

Bellevue Arts Commission Meeting Minutes

April 1, 2026
4:30 p.m.

Bellevue City Hall
1E-113 and Virtual

Commissioners Present: Chairperson Aldredge, Vice Chair Enomoto,
Commissioners Bhargava, Hazra, Martinez, McIntyre

Commissioners Remote: None

Commissioners Absent: None

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

Others Present: Ben Brandow, KBCS

Recording Secretary: Gerry Lindsay

I. **Call To Order**

The meeting was called to order at 4:30 p.m. by Chair Aldredge, who presided. All Commissioners were present with the exception of Vice Chair Enomoto, who arrived at 4:31 p.m.

2. **Approval of Agenda and Minutes**

A. Approval of Agenda

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

B. Approval of Minutes

Motion to approve the March 4, 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 clarified that, in compliance with Washington state campaign laws, speakers at public meetings cannot support or oppose ballot measures or candidates and that public comments must relate to matters within the authority of the Arts Commission, as established under Ordinance 6752.

Alex Tsimerman delivered remarks characterized by strong criticism of city officials and governance practices. The speaker expressed dissatisfaction with prior limits set for public speaking opportunities; alleged restrictions on freedom of speech; and described personal grievances involving past legal actions and access to Council chambers. The speaker also raised concerns about the city's leadership and referenced broader political and international issues. The comments included repeated accusations and

confrontational language directed toward officials, as well as statements asserting candidacy for public office and support for particular political causes.

Bailey Fuentes, a local artist on the Eastside artist roster, provided an update regarding a city-funded project grant originally scheduled for completion in 2025. It was explained that the project timeline was extended into 2026 with the city's approval. The proposed work involves an architecturally distinctive mural to be installed in the arts district. Supporting materials, including a PowerPoint presentation and visual concept images, were distributed to the Commissioners. The intended location of the mural is on a utility structure near the Spring District light rail corridor. The preliminary design concepts feature monochromatic elements contrasted with vibrant color accents. Project completion will require city approval, coordination regarding a right-of-entry agreement for site access, and procurement of liability insurance. Additional progress updates will be provided at a subsequent meeting.

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

A. Partner Presentation

Ben Brandow, interim general manager of KBCS public radio, explained that the station is a nonprofit community radio service affiliated with Bellevue College that has been operating since 1973. While the station is affiliated with the college, it does not receive funding from the college. The station receives funds from individual listeners, a few corporate sponsors, and generous grants from various sources, including the city of Bellevue. The broadcast tower is located on Cougar Mountain. The programming model features diverse noncommercial music, news, and public affairs content supported by volunteer contributors, including live performances and local programming.

Ben Brandow emphasized the station's facilities' intimate, welcoming nature and the high caliber of the musicians who regularly perform. The station's strong reputation within the roots, folk, and broader music communities has enabled collaborations with numerous regional arts events and festivals, including the Bellevue Blues and Jazz Festival and Wintergrass. The station is committed to partnering with local arts organizations and strengthening engagement with the Bellevue arts community.

The station airs public affairs and news programming during weekday mornings, including nationally syndicated programs such as The Thom Hartmann Program and Democracy Now! The station reaches approximately 60,000 to 70,000 unique listeners each week across the broader Bellevue, Seattle, and Tacoma region, with additional audiences accessing content through online streaming platforms. Listeners tend to engage with the station for extended periods due to the noncommercial format and diverse programming, which differs from typical commercial radio listening patterns.

Commissioner Martínez expressed appreciation for the presentation and inquired about the challenges facing radio stations in an era dominated by streaming services. Ben Brandow acknowledged that technological changes represent a significant challenge, particularly the proliferation of listening options and the need to adapt distribution strategies. Efforts to address the shift include expanding into podcasting and digital platforms such as SoundCloud, iTunes, and Mixcloud. Community-based radio offers a distinct value by providing localized content and dialogue at a time when many media outlets are consolidating under large corporate ownership. Despite industry pressures, recent fundraising efforts have reached record levels, suggesting sustained community support for local media.

