the LUC and development incentives. The framework enables city departments to explore neighborhood-specific solutions.

Commissioner Enomoto noted an apparent emphasis on safety and senior-focused infrastructure in Crossroads and asked whether these concerns are unique to Crossroads or are present across other neighborhoods. Justin Panganiban responded that while safety is a common concern, it is particularly pronounced in Crossroads. Engagement with two primarily Chinese-speaking senior groups, Kin'an and Transcend United, revealed concerns about lighting and pedestrian safety. Their concerns have been integrated into the policy language for Crossroads.

Turning to the draft vision for Newport, Justin Panganiban described it as a connected neighborhood characterized by strong social ties and a deep relationship with its natural environment. The community feedback highlighted Lake Washington, Coal Creek, and Eastrail as valued natural amenities that foster community engagement.

While Newport residents voiced appreciation for the natural beauty and tranquility of their neighborhood, they also identified a lack of indoor gathering spaces and noted that residents frequently leave the area to access libraries or community centers. A desire was expressed for more cultural events, murals, and public artworks that reflect Newport's rich history and diverse community.

The policy proposals for Newport center around three major themes. First, reinforcing the natural identity and history of the neighborhood, primarily through the preservation and enhancement of forested areas and trails. Second, the development of the designated neighborhood center, which encompasses the Newport Hill Shopping Center and surrounding areas, including apartment complexes, school district properties, parks, and faith-based institutions. The draft plan encourages cultivating a stronger business district that will better serve local needs. Third, there is an emphasis on creating intergenerational gathering spaces. Residents expressed a desire for public spaces that accommodate both youth and seniors, preserving Newport's tradition as a family-oriented community. As with Crossroads, there is policy support for partnering with faith-based organizations and coordinating with the Bellevue School District to explore future redevelopment of vacant school properties for community use.

Commissioner Martínez commented that implementation of the policy framework will require a deeper engagement at the neighborhood level.

Commissioner Hazra expressed appreciation for including intergenerational planning regarding the multigenerational use of parks.

Commissioner Bhargava said it is a very good idea to leverage existing infrastructure such as schools, faith-based centers, and social clubs, as indoor community spaces.

Councilmember Sumadiwiry suggested collaborating with the Transportation Department to enhance accessibility, particularly for seniors and individuals who require

mobility assistance. Long distances between pedestrian crossings can create safety challenges. Planning for multimodal transportation infrastructure in conjunction with land use planning will enhance convenience and safety for all age groups. Justin Panganiban agreed that policies around neighborhood connectivity are a key part of the planning process. For both Crossroads and Newport, there is a need for improved access to transit, allowing residents to better access the city and the region. Transportation staff are part of the core team.

C. Partner Presentations

Emerald Ballet Theatre

Jennifer Sigl, Interim President of the Board of Emerald Ballet Theatre, noted having been involved with the organization since 2007 as a parent, volunteer, and long-term stage manager. Erin McEachran, Artistic Director for the organization, remarked on having had an extensive history with the organization in various roles since its founding in 2007.

Erin McEachran said the mission of Emerald Ballet Theatre is to advance the arts through education, performance, outreach, and collaboration. The organization operates as a nonprofit and currently has a student body of about 70 dancers. Dance classes are offered for all ages and abilities, including a free parent-and-tot class called Dance with Me, and a free boys' class to support underrepresented groups in ballet. The teaching approach emphasizes inclusivity, a growth mindset, and life skills such as discipline, confidence, and perseverance. No auditions are required for participation, which reinforces the commitment to accessibility and positive experiences in dance education. Dance teaches life skills and regardless of how far they take dance, the skills they learn will last a lifetime, including discipline, organization, perseverance and confidence.

The summer programs go beyond traditional ballet programs and include culturally diverse offerings such as a Japanese dance, art, and culture camp, as well as musical theater and visual art. The camps are offered both independently and through partnerships with Redmond Parks and Recreation, Bellevue Parks and Community Services, and Mercer Island Parks and Recreation. The organization also runs teen teaching internships to help young people develop classroom management and professional communication skills.

