

BELLEVUE ARTS COMMISSION
REGULAR MEETING
MINUTES

DATE, 2022
4:30 p.m.

Bellevue City Hall
Virtual Meeting

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

COMMISSIONERS ABSENT: Commissioners Gulati and Martinez

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

OTHERS PRESENT: Councilmember Stokes; Katherine Hollis, Eastrail Partners

RECORDING SECRETARY: Gerry Lindsay

I. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 4:37 p.m. by Chair Lau Hui who presided. All Commissioners were present with the exception of Commissioners Gulati and Martinez.

2. APPROVAL OF AGENDA AND MINUTES

A. Approval of Agenda

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

B. Approval of Minutes

Motion to approve the November 1, 2022, minutes as submitted was made by Commissioner Aldredge. The motion was seconded was by Commissioner Gowdy and the motion carried unanimously.

3. ORAL COMMUNICATIONS

Arts Program Analyst Manette Stamm informed the Commissioners that the Bellevue Essentials party would occur the evening of December 7. The Commissioners were also informed that the Northwest Associated Art Choral Sounds Northwest Christmas program was scheduled to occur on December 10 and 11 at the Highland Performing Arts Center in Burien.

4. ACTION ITEMS AND DISCUSSION ITEMS

A. Eastrail Public Arts Principles

Katherine Hollis, executive director of Eastrail Partners, explained that Eastrail is the former rail corridor that stretches from Renton all the way into Snohomish County. The 42-mile corridor connects with four of the light rail stations going in on the Eastside as well as a number of Rapid Ride stations. Eastrail is about connecting the Eastside in ways that have not been done before. It is easily accessible and is not hilly.

Eastrail Partners was formed as an organization in 2020 in part to unify and catalyze the effort. The corridor is under the control of eight different governmental entities which highlights the need to coordinate and unify the work. In Bellevue, while the trail will be a significant element for the city, it is actually owned by King County and Sound Transit. There is a very good working relationship between the city of Bellevue and King County staff.

The Eastrail Partners organization is focused on community, advocacy and private sector engagement. The community focus is aimed at bringing people into the effort and planning the trail for everyone to use. The organization is working closely with organizations like Eastside for All and with all governmental entities to focus on how to create meaningful ways for the community to help plan the effort going forward. A recent event on the trail included a Mariachi band and a number of different community organizations, and there were some 300 attendees. The idea was to inform the public about the many different things the trail could mean, including public art. The advocacy efforts on behalf of the trail have yielded \$29 million in the state transportation budget, \$18 million of which is for Eastrail in the Bellevue area, including finishing the Wilburton trestle and the I-90 steel bridge. The focus on private sector engagement has centered in bringing corporate funders to the table advocating with legislators for public funding for the trail.

With regard to the Eastrail arts principles and goals, Katherine Hollis explained that the Regional Advisory Council, which is made up of the legislators of each of the eight governmental entities and Cascade Bicycle Club, which is a non-voting member, is helping to push Eastrail forward. Councilmember Stokes is Bellevue's representative. Eastrail Partners has helped to shepherd input from the Regional Advisory Council and staff. The principles and goals that have been identified include creating a more unified user experience; creating a meaningful and impactful way for communities to be involved in Eastrail planning; supporting arts coordinators and commissions from different jurisdictions to collaborate, and to incorporate trail-adjacent work that takes advantage of the linear nature of the corridor; and helping to synthesize existing public art plans and programs from member entities and provide guidelines and strategies towards expanding the current vision for arts and culture initiatives along the corridor. There have been meetings with arts specialists from Bellevue, Renton, Redmond and Kirkland. The work has included a review of current city principles and examples from similar efforts. A set of principles was drafted and circulated among Eastrail lead staff and arts specialists. The principles have also been reviewed by 4Culture.

The draft principles are focused on equity, inclusion and belonging, context and interconnection, collaboration, being unique yet cohesive, being more than just visual art, and making mandatory elements like benches and signage along the trail extraordinary.

Eastrail is and will continue to be integral to the city and it will serve as part of the city's viewshed.

Commissioner Aldredge noted that the Wilburton trestle will be going out to bid soon and remarked that sadly it has no public art piece attached to it. The trestle is visually prominent in Bellevue. If Bellevue had a one percent for art program, including art as part of the project would be mandatory.

