

Bellevue Arts Commission
Regular Meeting Minutes

September 4, 2024
4:30 p.m.

Bellevue City Hall
Virtual Meeting

Commissioners Present: Chairperson Aldredge, Commissioners Chen, Enomoto, Gulati, Hazra, Martinez

Commissioners Remote: Commissioner Nederlander

Commissioners Absent: Commissioner Bhargava

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

Others Present: Councilmember Stokes, Anna Mlasowsky

Recording Secretary: Gerry Lindsay

I. **Call To Order**

The meeting was called to order at 4:34 p.m. by Chair Aldredge who presided. All Commissioners were present with the exception of Commissioner Chen, who arrived at 4:38 p.m., Commissioner Enomoto, who arrived at 4:59 p.m., and Commissioner Bhargava.

2. **Approval of Agenda and Minutes**

A. Approval of Agenda

Motion to approve the agenda was made by Vice Chair Martinez. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Hazra and the motion carried unanimously.

B. Approval of Minutes

Action to approve the May 8, 2024, minutes was not taken.

3. **Oral Communications**

Alex Tsimerman expressed concern about public comment at City Council meetings.

Chair Aldredge noted for the record that as someone who volunteers their time on behalf of the city, the speech made by the previous speaker was offensive.

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

A. New Member Welcome

Arts Program Analyst Manette Stamm asked the new Commissioners to introduce themselves.

Commissioner Chen noted having migrated from China 25 years ago and being very active in the local community for the last 15 years. Being a certified Ikebana teacher has made it possible to get to know a lot of local artists. It is an honor to serve on the Commission.

Commissioner Hazra noted having been a Bellevue resident since 2006, having been associated with the Youth Link board for six years, and having recently launched a non-profit called Compassion Innovation, which is working on a mental health chatbot that was designed by youth between the ages of 16 and 18. An additional four years were spent on the board of the Bellevue Art Museum, during which time it became clear the degree to which art keeps the city together.

B. Crossroads Park Concept Design

By way of background, Public Art Specialist Scott MacDonald noted that in 2019, a community member from Commissioners proposed a Neighborhood Enhancement Program for a public art project in Crossroads Park. A total of four projects were voted on, three of which were funded through the program. In 2021, Amazon gave the city \$100,000 to resurrect and complete the art project within five years. Staff picked up the work in 2023, and the projection is that the project will be completed in the summer of 2025. The artist budget was set at \$75,000, leaving \$25,000 to complete engineering, permitting and other small expenses.

The Commission has been looking to support artists new to the field of public art and give them the opportunity to gain experience. The career-catalyst pilot program taps artists who have not completed a commission above \$25,000 and pairs them up with an established public artist to help them through budgeting, fabrication, contracting, and outreach. For the Crossroads Park project, a call was issued, and through a selection panel, artist Anna Mlasowsky was chosen.

Crossroads Park is home to various activities, including a community center and the Bellevue Youth Theater. The Crossroads neighborhood is the most diverse neighborhood in the city.

Anna Mlasowsky, originally from Germany and now a Seattle-based immigrant visual artist who has worked with glass for the past 17 years and whose work often deals with identity and gender, noted having produced a first work in 2019 using the optical properties of glass and dichroic coatings to create illusionary objects that mimic water droplets. A dichroic glasswork called *Forbidden Fruit* was created in 2023 for a solo exhibition in Seattle; it visually mimicked bunches of grapes, jelly, breast implants, fluid forms, and the proofing of dough, according to comments made by visitors. As one moves around dichroic glass works, the perceived coloring changes. By encompassing every color of the rainbow, dichroic glass can become a stand-in for multiplicity and representation of inclusivity.

The intent for the Crossroads Park piece is to represent diversity and inclusion by employing the concept of fluidity and the technique that makes physical the fact that everyone exists on the spectrum of experiences and needs and that everyone needs space in which to celebrate the spectrum. The work will be made from industrially manufactured sheet glass to comply with city regulations, with all pieces out of reach of visitors.

River is a work inspired by and conceived for the Crossroads community and will be a gift from the artist and the city. From the public process, two core ideas emerged: language and time. Coming together is a public act of care that builds community. Activation occurs when the community comes together to show each other appreciation and share their time. The core of the community is the people, and the Crossroads community is multilingual and culturally diverse. On any given day in the park, one can hear a multitude of different languages, evidence of the culturally diverse community.