Jennifer Sigl emphasized that performance is a crucial component of dancers' education. Over the past 18 years in the roles of long-time stage manager and parent, the impact of live performance on young dancers has been affirmed. Stage experience helps students develop resilience and composure in high-pressure situations.

Erin McEachran said another component of the organization is outreach, in which smaller-scale performances are offered in preschools and senior living centers. In the performances, bodies and costumes are used to tell stories. The experiences are joyful and moving. The Magic Bus assemblies bring narrated ballet performances into schools to make the art form more accessible and relatable for children. The assemblies help students see peers their own age performing, and that builds mutual confidence and relatability.

Erin McEachran highlighted some recent collaborative events, including participation in the Columbia Choir's 40th anniversary celebration concert at Meany Hall at which

choreographed pieces were performed alongside live music. The students also danced at the Sound Transit opening of the BelRed 130th Station; despite inclement weather, the dancers illustrated commitment and adaptability. The organization also contributed to the Everywhere Art organization art walk organized by Art Ma; the opening weekend was hosted at the Emerald Ballet Theatre studio. The event included dance performances and youth art activities. The students performed at the Wanru Art Center's cat-themed gallery event, where dancers interpreted the theme through contemporary dance. Additional outreach has included participating in Bellevue's Downtown Movies in the Park and conducting a collaborative photo shoot with photographer Gabby Calviconti to celebrate the city's artistic and civic identity.

Jennifer Sigl thanked the Commission for its ongoing support and expressed enthusiasm for future collaborations. The Commission was informed about the upcoming performance of *Peter and the Wolf* at Juanita High School Performing Arts Center, scheduled for June 7 and 8 at 2:00 p.m.

Answering a question asked by Commissioner Martínez, Erin McEachran said the organization tries to do the traditional Nutcracker every year. *Peter and the Wolf* was selected this year to help students develop acting and expressive skills in addition to technical ballet training. The students were encouraged to interpret individual characters and were guided to connect their dance to musical instruments featured in the story, such as clarinet and bassoon, fostering a multidimensional artistic experience.

Peyvand

Shahzad Shahrzad Shams, representing the nonprofit organization Payvand, introduced the nonprofit organization and its foundational mission by noting that the name Payvand is derived from the Persian word for union and fusion. The organization aims to support underrepresented, multicultural, and immigrant youth and their families with a focus on empowering the youth through community-building, educational initiatives, and enrichment resources. The first step in the youth empowerment strategy is cultural representation, which is implemented through arts and cultural programming. By showcasing cultural traditions from Iran, the Middle East, and Central Asia in public spaces, Payvand strives to instill a sense of pride, inclusion, and belonging. The underlying goal is to help youth feel seen and valued, which in turn encourages their engagement and contributions to the broader community.

Payvand has organized numerous events, including the annual Nowruz celebrations. The primary Nowruz event takes place at the Washington State Capitol, but has also been extended to different King County libraries where educational and artistic activities are provided, often featuring intergenerational participation. The workshops, such as egg painting, align with Nowruz and coincide with other seasonal events like Easter. One notable collaboration occurred at Bellevue High School with the MENA Club, where Payvand supported student-led Nowruz celebrations and distributed educational materials, including posters and bookmarks, some of which have circulated to schools as far away as California.

The organization conducts a range of scholarly and cultural programming, often hosted at libraries or in collaboration with the University of Washington. Payvand has also had a longstanding partnership with the Seattle International Film Festival, sponsoring films and inviting delegates, particularly from Iran, for over a decade. More recently, the organization has expanded to include works from the broader Middle East and Central Asia.

