

BELLEVUE ARTS COMMISSION
REGULAR MEETING
MINUTES

January 19, 2016
4:30 p.m.

Bellevue City Hall
Room 1E -109

COMMISSIONERS PRESENT: Chairperson Manfredi, Commissioners, Jackson, Lau Hui, Lewis, Malkin, Wolfteich

COMMISSIONERS ABSENT: Commissioner Madan

STAFF PRESENT: Scott MacDonald, Joshua Heim, Department of Planning and Community Development

OTHERS PRESENT: None

RECORDING SECRETARY: Gerry Lindsay

I. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 4:31 p.m. by Chairperson Manfredi who presided. All Commissioners were present with the exception of Commissioner Wolfteich, who arrived at 4:32 p.m., and Commissioner Madan, who was excused.

2. APPROVAL OF AGENDA AND MINUTES

A. Approval of Agenda

Motion to approve the agenda was made by Commissioner Jackson. Second was by Commissioner Malkin and the motion carried unanimously.

B. Approval of Minutes

Motion to approve the December 1, 2015, minutes as submitted was made by Commissioner Lewis. Second was by Commissioner Lau Hui and the motion carried unanimously.

3. ORAL COMMUNICATIONS – None

4. ACTION ITEMS AND DISCUSSION ITEMS

A. New Arts Program Manager Introduction

Chair Manfredi welcomed new Arts Program Manager Joshua Heim. He noted that the interview process was rigorous because there were a number of very good candidates.

Mr. Heim said he has been involved with municipal art programs for the last eight years and for the last four and a half years served as the Arts Administrator for the City of Redmond. Mr. Heim then gave a brief synopsis of his background.

The Commissioners took a moment to introduce themselves.

B. Bellwether Sculpture Exhibition Selected Works

Mr. MacDonald reported that he met with the jury on December 8. The jurors were Mark Anderson from The Foundry in Walla Walla, Beth Sellars from Suyama Space in Seattle, and Stefano Catalani from the Bellevue Arts Museum. Each brought different viewpoints to the table. More than 400 artworks were reviewed, with outdoor pieces representing significantly less of the total in terms of number of submissions. Submissions were made by artists from all over the world.

Mr. MacDonald explained that the construction projects under way are making it difficult to site pieces. It is unknown how much of Downtown Park will be available, nor is it known if the City Hall plaza will be available. Staff will need to be nimble going forward.

The Commissioners were shown photos of works by the chosen artists, and a map of the potential sites, including Downtown Park and the Pedestrian Corridor. It was noted that construction in Downtown Park will limit siting opportunities to only about a quarter of the park. And because City Hall is closed on the weekends, over half of the artwork will be closed to the public during those hours, which is certainly a constraint. If the plaza can be used, works sited there certainly would be viewable at all hours.

Commissioner Jackson questioned whether the sculpture sites have to be in the downtown area. Crossroads Park would be appropriate for outdoor works, and Crossroads Mall for indoor works. There are also sites in Wilburton that would be appropriate. As far as the downtown is concerned, she suggested the Hyatt Wintergarden area for indoor installations. Mr. MacDonald said both the library and Meydenbauer Center have had art located in them during past sculpture exhibitions. The problem was that only those specifically visiting those places saw the artwork; people off the street did not. The library does, however, have an associated plaza, and Ashwood Park is immediately adjacent to it which would provide access throughout the week.

Commissioner Wolfteich suggested Bellevue Square as a place to site indoor works.

Chair Manfredi said it was his understanding that the interactive app would be used again to inform people as to the location of the works. Mr. MacDonald allowed that it was very widely used during the last exhibition and yielded information about which pieces were most widely enjoyed.

Mr. MacDonald said he and Mr. Heim would carefully consider the suggestions in determining where to site the works, and would likely call together the committee to enrich the discussion.

C. Neighborhood Public Art Project Assessment

Mr. Heim told the Commissioners that Mr. MacDonald recently drove him around the city to see the various neighborhood art projects. He said he hoped the Commission could feel honest in giving feedback about the works, including those being planned, and the Neighborhood Public Art Program itself. He said as an outsider he did not yet have a firm grasp on why the city has both a Public Art Program and the Neighborhood Public Art Program as opposed to a single program. If tweaks are needed, they should be made.