Councilmember Stokes said the trestle itself is a work of art. There certainly could be works included that are related to the history of the rail, possibly located on either side leading up to the trestle, and underneath the structure.

Commissioner Aldredge stressed the need for excess structural capacity to support additional loads for sculptures and other elements.

Chair Lau Hui asked if the trestle is an historic landmark. Councilmember Stokes said it is not. Chair Lau Hui added that the trestle structure itself could be made to be more sculptural through different means.

Commissioner Aldredge commented that because the trestle will include seating and viewing elements as well as guardrails, there will be opportunity to incorporate artistic elements.

Arts Community Manager Lorie Hoffman said the work by artist Jill Anhalt that was intended to be located at the 121st light rail station will now be located in an Eastrail trail connector. Katherine Hollis said the work will serve as an example of how visual art along the trail and serve as wayfinding elements.

Commissioner Aldredge asked if there will be funding for art along the trail provided by the city or 4Culture. Councilmember Stokes said that certainly is a possibility. The conversation of how to provide funding for Arts and culture in Bellevue will continue going forward and art along the Eastrail corridor needs to be a big part of that discussion.

Katherine Hollis said the hope is that the Regional Advisory Council will approve the draft principles at its meeting in January. Eastrail Partners will at that meeting also present ideas regarding possible projects and grant opportunities. Ideally, the group will collectively identify projects for the coming year and bring the community in to help influence the projects and work on funding. Amazon has contributed \$7.5 million toward the trestle project. Meta and REI have collectively contributed \$2 million, and the King County Council has contributed \$500,000 for the connector between the SR-520 corridor and Eastrail. The hope is to finish that project and have the connector open in October. There is as yet, however, no budget for any kind of visual art.

Councilmember Stokes said Eastrail Partners is helping with things like financing but equally important the group is comprised of interested community members who can also provide meaningful advice.

B. Bellwether 2023 RFP Selection

Lorie Hoffman reminded the Commissioners that the request was put out in September following the 2022 Bellwether event. Historically the city has produced Bellwether through independent projects and partnerships with various organizations and stakeholders. After the 2021 iteration of the event, staff met with participating organizations to hear feedback and suggestions for moving the event forward more sustainably. The city hired a consultant to look at best practices and to assist staff in moving the event into a sustainable long-term model. The event is now ready to take the leap to a model primarily run by an outside or with support from the city, allowing the event to grow creatively and also in scope and impact.

The selected proposal is from Performing Arts Center Eastside (PACE). In addition to focusing on developing a physical performing arts facility in Bellevue, the organization also brings a lot of programming to the city and to the entire Eastside. The review panel believes the PACE proposal brings to the table a full service proposal. PACE enjoys some strong partnership and sponsorship brands. The contract would be for 2023 and 2024 with options to renew by mutual agreement.

Lorie Hoffman said the recommendation of staff was to approve the proposal at \$150,000 each year. If extended beyond the second year, the funding amount would decrease to a more sustainable level as the organization ramps up its own sponsorships.

Commissioner Aldredge noted being excited to see a consultant that is Bellevue based.

Councilmember Stokes asked if there would be a review after the first year, or if the contract would automatically be for two years. Lorie Hoffman said the contract would indeed be for two years with a performance evaluation for the second year. Built into the RFP are expectations around attendance media engagements.

Chair Lau Hui asked what Bellwether has cost the city each year over the past couple of years. Manette Stamm said in the bigger years the event has cost \$250,000. The 2022 budget was closer to \$50,000 or \$60,000, not counting staff time.

Councilmember Stokes voiced concern with the performance history of PACE. Accordingly, it would be better to include a review after the first year. Lorie Hoffman said the proposal for the Bellwether program includes establishing an advisory board with city staff and others. Councilmember Stokes said that could be staff in the uncomfortable position of both advising the committee and doing the evaluation.

Commissioner Aldredge agreed with Councilmember Stokes about the need to build in a review after the first year and asked if the contract could be revised accordingly. Lorie Hoffman stressed that the RFP was for two-years but agreed to confer with contract staff to see if such an amendment could be included.

Commissioner Aldredge asked if the issue could be tabled until the next meeting. Lorie Hoffman said there is a timing issue involved. The Commission could offer conditional approval. A contract needs to be in place by the end of January so PACE can start work in February. Events of such a large scale need a substantial lead time. The contract also requires the consultant to provide a report following the event outlining whether or not the goals were met. Lorie Hoffman said the question is what the consequences might be should the Commission not be happy with the report after the first year. Manette Stamm said there are conditions and penalties built into the contract.