Continuing, Shahrzad Shams said some 42 events were held in 2024, many of which were co-sponsored with other institutions such as universities, libraries, concert halls, bookstores, festivals, and art galleries. Seventy-two percent of the programs were free to the public and driven by volunteers. In December of the previous year, with the support of the city of Bellevue, Payvand screened a documentary film related to the 2022 Women's Life Freedom movement at Cinemark. The organization continues to host additional events, including a singing workshop and concert at Bellevue High School, as well as an upcoming ballet and Persian dance performance in July. The initiatives are part of the effort to fill the gap left by diminished arts funding in public schools and to ensure community-wide cultural enrichment.

Payvand's demographic profile reflects a leadership and volunteer base that is predominantly women and Middle Eastern. The organization creates impact through education and community connection, and works to challenge stereotypes and foster cross-cultural understanding. Exhibits such as Intergenerational Portrait Painting and Artistry of Iranian Women's Stories of Resilience have attracted strong participation, particularly the latter, which drew the largest attendance at the ANT Gallery. Collaborations with libraries have also produced well-received events, such as the Too Much to Carry exhibit, which focused on themes of displacement and featured poets and writers sharing personal narratives.

When asked by Commissioner Martínez about Payvand's family empowerment activities, Shahrzad Shams explained that the initiative began during the COVID-19 pandemic and evolved from a cultural advisory board at the University of Washington into a broader community response effort. The organization recognized an urgent need to support middle schoolers, especially those from multicultural backgrounds who struggled with identity issues and social acceptance. The age group, often caught between cultural expectations at home and social pressures at school, faces additional challenges. Payvand organized monthly meetings with counselors, judges, and coaches to offer support to youth and their families. To provide a safe space for expression, Payvand rented the basement of a church and created a drop-in center for youth and equipped the space with games, karaoke and paint supplies. Artists were invited to engage with the children. Unfortunately, the momentum was disrupted by the 2022 Women's Life Freedom movement, which cast a pall over the community due to widespread grief and protest in response to youth deaths in Iran. Many in the community were disengaged from programs during that period, and even the traditional Nowruz celebration was canceled. Payvand resumed its cultural programs with renewed focus following a prolonged period of mourning and inactivity, starting with Nowruz events at public libraries and the state capital. The organization now emphasizes expanding the reach of arts and culture to the broader community while encouraging the gradual re-engagement of those affected by past grief. Payvand has launched a dance camp and is developing a filmmaking camp for middle schoolers to tell their stories. Grant support from the Four Cultures organization has been secured, and contact with local filmmakers has been made to facilitate the program.

Commissioner Enomoto commended Payvand for its accomplishments in the face of adversity and asked about the role played by the city of Bellevue in supporting the organization's space needs. Noting existing collaborations with the University of Washington and Bellevue High School, Commissioner Enomoto asked if the city has been able to provide venues or other infrastructural support for Payvand's initiatives. Shahrzad Shams said the city has been supportive of Payvand's mission and efforts. City leaders first met during the Nowruz event at Bellevue High School; the mayor and several Councilmembers encouraged approaching the city for collaboration. Through

the connection, Visit Bellevue helped initiate contact with the Meydenbauer Center. Although Payvand was interested in holding a performance at the center, the rental cost proved too high, making it inaccessible. The challenge of securing affordable venues in Bellevue is ongoing; it costs more than a thousand dollars to rent a studio even for a half-day ballet camp. Even though there are more affordable venue options elsewhere, Payvand intentionally chooses to operate in Bellevue out of respect for the support it has received from the city. Participation in a city-funded exhibit at the Bellevue Gallery was cited as an example of the collaboration. A strong desire was expressed to organize additional events at the venue, incorporating poetry, music, and visual art. However, financial limitations remain a major barrier. Although supported by volunteers, the organization's growth is constrained by the cost and scarcity of accessible space. Access to space would not only ease the financial strain but would also enable greater artistic programming, especially since many artists are willing to donate their work and time.

