

BELLEVUE ARTS COMMISSION
REGULAR MEETING
MINUTES

July 12, 2016
4:30 p.m.

Bellevue City Hall
Room 1E -109

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

COMMISSIONERS ABSENT: None

STAFF PRESENT: Joshua Heim, Scott MacDonald, 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 Commissioner Malkin who presided. All Commissioners were present with the exception of Commissioner Wolfteich, who arrived at 4:35 p.m., and Chair Manfredi and Commissioner Lau Hui, both of whom were 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 Lewis and the motion carried unanimously.

B. Approval of Minutes

Motion to approve the June 7, 2016, minutes as submitted was made by Commissioner Jackson. Second was by Commissioner Madan and the motion carried unanimously.

3. ORAL COMMUNICATIONS – None

4. ACTION ITEMS AND DISCUSSION ITEMS

A. Cultural Compass Strategic Vision and Core Initiatives Draft 2

Commissioner Jackson reported that the public comment period closed on June 30. The committee then met to review and incorporate comments as appropriate which resulted in changing and expanding the vision bullet points. Lifelong learning was added as a core initiative, and sample strategies were added for each core initiative.

Commissioner Malkin asked who the target audience is and Arts Program Manager Joshua Heim suggested it is both the public and the City Council, with the Council being the primary audience.

Commissioner Jackson explained that the second bullet under the vision was revised to evoke the notion of art as welcoming and creating community through engagement and dialog. The notion of cultural heritage, diversity and history as something to be prized and promoted was incorporated into the third bullet. Where there were previously bullets for creativity and innovation, the new draft combines those two concepts. The notion of Bellevue sustaining a thriving and complete creative community was also added as a bullet.

Commissioner Jackson noted that there were some who wanted to see specific arts organizations highlighted in the document. In the first draft, some groups were included but others were not. The committee concluded that the document should focus on strategies rather than on specific organizations.

Commissioner Madan asked if use of the term “sample strategies” was meant to imply there are more than just those specifically listed. Commissioner Jackson said that was the intent. No attempt was made to be exhaustive in listing strategies.

Commissioner Jackson said the timeline has the document being presented to the Council in study session on September 19. That leaves open the possibility of scheduling an additional meeting in August if needed to refine the document.

Commissioner Malkin called attention to the second core initiative and pointed out that the specific types of facilities that would be supported are called out, including educational facilities, artist housing and studios, museums and performance venues. He suggested also mentioning galleries, which are not the same as museums. Commissioner Jackson agreed.

With regard to the third sample strategy under the third core initiative, Commissioner Malkin suggested the word “website” is a bit dated and proposed finding a more expansive word that would include apps and other electronic communication vehicles. He added that overall the committee had done an excellent job.

Commissioner Madan said the word “encourage” is used often in the document. He suggested the word is difficult to translate into action because it can mean different things to different people. Commissioner Jackson said the committee acted on the premise that in the world of policy language there is a hierarchy ranging from consider to encourage, nurture, foster, support and strengthen, where “consider” is a weaker word than “strengthen.”

Mayor Stokes suggested that briefing sessions for the Councilmembers from staff and Commissioners ahead of the Council study session would be appropriate. The approach has been shown to be effective when it comes to facilitating feedback and decision making at the Council level.

Commissioner Jackson said if directed to do so by the full Commission, the committee could meet again to focus on adding more sample strategies. Getting things like artist housing down on paper will be important; while that particular strategy may not be in the cards, not having it down on paper at all will mean it will not be in anyone’s mind.

Commissioner Malkin commented that some of the sample strategies listed in the draft could use some more clarity, such as “enhance the cultural features of the amenity incentive system.” Arts Program Coordinator Scott MacDonald said the amenity incentive system is the official title of the land use mechanism used by developers to include building height or density.

Mr. Heim stated that once there is approval from the Council on the vision document, the focus will turn to creating a strategic plan.

Mayor Stokes said the document addresses a topic the Council does not often talk about and as such there will be a lot of interest in it. Having briefings ahead of the Council meeting will provide the opportunity to ask questions and suggest adding specific items. Mr. MacDonald said he would work with Council staff to schedule the briefings.

Commissioner Jackson said it will be valuable to include in the Council briefings the concern voiced by the Bellevue Arts Museum to be explicitly called out in the document as an organization in need of being nurtured and encouraged. The committee, however, concluded the document should be more written to be more general.

B. Portable Artworks Recommendations

Mr. Heim said the committee focused on whether or not the city should be collecting portable artworks developed a mission statement that reads “The City of Bellevue seeks to be a vital platform for cultural exchange and creative inspiration. The City turns to living artists to enrich the collective experience of Bellevue’s public places through permanent commissions and a growing collection of moveable artworks funded through the Public Art Program. A segment of the collection is devoted to artworks that raise the discourse on the defining aspects of Bellevue’s civic life, exploring the diverse identities of our residents, converging cultures, international connections, technological currents and interplay between nature and the urban experience that make Bellevue’s environment unique. Bellevue’s art collection helps document the dynamic moments and complexities of Bellevue’s cultural life and is an important resource for future generations.”

