

Staff: Holli Bushnell, Office Assistant
Lakeview Cemetery
hbushnell@burlingtonvt.gov

Minutes

Parks, Arts & Culture Committee Meeting

Wednesday, March 30, 2021, 4:00pm

**MEETING CONDUCTED IN PERSON AT LORRAINE B GOODMAN CONFERENCE ROOM, BCA CENTER,
135 CHURCH ST AND VIA ZOOM)**

Attendance:

Committee Members: Chair Joan Shannon, Councilor Karen Paul
Absent: Councilor Ali Dieng

City Staff: Doreen Kraft – Burlington City Arts, Sara Katz – Burlington City Arts, Colin Storrs – Burlington City Arts, Cindi Wight – BPRW, Holli Bushnell – BPRW Staff,

Public – Patrick Shank – BCA Advisory Board, Jim Lockridge – Big Heavy World

Meeting called to order at 4:06pm by Chair Shannon

Jim Lockridge provided several documents to be added to the minutes as supplemental information.

Approval of agenda and any unapproved minutes

Councilor Karen Paul proposed to amend/adopt the agenda as follows: eliminate items 6 and 7 due to redundancy and reserve the opportunity to discuss the minutes from 11/17 following the presentation. Councilor Joan Shannon seconds, all were in favor

Presentation of Public Art Policy

Shannon reminded those assembled that the committee would not be voting at this time. Rather, they will be asking questions, making observations, and discussing next steps.

Patrick Shank, member of the BCA board of advisors and new chair of the public art committee echoed Shannon's sentiments, stating that the document is quite lengthy and that they will be providing an overview.

The new ordinances calls for improved guidelines and policies regarding art in public places. The BCA board of advisors was tasked with creating and overseeing guidelines. Members of the committee worked with BCA Assistant Director Sara Katz to generate these guidelines, modeling them on existing guidelines from other cities across the country. Former City Attorney Eileen Blackwood and Assistant City Attorney Hayley McClenahan provided legal support to make sure the guidelines are in keeping with other city policies.

Staff: Holli Bushnell, Office Assistant
Lakeview Cemetery
hbushnell@burlingtonvt.gov

The document contains standards for solicitation of public art, and guidelines for the selection and placement of public art, the acquisition and de-accessioning public art, and public comment process.

Shank concluded by requesting feedback from PACC. He stated that, barring any large changes or objections, the advisory board will make a motion to approve guidelines at their next meeting (5/17), and then come up with a plan to present to the full council.

Karen Paul commented that she wants to insure that new incoming PACC members have a chance to comment on the document, as well as Councilor Dieng who was not present at the time. She also asked if the guidelines examined from other cities included information/guidelines for public art that isn't just visual. She asked if the committee had considerations for art that wasn't visual or permanent.

Sara Katz commented that all the city policies they looked at were associated with capital funding. She doesn't see public art as just visual, but the function non-visual or multi-media work in the public space does require tech expertise for safety standards as well as elicit concerns about durability and maintenance. Cities manage art programs differently all over the country. Some places have temporary art, but those works have a different nature than permanent public art from capital projects.

Paul reiterated that she is curious if there will be opportunities for something other than visual art. Those other art forms could include visiting a space with a visual art display that also includes an audio element, providing opportunities for storytellers and other kinds of artists, and projects that represent cultural, racial, ethnic, and other broad perspectives. Katz assured Paul that her concerns are addressed in document under the definition of art – broad, all encompassing, and speaks to multi-media artworks. There is a trend in contemporary art to incorporate multiple disciplines into works, and BCA has no intention to discourage any kind of artist from participating in public art.

Shank continued that some of the guidelines that the committee used as models included “percent for public art” projects that are designed to shape public spaces. These funds are intended for visual arts installations instead of performing art, due to the ephemeral nature of performing arts. Unfortunately, performing arts are generally not seen as permanent ways to enrich public spaces. Katz commented that it doesn't mean BCA isn't thinking about places where performance art can occur, but those spaces are created by other kinds of professionals, not artists.

Paul reiterated her concern that the guidelines make sure the city is doing its best to make sure every art form is represented. She felt that if there's a form that's more difficult to show permanently BCA/these guidelines should find a way to make it last.

