

BELLEVUE ARTS COMMISSION
REGULAR MEETING
MINUTES

November 7, 2017
4:30 p.m.

Bellevue City Hall
Room 1E -109

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

COMMISSIONERS ABSENT: None

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

OTHERS PRESENT: Nancy Kennedy, Kelly Erlandson, Seattle International Film Festival; Deanne Morgan, Charles Ranett, Evergreen Association of Fine Arts; Chris Powell, Northwest Sound Men's Chorus; Martha Garrett, Mary Kantor, Bellevue Philharmonic; Frank Stilwagner, Village Theatre

RECORDING SECRETARY: Gerry Lindsay

I. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 4:35 p.m. by Chairperson Manfredi who presided. All Commissioners were present with the exception of Commissioner Lau Hui, who arrived at 4:40 p.m., and Commissioner Jackson, who arrived at 5:08 p.m.

Chair Manfredi welcomed new Commissioner Ashmaita Gulati. The Commissioners took a few minutes to introduce themselves

2. APPROVAL OF AGENDA AND MINUTES

A. Approval of Agenda

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

B. Approval of Minutes

Motion to approve the October 3, 2017, minutes as submitted was made by Commissioner Malkin. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Lewis and the motion carried unanimously.

3. ORAL COMMUNICATIONS

Chair Manfredi reported that he had been invited to join the advisory task force charged with helping the selection committee think through the process of choosing a CEO for the Tateuchi Center. He said the task force is comprised of some 20 individuals from all sectors of the community. The first meeting was very lively given the energy and enthusiasm for the project.

4. ACTION ITEMS AND DISCUSSION ITEMS

A. Presentations by Organizations

Arts Program Manager Joshua Heim called attention to the information in the packet regarding each organization, the nature of the artistic service and public benefit, the amount requested and the amount awarded for 2017. He said Music Works Northwest was unable to be present for the meeting and would make its presentation instead in December, and that Tasveer was also unable to participate but asked him to read something into the record.

Ms. Nancy Kennedy, Director of Partnerships for the Seattle International Film Festival (SIFF), introduced her colleague Kelly Erlandson, Community Relations Manager for the organization. She explained that SIFF has been in existence for 44 years and has been in Bellevue for more than a decade. Two weeks of the film festival is now presented at Lincoln Square.

Ms. Erlandson said the recent festival was in Bellevue for 14 days and had 39 films. One of the things that helps make the festival successful in Bellevue is the fact that the city is greatly diverse. Films in 21 different languages were screened with English subtitles. Thirteen percent of the total SIFF audience of 140,000 comes from Bellevue. In addition to being impactful in the theater, SIFF is impactful in the community. For 2017, 228 students were served in the Bellevue area through filmmaker visits at schools and through free screenings of films relevant to their curriculum. In addition, 576 free and discounted tickets are also distributed annually to underserved communities, with the distribution being handled by community partners on the Eastside.

Ms. Kennedy noted that SIFF is very affordable with tickets priced at \$14 or less, and there are various discount packages available for teens, seniors and students where tickets go for as little as \$5. New initiatives are being worked on for 2018 that will not necessarily be part of the Eastside Arts Partnership grant. SIFF is working with WASA, a new gallery in Bellevue that sponsors films from China; and with Jubilee Reach to bring the SIFF youth filmmaking program to some of the middle schools in Bellevue.

Ms. Erlandson said SIFF also serves artists and filmmakers relative to film submissions and representing their works in the festival. For 2017, seven persons from Bellevue submitted films, up from only two in 2016. Entry fees are waived for all filmmakers from Washington state, or for films that are 50 percent or more shot in the state.

Commissioner Lewis asked if festival has grown from 2016. Ms. Kennedy said growth in Bellevue has been steady, starting with the Eastside International Film Festival at Meydenbauer Center. The programmers recognize that there is a significant Russian community in Bellevue so a film from Russian is always included. Some 20 Chinese students will be brought in to spend two months on the Eastside doing a film studies program at Northwest University in Kirkland. SIFF is the preeminent film arts organization in the state and is putting a lot of effort into outreach and education programs.