Mr. Heim said the panel that was assembled met on June 23 and reviewed 168 applications from artists. Their initial charge was to identify artwork for Mini City Hall and after reviewing a number of works recommended acquiring works by Junko Yamamoto, an artist born and raised in Japan but who now lives in Seattle. Her work speaks broadly to the connectedness of humanity through the use of common themes such as circles. As a foreign-born artist, her work also speaks to international connections. The two recommended works, *Coral Reef* and *Water Inside*, will collectively cost \$4200.

Commissioner Malkin asked if additional lighting will need to be installed at Mini City Hall in association with the artwork. Mr. Heim said the facility is being renovated and new lighting is part of the project.

Continuing, Mr. Heim said a proposal has been made to put artwork in the three drop-in rooms off the concourse in City Hall. The rooms are used a lot and are publically accessible. Even when in the rooms are in use, the fact that they have glass walls means any works placed in the rooms would be visible from the concourse. The recommendation of the panel was to purchase one series by artist Cynthia Camlin, one place setting by artist Diem Chau, and one painting by artist Roger Shimomura. Specific purchases are yet to be determined based on studio visits and budget considerations, as well as consultation by city staff. Mr. Heim said the panel recommended putting together a roster of artists. They recommended a total of 39 artists be included along with their artworks for the next two years.

Commissioner Madan commented that the panel did a good job. He said he was concerned the panelists would skew the needle toward contemporary abstract work, leaving out more traditional works. That appears to be what they did. In 2018 when the roster is updated, a panel should be chosen that does not necessarily come from the well-entrenched Seattle artists establishment to avoid running the risk of having a collection that looks like every other collection locally. Of the 39 artists on the proposed list, a large number of them are those who show up over and over again in museums and galleries and shows. With regard to the

proposed selections, he said they are very good choices. Whatever the city purchases from Mr. Shimomura will only go up in value over time.

Commissioner Madan noted the Microsoft used to be a main collector and supporter of new and emerging artists under a previous curator. That is no longer the case. Mr. Heim said Microsoft has over 10,000 objects in storage, and the facility users have not traditionally treated art very well. A lot of the works have been damaged over the years and have had to be pulled.

Commissioner Madan said it is a good thing that a roster of artists and works has been developed. In the future the Commission may want to consider having a short list for acquisitions and put it out for Bellevue residents to comment on. That would give the public some buy-in in selecting works. Mr. MacDonald shared that Mini City Hall Manager Barbara Tuninga participated with the panel and provided comments on every artist. It was helpful to have that community connection.

Commissioner Malkin pointed out that the job of the Commission is in fact to represent the community. Commissioner Jackson noted that the panel actually represented the community in the selection process. In selecting panel members, and indeed in all that the Commission does, consideration must be given to how the general public will interpret works. It should not be necessary to include a paragraph explaining works to keep the public from concluding that a work is obscene. Additionally, abstract works may not easily be connected with Bellevue and culture. The Commission has the responsibility to select works that will be accessible to the most people. Mr. Heim agreed that the challenge with municipal procurement is that works cannot even be considered unless the artist applies to be considered. Quality should always be the first consideration in selecting works, and the 39 artists on the proposed roster certainly fit that category. There is a mix of emerging artists and well-established artists, and the process was not limited just to Northwest artists.

Mr. MacDonald commented that the volume of paintings compared to other mediums was enormous. There were no beautiful watercolor landscapes submitted. While it is a possibility, it is not known if the makeup of the panel was what kept some artists from submitting their works.

Commissioner Malkin proposed moving ahead with the proposals and take the lessons learned and apply them next time around.

Commissioner Wolfeich cautioned against underestimating the ability of the public to get and appreciate abstract works. Commissioner Jackson said the works by Ms. Yamamoto will go very well in Mini City Hall, and most will probably appreciate them. She commented, however, that some will be challenged by them, which is not necessarily a negative. Commissioner Lewis agreed that the Crossroads population should not be underestimated. The works will certainly serve as conversational pieces. Commissioner Jackson said she wanted to make sure the portable artworks are not all skewed one way or the other.

Commissioner Wolfeich asked if the panel was made aware of where works could potentially be sited. Mr. Heim said they were not. The panel met at City Hall and they were given a tour that included the public meeting rooms and the main hallway. Where portable works are considered, they are usually on the small side. City Hall does not have walls to support that, however.

Commissioner Wolfeich said that fact would seem to argue against selecting the works by Diem Chau. Mr. Heim agreed and stressed the need to fully address all issues relating to siting

and installation. Mr. MacDonald added that much will need to be done before coming to the Commission with a recommendation to purchase specific works for the collection.

Mr. Heim said approval of the roster is very important. If not approved, the Commission will be limited to purchasing only a single artwork and the entire process would have to start over again in order to buy anything else. He said what the Commission needed to do was approve the roster and approve the first purchase, but not the second and third purchases because as yet no site for them have been identified. The city already has artwork in storage and purchasing works just to put them in storage would not be a good idea.

A motion to approve the roster for use during the first two years of the Portable Artworks program, and the first purchase of the two pieces by Junko Yamamoto, was made by Commissioner Jackson. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Lewis and the motion carried unanimously.

