

CITY COUNCIL STUDY SESSION
DRAFT MINUTES
Monday, April 30, 2018
Council Chambers, 1175 E. Main Street

Mayor Stromberg called the meeting to order at 5:30 PM

Councilor Slattery, Councilor Bachman, Councilor Morris and Councilor Seffinger were present. Councilor Rosenthal was absent.

I. Public Input (15 min)

Huelz Hutcheon- Ashland- Spoke regarding the speakers and monitor in the lobby not working. He spoke regarding having solar panel roofs on old and new buildings.

II. Discussion of Senior Issues (45 min)

Councilor Slattery gave a Staff report. He spoke that it was discussed to create a study group to discuss aging in Ashland and the services provided.

Councilor Seffinger spoke that she brought this issue up 4 years ago and that there have been changes since that time. She gave Council a handout that she wrote up in the Ashland Daily Tidings 4 years ago (*see attached*).

Items discussed were:

- Ageism
- Growing senior population
- Future senior issues
- Services for seniors
- Budget and Strategic Planning
- Installing a handrail at the Japanese Garden
- Senior Services Division in the Parks and Recreation Department
- The search for a Superintendent for Senior Services
- Creating a Senior Program Advisory Committee
- Poverty growth in seniors
- 46% of people in Ashland are over 50
- Homelessness in elderly individuals
- Housing for all ages
- Council and Parks role to this issue
- Parking for seniors
- Trails for seniors

- Transportation for seniors

It was decided to have Councilor Bachman and Councilor Seffinger work with Staff on establishing a working group to discuss senior issues and bring it back to the Council.

III. Civic Donations Policy Review (30 min)

City Attorney, David Lohman gave a staff report. He went over the draft policy.

Council discussed whether or not to accept donations that have initial or ongoing costs. The Council came to a consensus to look at these donations case by case.

It was decided that the policy would be revised and brought back to Council.

Interim City Administrator discussed the Look Ahead. It was suggested to move the selection of Councilor Position #6 and the Approval of Employee Health Benefits Plan before the Public Hearing at the Council Business Meeting tomorrow night.

Mayor Stromberg spoke regarding marijuana dispensaries staying open later than 7 PM. This would need an Ordinance change. This was decided to bring back to the Council with more information.

The Council adjourned to Executive Session at 6:41PM for real property transaction, pursuant to **ORS 190.660(2)(e)**

Respectfully submitted by:

City Recorder, Melissa Huhtala

Attest:

Mayor Stromberg

In compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act, if you need special assistance to participate in this meeting, please contact the City Administrator's office at (541) 488-6002 (TTY phone number 1-800-735-2900). Notification 72 hours prior to the meeting will enable the City to make reasonable arrangements to ensure accessibility to the meeting (28 CFR 35.102-35.104 ADA Title I).

“It's paradoxical that the idea of living a long life appeals to everyone, but the idea of getting old doesn't appeal to anyone.”

— Andy Rooney

By Stefani Seffinger, City Counselor

Not coincidentally, in recent years I have become interested in the social and health needs of aging senior people. After all, aging is something none of us can escape. And with advances in health care and technology many of us will be living longer. Statistics bear this out:

- It is estimated that the number of people in Jackson County, age 80 and older, is expected to more than double in the next 20 years. *
- Jackson County has a distinctly higher than average number of elderly seniors than other Oregon metropolitan areas and almost 30% of them live alone. **

The World Health Organization along with AARP have developed programs and guidelines to help cities prepare for the rapid aging of the U.S. population by paying increased attention to the environmental, economic, and social factors that influence the health and well-being of older adults.

Many cities in Oregon and throughout the United States have created Commissions on aging to make their city more age friendly. These commissions focus on the needs of the elderly including , transportation, age friendly and affordable housing, and health care support. An example of this are senior advocates that help seniors learn about services, coordinate resources and identify gaps in service.

Senior advisory committees also support existing commissions to include the needs of the elderly when recommending proposals to their city Council. Examples of this would be in advocating for housing options like single level houses, age-friendly design, multi-generational housing development and a continuum of support housing, assisted living and long-term care options . Someone turning 65 today has a 68% chance of needing some form of long term care. Our community is lacking in these facilities.

For many seniors losing their ability to drive has devastating consequences particularly when there are few public transportation options available. Ashland has limited bus service and valley lift provides service only to those within a short radius of a bus stop. Riding a bicycle or walking to town are not realistic options for many aging seniors. Social isolation is a very significant cause of depression and decline in mental ability for seniors so getting to a volunteer job or the senior center may be very important. Other cities have worked to expand transportation options and develop creative programs to connect seniors to rides.

Looking at the built environment and outdoor spaces through the eyes of less mobile senior is another important role a senior commission can play. Examples include keeping pathways well maintained and free of obstructions and providing drop off areas that are safe and convenient for both older citizens and our many older visitors to our city. A specific concern that came to my attention recently was the entrance to the Japanese garden in Lithia Park. The beautiful entry includes natural rock stairs from the road up to the garden. Adding an attractive railing to help navigate the uneven surfaces of the natural rock steps would greatly increase the safety of this feature for unsteady older people.

There are many other roles that an Ashland Senior commission or Adhoc committee might fill. These include an assessment of the city to identify how to make it more age friendly. There are programs and checklists available from the World Health Organization for this purpose. Other areas could include a compilation of existing services and resources, looking for grants for new and innovative programs that have a good chance to be implemented, and working with both the city and the Parks and Recreation Commission to achieve city goal 6.3 which is to explore expansion of the Senior Center and senior services in Ashland.

I recently participated in a television program the mayor hosted on needs of seniors in Ashland which has reinforced how important it is to understand and coordinate the needs of Ashland's aging population before the need is critical. I think a senior commission would help fill this role.

* Source: Office of Economic Analysis, Department of Administrative Services, Oregon

** Source: US Census