

**Bellevue Arts Commission
Regular Meeting
Minutes**

November 8, 2023
4:30 p.m.

Bellevue City Hall
Virtual Meeting

Commissioners Present:	Chairperson Gowdy, Commissioners Aldredge, Martinez
Commissioners Remote:	Commissioners Enomoto, Bhargava, Gulati
Commissioners Absent:	Commissioner Nederlander
Staff Present:	Manette Stamm, Lorie Hoffman, Scott Macdonald, Community Development
Others Present:	Lora Unger
Recording Secretary:	Gerry Lindsay

I. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 4:37 p.m. by Chair Gowdy who presided. All Commissioners were present with the exception of Commissioner Nederlander.

2. Approval of Agenda and Minutes

A. Approval of Agenda

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

B. Approval of Minutes

Motion to approve the September 6, 2023, minutes as submitted was made by Commissioner Enomoto. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Martinez and the motion carried unanimously.

3. Oral Communications – None

4. Action, Discussion and Information Items

A. Crossroads Park Public Art: Artist Selection

Public Art Specialist Scott MacDonald explained that the Crossroads Park public art project was originally a Neighborhood Enhancement Program project proposal, suggested by a Crossroads resident wanting to see some art in Crossroads Park. The proposal was put on the Neighborhood Enhancement Program ballot, and it received the fourth highest number of votes, and the top three projects were funded. A couple of years later, Amazon looked at the list of projects that were not funded and offered \$100,000 for the park art project. Under the agreement with Amazon, the project will be

completed within three to five years, with 2026 being the out year. The Arts Commission approved the artist call in July after increasing the threshold to \$25,000 for artist eligibility. The project is seen as a mentorship opportunity in alignment with the Commission's values of trying to support artists in all phases of their careers.

The artist's budget is \$75,000 to cover design, fabrication and installation. The remaining \$25,000 will address engineering, permitting and foundation construction. Artists trying to sell a single artwork to a single individual in a gallery are far different from public art where the artist must try to sell their work to an entire community. The desire is for the artist to focus on design and learn how to fabricate and install in a public place safely. Permitting is typically the city's responsibility, the ultimate owner of the work. Eligible artists cannot have completed a public art project over \$25,000, and they must live in Puget Sound area counties.

The selection panel members were Commissioner Martinez, Bellevue Youth Theater Supervisor Billie Hassebrock, and art consultant Lele Barnett who has worked with Microsoft and Meta. The panel reviewed 47 applications and selected four finalists for staff interviews. Ultimately the panel selected artist Anna Mlasowsky, an immigrant to the United States born in East Germany with a Bachelor of Arts degree in glass from the Royal Danish Academy and a Master of Fine Art in sculpture from the University of Washington. Anna Mlasowsky's work often explores the concepts of "otherness." For the Crossroads Park project, the artist wants to create a work with dichroic glass that refracts light and creates beautiful color patterns that change throughout the day, something people can enjoy.

A similar project has not been done previously in Bellevue; thus it is important to think through any possible issues that could be major hangups or huge benefits. The staff concurs with the recommendation of the selection panel based on the key supporting factors of the artist's personal story mirroring many in the community, the potential of artwork that changes throughout the day depending on the light, and the fact that dichroic glass is commonly used in public art. Staff have also identified artists and other resources to assist the artist through the project.

Commissioner Gowdy asked what the work would look like and where the work would be sited in the park. Scott MacDonald said what it will look like will be unknown until a design is in hand. The areas of the park considered include the easternmost section of the park where the splash pad and big field area are, and the plaza area near the youth theater entrance, a spot that could lend itself to using lighting.

Commissioner Gulati suggested the senior citizen facility near the park's east side would be a good location choice. Scott MacDonald pointed out that the facility is privately owned. Commissioner Gulati said several senior citizens walk in that part of the park and the artwork would be something they would enjoy.

Commissioner Martinez suggested the concept could involve more than one piece, tying the park together with light and vibrancy. Crossroads is home to a strong community given the presence of the community center, the park, the skate park, several social services, and the mall.

Commissioner Aldredge stressed the need to consider having the work well off of ground level. Experience has shown that people will break glass to steal it. Glass is otherwise resilient in all weather conditions and offers wonderful colors, but it is vulnerable to being broken. Some caging or other protection might be needed. Scott

MacDonald suggested it would be good to set up a meeting between Commissioner Aldredge and the artist to discuss that kind of detail.

