

BELLEVUE ARTS COMMISSION
REGULAR MEETING
MINUTES

November 1, 2022
4:30 p.m.

Bellevue City Hall
Virtual Meeting

COMMISSIONERS PRESENT: Chairperson Lau Hui, Commissioners Aldredge, Bhargava, Enomoto, Gowdy, Gulati, Martinez

COMMISSIONERS ABSENT: None

STAFF PRESENT: Manette Stamm, Lorie Hoffman, Department of Planning and Community Development; Elizabeth Erickson, Department of Community Development

OTHERS PRESENT: Councilmember Stokes; Brittan Drake, Meydenbauer Center

RECORDING SECRETARY: Gerry Lindsay

I. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 4:34 p.m. by Chair Lau Hui who presided. All Commissioners were present.

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 13, 2022, minutes as submitted was made by Commissioner Gowdy. The motion was seconded was by Commissioner Enomoto and the motion carried unanimously.

3. ORAL COMMUNICATIONS

Arts Program Analyst Manette Stamm highlighted the tenth anniversary of Bellevue Essentials and the celebration to be held in December.

4. ACTION ITEMS AND DISCUSSION ITEMS

A. Comprehensive Plan Periodic Update: Arts Scope

Senior Planner Elizabeth Erickson explained that the Comprehensive Plan is an important high-level document that defines the vision for how the community is to grow. It is a requirement of the Growth Management Act to have a Comprehensive Plan. The document looks out 20 years so when adopted in 2024 it will go through 2044. The plan has a vision chapter as well as individual chapters called elements, each with policies from which specific

actions and decisions are determined. Many things follow the Comprehensive Plan, including the regulations in the Land Use Code, and planning documents such as the Cultural Compass.

Each element of the Comprehensive Plan includes some narrative, but the heart of the plan is in the high-level goals and policies of each element. Of most importance to the Arts Commission are the Economic Element and the Urban Design and Arts Element.

Councilmember Stokes said arts and culture are part of economic development, land use and area planning given that the arts are part of a productive economy. The fact is 2024 is not that far away, and there is a lot of work to be done during 2023.

Elizabeth Erickson reminded the Commissioners about the various means being used to engage with the community. The venues include events, surveys and discussions. Cultural outreach assistants are helping in the work with specific communities across the city. The strategy team or stakeholder group has been meeting monthly throughout the process. Public comment is received at all board, commission and City Council meetings, and all of the city's boards and commissions will be weighing in with their specific recommendations. All of that input will flow into drafting an initial plan which will in turn be taken back through the same public engagement process for feedback. The plan will ultimately be brought before the Planning Commission and then the City Council for adoption.

The goals of the update work are focused on planning for growth, environmental sustainability and resilience, expanding housing and affordable housing options, equitable approaches, creating vibrant places, and setting the stage for future planning.

The community feedback to date has included an interest in making Bellevue more fun and quirky with unique spaces across the city. People see variations, excitement and things to do, including nightlife. Arts and culture is a critical piece of that. There has also been a lot of excitement around the notion of having small and local businesses and having more gathering spaces closer to home.

Elizabeth Erickson said the interest in having gathering spaces and small businesses scattered throughout the different neighborhoods across the city is tied to the city's neighborhood centers around which there is already some language in the Comprehensive Plan. The interest is on strengthening those policies and focusing on making spaces more vibrant, usable and walkable. From an arts and culture standpoint, the desire is to make sure that there is the capacity for arts and culture uses.

Councilmember Stokes said the area has been talked about for some time. Clearly, there is a need for more neighborhood centers. Arts and culture uses are often part of the neighborhood centers, but they are not really emphasized. The Comprehensive Plan update provides the opportunity for the Commission and the community to weigh in on the desire to see more arts and culture uses citywide, particularly in the neighborhood centers.

Chair Lau Hui stressed the need to keep in mind the city's changing demographics.

Elizabeth Erickson said the public input has highlighted a desire to see a unique character across Bellevue. The focus is less on how different spaces look and more on specific experiences. In emphasizing arts and culture in the Comprehensive Plan, specific attention should be given to the experience and culture of spaces, which ultimately give character to places. Examples include actual facilities that support arts and culture, as well as historic and cultural resources. Given the desire for gathering places, the update work will look at policy support for an event space outside of the Downtown.

Arts Community Manager Lorie Hoffman said it was interesting to hear about the community's interest in something the arts community has been talking about for a long time.

Elizabeth Erickson said land use is a critical part of the update, particularly in the transit-oriented development areas close to light rail and transit stations. Specific to BelRed, there will be a focus on how to incorporate art systems as opposed to just physical art; a clear definition of the Arts District; and incentives within the Arts District. There will also be a focus on potential policies regarding affordable housing for artists within the Arts District.