Anna Mlasowsky shared having spent a day at the park, visiting with and getting to know visitors as many people come to the park to play as some come to watch others play. The elderly population enjoys nature and taking walks or sitting on benches. Many new people are moving to the area, and they come to the park to enjoy the special use areas and to simply spend time together.

A river consists of many individual drops of water that form a body. Time is moving the water past. *River* is a metaphor for a community sharing time. It is intended to be a physical manifestation of the importance of language shaping the community, the act of coming together, and the value of time invested in each other as time flows around each person. The work is also a visual abstraction of a waveform of the recorded phrase: "It takes more than two to form a river." The pitch and frequency of the recording are translated into circular glass discs, each representing a single pitch that is strung together to make up the words of the phrase. As currently designed, *River* consists of 82 glass circles mounted on three-quarter-inch steel tubing. The largest circles are 18 inches and the smallest two inches in diameter. As visitors view the sculpture from below, the overall shape and relationship of the spine sections will change in relation to each other, and the curvature of the spine will influence which color is reflected from the discs.

Anna Mlasowsky said the work will use dichroic borosilicate sheet glass coated, drilled and laminated by Prinz Optics in Germany. Such glass has a higher impact resistance than regular flow glass and is, therefore, more suitable for outdoor projects. The discs will be composed of either two or three sheets of glass laminated together. The dichroic effect looks different at different times of the day. During the day, it reflects blue, while during the night, it reflects gold. Moving around the work, one sees reflections of all colors in the visible spectrum. The artwork will also scatter colors across the area, including on the pavement and the grass during the day. The light from the lamp at night will project the colors downward from above.

The work will be installed on taller light poles on the north end of the park. There are four possible locations, each of which offers different advantages. The final choice of poles will be determined through communications with parks and youth theater staff. The youth theater location is a gateway between the community center parking, the wooded north section of the park and the open south section of the park where the splash pad is. The pole by the youth theater would provide for beautiful visual play with the individual elements as visitors move around the artwork. The other possible sites are behind the community center near the playground, across from the tennis court, and at the back end of the community garden area across from the active senior apartments.

Chair Aldredge asked about the size of the proposed work. Anna Mlasowsky said the size is not yet fixed, as it is pending the engineering work. The spiraling and curvature of the spine will make the piece extend a certain distance off the pole. As envisioned, there will be at least four inches of clearance between any glass piece and the pole to allow room for movement.

Scott MacDonald said the pole itself is 23 feet high, and the lowest element of the work typically must be 9.5 feet above the ground. The proposed design shows the work ten feet off the ground and extending to the top of the pole, except for one area that allows maintenance crews to maintain the lights at the top of the pole.

Chair Aldredge commented that outdoor artworks can feel relatively small. When scaling the piece, care should be taken to ensure that it is sized to truly make an impact. Anna Mlasowsky agreed.

Scott MacDonald clarified for Vice Chair Martinez that a minimum of two of the four potential sites will be selected. Vice Chair Martinez said the selection committee wanted to see some continuation through the park, so having the work on at least two poles would be good. Site selection will be a mix of artist preferences and operational needs for the parks department.

Arts Community Manager Lorie Hoffman added that staff are exploring some additional external funding to include additional locations.

Councilmember Stokes asked about the timeframe, and Scott MacDonald said the target completion date is August 2025.

Scott MacDonald said the staff recommended endorsing the concept. If endorsed, the process would proceed to the final design, which includes the engineering, final site work, and budgeting. At the final design stage, the Commission will be asked to recommend that the city purchase the work.

Chair Aldredge said the work has both a serious and whimsical quality, which is difficult to achieve. The changing aspects in terms of light are wonderful. While glass is fragile, the artist is doing all that is possible to address that concern. It might make sense to install security cameras on the installations.

Answering a question asked by Commissioner Chen, Scott MacDonald said the intent is to fabricate the work so that the sections can be replaced individually. Additionally, because the glass pieces will be laminated, should someone break a section with a rock, no glass will fall to the ground.

Chair Aldredge suggested it might be wise to manufacture and keep a few replacement parts on hand in case something needs to be replaced. Scott MacDonald agreed to talk to the artist about that.

A motion to endorse the concept design created by Anna Mlasowsky for Crossroads Park was made by Vice Chair Martinez. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Enomoto and the motion carried unanimously.