Vice Chair Enomoto asked about educational and community engagement opportunities, particularly for young people interested in media production. Ben Brandow responded that the station maintains an intake and training program designed to provide accessible pathways for community members to become volunteer broadcasters. All volunteer DJs receive hands-on training at the station. Participation from students and younger individuals has been increasing, which can be attributed in part to a growing interest among youth in more deliberate, community-centered media experiences as an alternative to high-volume digital content consumption.

Commissioner McIntyre noted being a long-time listener and asked about the station's financial stability, particularly in light of broader funding challenges affecting public media. Ben Brandow allowed that the station had experienced a reduction in federal support from the Corporation for Public Broadcasting, resulting in an estimated 10% budget decrease of approximately \$120,000 annually. The loss was characterized as significant for a small organization with limited staff, but noted that careful financial management and community support have enabled continued operations. Emphasized was the importance of stable grant funding from local partners, including the city of Bellevue, in maintaining predictable budgeting and program continuity.

Commissioner McIntyre recognized the magnitude of the funding reduction and expressed a willingness to support efforts to address the deficit. Ben Brandow outlined a prospective capital campaign to relocate the station from its aging residential structures on the college campus to a more modern facility. The current buildings present operational challenges, including environmental noise interference and maintenance concerns. A new space would facilitate collaboration with related media services and allow for integration of video production capabilities. Additional details about the campaign will be made available as planning efforts progress.

Chair Aldredge asked a question about coordination with local arts organizations, specifically regarding developing a comprehensive community calendar to promote local events. Enhanced collaboration could strengthen communication channels and increase public awareness of community cultural activities. Ben Brandow noted that the station has a community calendar on its website and said it is an important part of the station's outreach efforts. Nonprofit organizations are encouraged to submit qualifying events to the public listing. While certain restrictions apply due to the station's nonprofit status and regulatory requirements governing fundraising and language use, qualifying submissions are routinely accepted and promoted. The station periodically selects specific nonprofit events to receive complimentary on-air announcements for multiple weeks, thereby providing meaningful exposure to community organizations. Continued participation from local groups is encouraged, particularly those groups that are located on the Eastside.

Commissioner Hazra also noted being a regular listener and allowed that there is a lot of interest among young people about how to become radio hosts. Ben Brandow expressed a willingness to connect directly with young people interested in youth-oriented programming. One potential is HD radio technology, which can be used to create an additional channel focused on student participation, providing increased opportunities for young people to gain experience in broadcasting. The station already involves students through programs such as Running Start. Enthusiasm was expressed for expanding educational pathways in the future. Bellevue College does not currently offer a radio training program, but it does offer classes in podcasting. One current issue is that the college campus station facilities are not compliant with accessibility standards and therefore cannot support formal instructional programming for academic credit.

The proposed capital campaign to secure a new facility will address the limitations and create opportunities for structured instruction and hands-on training within a major metropolitan media market. The potential development represents a significant step forward for both the station and the college, enabling students to gain real-world broadcasting experience in a professional setting.

Commissioner Bhargava asked if the station offers modern streaming options compatible with contemporary technologies, such as voice-activated devices. Ben Brandow confirmed that the station is accessible through multiple digital platforms, including smart speaker systems and online streaming services. While acknowledging caution regarding the use of artificial intelligence in creative processes, it was clarified that the station actively utilizes modern distribution technologies to reach audiences where they are and maintains policies designed to protect artists, including a decision not to broadcast music generated by artificial intelligence.

B. Night Blooming Deaccession

Public Art Specialist Scott MacDonald brought before the Commission a request for a motion to deaccession the artwork *Night Blooming* from the city's public art collection, adding that the request was being presented with a sense of regret due to the artwork's significance and popularity. The work is by artists Taiji Miyazaka and David Drake, both of whom are affiliated with Washington State University. It was originally commissioned for the Bellevue Arts Museum's 2016 Wood Biennial exhibition. After the exhibition concluded, the artwork remained installed on the museum roof for an extended period before being donated to the city in 2018. City staff subsequently identified a suitable location at the Bellevue Botanical Garden, where a foundation was constructed, and the artwork was relocated for permanent display. The structure is constructed from reclaimed spruce wood sourced from an historic barn in eastern Washington. The design was inspired by traditional grain silos and grain elevator construction methods. The expected lifespan of the installation was estimated at approximately ten to fifteen years at the time of installation in 2018.