Councilmember Stokes said success in developing the BelRed Arts District likely will lead to other neighborhoods wanting to see similar arts districts in their areas. The Commission has the opportunity to play a very influential role in how the city should move forward.

Elizabeth Erickson briefly reviewed with the Commissioners the timeline going forward, noting that the draft policies will be ready for review in the spring of 2023. The feedback will trigger edits and changes to a full draft plan to be released in the summer of 2023, which will in turn be subject to additional feedback and review before bringing it to the Planning Commission and ultimately the City Council.

Chair Lau Hui voiced support for emphasizing the arts district in the Comprehensive Plan.

Councilmember Stokes allowed that it takes a long time for cities to change. Much of what is currently under discussion has been talked about for decades. The city is fairly clear about what it wants to do, the question is how to get there. The Commission is in a good position to help guide the process.

Commissioner Enomoto asked if data from the recent art space survey will be factored into the policies. Lorie Hoffman said it could be, though the final report is not yet in hand. Once received, the final report will be shared with the planning team.

Commissioner Martinez agreed with the need to emphasize neighborhood centers and asked what they might look and feel like. Elizabeth Erickson said there are several existing neighborhood centers in the city, adding that there are gaps where there are none. Northtowne in northwest Bellevue is a neighborhood center and it is typical in that it has a large anchor and a number of small businesses that share the foot traffic. Many of the centers are located on arterials near housing developments. The Lake Hills Shopping Center is a neighborhood center that was developed recently with a library as an anchor.

Noting that the Eastgate neighborhood center has a focus on sports, Commissioner Martinez suggested there could also be centers with a focus on arts and culture. Commissioner Aldredge agreed and decried the lack of arts facilities generally in the city.

Commissioner Aldredge noted that there has been a huge interest from corporations, likely because of the murals and utility box wraps. Dollars from corporations should be captured via incentives or other means. The fact that Amazon paid for the utility box wraps in the Downtown without any incentives is an indicator that there is an audience that wants to spend money. That enthusiasm needs to be captured. Councilmember Stokes commented that that goes back to the public comments about wanting more excitement and different things.

Lorie Hoffman pointed out that millennials look for a vibrant arts and culture before deciding to take a job in a community.

Chair Lau Hui stressed the need to avoid seeing artist spaces displaced as development occurs. Policy language should be added to the Comprehensive Plan to make sure such places do not

disappear. Elizabeth Erickson agreed preserving spaces is a key element that should be given its proper weight. Councilmember Stokes added that over the years there have been talk and studies about preserving spaces for artists to both work and live, but what has been lacking is the critical mass to make it happen. That point has finally arrived.

Commissioner Aldredge noted that there are a number of historic Bellevue cultural organizations located in the BelRed area that are currently threatened by rising rents and redevelopment of the area. The issue needs to be considered in a hard and realistic way.

Commissioner Martinez said that realization came to light recently when seeking a space for an organization. On a five-year lease, the starting rent was \$8000 per month, rising to almost \$12,000 per month in the fifth year. Rents that high are not generally sustainable for any business or organization.

B. Meydenbauer Theatre Policy Updates

Brittan Drake, theater manager at Meydenbauer Center, briefly reviewed with the Commissioners show highlights from the past year, including BollySteps Dance, American Asian Performing Arts Theatre, Bellevue Jazz and Blues Festival; International Ballet Theatre; Prashanthi Chitre Institute of Performing Arts, and La Luna. With regard to upcoming capital projects, it was noted that a new stage lighting control unit has been ordered along with a new projector based on consistent feedback from clients in regard to the use of projection design in production backdrops and effects.

The fourth quarter is seeing a return to the historical numbers of the busiest years of the past. A Warren Miller ski film is slated for November, and the Nutcracker ballet is scheduled as well. Also on tap is the Seattle Latino Film Festival and the Spain Culture Festival. The year will end with a projected occupancy double that in 2021.

Brittan Drake said time has been spent recently reviewing policies and meeting with clients to gain feedback on what has not been working for them. The work has resulted in some policy updates. There previously has been a seasonable booking calendar that opened in January for events in the fall of the same year and running for a full year. It was restrictive for most clients, thus, the move has been made to go to a prioritized revolving schedule. The structure includes three tiers and requires a deposit at the time events are booked. The restrictions for holiday season bookings have been eliminated. Another change is that weekend dates are now at performance rates, which improves access for new groups.

Manette Stamm asked if the new tiered system is based on historical bookings or if it updates each year. Brittan Drake said the system updates annually. Past bookings do not translate into bookings for the new year. The system facilitates resident arts groups, annual reoccurring groups, and new groups.

Commissioner Bhargava asked if there are incentives for groups that are specifically based out of Bellevue. Brittan Drake said there is no policy language that prioritizes the City of Bellevue groups. There has been regular feedback from the community about the need for a larger space of about 800 seats. Some groups are booking three or four performances just because they can easily sell 1200 tickets, the Bellevue Youth Symphony being one. The current theater has 410 seats.