C. Public Art Policies Final

Scott MacDonald noted that the Commission received a briefing on the public art policies in May and that the Commission needed to take formal action to endorse them. The city has long-established practices that are not explicitly based on city code. The proposed policies will serve as standard operating procedures for the public art program, and as such, it is important to hone in on the different roles of the Commission, as outlined in the city code, and the staff. Per code, the commission's role is focused on the acquisition of artwork and the suitability of any gifts of art.

Additionally, although not in the city code, the commission has duties regarding the deaccession of artwork, which is the removal of pieces from the collection, often at the end of their lifespan. Staff are focused on budgetary decisions, developing artist calls in alignment with Council priorities, and making recommendations to the commission. The staff also manages the care of the collection.

The policies identify key points at which the commission is engaged in projects to ensure the clear and consistent application and management of projects, primarily where staff turnover occurs, to ensure that critical information is not lost. The policies also include collection goals, which are informed by city Council direction and adopted plans. The policies also outline a deaccession process, something that previously has not been in place.

Scott MacDonald said that once endorsed, staff will immediately implement the policies in the management of current and future projects.

Commissioner Hazra raised the question of balancing older artwork with the evolving needs of the community. Scott MacDonald said that will occur on a project-by-project basis. Decisions about what should remain in the collection should not rest solely on the whims of staff. While not aware of any specific problematic pieces in the Bellevue collection, there are examples from other cities, such as Confederate statues, where changing attitudes have led to community discussions about removal. Such decisions often come from community conversations rather than from staff proposals. In most cases, the need for deaccession arises when artwork becomes unsafe, where sites are demolished, or where artwork is situated on private property that is to be redeveloped, leaving no room for the piece.

Chair Aldredge commented that the conversations regarding putting the policies together included a large focus on the maintenance of works. The cost of maintaining artwork, mainly works not beloved by the community, can drive decisions to remove works from the collection. Long-term costs should always be considered when acquiring new works and creating maintenance plans and schedules for the existing collection. The staff are to be praised for their careful approach to the issues. Some larger cities with more extensive collections have faced problems where they have not been as thoughtful. Deaccessioning can create challenges for artists, and it is essential to have transparent processes that ensure good communication.

Scott MacDonald mentioned that staff are already acting ahead of the policies by contracting for the collection's maintenance. As part of the contract, the maintenance contractor will review all concepts and final designs and provide insight into future maintenance costs and the expected lifespan of works. Such a forward-thinking approach will help create a collection with longevity and maximum public benefit.

A motion to approve the policies was made by Commissioner Enomoto. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Chen and the motion carried unanimously.

D. Committee Assignments

Manette Stamm said committees provide the opportunity for groups of three or fewer Commissioners to do meaningful work behind the scenes. The specific committees are Public Art, Allocations, Grants and Funding, BelRed Arts District, and Community Partnerships. Each Commissioner should serve on at least two committees. The Allocations Committee involves the most significant commitment but serves as an

excellent opportunity for new members to review grants and learn about the community. The Public Art Committee is also very active.

Vice Chair Martinez asked to be on the BelRed and agreed to also serve on the Allocations Committee.

Commissioner Nederlander agreed to serve on the Allocations Committee, the Public Art Committee, and the Community Partnerships Committee.

Chair Aldredge expressed interest in serving on the Public Art Committee and the BelRed Committee.

Commissioner Chen chose the Community Partnerships Committee.

Commissioner Hazra voiced a preference for the Allocations Committee and the Community Partnerships Committee.

Arts Community Manager Lorie Hoffman suggested the work of the Grants and Funding Committee could be rolled into the Allocations Committee.

Chair Aldredge asked if the capital grants are awarded annually. Manette Stamm explained they are addressed every other year.

E. Capital Facility Grant Recommendations

Manette Stamm explained that capital facility grants differ from ongoing grants. Operational support grants occur every other year, while project grants are annual. The new Capital Facility grant also follows a biannual schedule. A vote of the Commission is needed to endorse the recommendations of the Allocations Committee for the next two years of funding, which will then go to the Council for final approval in October. In the review process, applications were divided into two pools: one focused on facility maintenance, and the other focused on capital projects.