Mr. Heim noted that two projects have been completed under the Neighborhood Public Art Program, both by the same artist. There are other projects that underwent similar processes without taking nearly as long to complete, though they were not part of the Neighborhood Public Art Program. The Bridle Trails project took six years to complete, and the Newport

Hills project took seven years. The projects in the pipeline are the Lake Hills and Lattawood projects.

With regard to the former, Mr. MacDonald shared with the Commission that he had earlier in the day received a draft agreement from Puget Sound Energy, and noted that he has been keeping the community updated.

Under the current process, a panel, drawn from members of the community, a member of the Arts Commission assigned to serve as chair, and a couple professional artists, selects an artist based on the criteria established by the community. Project management is handled by the city's art program staff. Once the artwork is completed and installed, a dedication celebration is held. The budgets are typically between \$75,000 and \$150,000 per project.

Chair Manfredi asked what slowed the processes for the Bridle Trails and Newport Hills projects. Mr. MacDonald said in both instances, once the artist was selected, he was asked to bring back three proposals. The panel selected all three in both cases, leaving the artist to figure out how to bring in all three proposals within the budget, and where everything should be sited. Staff worked with the artists and others to locate sites, because in both cases there were no specific sites identified ahead of time. While the works were being fabricated, the staff were working to acquire easements and addressing other technical matters. For the two projects in the pipeline, there is the advantage of having sites identified beforehand.

The Commissioners were reminded that the Public Art Program has three goals: 1) to use public art to define or enhance an urban walkway from City Hall to the waterfront; 2) to facilitate private investment in public art; and 3) to engage neighborhoods in commissioning public art. The Neighborhood Public Art Program must respond to the third of those goals, and the key objectives are to: 1) focus on collaboration between neighborhood partners and public artists to create and site artworks that reflect community identity, pride and unity; 2) to provide a positive and meaningful experience for all participants through a successful public art commission; 3) to increase transparency of the public art process by involving the community at every step of the project.; 4) to select partners that represent a reasonable amount of the neighborhoods population, as qualified by program objectives; 5) to present a fair and balanced distribution of projects within the city and neighborhood; 6) to select public artists with a deep commitment to community-based public art and demonstrated effectiveness in working with a community and maintaining artistic integrity; and 7) to provide appropriate staff administration to facilitate the project in the time allotted.

Mr. MacDonald shared with the Commissioners photos of the two pilot projects in Bridle Trails and Newport Hills.

Mr. Heim said in reviewing the program he uncovered four big results at the heart of what the Neighborhood Public Art Program seeks to produce: 1) educate and expand people's ideas about what public art is and can be; 2) develop good partnerships with businesses and existing cultural groups; 3) address diversity through communication and participation; and 4) produce an environment in which the Commission takes the lead in convening groups to work on a singular vision.

The Commissioners were shown photos of four widely recognized award-winning projects from around the country. Mr. Heim allowed that each could represent a different way of looking at public art projects while being community and neighborhood based and achieving the goals of the Neighborhood Public Art Program. The works were more about experience than object; less about serving a community and more about building a community; included

performative elements; and were more about possibilities as opposed to conveying a fixed identity.

Mr. Heim detailed the Los Angeles Urban Rangers Program, Project Row Houses, Conflict Kitchen, and Bust to the Future, as examples of exceptional public art projects. Mr. Heim said Bellevue wants partnerships, community involvement, great art and a transformed community. The fact is often the best results flow from choosing one of those outcomes and doing it well.

The Commissioners were asked to comment on how well the two Neighborhood Public Art Program projects that have been completed fulfilled the program goals.

Commissioner Malkin asked if a survey has been done in the two neighborhoods focused on the degree to which the projects have been welcomed by the residents. Mr. MacDonald said no survey has been conducted, nor has there been a review of the Neighborhood Public Art Program process. The feedback received from a few specific persons has all been good, however.

Commissioner Jackson commented that the installation in Newports Hills would not be acceptable to the Bridle Trails neighborhood. That is proof of the fact that local art reflects the local community. Both works have served to expand people's ideas about public art and have produced an environment in which the Commission took the lead in getting residents to work together toward a common vision. She said developing partnerships with businesses should be an outcome rather than a goal. Neither project really addresses diversity.

Commissioner Lewis pointed out that Bridle Trails is in fact one of the least diverse neighborhoods in the entire city, so addressing diversity there is not really an issue.