Ms. Deanne Morgan, President of Evergreen Association of Fine Arts (EAFA), said the organization started out as the Eastside Association of Fine Arts with five students taking classes from Marion Langston, who was an instructor at Bellevue College. Everyone had such a good time they decided to start an organization open to everyone from beginners to professionals. That was more than 40 years ago. EAFA is an exciting organization for fine arts. The whole Eastside has done an incredible job for the performing arts, but organizations struggle when it comes to the fine arts relative to finding places to meet and to hold shows. In

a space only 1500 square feet or so all of the fine arts organizations, like the Northwest Water Color Society, the Pastel Society and Puget Sound Group of Northwest Artists, could share the space. EAFA is a nearly free organization open to all; there are annual dues of \$45 that are used to pay for meeting space between May and September. Well-known artists are invited to conduct demonstrations at each meeting. Finding space continues to be the main issue. Currently the organization meets at Westminster Chapel. The meetings are open to all, not just members. Demonstrations at the meetings are filmed and posted to the website to reach a wider audience.

Ms. Morgan said the public arts program offered by EAFA includes nine venues in Bellevue. At each of the venues, paintings are on display every day all year round. The talent of local artists is amazing. Many members give classes, and juried art shows are held regularly, though finding space remains an issue.

Mr. Chris Powell, Director of Marketing for Northwest Sound Men's Chorus, said the organization is the Bellevue chapter of the Barbershop Harmony Society, the world's largest all-male singing organization with 22,000 members across North America. There are affiliated men's and women's organizations in more than a dozen countries bringing the total number of active singers to more than 80,000 worldwide. The common image of barbershop singers includes flat straw hats and striped jackets from the 1920s, but while that is part of the history of barbershop, it is not a full representation of the current organization. Barbershop quartet singing is only about half of the music now; the other half involves choruses. There are more than 700 choruses in the United States and Canada.

Northwest Sound Men's Chorus is a men's acapella chorus that performs in a variety of musical styles, including Americana, jazz, show tunes, pop and more, all with a distinctively rich barbershop harmony. At any given show classic songs like Puttin on the Ritz and Wonderful World, popular songs by artists such as Michael Bubl , Harry Connick, Jr., Queen and the Beatles, and Disney songs. Concerts are produced and performed several times each year in Bellevue featuring groups from within the local organization as well as nationally known acapella performers. Each year at the Strawberry Festival, the organization hosts a booth offering singing demonstrations in which members of the public are invited to join.

Northwest Sound Men's Chorus participates in competitions and has been the regional champion and international competitors 12 times over the last 32 years, and has finished in the top 20 in the world for the last two years in a row.

Mr. Powell said Northwest Sound Men's Chorus is also a teaching chorus in line with the mission of the Barbershop Harmony Society to preserve and encourage barbershop singing. Every rehearsal includes vocal instruction from the musical director and other musical coaches. Special programs that teach acapella singing to members of the community are also put on. The Sing Sing Sing program involves six weeks of free group music lessons once or twice a year, open to all interested men in the community. Some 2000 men are served in each of the classes. The grant proposal submitted is related to support and advertising for the program.

Commissioner Lau Hui asked how many shows are produced each year. Mr. Powell said there are two in June and two in December, along with other performances around the community, including at the Strawberry Festival. On November 26 the chorus will perform at the Garden d'Lights Christmas show.

Ms. Martha Garrett, interim Executive Director for the Lake Washington Symphony Orchestra, the organization is often known as the little orchestra that wouldn't go away. For 42 years the orchestra was known as the Bellevue Philharmonic and the tough recession of

2008 forced the organization to shut down. In 2012 the group reformed with a new board, and in 2014 the first concert was a great success. In 2015 the organization gave two concerts, and in 2016 there were three concerts. By the end of 2017 and on into 2018 the group will be doing five concerts annually. The budget in 2007-2008 was \$550,000 annually, which in today's money would be closer to \$1 million. The objective of the organization is to become the major symphony for the Eastside.

Mary Kantor, President of the Bellevue Philharmonic, said a sensory friendly concert is offered for kids on the autism spectrum. The most recent one was at Halloween and was a success. Ms. Garrett said the reception for the sensory friendly concerts has been amazing, measured largely by the tears in the eyes of the parents. Ms. Kantor said the concert is offered in partnership with the Seattle Pacific University music therapy program.

Ms. Garrett said the masterworks concert involves working with world-renowned soloists who live in the Puget Sound area. A concert was recently conducted with Mark Salman, an internationally known pianist, and last year international violin soloist Sophie Lee performed with the orchestra.

Between 60 and 70 percent of the Bellevue Philharmonic audience comes from Bellevue. Clearly the organization is appealing to local residents. The biggest challenge as an orchestra lies in developing new audiences. Audiences that go to the symphony are a Saturday night or a Sunday afternoon are dwindling. Part of the long-term plan is to bring kids in from the Bellevue community to attend children's concerts. It is also necessary to look at different programming apart from the typical all classical music.