In response to a follow-up question asked by Commissioner Bhargava, Shahrzad Shams confirmed that the movie screening Payvand held at Cinemark in Bellevue also required rental fees that totaled about \$1,600. The choice to host the event locally was made in order to foster community connection. The event was supported by a grant from the city.

Commissioner Bhargava affirmed the importance of such cultural sharing and asked about Payvand's collaboration with other underrepresented communities, particularly the Afghan community. Shahrzad Shams said Payvand is well-connected to the Afghan community, although most Afghan families reside to the south of Bellevue. For events such as the Seattle International Film Festival, Payvand has provided free tickets to Afghan attendees and collaborated with them during Nowruz celebrations at the state capitol. It has been difficult to engage Afghan women in public programming. Afghan women do participate in their own internal community activities, but their presence in broader cultural events has been minimal. Despite direct requests, not a single Afghan woman attended a recent reception to which they were invited. A continued desire to support and elevate Afghan women was expressed considering the challenges they face in accessing public cultural spaces. Payvand also partners with the New American Alliance for Policy in Kent, which works extensively with Afghan communities. Through the partnership, a youth art workshop is offered for their tutoring program. Several artists affiliated with Payvand have volunteered to support the initiatives without compensation. Although the Tajik community in the area is smaller, there is a relatively strong Uzbek community. Payvand maintains collaborations with both groups and continues to invite them to participate in shared art programs. A recent exhibit at the A&T Gallery included artists from Turkey, Afghanistan, and Europe. One artist submitted work from Europe at the recommendation of community members, and Payvand covered all shipping, framing, and presentation expenses to ensure the work reached the local audience.

Resounding Love Center for the Arts

Cindy Ogasawara, co-founder, co-CEO, and president of Resounding Love Center for the Arts, began by referencing the Netflix documentary *Join or Die*, which examines the decline in civic participation in the United States. The film included the quote "If the polity is going to be saved, we have to imagine being together differently." That requires taking risks, to face the possibility of failure, and above all, to love different ways of being together. The concept is central to the philosophy of Resounding Love, a social justice organization that presents itself publicly as a choir.

Cindy Ogasawara explained that Resounding Love is intentionally composed of a highly diverse membership, representing differences in race, ethnicity, ability, neurodiversity, gender identity, sexual orientation, and socioeconomic background. The organization seeks to cultivate a new model of community by fostering deep, intentional relationships across those lines of difference. The mission was characterized as the real work of the current era.

Cindy Ogasawara referenced two observations that have shaped the organization's thinking. First was a statement by Melinda Gates, which said society is currently struggling to digest its new diversity. The second quote was Gloria Steinem's remark that the most dangerous moment in an abusive relationship is when the abuser begins to lose control. Those thrashings and death throes of the old order are being felt, giving hope that birth is being given to a new way of being.

Cindy Ogasawara explained that the Resounding Love choir was formed in March 2020 at the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. Starting a choir under such circumstances is not recommended. The group was forced to meet exclusively on Zoom for two and a half years. Despite the limitations, members joined from across the country and as far away as Costa Rica. The group built trust and community through weekly online meetings, individual rehearsals, and video recordings that were edited into joint performances. The choir resumed in-person rehearsals and performances in January 2023 and has since remained active.

The choir's repertoire centers on African American musical traditions. Cindy Ogasawara said co-founder Marshawn Moultrie identifies as Black, and together they lead the organization in a way that embodies both artistic integrity and anti-racism principles. Cindy Ogasawara noted overseeing the operational management and leading the choir's internal equity and justice work. Everything artistic is the domain of Marshawn Moultrie. The choir can be described as multiracial, interfaith, LGBTQ+ embracing, and committed to serious social engagement, which distinguishes it from more traditional gospel choirs.