C. Art Donation

Mr. Heim said *Night Blooming* by Taiji Miyasaka is currently located on the top floor of the Bellevue Arts Museum. The museum approached the city in March with an offer directly from the artist who would like to maintain the work in a public space in Bellevue. He said he and Mr. MacDonald lobbied to have the piece sited on the new roof garden at City Hall, but that will not be possible for a number of reasons, not the least of which is the weight of the piece. However, economic development operates an impact hub at the Lincoln Center building, which is owned by the city, and the proposal is to accept the artwork and install it in the courtyard of the Startup 425 facility in that building. The work is made from decommissioned pieces of wood that used to be part of grain silos in Eastern Washington. The artist is an architect who is on the faculty of the School and Design and Architecture at Washington State University.

Other works by the artist were shared with the Commissioners.

Commissioner Malkin said he had no issue with accepting the work but had questions about the location. He said he would prefer a location that is more visible to the public, such as a park. He allowed, however, that he did not know what risks to the piece might be associated with a park site.

Commissioner Lewis pointed out that the site will in fact be quite near the grand connection once it is created. Mr. Heim agreed and added that there are currently no works sited in Wilburton. He said one concern with the piece is the possibility of encampment. For that reason, the artist has agreed to install a lock. The piece needs to be located on a site that is staffed so the door can be locked and unlocked, something that would not be possible in a park.

Commissioner Jackson said she had the same concerns about what appears to be an obscure location, but said she was happy to learn there is the potential for a public meeting space in the Lincoln Center building.

Mr. Heim added that the complex will also house the new homeless shelter which will open the door to a widely diverse population. It is possible the work could be moved at some future time, though it is not easily moved.

A motion to recommend accepting the artwork donation as described was made by Commissioner Jackson. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Wolfteich and the motion carried unanimously.

D. Bellwether Update

Mr. MacDonald reported that artworks are starting to show up for the exhibition, including inside City Hall and in the pavilion. More are coming for City Hall, the pedestrian corridor and Downtown Park for a total of 32 artworks. An opening event is planned for July 29 at 6:00 p.m. at City Hall. A map that will act as a catalog will be made available.

Continuing, Mr. MacDonald said as the exhibition has been honed, the idea of it being both an exhibition and an art walk has been highlighted. In all there will be almost 60 permanent and temporary artworks along the route. A number of events will occur during the exhibition, beginning with the opening event and continuing with the first Friday events in August and September, and the closing event in October. The events are intended to spark or reinvigorate the exhibition throughout its full run. Performance-based artwork will be sited along the pedestrian corridor, and both first Friday events will occur during the noon hour when the pedestrian corridor is heavily activated.

The teen project artwork was coordinated by artist John Flemming. He organized three different teen workshops at the Bellevue Arts Museum. The work was originally fabricated to be on the construction fencing for Downtown Park, but that proved to be very challenging. Instead, the work will be located on the wood slat fence of the plaza at City Hall. The work, which is comprised of 96 metal slats and which once installed will be 45 feet long, will be going into the city's permanent collection following the exhibition once the plaza is removed to accommodate the Sound Transit project.

Mr. MacDonald shared with the Commissioners photos of other works that will be included in the exhibition, including one fabricated for a pole on Bellevue Way in front of the mall that the artist would like the city to have after the exhibition. He said the work would be perfect for the Lake Hills neighborhood.

Mr. Heim noted that as reported in previous meetings, nothing permanent can be installed on the Lake Hills poles. The only way to put artwork there would be to make it temporary. Mr. MacDonald said it would cost a few thousand dollars to construct specific brackets for the Lake Hills poles and to install the work there. There would also need to be neighborhood buy in.

Commissioner Madan asked if the work could simply be left where it will be installed for the exhibition. Mr. MacDonald said that certainly would be an option, though it is a great site for future exhibitions given that it largely stands on its own. It is possible the work could remain in place until being moved to Lake Hills, if that idea were to go forward.

Commissioner Malkin pointed out that there are three poles in Lake Hills and if the one work were to be moved there, it would be appropriate to commission works for the other two poles as well.

Mr. Heim suggested that during the duration of Bellwether it would be a good idea to put together a stakeholders list and invite them to tour the exhibition to see if there are any works they believe would be appropriate for their neighborhoods.

Commissioner Malkin asked for an update regarding the inflatable artwork that will be part of Bellwether. Mr. MacDonald said the work will be going forward. It includes eight 25-foot-tall inflatable spires with a spherical shape in the middle. It will be installed during the events, using them to mark the route. They cannot be left up for long periods of time because they could easily be damaged.

5. COMMISSION QUICK BUSINESS

Mr. Heim suggested a meeting in August is needed to address the grants program and to approve the guidelines. The membership of the allocations committee also needs to be established.

There was agreement to set the meeting for August 16.

6. REPORTS

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

7. CORRESPONDENCE, INFORMATION

- A. Written Correspondence – As Noted
- B. Information – As Noted
 - i. Future Agenda Items
 - ii. Committees

8. ADJOURNMENT

Commissioner Malkin adjourned the meeting at 6:36 p.m.