Manette Stamm said seven applications were received from five applicants, totaling \$22.7 million. Applicants were allowed to apply for multiple grants for different projects. After review, the allocations committee, staying within its \$1.8 million budget, recommended funding four applicants and five distinct applications. Two applications, KidsQuest and Tasveer, were not selected for funding, though not due to poor rankings.

Lorie Hoffman clarified that the KidsQuest request of \$20 million ranked high but exceeded the funding scope. The recommendation was to explore other avenues for the city to engage with the project. As for the Tasveer project, while both exciting and robust, it was deemed to lack the essential requirement of site control. Once a site is selected, reapplication could be made.

Answering a question asked by Vice Chair Martinez about site selection, Manette Stamm explained that applicants were encouraged to apply even though they did not yet have a site. The intent was to encourage them to participate in the process. Should they gain site control in the next year or two, the applicant could apply again in the next cycle, and they could potentially be reimbursed for eligible expenses. At the time of application, the applicant could have secured a site, but this was not the case.

Chair Aldredge pointed out that KidsQuest was not asking for immediate funding but rather a future commitment. The mismatch in timing contributed to the decision to refer their request to the Council for further consideration.

Councilmember Stokes said the city is actively working on finding a way to support KidsQuest and acknowledged its importance as an amazing community asset.

Chair Aldredge clarified that the other KidsQuest request is primarily for the repair and maintenance of their space. Theater33 is another organization that has provided a lot of value to the community; the same is true of the Asian American Performing Arts Theater, which has relocated from Seattle to Bellevue, bringing a significant cultural gain to the community. The Allocations Committee discussed the Bellevue College Foundation's request, which was ultimately recommended for funding at 50 percent of the requested amount. The foundation's building has been neglected for decades, which raises questions about the role of the city in its maintenance and public access. Lorie Hoffman said the request triggered a valuable discussion about long-overdue maintenance of the facility and the administrative clarity at the college.

Commissioner Hazra asked if funding for the Bellevue College Foundation would mean the Carlson Theater would be open to the public. Manette Stamm explained that the theater is open to the public. However, during the pandemic, no theater manager or anyone was taking in requests through a formal process, which triggered some confusion on the part of the community. Lorie Hoffman added that each of the grants comes with public benefit requirements, so the theatre, if awarded, will have to provide publicly accessible programming.

Manette Stamm said that once the recommendations are endorsed, they will go to the Council for approval in October. Contracting with the individual organizations will follow. The grants operate on a reimbursement basis, and organizations often secure loans against committed funds to finance their projects.

A motion to endorse the recommendations of the Allocations Committee was made by Vice Chair Martinez. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Chen and the motion carried unanimously.

5. **Commission Quick Business** – None

6. **Reports**

A. Commissioner's Committee and Lead Reports – None

B. Project Updates from Staff

Lorie Hoffman said the Eastside Arts Partnership and Project grants are now open for applications and will remain open until October 10.

Regarding the BelRed Arts District, the Alliance has installed a new artwork by Brady Black on a fence on the south side of Spring Boulevard at 130th Avenue NE by the new Light Rail station. The community-made artwork shows the faces of five children speaking to each other through cans and strings. There will be an opening reception for the work on September 15 at 10:00 a.m. The construction of 130th Avenue NE in the District is under way, and *Yonder Sky* by Po Shu Wang is expected to be installed later in 2025.

The Creative Crosswalks project on the south side of Downtown Park has been installed.

When Now Becomes Then, a work the Commission recently deaccessioned, sold at auction for \$7,550. The proceeds will help recoup some of the expenses of storing the piece.

Scott MacDonald shared that the Grand Connection Crossing project relates to the section of the overall Grand Connection that crosses over I-405 and connects with Eastrail. An artist will be hired to develop an art plan for the project and to work with the city's consultants on various art and aesthetic elements. The Commission will be involved in developing a preliminary artwork concept. The Commission will be kept updated as the work progresses.


Lorie Hoffman said work is underway to select a contractor to maintain the city's entire art collection. The contract will cover four years.

Models in Motion & Link in Progress is currently on display on the City Hall mezzanine and will run through the end of the year.

An additional utility box wrap will be installed in the BelRed neighborhood. Staff are working with an artist on the project.

7. **Adjournment**

Chair Aldredge adjourned the meeting at 6:04 p.m.



City of Bellevue staff liaison

12/4/24
Date _____