

BELLEVUE ARTS COMMISSION
REGULAR MEETING
MINUTES

February 7, 2023
4:30 p.m.

Bellevue City Hall
Virtual Meeting

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

COMMISSIONERS ABSENT: Commissioners Aldredge, Bhargava

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

OTHERS PRESENT: Councilmember Stokes; Scott MacDonald, Ambergris; Jill Anholt, Artist

RECORDING SECRETARY: Gerry Lindsay

I. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 4:32 p.m. by Chair Lau Hui who presided. All Commissioners were present with the exception of Commissioners Aldredge and Bhargava.

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 Enomoto and the motion carried unanimously.

B. Approval of Minutes

Motion to approve the January 10, 2023, minutes as submitted was made by Commissioner Enomoto. The motion was seconded was by Commissioner Gowdy and the motion carried unanimously.

A motion to move agenda item 4C ahead of agenda item 3 was made by Commissioner Gowdy. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Enomoto and the motion carried unanimously.

4. ACTION ITEMS AND DISCUSSION ITEMS

C. Oral Communications

Arts Program Analyst Manette Stamm said the options open to the Commission in regard to oral communications were to reinstate oral communications in accord with Article VII, Item D, of the Commission's bylaws, or to elect not to reinstate the oral communications.

A motion to reinstate oral communications in accord with the Commission's bylaws was made by Chair Lau Hui. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Gowdy.

Commissioner Martinez asked if the action to reinstate oral communications would apply both to in-person and virtual communications. Manette Stamm said it would apply to both.

The motion carried unanimously.

3. ORAL COMMUNICATIONS

Alex Tsimerman began with zieg heil and called the Commissioners dirty damn Nazi gestapo democratic Fascists and psychopaths and claimed to be neither peaceful or happy. The Council for ten months did not allow public comments. Other councils in the area did the same and all because they did not want Alex Tsimerman to speak. They are all freaking idiots and more dangerous than Nazis or Communists. Councilmember Stokes represents the Council and sits as part of the Commission, and that is not good. All empires that collapsed over the last ten thousand years fell because they were controlled by idiots. Councilmember Stokes is not doing a good job and is acting very strange. All such kind of Councilmembers should be out because they are dangerous for the system and for the people.

4. ACTION ITEMS AND DISCUSSION ITEMS (continued)

A. Jill Anholt Artwork Concept Design

Scott MacDonald, consultant with Ambergris, noted that the Arts Commission Code, Chapter 3.56 of the Bellevue City Code, confers on the Commission certain powers and duties relative to developing recommendations for acquiring public artwork consistent with guidelines and priorities approved by the City Council. Artist Jill Anholt was selected in 2017 by a public art panel comprised of community members, public art professionals and a representative from the Arts Commission and was charged with developing a public art chapter and informing other parts of the BelRed Streetscape Plan which has now been adopted as part of the Transportation Design Manual. As part of the scope of work, two early artwork concepts were developed, including a set of mobile artworks and a fixed piece called *Cut and Fill*.

In 2020, the Commission elected to move forward with *Cut and Fill* as a concept and since then Jill Anholt has been refining the concept and conducting a lot of community outreach. In 2021, after some very helpful outreach with a number of community groups, specifically the Snoqualmie Tribe, the artist was moved to remove all that glorified history and development and to see things from the Native perspective. That upended and escalated the project to something much deeper and more meaningful and which is now called *Rooted*. Some issues with the original site at 121st Avenue NE and Spring Boulevard were encountered that necessitated thinking about a new location but still in the same general area. The new location is at NE 12th Street and Spring Boulevard, the site of an upcoming project to build a trail connection to Eastrail to the east.

Jill Anholt allowed that the project has come a long way. *Rooted* is an inhabitable interactive sculpture that is inspired by the organic natural forms of tree roots. It recalls the very specific natural and cultural history of displacement for communities in Bellevue due to colonization and industrial development. The work, like tree roots, speaks to the ideas of connection and resiliency within nature and people, and the capacity to endure and even prosper in spite of challenging conditions. The work is created from Corten steel i-beams which are altered, shaped and seamlessly joined together to create an organic sculptural form composed of two towering shapes. The two elements reach toward each other and intermingle, and reach upwards to the sky where their wide bases coalesce into two circular voids, one expressing the memory of a tree trunk reaching intimately up into the sky, and the other with a reflective metal bringing a view into an intimate and participatory relationship with the sculpture.