Doreen Kraft noted that percent for public art is only one source of funding towards any/every BCA project. There are multiple other avenues through which public art is funded. Public art can be temporary, but the guidelines being discussed are specifically for permanent art. This is just one piece of the puzzle. With much of future funding coming from DPW, many of the new spaces for public art will

Staff: Holli Bushnell, Office Assistant
Lakeview Cemetery
hbushnell@burlingtonvt.gov

be unconventional. These spaces will define what kind of art can be created for that area. There are/were a number of pieces in the downtown center with multi-media components. Large teams come together to create multi-media works. All aspects of the work are considered when planning an installation.

At this time, Shannon noted that public forum had not yet been held and suggested opening it for comments.

Public Forum

Jim Lockridge was present and noted that he had a couple of questions and a couple of comments based on the discussion thus far. Lockridge was concerned that the new ordinance takes the funding from capital projects and does not allocate anything specifically towards the performing arts. The ordinance specifically avoids discussion of performing arts. To his mind, this exclusion is not ethical in that it does not include all the arts it is intended to serve. The ordinance encourages and allows the city to take this capital support and channel it away from infrastructure for the performing arts. He feels the new ordinance serves special interest, not all art interests. There is a great need in the city for new performing arts infrastructure that is not being addressed by the ordinances. He feels that the values included in the ordinance are meant to be inclusive, but they fall short and he hopes that there's a path forward that considers the performing arts in the ordinance.

Public forum was informally closed following Lockridge's comment.

Shannon asked the assembled BCA representatives what some of the best public art projects, what some of Burlington's best art projects are, and what makes them great. Katz responded that she likes all kinds of public arts for many different reasons, and that it's difficult to say what the "best" is. To her, artwork that engages the public is the end goal of art in public places. With these works, it's less about the artist and their vision and more about art and artist engagement with the public. What that interaction is varies from piece to piece, but it's the engagement that's exciting to her.

Kraft echoed Katz's feelings that engagement is the most important thing when it comes to public art. For her, it doesn't have to do with if she likes or dislikes something, it's the conversations that are created by art that are important. Kraft loves the dialog that can come out of public art. She agrees with Katz that the best art generates conversations between artists and the community and within the community. Art is as rich as the people who participate. Kraft feels that Burlington already has extraordinary public art, but there is room over the next 10 years to look with an eye towards the community wants to see. Art can shape the public landscape, provide community gathering space, illustrate our time, reflect on history, and serve as inspiration for what's possible in the future. There is a project in Dewey Park in association with REIB that Kraft is particularly enthusiastic about. The new guidelines make sure that the process for creating public art is equitable, sustainable, maintainable, and de-commissionable if necessary. It makes clear the understanding of what the city signs on to when the

Staff: Holli Bushnell, Office Assistant
Lakeview Cemetery
hbushnell@burlingtonvt.gov

work is created. At present, many public art works being de-accessioned because of racist history, and while that process is very painful it's also very important. With the ordinance change, we'll have guidelines to handle that process should we need to.

Shank echoed everything put forth by Katz and Kraft. He feels that well executed public art can do a lot of things. They can be places for celebration, provide awareness of art, illustrate the city's commitments to specific issues, educate people about culture and heritage, attract visitors, and can be an engine for economic development. He is looking for work that will have a big impact. Burlington has lots of stand-out public art, and those spaces where art exists are recognized as important places to our city.

Paul commented that some of these large projects could potentially raise half a million dollars a year for public art. As it is a very significant investment, she wants to make sure the ordinance encompasses public art for all that art can be defined as.

Shannon commented that one of her favorite piece of public art in Burlington is the World's Tallest Filing Cabinet. She loves it and asked if there was any information on that piece. Katz informed her that the installation was moved and a new foundation was installed in it's new location at the Select Design property. Shannon commented that she hopes the cabinets continue to grow and change. Shannon Appreciated what Lockridge shared and is curious about different opportunities in different locations. Building diverse art forms doesn't happen in one project. Shannon wants to make sure policy is broad enough to make sure we can take advantage of all the opportunities that arise. Continuants like interactive, physically engaging art. Shannon thanked everyone present for the discussion, and commented that she will be digging into the document and looks forward to future discussions.

Kraft took a moment to share with the committee list of rentable public spaces as requested by Councilor Dieng following the closure of North End Studios. She was happy to report that the list is available on the BCA website as well as loveburlington.com. The list includes all community venues and provides sorting capabilities and contact info for each space

Schedule next meeting

The next PACC meeting will scheduled via a doodle poll to be held both in person and via zoom.

Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 5:00pm.