Councilmember Stokes commented that plans for Cloudview, a new and larger theater, are still in the works but has been put on hold given the current economic situation. The theater will be a very important piece of the puzzle for Bellevue.

Brittan Drake said the EastHub theater as planned currently planned will serve a different clientele. It will not have a fly loft for scenery or a traditional theatrical stage and lighting.

Lorie Hoffman said the PACE project has been going on for a long time. It involves a more traditional big house space with some 2000 seats.

C. Acquisition of *Emerging Radiance Farmhouse* by Michelle Kumata and Tani Ikeda

Lorie Hoffman highlighted the opportunity for the city to acquire a piece of artwork called *Emerging Radiance* by artists Michelle Kumata and Tani Ikeda. Over the years the Commission has chosen to acquire works based on a variety of reasons ranging from the aesthetics of the works to relevancy to the city. Most recently works have been acquired by donation for the city's portable collection.

Emerging Radiance is a physical farmhouse with a mural honoring the untold stories of Japanese American farmers who lived in Bellevue and who transformed the land into a thriving and prosperous community before being forcibly uprooted and incarcerated during WWII. The piece includes QR codes that can be scanned to gain access to the real stories of real people who lived in Bellevue. The farmhouse measures 10 feet by 10 feet and is more than 13 feet tall. It requires a 40-foot by 40-foot space to facilitate the display. The work can be taken apart and displayed on a wall, expanding the display options. The work was on display at the Bellevue Art Museum from February 3 to March 13 where it received incredible reviews and doubled the museum attendance. It was also featured at the Augment Seattle immersive art festival; was featured in the documentary "Day of Remembrance: 80th Anniversary Virtual Program Honoring the Nikkei Farmers of Bellevue;"; and won the 2022 Tribeca Award for Best Immersive Project.

Manette Stamm said the city has worked with Michelle Kumata before. In 2019 the artist created a work that was displayed in the lobby of City Hall as part of Bellwether. The three-panel work was also inspired by the Kikkee farmers of Bellevue.

Lori said the *Emerging Radiance* idea is built on the Meta augmented reality framework. A first iteration mural of the piece is on display in a Meta office in the Spring District, but to see the work one must be a Meta employee with a security badge. The piece is currently encumbered with display commitments. The recommendation of staff is to receive the work into the city's collection. Funding for acquisition of the piece would come from the City Manager's Office and would not impact the public art fund.

Councilmember Stokes pointed out that the work ties in very well with work being done on Eastrail which focused on Japanese farmers and where they loaded their produce onto trains.

A motion to approve the acquisition of the artwork *Emerging Radiance* by artists Michelle Kumata and Tani Ikeda and include the artwork in the Bellevue Public Art Collection was made by Commissioner Enomoto. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Aldredge and the motion carried unanimously.

Lorie Hoffman said the hope is for the work ultimately to be housed at the Bellevue library.

D. 2023 Arts Grants Approval

Manette Stamm sought from the Commissioners support for the recommendations of the Allocation Committee for 2023 Eastside Arts Partnership support and project grants. A few changes were made to the granting program. The changes included streamlining the

application process; a program name change; new add-on grant opportunities for both programs; and a two-year cycle for Eastside Arts Partnership support grants. The review panel was made up of Commissioners Aldredge, Martinez and Enomoto, former Commissioner Philip Malkin, and Sudeshna Dixit, director of cultural connections at EastHUB.

Manette Stamm stated that 53 grant applications were received, the most ever, totaling \$454,295. The Allocation Committee recommendations cover only 40 percent of the total request. The dollars do not come only from the arts program budget given the receipt of a grant from the National Endowment for the Arts and funding from 4Culture. The recommendation for Eastside Arts Partnerships is to allocate \$126,000 to 29 applicants, and for Special Projects the recommendation is to allocate \$35,000 to 16 grants, eight of which are individuals and eight of which are organizations. For the add-on grants, the recommendation allocates \$5000 each to Music Works Northwest, Tasveer, and (VC)Bynum Arts and Education in PowerUp for Equal Access grants; and five \$1000 grants to four individuals and one organization for the BelRed bonus program.

Commissioner Aldredge said the additional available funding is a good thing. Funding was restricted last year due to the pandemic and the lack of performances. In many cases, organizations were awarded amounts close to their pre-pandemic allocations; in some cases, even more money was recommended. The Allocations Committee was very unified in making the funding recommendations. The committee was very cognizant about trying to reward organizations that hold events in Bellevue.

Manette Stamm said there was no discussion about project grant amounts given that the grant request amounts are set in the application.