Commissioner Malkin asked where rehearsals and performances are held. Ms. Garrett said a partnership has been formed with Westminster Chapel. They hired Bellevue Philharmonic as the orchestra in residence and two symphony concerts per year are done there. The rehearsals are held there as well ahead of the concerts.

Ms. Kantor said children under 18 were admitted in free to the Halloween concert. The adults were charged only \$10 each, which was not nearly enough to finance a full orchestra. The organization relies on grants to subsidize ticket sales. Children under 18 are admitted free to all concerts. Advertising is done via Facebook Boost and mailed postcards. KING-FM has been very generous in promoting the concerts. The kids concerts are advertised through the Bellevue School District.

Mr. MacDonald asked how big the performance audiences are. Ms. Kantor said there were a few hundred at the masterworks concert, and there were about 80 at the Halloween concert. She said the next concert will be the Christmas concert scheduled for December 8, 9 and 10 at Westminster Chapel.

Mr. Frank Stilwagner, Director of Development for Village Theatre, thanked the Commission for its continued support over many years. He said the main program offered by the organization in Bellevue is the Pied Piper school program. Village Theatre started in Issaquah in 1979 and will be celebrating its 40th anniversary in 2019. Village Theatre is the largest fully producing theater in the Puget Sound region. Everything done by the organization is built from the ground up and performed in one of the facilities. The organization's annual budget is \$13.2 million, which compares to the \$10 million budget for Seattle Repertoire, \$5 million for Act Theater, and \$23 million for Fifth Avenue.

Village Theatre exists to serve mostly people on the Eastside. More than 22 percent of the main stage audience lives in Bellevue, and 17 percent of the youth in the kids stage programs come from the Bellevue community. Pied Piper is held at Meydenbauer Center, and there are

school programs offered in the Bellevue School District, including 18 shows during the past year for 5577 students. Of those, 28 percent were on full scholarship and paid nothing, and another 30 percent paid half of the \$7 fee; the balance paid the full price. All of the participating schools receive free in-school workshops, and during the last year 63 such workshops were conducted between the Everett and Bellevue locations; 47 of the workshops were in Bellevue and served over 1300 students. Pied Piper started in Everett 27 years ago and is one of the most exciting things Village Theatre does given that it reaches so many young people.

Village Theatre has long been engaged in Bellevue, particularly with the Pied Piper program, but the organization would like to do more, especially with the Main Stage program. Executive Producer Rob Hunt has been asked to serve as part of the executive director advisory committee for the Tateuchi Center; he also sits on the programming committee. Once the facility is built, Village Theatre intends to have at least a holiday show there running for four weeks or so there and specifically developed, produced and performed at the Center. Plans call for an additional program offering during the summer months.

Village Theatre has a grant application in to the Commission that seeks continued funding. The goal is to continue to expand outreach efforts and free in-school workshops. The organization also would like to increase the number of shows at Meydenbauer Center and on the Eastside in general.

Commissioner Malkin asked how much of the audience in general is multicultural. Mr. Stilwagner said almost three years ago the board put together a strategic plan looking out to 2020. A huge part of the plan is focused on social and racial equity, an element that is reflected in the shows presented, including Pied Piper and Main Stage. The organization is actively color conscious in its casting efforts and selecting productions.

Mr. Stilwagner said apprenticeship programs are offered through the Kids Stage programs. Kids audition to be in shows and when chosen work with professional actors. They get paid but they can also get high school or college credit. The organization is seeking to accredit its youth education programs. The Summer Independent program allows kids from junior high to age 20 to promote shows to the production leaders and director of youth education. Last year there were ten groups come to present program ideas in which they have to do everything from marketing to fundraising, directing, lighting, sound and casting working side by side with the professionals.

Commissioner Jackson asked how staged the children's programs are. Mr. Stilwagner said it involves far more than a few boxes and paper mache trees. The companies worked with have sets and costumes as well as professional performers who are paid union wages.

Commissioner Jackson asked what strategy was involved in Pied Piper presenting shows instead of producing them. Mr. Stilwagner said part of the agreement when Village Theatre took over management of the Everett Performing Arts Center where Pied Piper was the resident presenting company was that the organization would continue doing what they had been doing. It is a good business model to continue to present. Consideration has been given to doing a show or two, but it has been found to be more advantageous to bring the kids in to the Main Stage programs.