The site is situated just to the west of where the trail meets with the sidewalk. The area will be planted with low-maintenance grass, evoking a natural setting that will still allow people to interact with the work. The site is clearly a gateway.

Those who enter the work and look up will see themselves in the reflective element and will as such become part of the work. At the same time, they will be able to look through the open element, possibly imagining where a tree may have existed in the long-ago past.

Jill Anholt said the work came about by working closely with the Snoqualmie Tribe and with Japanese American groups. The feedback from both groups has been very positive. When *Cut and Fill* was presented, the Tribe helped by pointing out and recognizing the colonial lens and the glamorization of industry above all else. Upon being shown *Rooted* the Tribe felt both heard and listened to. In highlighting their resilience, the Tribe noted still being here and surviving on the land. They loved the reference to the organic forest and the memories of the vast forest the Tribe relied on in the past. The Japanese American group also responded positively to the work because it speaks directly to their history with the land which included pulling out large roots to create small plots of land to farm prior to and after their internment.

The overall scale of the work is almost 17 feet by 21 feet. The lowest ring is about 12 feet high and the upper root is about 15 feet. A fabricator has been contacted to determine cost, and an engineer has been working to design the footings. As contemplated, there will be a number of smaller footings on which the legs will be anchored, allowing the landscape to grow around the artwork. The brown-orange Corten steel changes over time as it is exposed to a natural environment, eventually developing a stable protective layer of exterior rust. When sited on a pad of concrete, Corten can stain the pad, but the proposed approach will not have that issue.

Chair Lau Hui asked about the proposed landscaping materials. Jill Anholt said the landscape architecture team that is developing the trail connection has not reached a determination yet in regard to exact plantings. The team has referenced low-maintenance grass species that will be intentional and not just look like weeds. Mr. MacDonald added that there will be irrigation to the site and the landscaping will be maintained. There are ornamental grasses that stay fairly compact and that have different colors and textures.

Councilmember Stokes commented that the design is exciting. The proposed site is excellent and ties in well as a gateway on the corridor.

Commissioner Gowdy commented favorably on the color of the Corten. It provides a nice contrast to the surrounding area and will stand out.

Commissioner Enomoto asked if there are any studies around how Corten impacts the soils as it rusts over time. Mr. MacDonald allowed that the runoff from Corten has a little bit of iron in it, which is what the staining comes from. The unique thing about Corten is that the runoff is not the result of the material breaking down. As it gets the richer colors over time, the Corten is actually sealing itself. Corten is used in sculptures as well as architectural features.

Councilmember Stokes said Corten has been around a long time and has more context and art to it than just regular steel. It will become something more organic over time and will fit in very well with the rest of the area.

Commissioner Gulati asked if Corten starts looking like stainless steel and turns red over time. Jill Anholt said from the start it looks like regular steel, but not stainless steel. As the metal is worked, it develops character at the joints and so forth. Once fabricated, the Corten will all be sandblasted, allowing all elements to develop a patina simultaneously. At first, the steel will

be darker and over time it will shift to brown and orange colors before stabilizing. The material does not crumble over time or develop sharp surfaces that could hurt somebody.

Chair Lau Hui asked about pricing. Jill Anholt allowed that prices have gone up almost 30 percent from when the project was first envisioned. However, the landscape architecture group has agreed to pay for the footings, bolstering the budget for the artwork and balancing things out. Mr. MacDonald clarified that the landscape architects are working for the city's transportation department.

A motion to approve the recommendation as presented, triggering the artist to move onto Final Design of the artwork, was made by Commissioner Gowdy. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Enomoto and the motion carried unanimously.

B. Arts Commission Bylaws

Arts Community Manager Lorie Hoffman explained that the Commission is governed by two documents: Bellevue City Code 3.56, and the Commission's bylaws. Together, the documents outline the powers and duties of the Commission. BCC 3.56 establishes the Arts Commission and sets forth broad general rules regarding officers, meetings, Council communications and other items, and directs staff in the Department of Community Development to serve as support staff. The code also calls for the Commission to establish bylaws regarding procedures. Adopted by the City Council, city code can only be amended by the City Council.

The Commission's bylaws specifically define rules and procedures for the Commission. They cannot override or contradict city code, and they cannot give the Commission additional powers and duties beyond those outlined in the code. The bylaws can be amended by the Commission.