Commissioner Enomoto made a motion to endorse the recommendation of the selection panel. Commissioner Gulati seconded the motion, and the motion was carried unanimously.

B. Public Art in Storage: *When Now Becomes Then*

Scott MacDonald said the work by artist J. Seward Johnson II is painted bronze of an actual person, which is the artist's signature approach. The artist typically paints the entire sculpture, but the work in question is unique in that only the clothing has been painted. The work was donated to the city in 2006 by the Shirley family, prominent local art philanthropists. Their full art collection will ultimately be left to the Seattle Art Museum. The piece has been in storage since its donation. It was originally valued at around \$115,000, but the artist's comparable works of about the same size and quality sell for about \$10,000.

The work is in good condition, particularly all of the above-grade bronze. The steel foundation on which the sculpture is mounted has rust. Bronze works generally require a higher level of maintenance than other metals.

There have been at least two efforts to site the work in the past, beginning with an initial effort in 2006 when staff identified a couple of locations in Robinswood Park that ultimately fell through, and again 2015 when another site in the same park was selected but which also was rebuffed by the parks department.

Currently there is no site identified for the work. That gets to the challenge of accepting donated works. Often there is no home for them, and they often do not have a real constituency. Additionally, the work has a dated appearance given the colors used for the clothes; the specific color tones are of the time when the work was created. The fabrication techniques are stellar, and it is unique that the cast was made from a real person. The potential for graffiti is a large issue, especially on the clothes or the tablet. The potential costs involved include the storage fees incurred to date as well as the cost of transporting the work from the storage facility in Kent to a potential site and any installation fees, which would amount to as much as \$25,000. Additionally, there would be ongoing costs for maintenance.

For all those reasons, the staff recommended deaccessioning the sculpture.

Commissioner Gulati noted past efforts to encourage the city to add art to the STEM program. *When Now Becomes Then* is a very innocent and charming work. If retained, it should be sited in a location where students and artists could be encouraged to come paint and sketch the sculpture and the area. It would be very attractive to students.

Commissioner Bhargava asked what is involved in deaccessioning a sculpture. Scott MacDonald said historically the city has considered several options: sell the work; ask the artist to trade for another piece, which is not possible in this instance given the artist died in 2020; consider giving the work back to the donating party; donating the work to another public agency; and destroying the work. Commissioner Bhargava agreed with the comments of Commissioner Gulati and voiced support for taking that approach over the destruction of the work. Scott MacDonald confirmed that destruction of the work would be the last resort.

Commissioner Aldredge said the fact that the city has stored the piece for 17 years and has at least twice failed to find a location for it, argues in favor of deaccession.

Commissioner Enomoto agreed. Keeping the work in storage does not make sense, particularly if the piece does not represent the community or tell a Bellevue story.

Commissioner Martinez commented that even if the piece were to be donated to a school, they would have to maintain it and deal with any graffiti issues. Deaccessioning the work makes the most sense.

A motion to deaccession *When Now Becomes Then* was made by Commissioner Martinez. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Aldredge and the motion carried without dissent. Commissioners Bhargava and Gulati abstained from voting.

Commissioner Gulati asked if the work was forgotten or deliberately set aside for 17 years. Arts Community Manager Lorie Hoffman pointed out that the two formal attempts in 2006 and 2015 to site the work are not the only efforts made to find a home for the sculpture. It has been an ongoing project in the background throughout the years, and thus far no place for the work has been found.

Commissioner Bhargava suggested donating the work to Bellevue College might make sense. Commissioner Aldredge added that the city of Kirkland has quite a selection of bronze works in its collection. Scott MacDonald said those options could be considered.

C. Bellwether Arts and Tech Festival 2023

PACE executive director Lora Unger said presenting Bellwether was an honor and thanked the Commission for the opportunity. The opening kickoff event was held near the end of August and offered a great opportunity to get the artists engaged with people from the city and others engaged with the project. The first official event was on September 9 in the Spring District. The artistic partner for the event was the Sustain Music Project and the event involved AI music and coding. Called Algorithm, the event involved the intersection of music and technology. The innovative concert featured diverse music ranging from Bach to compositions composed through computer algorithms and AI. The attendees were immersed in a multisensory experience as six featured instruments unveiled an intriguing connection between music and math, all accompanied by a mesmerizing video project.