B. Grand Connection Art & Cultural Plan Endorsement

Mr. Heim reminded the Commissioners that the Grand Connection Art and Cultural Element was presented to the Commission in July, after which it was posted along with the broader Grand Connection vision framework document. No comments were received regarding the

document. The overall Grand Connection vision document is set to be before the City Council for endorsement on December 11. Most of the content of the Art and Cultural Element will be included in the main document; the element will also be included as an appendix. Endorsement of the overall document will include the Arts and Cultural Element piece.

The Arts and Cultural Element includes the framework that talks about the vision of the Grand Connection being a cultural corridor; the goals about marking the space both with public art and new public programs; a number of strategies; and a listing of the big moves and the first moves. The department is about to launch a civic center master plan that includes a proposal for the arts program to co-manage it.

Chair Manfredi asked about the standalone Grand Connection Arts Program. Mr. Heim said it remains only an idea that would appear in the next budget deliberations for 2019-2020. The idea is that there is a lot of work to be done and rather than reprioritize and push away some of what the arts program already does, the work could become part of a city program or addressed by an organization. At the master plan level, specific strategies are not identified.

A motion to endorse the Grand Connection Art and Cultural Plan, and to encourage the City Council to adopt it, was made by Commissioner Lewis. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Malkin and the motion carried unanimously.

C. Artspace Project Discussion

Mr. MacDonald noted that the Commissioners had previously been asked to read through the report and added that the staff core group developed a series of questions that were either raised directly by Artspace or questions in need of being answering fully before realizing the project.

For the benefit of Commissioner Gulati, Mr. MacDonald took a few minutes to explain the Artspace project and the steps taken to date.

Commissioner Jackson pointed out that there are long waiting lists for the Artspace projects in Seattle and she asked if there are situations in which their developments have not filled up right away. Mr. MacDonald said he has not heard of any Artspace developments having problems filling up. He said he is not aware of other communities having built affordable artist spaces. There is a real need for cultural and community space in nearly every community so that is what usually gets the attention. There is also a clear need for affordable housing which is difficult to achieve, particularly due to high land costs. The city owns some parcels, and Sound Transit will be transmit some properties to the city after the light rail line is completed.

Answering a question asked by Commissioner Gulati, Mr. MacDonald said the Bel-Red area was designated as an arts district back in 2008, but there has not really been any movement toward making that a reality. Commissioner Jackson pointed out that in fact, many of the artists in that area have been and are being forced out as the area converts to another downtown. Mr. MacDonald agreed that escalating land values that resulted from rezoning the area have had that effect.

Mr. MacDonald said Artspace came into the community and was provided with background material, including demographics and area profiles of the different opportunity areas, such as Crossroads, Bel-Red, downtown and Wilburton. With the exception of Crossroads, the areas are where the city does own some property of sufficient size. The background materials included the Comprehensive Plan, the Bel-Red subarea plan, information about the planned multicultural center and the Grand Connection, to give context about things in the works in

the city. Information was also shared about the creative and cultural spaces in the city. Representatives came out for a two-day visit and met with four different focus groups representing artists and arts organizations, financing and funding interests, civic leadership, and the business community. There was also a public meeting with some 60 persons. There was widespread support for affordable space for organizations, including affordable live/work space.

Artspace seeks in its feasibility study to establish the community need and to clarify what help the local needs. They also look at the need regionally. The Seattle development with the shortest wait list is 600 artists; the longest wait list spans a decade. The Artspace work is divided into two segments and they are halfway through the process. From the community they say they clearly heard there is a need for affordable space for the arts. From that they developed three strategies. The first strategy involves creating an Artspace model mixed use facility that incorporates multiple types of creative spaces, including live/work housing, work and studio shared space with specialized equipment, and creative and commercial space. Their initial project concept for employing the strategy assumes a 75-100 unit affordable live/work facility. The steps identified for moving the strategy forward include conducting an Arts Market study; having an in-depth conversation about priority areas, including Sound Transit's Operations and Maintenance Facility Eastside site across from the Spring District. The City would need to act quickly to influence the RFP to promote the inclusion of an affordable arts development. However, without the completion of the Arts Market study, there is not enough data to show that the need exists yet. King County has set aside \$10 million for affordable housing within the transit-oriented development areas of Bel-Red. Accordingly, development of an affordable artist live/work space in Bellevue could be easier without a substantial contributions from either the city or private philanthropy.

Commissioner Lau Hui said she assumed the \$10 million from King County is for affordable housing generally, not just for affordable artist live/work space. Mr. MacDonald said the guidelines for the funds are not yet completed, but the county is imagining that they will go to at least two projects, with a maximum of \$5 million per project.