Creating an inclusive choir requires clear core values that guide how members treat one another. The core values are especially important given the diverse and sometimes conflicting backgrounds of the members. Some of the most challenging internal work falls on white-identifying participants, particularly white women who have been conditioned to assert their presence. In Resounding Love, they are asked to "lean out" in order to support the leadership of Black, trans, and queer members. The dynamic requires ongoing accountability and adaptation. The organization's core values are structured to promote necessary power-sharing and mutual respect.

Resounding Love serves different types of audiences. Although the choir has performed in prestigious venues such as Benaroya Hall, Lumen Field, and Langston Hughes Performing Arts Institute, the organization's most meaningful engagements occur with marginalized communities. Resounding Love was the first choir to receive the Seattle Symphony's Community Stages Fund grant, valued at \$7,500, which enabled the performance at Benaroya Hall. More significantly, the choir intentionally performs for communities that are often overlooked, including homeless shelters, faith communities that serve BIPOC and LGBTQ populations, and juvenile detention facilities such as Echo Glen Children's Center in Snoqualmie. The organization is currently in discussions with Green Hill School, an incarceration facility in Chehalis. The choir's mission in those settings is to affirm the dignity, worth, and humanity of those who are rarely included in traditional performance spaces. The message to those communities is one of hope, inclusion, and belonging.

Cindy Ogasawara thanked the Commission for supporting organizations like Resounding Love and invited the Commissioners to attend upcoming events. While the next performance is already sold out, the concert on Saturday, June 21, at 1:00 p.m., would be a good choice; it is part of the Eastside Love and Justice Pride Service, an interfaith event hosted by Eastside Pride that specifically celebrates and uplifts transgender and non-binary individuals.

Commissioner Martínez asked what the choir would be doing to celebrate Pride Month. Cindy Ogasawara explained that, while the group considered organizing a pride parade march, the logistics and resource demands were too high. Instead, the choice was made to dedicate the choir's efforts to the Eastside interfaith pride service. Within the choir, they are celebrating the LGBTQ members by recognizing their identities and contributions.

Commissioner Enomoto asked how Resounding Love plans to engage with the youth, especially in light of contemporary struggles around identity and belonging. Cindy Ogasawara responded with enthusiasm and explained that youth outreach has been a long-standing goal. While the organization has not yet made all the right connections, any suggestions for collaboration will be welcomed. Co-CEO Marchand Moultrie will soon begin a new role as an adjunct instructor leading the choral program at South Seattle College, which could help introduce more college-aged participants to the choir. During the pandemic, young people as young as nine joined Resounding Love's virtual choir, which was impressive given the demands of remote schooling. The organization strongly desires to foster youth engagement and is open to additional community partnerships.

Commissioner Hazra noted that the Bellevue Youth Council was meeting in an adjacent room. The council includes 150 youths from the Bellevue School District. Cindy Ogasawara was encouraged to connect with Patrick Alina, who leads both the Youth Council and the official Bellevue Youth Link Board. Commissioner Hazra said while personally leading the group, 40 percent of participating youth identified as LGBTQ and some were experiencing homelessness. Cindy Ogasawara said Resounding Love accepts individuals of all backgrounds and skill levels.

Councilmember Sumadiwiryra left the meeting at 557 p.m. to attend another meeting

Performing Arts Festival of the Eastside

Eric Passmore, president of the Performing Arts Festival of the Eastside, often abbreviated as "Parfés," said the non-profit organization was founded in 1996 to provide educational and performance opportunities for young musicians, 90 percent of whom are from Bellevue. The primary annual event is a week-long music festival held at St. Andrew's Lutheran Church, located across from Bellevue College. During the festival, music professors from institutions such as Northwestern University, University of Puget Sound, Seattle University, and Western Washington University are invited to mentor the young musicians. Participants compete and perform in categories that include piano, violin, viola, cello, bass, and woodwinds. In 2024, the festival featured 430 students and 629 performances, given that many students perform in multiple categories. Most divisions are at full capacity and have waitlists, with the exception of woodwinds.