Lorie Hoffman added that the idea all along has been that it will take two years to meet with success, with the first year serving as a building year. A fuller review is required after the second year. Specifics could be added to the check-ins to satisfy the Commission.

Commissioner Enomoto pointed out that the calendar provided by PACE includes five check-ins with the city in addition to the final report in November. That should satisfy the Commission's ability to guide the process and make any needed course corrections.

Councilmember Stokes said while the proposal is good, the concern is that it includes a broad scope of promises. The organization has been around for decades and has never actually achieved its goals. That said, the organization has been bringing new people onboard and the claim is they are ready to hit the ground running. It would not be good in two years' time to have a program that has not worked well; that would give a bad name to Bellwether. There should be in the contract an end-of-year check and review.

Commissioner Aldredge agreed, pointing out that there will be an event to evaluate at the end of the first year.

Lorie Hoffman said one option would be to write the contract as a one-year instrument with an option to renew for a second year. There was agreement in favor of taking that approach.

Commissioner Aldredge said there should also be a termination clause in the contract should things not work out as desired.

A motion to approve the 2023-2024 Bellwether Event Management Proposal by PACE, written as a one-year contract with an option to renew, was made by Commissioner Aldredge. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Gowdy and the motion carried unanimously.

C. Year in Review

Manette Stamm stated that during 2022 the Commission received grant requests totaling \$272,530 and approved grants totaling \$145,000 to 43 organizations and artists. The Council on December 5 approved the allocation of \$181,000 for 2023. The total requests for the year, however, total \$545,295. In all there were 53 applications received and awards were made to 41 organizations or artists.

Councilmember Stokes said the comments made by the Councilmembers were very positive in terms of the importance of arts and culture in Bellevue. The word is certainly getting out about the value of arts and culture. Small investments can have big returns.

Chair Lau Hui pointed out that a number of community members also spoke up during the meeting in favor of funding for the arts.

Manette Stamm said no large public art projects were installed in 2022 but in 2023 the Downtown Park project will be installed. The 130th Streetscape artwork by artist Po Shu Wang is in fabrication and will be installed during the year. The Commission will be receiving an update regarding the final design for the BelRed Streetscape artwork concepts by artist Jill Anholt during 2023. The successful utility box wrap program will continue as well. A pared down version of Bellwether proved to be successful, and work continues on the BelRed Arts District with meetings occurring every other month.

5. COMMISSION QUICK BUSINESS

A. Remote Participation Approval for Next Meeting

Manette Stamm noted the meeting would take place on the second Tuesday of January rather than the first.

A motion to approve remote participation at the January meeting by Commissioner Gulati 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 2023-2024 Public Art Fund allocation includes a fairly sizeable increase from \$350,000 to \$500,000. That will then ramp up by \$50,000 every two years until reaching \$650,000 in 2028. The funds are needed for maintenance and additional staffing.

A Cultural Facilities CIP fund is set to increase from \$200,000 per year to \$960,000 per year, and then to \$2.4 million per year in 2028-2029. The funds have historically been used for projects in which the city has committed to large facilities capital investments, such as KidsQuest Museum, Pacific Northwest Ballet and the Bellevue Art Museum.

For 2023, a one-time conversion of \$85,000 from the public art CIP to the general fund will become available for arts grants. The Commission will be presented with a streamlined project grant proposal in January.

Lorie Hoffman said the first draft of the ArtSpace art market study report has been received. It will be shared with the Commission in January.

The next meeting of the BelRed Arts District Association is slated for Thursday, December 15 at the G5 Hub. Commissioners are welcome to attend.

A meeting with the inspectors regarding the Downtown Park public art project was held recently. That means the project is officially approved to move forward with construction.

Manette Stamm informed the Commissioners that the 2020 portable art collection acquisitions are currently on display at City Hall and at mini City Hall in Crossroads. Additionally, the Bellevue School District is on board with participating in the utility box wrap program. Yet to be determined is what the partnership will look like and which schools will be involved. The feedback has been very positive.

Councilmember Stokes suggested there should be talks about what kind of art should be included as part of the new aquatic center project.

7. COMMUNICATIONS – None

8. ADJOURNMENT

Chair Lau Hui adjourned the meeting at 5:55 p.m.