The second event occurred on September 16 and involved two art installations placed at Bellevue College by two artists. One was a connotative immersive installation that brought to life the interconnected, ephemeral and dynamic nature of all things through a seamless integration of generated interactive digital projections. The ever-changing image reel was thought-provoking and mood-changing, and the dancers created movement and choreography in real-time corresponding to what they were hearing. The second project was an ode to rave culture featuring video poetry combining dance and video synthesis. The premise of both installations was to have visual images motivating movement and dance. The event was interesting in the way audience members participated.

The third event on September 23 was held at the Marketplace at Factoria. The event was held in partnership with Digipen and was especially focused on education. Students were featured in a video game-making competition. Five different teams built video games and the students were put in the position of showcasing to a judging panel how

their games worked, and in front of an audience explaining how the games were made. The students received great feedback and were awarded prizes.

The fourth event was held on September 30 in Downtown Park and it featured a silent disco. Participants checked out ceramics created by a local artist. The headphones were provided by the event's DJ, and one of the singers from the opening event performed live. There was a photo booth in which people would dance. Many students were engaged, culminating in a big party to which everyone was invited.

During Bellwether there were digital residencies on YouTube involving artist presentations. The reach for the four events exceeded 4000.

Concerning the marketing strategy, Lora Unger said in July and August press releases were sent out, and media kits were created for all of the partners, Spring District, Bellevue College, Marketplace at Factoria and the city. Partnerships were created with *425 Magazine*, the *Bellevue Reporter*, *Seattle Times*, King 5/KONG, *Mercer Island Reporter*, *Bellevue Patch*, T-Mobile and *Puget Sound Business Journal*. There were also listings on EverOut.com, the Bellevue Downtown Association and the Bellevue Chamber of Commerce. The artists took over the Instagram account during the event. Lotus Communications was engaged to create a significant digital promotional campaign. They created display ads as well as behavioral social mirroring targeting. About the latter, a slate of social media posts was created, and those posts were then retargeted online. The campaign reached over 300,000 people with a 1.03 clickthrough. The national average clickthrough rate is 0.07. The display ads had a very large footprint. The campaign reached Kirkland, Redmond, Sammamish, Snoqualmie and other cities in addition to Bellevue, taking in a sizeable portion of the Eastside. With a run of over six weeks, there were more than 500,000 total impressions and a 0.09 clickthrough rate. In addition, Lotus Communications brought into the mix a lot of in-kind promotion, including 381 radio spots with a value of \$19,000. Other sponsorships included Amazon.

Commissioner Aldredge noted having serious concerns going forward given the staffing cutbacks at PACE. Lora Unger said the position that was cut served a redundancy and added being the person who will handle the program moving forward. The budget that was put together included someone to serve as curator. The reality is that even without that position, the support system would all still be in place. The program was created at a time when there was no executive director at PACE, but now there is. In the future, the programming will be done, except for Arts Without Barriers which was possible because of a one-time non-renewable grant.

Commissioner Aldredge said in the past Bellwether was run by people who were basically curators, and added having not felt very connected to the Bellwether experience for its most recent iteration even as a member of the Arts Commission. That could be a reflection of the communications not targeting well.

Commissioner Gowdy observed from the reports that some of the events were more successful than others. The question asked was if the same or a similar approach would be used going forward. Lora Unger stressed the need to talk with city staff to determine what can be done in the future. It would be premature to discuss this with the Commission until then.

Commissioner Aldredge said the idea of the contract when awarded a year ago was that the city would give more money to a non-profit to lower the burden and cost on city staff. Lorie Hoffman explained that conversations around whether the contract will be

renewed are outside the purview of the Commission. What is needed are the Commission's overall thoughts about the event and any critiques.

Commissioner Martinez commented on having attended the Spring District event. There were no signs posted or other clear indications of the event happening. Some on-site day-of advertising would have helped to attract those already in the neighborhood who might otherwise not have known anything about the event. Commissioner Martinez also remarked that there were not enough people on hand at the scheduled start time even to start the show, so it did not begin until later, leaving people to wait around. Lora Unger said the issue with that show was that the laptop of the person in charge of the event crashed, leading to a loss of an hour during which there was supposed to be dancing as build-up to the actual concert. The event lost steam as a result.

Commissioner Enomoto reported having attended the silent disco and found it a great event that allowed people different ways to participate. It could have been clearer that the event was free and open to the public. Better signage would have helped, along with having people on hand to personally invite people to join in the festivities. The after-event party had the look and feel of a VIP event, which may have kept some from attending. It would also have been amazing to have held the dance under the Piloti sculpture. Lora Unger agreed that having a banner and additional signage in the park leaving up to the event would have been beneficial to the event. Unfortunately, the city does not allow on-site promotions except for the day of. More on-site promotion would certainly have yielded a stronger turnout.