With regard to the priority area of Wilburton, Mr. MacDonald said the Lincoln Center site is one potential site. Artspace did not look at specific sites. The city owns the four-acre parcel, part of which will be taken up by the Sound Transit light rail project.

Artspace wants the city to get going on identifying leaders within the creative community to help form an advocacy or advisory body to help steward the project and facilitate making connections.

Mr. MacDonald said the second strategy is focused more on the planning side of things. It is focused on adopting or expanding developer incentives to encourage carve-outs of below market-rate creative spaces in private developments. There are a number of incentives built into the Land Use Code for the downtown and Bel-Red, and the Wilburton rezone effort that is underway will develop incentives as well. The Bel-Red

look back, set to get under way in 2018, will provide an opportunity to review and revise the incentives in place there.

The third strategy involves curating a shared space collaborative for creative commercial enterprises and non-profit arts-related organizations. Mr. MacDonald said that will be better defined by the Arts Market study.

The work done to date has raised a number of questions, including three key questions: is the vision of Bel-Red as an arts district is viable; how do artists and arts organizations in Bellevue and around the region want to be connected to the arts community; and how do artists, non-profits and creative businesses define affordability. Through various efforts, there has been a lot of community support evidenced for Bel-Red being an arts district. There has not, however, but a lot of discussion among artists about their level of support for the Bel-Red arts district. The distinction is important and their views need to be ascertained.

Commissioner Gulati suggested that beggars cannot be choosers. Artists in need of affordable space will take what they can get. Artists do not normally have the bandwidth of choice. Artists struggle due to a lack of space that truly meets their needs, but they will take whatever comes along so long as it is affordable and located in a place where people can access it. Mr. MacDonald agreed. He noted that initially the 130th area of Bel-Red was seen as the prime location because it is called out by policy and is generally considered to be the heart of the arts district. There are currently quite a few artists and arts groups located in that area.

Mr. MacDonald said Artspace had questions about the viability of the 130th area and the Bel-Red arts district in the foreseeable future. They raised a number of questions that will be addressed as part of the Bel-Red look back. The Arts Market study will seek to answer questions about how artists and arts organizations want to be connected to the arts community, as well as questions around what artists and the arts community defines affordability.

Commissioner Malkin pointed out that Artspace already has a relationship with Sound Transit. While that will probably not appear in the report, the fact could generate some degree of optimism relative to how the conversation might progress. He asked if Artspace suggests the Commission should make some sort of gesture toward Sound Transit. Mr. Heim said that has not been proposed. They are clear that Sound Transit and the city are separate entities and that neither the city nor the Commission has any bearing on decisions made by Sound Transit.

Mr. MacDonald said staff would come back to the Commission at a future meeting with a strategy aimed at fitting all of the pieces together.

D. Of Mice and Meng Exhibition Proposal

Mr. Heim said the exhibition proposal is a new idea that is not a new idea. Exhibitions have been done in the past, notably with Bellwether, that involved a City Hall component. Relatively recently the Commission also included an exhibition for Asian Pacific-American Heritage Month. The Of Mice and Meng proposal fits with the notion of Bellwether occurring annually. The City Hall site will be complicated in the coming three or four years due to construction activities and the resulting access issues, which means exhibitions during that time will likely occur away from City Hall. The community and city employees love having Bellwether exhibits in the building and wish they would occur more often. A line item was included in the public art budget for an annual exhibition, and those are the funds that would be used for the Of Mice and Meng exhibition.

As proposed, the exhibition will feature artwork from the Wing Luke Museum of the Asian Pacific American Experience. The works are by a now deceased artist named Meng Huang who came to America as an immigrant after training as an artist in Hong Kong. The works involve found items. The idea is to have the works on display at City Hall between February 16, 2018, and December 31, 2018.

A motion to endorse the exhibition proposal Of Mice and Meng for display at City Hall was made by Commissioner Jackson. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Lewis and the motion carried unanimously.

Commissioner Malkin mentioned that the exhibition will be the second Asian show in a row. He suggested the Commission should think a little more broadly. He agreed that the opportunities just happened to arise in that order, but consideration should be given to who else the city could partner with. Mr. Heim said the pilot project will help determine how the partnership piece will work and get onto the schedule of doing an annual exhibition. The Commission could help by coming up with a partnership strategy during 2018.

5. COMMISSION QUICK BUSINESS – None
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
 - i. Committees – As Noted

8. ADJOURNMENT

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