Another core component of the festival consists of public concerts. The concerts feature award-winning students and are free and open to the public. This year, the organization increased its total number of concerts to six. Families attend to support the students,

and all performances are recorded and published on YouTube. The festival also includes a concerto playoff competition, which adds another performance highlight.

The organization uses the grants it receives to fund the concerts. The grants are primarily from the Bellevue Arts Program and 4Culture in support of the concert programming, including the concerto playoff and Eastside artist concerts. Despite limited financial resources, the organization functions effectively due to its longstanding partnership with St. Andrew's Lutheran Church and an all-volunteer staff. Currently, no staff members are paid.

The majority of the organization's funding, approximately seventy-five percent, comes from family participation fees related to the week-long festival. The remaining portion of the budget is supplemented by grants, private donations, and interest income from holding accounts. The concert series includes five main events and a newly added sixth concert and it is sustained primarily by grants.

Eric Passmore emphasized the remarkable growth and enthusiasm around fine arts participation and highlighted the program that features 629 performances from 429 students. Most divisions have waitlists, which indicates an increasing demand. The high level of discipline and talent among the students, many of whom practice up to two hours daily on instruments such as cello, violin, viola, and piano, is impressive. The children's technical skill and dedication is to be admired. Their musical communities are tight-knit; individual studios form mini-communities. In one instance, a piano teacher's studio provided refreshments for an entire concert audience, fostering a sense of camaraderie.

Eric Passmore expressed interest in connecting with other fine arts organizations to share experiences and understand common challenges. While hesitant to ask for assistance that does not benefit the broader community, a specific issue was highlighted: grant reporting requirements. King County requires calendar-year-based reporting, whereas the organization operates on a fiscal year that aligns with the school calendar, which runs from June to July. The discrepancy forces the organization to prepare redundant and potentially inconsistent reports, complicating compliance with the regulatory filings.

Parfés is collaborating with the Bellevue Symphony to feature the winner of the concerto playoff, a student named Maximilian, in a performance at Meydenbauer Center in October. It will be exciting to see Maximilian perform alongside professional musicians.

Commissioner Enomoto noted that Parfés is unique in that it is the only organization that has not come asking about physical space, which is likely attributable to the successful relationship with St. Andrew's. The administrative reporting challenge was acknowledged, and the suggestion was made to determine if city staff could help in any way. As far as connecting with other organizations, the suggestion was made to make use of the Bellevue Arts Directory. Other neighborhoods might have something similar to raise awareness of small organizations. Eric Passmore responded positively to the idea, especially given the consolidation of small businesses like luthiers and instrument rental services, which are increasingly difficult to find. Strengthening connections would be useful.

Commissioner Martínez asked what the most difficult challenge is in preparing for the festival. Eric Passmore explained that balancing the competitive aspect of the program is the most emotionally taxing and nuanced task. Competitions can have contrasting

effects on children: winners might walk away feeling confident and lose any motivation to improve, while those who do not perform well may feel discouraged and reluctant to participate again. The organization actively works to foster resilience and prevent such outcomes.

Commissioner Bhargava asked if the organization has considered recruiting adult volunteers through school PTSA groups. Eric Passmore explained that space, not staffing, is the primary constraint. The current venue at St. Andrew's provides a warm and familiar environment, which helps maintain a supportive atmosphere for participants. While other concert venues for performances are being explored, the organization is cautious about expanding too quickly or into less appropriate academic settings. However, if additional space can be secured, the organization would be able to increase the number of adjudication sessions and welcome more students from the waitlist. The waitlist is not inherently negative, but it does fill up very quickly, which means the current system favors the most prepared applicants rather than those who might benefit most from the program.

Commissioner Enomoto asked if the organization considers income or equity factors when admitting students, and whether tuition subsidies are offered. Eric Passmore expressed openness to that but admitted that help and guidance would be needed from someone experienced in equity-based admissions. A similar approach was tried recently with girls' lacrosse, but absent an associated outreach, the attempt received little participation. Any inclusive programming would also need to ensure participants are adequately prepared, given the high technical level of the current festival. The possibility of creating a separate, more accessible event, such as a fall adjudication session with a lower entry threshold, perhaps focused on Baroque music, might be an approach to try.