Commissioner Bhargava agreed that signage for the event was inadequate. The Commissioners received regular updates about the event, but the general public may not have been fully aware. The kickoff event at the private residence was small-scale and more of a social event. Lora Unger agreed, adding it would have been good to see more follow-through on the materials sent out to the partners to help promote the event. The materials were not sent out to the anticipated and hoped-for level. On-site promotion is the best approach.

Commissioner Gulati agreed with the need for more in-site banners and the like. However, the city's restrictions on putting up promotional banners make advertising events more difficult. A way needs to be found to advertise events across and within communities.

Commissioner Aldredge pointed out that it is already somewhat late to begin planning for Bellwether 2024. Lorie Hoffman said Bellwether would be added to the agenda again for the Commission's December meeting.

D. 2024 Project Grant Applications

Manette Stamm reminded the Commissioners that the Eastside Arts Partnership is on a two-year cycle. New applications have been received from all of the recipients, and reports are being collected from the 2023 award recipients.

The Allocations Committee members were Commissioners Enomoto and Nederlander; Po-Yan Tsang, artist and resident of Bellevue; Twyla Sampaco, artist and resident of Bellevue; David Bellard, artist and resident of Bellevue; and Eden Helstein, BelRed Arts District Community Alliance who reviewed the BelRed bonus applications. The Committee reviewed the submittals from 36 applicants with requests totaling \$119,000, including the BelRed bonus. EAP grantees were not eligible.

Manette Stamm said the Allocations Committee recommended allocating \$65,000 to 22 grantees: \$60,000 to eight individuals and 14 organizations in project grants; and \$5000 to three individuals and two organizations for the BelRed bonus.

Commissioner Aldredge suggested the increased number of applicants is an indicator that more funding is needed for the program. The project grants are the best and most effective way to reach individual artists in Bellevue.

Commissioner Enomoto asked if the applicants are asked in the application about how they heard about the grant, adding that the pool for this year was far more diverse than in past years. Manette Stamm said that question is not included on the application and agreed it would be a valuable question to add.

Commissioner Bhargava remarked on having enjoyed the Allocations Committee process along with the non-Commission members.

A motion to approve the recommendations of the Allocations Committee for 2024 project grants was made by Commissioner Aldredge. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Bhargava and the motion carried unanimously.

5. Commission Quick Business

Manette Stamm asked the commissioners to make sure staff members are aware of their iPad serial numbers.

6. Reports

- A. Commissioners' Committee and Lead Reports – As Noted
- B. Project Updates from Staff

Lorie Hoffman said the final reports for the 2023 grants are due by November 20.

The final report for the Arts and Economic Prosperity study has been delivered, and the Commission will be receiving the full report in December. The numbers look good. The national numbers are live online, and Bellevue exceeded them by quite a bit. Bellevue stood out, particularly in out-of-region or tourist spending.

About the BelRed Arts District, the Community Alliance will be holding a community meeting in the district from 3:30 p.m. to 5:30 p.m. on November 9. An update will be given on how the partnership is working.

Seven of the eight murals for the mural program have been installed. The eighth is on hold due to an issue with the underlying paint. The transportation department is coordinating with Sound Transit to get the issue fixed.

All maintenance contracts for 2023 have been completed and a couple of emergency repairs are being explored. A larger RFP and contract may be in the works for 2024 maintenance.

The utility box wrap program is underway. The first box done in partnership with the Bellevue School District has been wrapped and the students are very excited about it.

Commissioner Martinez asked about getting more demographic information from artists. Manette Stamm said there have been no responses so far. The survey will be open for a while yet. There is demographic information available for each EAP artist.

Commissioner Aldredge asked if demographic information would be sought from the project and roster artists. Lorie Hoffman pointed out that the roster is entirely volunteer and asking for demographic information may not be appropriate. Manette Stamm added that the city cannot be decided based on gender, race or other demographic factors.

Manette Stamm informed the Commission that the call for the Crosswalk project would be closing later in the day. Two panelists will be sought from the Commission to review the submittals.

Commissioners Aldredge and Martinez volunteered to serve on the panel.

7. Adjournment

Commissioner Gowdy adjourned the meeting at 6:10 p.m.