Scott MacDonald reflected on the installation process and the community's response to the artwork. Architecture students from Washington State University assisted in assembling the structure at the botanical garden. The installation received significant attention from city media outlets, including a televised segment documenting the project. The design incorporates narrow gaps between wooden boards to allow light to filter into the interior space, creating a distinctive visual experience for visitors. The artwork has consistently attracted public interest, with visitors frequently stopping to view or enter the structure. The piece has become a meaningful and well-loved element of the city's public art collection.

A short video was played featuring commentary from the artists and collaborators. In the video, the artists described their longstanding professional relationship and explained their inspiration for the work, emphasizing an interest in the distinctive quality of light found within timber grain elevators and aging wooden structures. They noted that the installation was designed to evoke the experience of light filtering through weathered materials and to allow the structure to gradually blend into its natural surroundings over time. The artists further explained that the reclaimed timber used in the sculpture originated from historic grain elevator construction and that the project intentionally returned the material to its regional landscape to undergo a natural process of aging and decomposition. Additional commentary in the video described the involvement of university students in assembling the structure using traditional stacked

timber techniques, as well as the aesthetic effect created by narrow gaps between boards that allowed light to shimmer through the interior, transforming the visitor's experience once inside.

Scott MacDonald explained that during the previous year, personnel at the Bellevue Botanical Garden reported visible signs of deterioration in several sections of the structure. Upon inspection, staff identified boards that had become weakened, broken, or spongy due to moisture exposure. Although initial observations suggested limited damage, more extensive deterioration became apparent once repair work began. In several locations, the area of compromised wood was significantly larger than originally anticipated, requiring the replacement of numerous boards rather than isolated sections. These findings raised broader concerns about the structural integrity of the installation, particularly given the risks posed by continued exposure to seasonal weather conditions.

Scott MacDonald said the recommendation to deaccession the artwork was based on the difficulty of detecting internal deterioration without invasive testing and the resulting safety risks to the public. Removal of the structure from public view would occur regardless of the commission's vote because the issue constitutes a safety matter for which the city is responsible. The commission's action to deaccession the work will primarily serve as an administrative determination of the artwork's official status within the city's public art collection. Staff are exploring potential future uses for the existing engineered foundation, which represents significant prior investment. There is the possibility of commissioning new artworks at the same site on a rotating basis. Scott MacDonald emphasized a desire to preserve the spirit and community value associated with the original installation while ensuring public safety.

Vice Chair Enomoto asked whether the city typically conducts any ceremony or commemorative activity when an artwork is deaccessioned, and suggested that a formal acknowledgment might honor the creative effort and public connection associated with the piece. Vice Chair Enomoto also asked whether documented deterioration of spruce as a material would influence future policy decisions on acceptable materials for outdoor installations. Scott MacDonald responded positively to the suggestion of a farewell or recognition event and indicated that staff would explore the concept. Regarding the policy regarding the use of materials, it was noted that spruce will likely no longer be recommended for outdoor applications unless a project intentionally incorporates natural decomposition as a central artistic theme in a way that will not create safety risks.

Commissioner McIntyre asked if the components of the structure might be salvaged or repurposed for educational or artistic use once the installation is dismantled. Scott MacDonald said reuse would likely be impractical due to the extensive number of fasteners required to assemble the structure and the anticipated presence of widespread deterioration, rendering much of the wood unsuitable for safe reuse. The current plan is to dismantle and dispose of the materials following removal.

Chair Aldredge reflected on the artwork's popularity and expressed personal disappointment at the need to deaccession the piece, while acknowledging the importance of safety considerations. The situation underscores the value of comprehensive maintenance planning and material evaluation during the commissioning process.

Chair Aldredge proposed exploring recreating the installation using alternative preservation techniques, specifically traditional wood-charring methods used in Japan

and other regions to enhance durability. Scott MacDonald acknowledged the suggestion and confirmed that the staff is open to considering a wide range of ideas for a future iteration of the project. Despite the current circumstances, the artwork has delivered meaningful cultural value and community engagement during its lifespan. The experience gained will inform improved decisions in future public art initiatives.

A motion to deaccession *Night Blooming* was made by Vice Chair Enomoto. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Martínez, and the motion carried unanimously.