Mr. MacDonald agreed and added that by contrast Newport Hills is one of the most diverse neighborhoods. He said the people he has heard from there have indicated the artwork is busy with a lot going on. There certainly were some frustrations with the process that generated more feedback than the actual artwork has.

Commissioner Jackson said from her viewpoint as a Bridle Trails resident, the artwork is absolutely perfect for the neighborhood. That could be why not much feedback has been received.

Commissioner Wolfeich suggested that compared to the examples of projects from around the nation, the projects in Bridle Trails and Newport Hills both fall a bit short of the ideal. It could be that the approach in both instances was more conventional and focused on an installation.

Chair Manfredi commented that the Urban Rangers project is not something that would spring to mind in considering public art. To drive a conversation anywhere like that would require a good deal of leadership on the part of the Arts Commission. Commissioner Jackson agreed and pointed out that the examples given were all from much more urban areas. Bellevue has a split between what is clearly an urban core and areas that are clearly neighborhoods. Bellevue's Neighborhood Public Art Program yields works that are suitable and comfortable for the neighborhoods in which they are sited.

Chair Manfredi pointed out that the examples given were all temporary artworks, whereas the projects that go into the neighborhoods are designed to be permanent and to evoke neighborhood identity. Temporary works cannot do that.

Commissioner Lau Hui commented that Seattle's annual design festival is similar to some of the examples given, but Seattle has a larger pool of money from which to draw. Commissioner Jackson concurred.

Mr. MacDonald said one of the themes in all of the example projects is the instigation of an ongoing conversation. That is something that could happen in Bellevue, even if the focus is on something temporary, or temporary leading to permanent. One example is an art project that involved an exquisite corpse statement about Columbus that evolved over time and was added to the side of a building in a very community driven process. The artist began with a line and then through a community contest additional lines were suggested. The artist and a curator then sifted through the suggestions and added to the statement. The process was repeated until the entire statement was written.

Commissioner Malkin said the Commission actually funded a similar project, though it did not come to fruition. The artist solicited ideas from the community and turned them into haikus, and the idea was to paint them on the stripes of a parking lot. The property owner, however, kept the project from happening. The Commission does look for projects and artists that involve the local community, including where temporary works are contemplated.

Bringing the discussion back to Bellwether, Commissioner Jackson noted that in previous years the exhibition included a teen project that involved temporary art and wide participation under the direction of an adult leader. She asked if that is in the budget. Mr. MacDonald said it is in the budget. The project has been on the edge for the last few exhibitions because of time constraints. He agreed it would be good to have it come back. Commissioner Jackson added that in order to be successful it will need to be more front and center. Mr. MacDonald said the project was originally envisioned as a way to engage teens from Ground Zero who were, it was assumed, damaging the artwork put in the park. It evolved over time into a larger program to where in 2012 there were 90 students involved.

Commissioner Malkin suggested that going forward with neighborhood projects, the respective neighborhoods should be asked if they would like to see something that is more interactive or multicultural.

5. COMMISSION QUICK BUSINESS

Mr. MacDonald reminded the Commissioners that traditionally the February meeting has been moved from the first Tuesday to the third, and that the March meeting has been canceled. He said he would work with the Chair to reschedule the February meeting.

Commissioner Jackson thanked Mr. MacDonald for taking on the job of being the staff bridge during the search for a new arts program director.

6. REPORTS

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

Mr. MacDonald reported that an RFQ has been issued for the Grand Connection project. The city has established a budget to hire a consultant to develop an overall view, with a particular eye on how it should tie Downtown and Meydenbauer Bay Park.

Mr. MacDonald said the Spring District Station is back on the docket for East Link. An artist selection process will be kicked off soon, and interviews will occur in February.

Temple of the Stones is an artwork that has needed maintenance for some time. Mr. MacDonald said the artist John Young has made some repairs. The sealant is peeling and is in need of repair.

The City Limits ArtMap is at the print shop and should be available by the next Arts Commission meeting.

7. CORRESPONDENCE, INFORMATION
 - A. Written Correspondence – As Noted
 - B. Information
 - i. Future Agenda Items
 - ii. Committees
8. ADJOURNMENT

Chair Manfredi adjourned the meeting at 6:37 p.m.