Commissioner Gowdy noted having been impressed with the number of new applicants. Commissioner Aldredge added that the quality of the applications was also improved, likely the result of improving the application form.

Chair Lau Hui asked if there will be effort put into getting feedback from the applicants. Manette Stamm said those that elect to accept their grants will have to submit a post-grant report that can be tailored to include certain questions to garner the best feedback. Lorie Hoffman said the post-grant report will also be used to collect audience demographic information, which has not been done before.

Commissioner Gulati recalled that not long ago a request was made for additional funds from the city for distribution to the various groups. Lorie Hoffman said the current City Manager's budget does not include any increases for the arts grants. The arts grants budget has not increased since 2000. The City Council will be holding a public hearing on the budget on November 7; that will be the final opportunity for the community to comment on the draft budget. Commissioner Gulati commented that the city continues to highlight the need for arts and culture while not choosing to add any funding. This leaves the Commission to deal with the same level of funding from more than 20 years ago, which in reality is less money given inflation. Lorie Hoffman added that the number of applications continues to increase every year, which means the dollars must be stretched even further. Accordingly, the average award has been going down.

Commissioner Aldredge suggested members of the Commission should show up at the Council's budget hearing to highlight the issue on the record.

Councilmember Stokes agreed as liaison to make the Commission's position known to the full Council. The practice of the Council has been to consider more funding for the arts, but it has not approved any increase.

Chair Lau Hui suggested that the Commission should draft a memo to be sent to the Council. Councilmember Stokes agreed to carry it forward to the full Council.

Commissioner Aldredge said the fact that only 40 percent of the total requests is very telling.

Councilmember Stokes suggested that the memo and testimony to the Council should outline the need, the city's population growth over the last 20 years, and a specific dollar amount.

Commissioner Enomoto pointed out that attempts to create an arts district and attract artists to it will not be successful if there is inadequate funding going forward. Councilmember Stokes agreed that needs to be part of the conversation.

A motion to endorse the Allocation Committee's 2023 funding recommendations for Eastside Arts Partnerships and Project grants was made by Commissioner Martinez. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Aldredge and the motion carried unanimously.

Manette Stamm said Chair Lau Hui will present the recommendation to the Council on December 5.

Commissioner Aldredge agreed to draft a memo to the Council regarding funding for the arts in the city's budget.

5. COMMISSION QUICK BUSINESS

Commissioner Gulati requested to participate remotely at the Commission's December 6 meeting.

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

6. REPORTS

A. Project Updates

Lorie Hoffman said the arts market study wrapped up in September. There were a total of 436 survey responses, which is excellent. The robust survey had questions about affordable housing, collaborative workspace, solo workspace, how much could be paid for space, and a number of other topics. The final report should be in hand in November. The demographic breakdown on the survey respondents closely represents the city's actual population. A clear need for affordable artist housing and workspace was highlighted by the responses.

Lorie Hoffman shared that the arts and economic prosperity study is in progress. The study involves talking with people as they leave a show about their economic habits. To date, 137 surveys have been collected toward the goal of 800.

With regard to the BelRed Arts District, the third of the proto-board meetings was held on October 25. The meeting covered a draft charter, becoming a 501(C)(3) and a logo design. A deeper dive into land use planning and the Comprehensive Plan will be the subject of the next meeting.

The Cultural Compass project update will be removed going forward. The plan is close to 20 years old and will be retired, though a number of the pertinent policies will be recommended to be moved into the Comprehensive Plan.

Bellwether 2022 has wrapped. The online digital residencies had over a quarter million views. 535 people attended in-person events and engaged with the augmented reality artwork. One application from the Bellwether 2023 RFP has been received. It will be reviewed in the coming weeks and then shared with the Commission.

The Downtown Park signature artwork is in fabrication. In all, 6665 individual pieces need to be cut and folded and held together with 180,000 rivets. There is no pathway to finish the installation before December, and there is no desire to be installing artwork during the busy holiday season. While over the years the models have all shown the work with a white underside and a green top, but the green top has not performed well in the color trials. The proposal now is for a white-on-white color pallet.

Manette Stamm noted that the artist roster continues to grow with every call that is put out. The roster is useful and is used, and it is shared.

Maintenance work on the city's public art is continuing. Many of the works addressed during the year are of wood, and many had to have lichen removed and rotted areas addressed. Quite a lot had to be allocated to *Long Boat* for new parts. There also is some serious damage to Guan Yin. The work is not in the city's public art collection, but currently, various city departments do share in its maintenance. The marble base of the piece is hollow and has a significant crack which appeared after it was moved and reinstalled. There is also a missing finger.

Lorie Hoffman said a general review is underway to determine who is responsible for the maintenance of gifted works, particularly those from sister cities.

7. COMMUNICATIONS – None

8. ADJOURNMENT

Chair Lau Hui adjourned the meeting at 6:27 p.m.