5. Commission Quick Business

Manette Stamm stated that the next regularly scheduled meeting would be held on July 2. However, given the proximity of the date to the July 4 holiday, a suggestion was made to consider alternative dates. Following a discussion, the Commission confirmed July 9 as the date for the next meeting, which coincides with the planned art opening for the portable artworks.

Manette Stamm acknowledged that the meeting marked the final session for Commissioner Nederlander.

Commissioner Nederlander reflected on having served on the Commission since August 2023 and expressed gratitude for the opportunity to support the funding of arts and architecture projects. The decision to seek a seat on the Commission was made with the intention of representing younger Bellevue residents and promoting engagement among early-career professionals in tech and science sectors, particularly in aerospace. Commissioner Nederlander shared working for Blue Origin when appointed to the Commission. There is a gap in arts engagement among younger professionals in the general science and engineering fields. The importance of supporting creative expression was stressed, especially as young workers face increasing layoffs and reduced opportunities. Commissioner Nederlander announced an upcoming relocation to Florida for a new position at NASA's Kennedy Space Center, but affirmed a continued commitment to arts advocacy.

6. Reports

A. Commissioners' Committee and Lead Reports – As Noted

B. Project Updates from Staff

Lorie Hoffman reported that the Council on June 3 approved the resolution to award contracts for the cultural facility grants approved at the end of 2024. The procedural approval allows for the contracting processes to move forward.

Lorie Hoffman said the BelRed Arts District, in partnership with Eastrail Trail Partners, will be hosting an art walk on Saturday, June 7. The event will feature guided tours of public art installations and will conclude with optional travel on the light rail into the Bellevue Arts District for further involvement with art and artists.

Regarding the long-anticipated installation of Yonder Sky by artist Po Xu Wang, it is planned to be installed in the second half of July. The 12-foot interactive sculpture has been completed and is the city's possession, but installation was delayed pending street readiness. The sculpture allows users to interact with touch-sensitive sensors, creating musical compositions using samples from Bellevue artists. The artwork includes both choral and instrumental sound elements.

Lorie Hoffman reiterated that the Portable Art Collection is currently on display with the exception of one piece. A full reception will take place following the Commission's July 9 meeting.

Artist Bethany Frankel has been selected to create nine large-format vinyl panel artworks along 124th Avenue NE in the Bellevue Arts District. The works will focus on the themes of nature and water and will offer a strong visual impact once completed. Another artist, Aline Jimenez, has completed a set of vinyl utility box wraps at the intersection of 136th Avenue NE and NE 20th Street, close to the light rail line into Redmond. The artworks are described as vibrant and striking.

Maintenance of existing artworks is also underway. Approximately twenty-five works are scheduled for cleaning or restoration in 2025. Two initial priorities include *Palloti* in Downtown Park, which will undergo basic cleaning, and the Gandhi statue in Ashwood Park, which requires more substantial restoration.

Commissioner Chen asked about the Creative Crosswalks project and whether the selected artist had accepted the commission. Manette Stamm explained that following discussions with the Transportation Department, the decision was made to engage two artists instead of one. The primary artist selected by the panel and a second strong finalist were both commissioned to submit concept designs. The dual-artist approach provides assurance to the transportation team, which had specific technical constraints related to thermoplastic materials, such as allowable line thickness and color limitations. Manette Stamm added that both artists will be paid for their conceptual design work. The approach will inform future crosswalk projects and will potentially allow the city to reuse designs from the second artist if the project proves successful. The Commission will be kept updated going forward.

7. Adjournment

Commissioner Enomoto adjourned the meeting at 6:25 p.m.


City of Bellevue staff liaison


Date