C. Update to the Arts Commission Bylaws

Manette Stamm sought from the Commission a recommendation to bring back the recommended and updated bylaws for final action and adoption at the next regular meeting of the Commission.

The proposed revisions are part of a citywide initiative affecting all boards and commissions. There are three principal changes. The first clarifies that service on any city board or commission is limited to two consecutive terms across all boards and commissions. Before an individual can apply for reappointment, there must be a period of time away from serving. The second modification extends the exclusionary period for decorum violations from 60 to 180 calendar days and clarifies the associated appeal process. The third set of revisions involves general formatting and language adjustments, including replacing gendered pronouns with gender-neutral terminology and correcting inconsistencies in capitalization and structure. The changes are consistent with guidance from the City Attorney's Office and are aligned with updates to the municipal code.

Lorie Hoffman explained that the city code is established by the City Council. Bylaws are adopted by the individual boards and commissions, though they are often guided by legal recommendations. Final action to adopt the revised bylaws will occur at a subsequent meeting following additional review.

There was consensus directing staff to bring the bylaws to the next Commission meeting for action.

5. **Commission Quick Business**

A. Next Meeting Date

Manette Stamm proposed June 3 as the next regular meeting date. The Commissioners were reminded that officer elections typically occur in June and that advance notice will be provided to interested parties seeking to serve as Chair or Vice Chair.

B. Capital Facility Allocation Committee Members

Manette Stamm requested confirmation of membership in the Capital Facilities Allocation Committee, which evaluates grant applications for arts and cultural facilities. The review activities are expected to take place in June and July, and final recommendations will be presented to the full Commission in September. The process will include virtual meetings and applicant interviews to support informed decision-making.

Chair Aldredge volunteered to serve on the committee along with Commissioners McIntyre and Martínez.

6. Reports

A. Project Updates

Manette Stamm reported that the Cultural Facilities Grants Program was scheduled to launch on April 13. It was noted that no major changes were made to the program guidelines. The application system has officially transitioned to a new digital platform intended to improve usability for both applicants and reviewers.

The Commissioners were informed of several upcoming community arts events and educational opportunities.

Lorie Hoffman said the Planning Commission will soon receive an update on the BelRed Land Use Code, a significant component of ongoing development in the BelRed Arts District. The Commissioners were encouraged to attend the session or view it online to better understand how arts-related uses are being integrated into the district planning efforts.

Lorie Hoffman reported that staff is working with an artist to develop an initial draft of the Grand Connection art plan. A preliminary draft is expected to be presented to the Commission at a future meeting.

Two feasibility studies were introduced: the first involved assessing the need for an outdoor, purpose-built event facility designed to support concerts, festivals, and markets, with appropriate infrastructure for staging and logistics. The second study focuses on evaluating operational and facility models for a potential major performing arts center, including the possibility of collaborating with existing nonprofit efforts and expanding plans associated with the Bellevue Convention Center. Detailed presentations on both studies will be provided later in the year, following the section of a consultant and preliminary analysis.

Lorie Hoffman reported on developments within the public art program. One notable update concerned the temporary removal of the sculpture *Bellgate* by artist Lee Kelly due to redevelopment activity at its current location. The artwork has been removed in preparation for the construction of new high-rise buildings, and contractual assurances are in place requiring its reinstallation once development is complete. The piece will be securely stored and periodically inspected during the interim period, and the reinstallation date will depend on the construction timeline.

Additional updates included progress on temporary art installations, the refinement of designs for creative crosswalk projects scheduled for summer implementation, and plans to open applications for emerging artists to participate in two new public art initiatives in Lake Hills and Lewis Creek Park. The initiatives were described as an expansion of a previously successful program designed to help artists transition from studio-scale work to larger public installations.

Regarding the emerging artist program, Vice Chair Enomoto asked about community involvement in selecting artwork for neighborhood installations. Lorie Hoffman responded that community engagement is an integral component of the selection and design process. Outreach to local community groups is conducted early in project development, and representatives from affected neighborhoods are often invited to

serve on artist selection panels alongside Commissioners. It was further explained that selected artists are typically required to engage directly with community members during the design phase to ensure that local perspectives are reflected in the final work.

7. **Written Communications and Other Information** – None

Chair Aldredge adjourned the meeting at 5:49 p.m.

City of Bellevue staff liaison

Date