In short, the city code defines what the Commission does, and the bylaws define how it is done.

The Commission is charged with serving as a central commission for whom individuals and groups can take their concerns about ideas in regard to the arts; encouraging working, sharing, teaching and participation in the arts; reviewing and making recommendations on the suitability of artwork, including those intended as gifts; and recommending priorities for funding and the allocation of funds for small grants to organizations based on eligibility and selection criteria.

The bylaws for all city boards and commissions follow the same general format, but the Commission does need to update and amend the bylaws from time to time. Certain sections of the Commission's bylaws were last updated in September 2022 to remain in line with the new rules around hybrid meetings.

Article V Item A sets the time and date of the month for regular Arts Commission meetings, which is currently 4:30 p.m. on the first Tuesday of each month. Lorie Hoffman said the recommendation of the staff was to change the meeting time and day of the month in order to facilitate allowing the Commission to meet in Room 1E-113, which is specifically equipped for commission meetings with microphones, hybrid meeting technology, and accommodations for the public. The room also has a separate entrance door to better address any safety concerns.

Manette Stamm noted that the room is not available on Mondays given that it is used by the City Council. A number of meetings are scheduled for Tuesdays each month. While Wednesdays and Thursdays are more favorable given that there are some available days.

Chair Lau Hui asked if the Commission could continue to meet at 4:30 p.m. even if changing to a different day of the month. Manette Stamm said the current meeting time can be changed or retained.

Following a general discussion, the Commission favored meeting on the first Wednesday of each month at 4:30 p.m.

A motion to amend Article V Item A of the Commission bylaws to reflect a new meeting time of the first Wednesday of each month at 4:30 p.m. was made by Commissioner Enomoto. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Gowdy and the motion carried unanimously.

C. Oral Communications (Continued)

Commissioner Enomoto asked if the Commission is allowed to limit public comment to issues relating to the arts. Lorie Hoffman explained that members of the public are allowed to comment on anything during oral communications.

Commissioner Martinez acknowledged that the public is allowed to comment on any topic, and that the Commission's meetings are open to the public. However, when the comments made border on hate speech there should be a policy in place to protect the wellness of the space and the Commissioners. Manette Stamm said staff and the City Council is aware of those concerns. The difficulty is in making sure no one's First Amendment free speech rights are infringed upon. Room 1E-113 has an exit door the Commissioners can use in cases of feeling unsafe.

Councilmember Stokes said the Council is fully aware of the concerns, adding that similar issues are under consideration by Seattle and King County. The issue, however, is a difficult one to tackle.

Manette Stamm noted that the Commission's meeting on March 7 would still be in Room 1E-109.

A motion to approve remote participation on March 7 by Commissioners Gulati and Enomoto was made by Chair Lau Hui. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Gowdy and the motion carried unanimously.

Manette Stamm pointed out that Commissioner Bhargava has been approved to participate remotely indefinitely.

5. COMMISSION QUICK BUSINESS – None

6. REPORTS

A. Project Updates

Lorie Hoffman said completion of the Arts Market Study during February means the Artspace item will be removed from the project updates list. Going forward, updates regarding affordable artist housing and creative commercial spaces will be part of the BelRed Arts District update.

With regard to the Arts and Economic Prosperity survey, Lorie Hoffman said 350 of the surveys have been collected, which is ahead of the national average. The survey window has been extended to May 31. The final report is set to be delivered by the end of the year. The

region-wide survey covering the Eastside has collected enough surveys among the partner cities. There will be standalone reports for Bellevue and for the Eastside.

The Commissioners were informed that construction has started on the Downtown public art project. The work will be 24 feet tall and have a circular shape at the top, and it will have a 60-foot diameter. It will take six to eight weeks to complete the work. Public response concerning the piece has been very positive.

Turning to the public art collection and maintenance, Manette Stamm shared that *Longboat.Reed.Rookery* is being fixed with parts gathered from all over the world. When the work is completed, the work will light up at night.

7. COMMUNICATIONS

A. Written Communications

Manette Stamm shared with the Commissioners two thank-you letters from the Bellevue Art Museum and the Pacific Northwest Ballet.

8. ADJOURNMENT

Chair Lau Hui adjourned the meeting at 5:44 p.m.