

City of Ashland  
ASHLAND PARKS AND RECREATION COMMISSION (APRC)  
ASHLAND SENIOR ADVISORY COMMITTEE (ASAC)  
Meeting Minutes  
March 8, 2021

Committee Members Present:

- Anne Bellegia, Chair
- Mike Hersh
- Mike Gardiner, Co-Chair
- Kathy McNeal
- Mary Russell-Miller
- Stef Seffinger
- Sandy Theis

Staff Present:

- Michael Black
- Sybil Bowser
- Isleen Glatt
- Natalie Mettler

**CALL TO ORDER**

Bellegia called the meeting to order at 3:30pm.

**OPENING**

Bellegia acknowledged and welcomed the citizen guests present: Jackie Bachman (OHRA, Housing and Human Services Commission), Kenneth Benton (potential ASAC member), Rob Casserly (OLLI), Maria Harris (Community Development Department, Planning Division), Debra Johnson (potential ASAC member) and Leda Shapiro (potential ASAC member).

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

**Motion:** Gardiner/Theis m/s to approve the minutes from January 11, 2021. Voice vote – all AYES. Minutes approved.

**ADDITIONS OR DELETIONS TO AGENDA**

None.

**PUBLIC INPUT**

None.

**CITY OF ASHLAND PLANNING DEPARTMENT AGE-FRIENDLY HOUSING INITIATIVES**

Maria Harris, Planning Manager with the City's Community Development Department, presented background about housing issues, four relevant long-range City housing projects, and trends in housing (See PowerPoint: [Housing Update](#)).

Harris reported that the Oregon Statewide Land Use Planning Goals is a comprehensive plan with 19 goals to address land use and related topics. Goal 10 focuses on housing, covering needed housing for communities, buildable lands inventories (urban growth boundary), and housing capacity analyses.

The four long-range City projects relevant to seniors are:

- 1) Accessory Residential Units (ARUs): over 200 have been approved since 1991, showing Ashland is ahead of the curve in allowing such units. These are becoming more popular and now make up about 25% of permits in single family housing zones.

- 2) Cottage Housing: adopted in late 2017. These provide 20% of housing lots as open space for residents. An example is the Laurel Street Cottages (472 N. Laurel Ave), which are twelve 800ft<sup>2</sup> units completed in 2020. The National Association of Home Builders recognizes Ashland as an area of best practices for cottage housing.
- 3) Transit Triangle Overlay: adopted in 2018, this area in southeast Ashland is a test site for building prototypes, where the zoning code has been changed to remove barriers for accessible housing and encourage smaller units that are more financially and physically feasible.
- 4) Duplexes: the 2019 Oregon Legislature Housing Bill 2001 highlighted “missing middle housing” (in contrast to single family homes) to allow for more duplexes in more areas. It outlines the same approval process and standards for both duplexes and single family homes.

Harris referenced a 2019 AARP publication, [Making Room: Housing for a Changing America](#), to illustrate trends in housing types, demographics, and household costs vs. household income. With more singles living alone, mostly seniors and adults under 25, there is greater need for studio and 1-bedroom units, which is not reflected in the current housing stock. (80% of Ashland’s housing stock is comprised of 2+ bedroom units). Housing costs have increased more than income, and now 4 out of 10 Ashland residents face a housing “cost burden,” defined as spending over 30% of household income on housing. These trends are reflected on the state and national levels as well.

Harris noted that Representative Pam Marsh introduced House Bill 2366 in this session’s legislature. This bill aims to relax the definition of visitability per ADA building code, simplifying the definition for lifelong ADA housing units. Glatt asked about Universal Housing Standards of Accessibility and whether these have been incorporated by the City. Harris responded that the new legislation introduced by Marsh does not require lifelong housing (single family homes are still exempt from ADA requirements) but is beginning to tackle the issue of accessible housing. Theis asked about whether builders in Ashland are willing to construct lifelong housing units. Harris replied that she does not have direct experience with area builders, but that, in general, the building community takes a while to adapt to changes. Still, the momentum for constructing accessible units seems to be mounting, as evident with the Laurel Street Cottages.

Bellegia asked about modifications to the existing housing stock: can standards for modification be expedited or relaxed? Harris clarified that the Community Development Department is comprised of Planning and Building Divisions; the issue of modifications falls under the purview of the Building Division. Bellegia suggested that ASAC have a speaker from the Building Division speak to these issues at a future meeting. Shapiro asked whether changes to zoning affects affordability requirements, and whether there are any accommodations for builders seeking to construct accessible units. Harris noted that calculations show it is unprofitable for builders to build affordable units in the Transit Triangle Overlay.

### **NOMINATE OFFICERS FOR 2021-2022**

Gardiner has volunteered to serve as the next chair (starting July 2021) if no one else fills the position. Bellegia will check with the potential new ASAC members if any are interested in serving as either as Chair or Co-Chair for the next term. Glatt noted that the bylaws governing election may need to be revised. ASAC plans to vote on new officers and positions at the May meeting.

### **UPDATE ON BIENNIUM BUDGET PROCESS**

Black compared the FY 2019-2021 (\$14,063,048) and FY 2021-2023 (proposed \$15,109,504) APRC budgets, showing an increase in about \$1,000,000. All APRC supervisors were asked to make cuts, and five positions are being left vacant, but the budget is still increasing due to inflation and costs beyond APRC controls, such as PERS, insurance, utility costs and other contracts. In addition, the City’s central service fees are going up. Whereas most areas will experience budget cuts, the portion of the budget allocated to APRC Administration,

Open Space/Trails/Forestry, and Senior Services Division (SSD) are going up. The increase to SSD is a reallocation of existing costs for time of Admin staff spend helping SSD.

Black clarified that, since 1908, APRC gets revenue for operations from citizen property taxes. Historically, this has been \$2.09 for every \$1000 of assessed property value. This amount was reduced to \$1.89 in 2019. For the next biennium, the \$1.89 per \$1000 of assessed value gets the APRC within \$3,000,000 of its proposed budget. Additional revenue is earned from fees for services, such as community programs, facility rentals, and maintenance work for other agencies. An additional \$2,000,000 will come from the City's Food and Beverage Tax and spending of reserves during this fiscal crisis. APRC's current ending fund balance is sufficient to contribute to the 2021-23 budget but will be depleted beyond the coming biennium. APRC has made a goal to identify and secure a permanent funding source.

Bellegia asked what ASAC could do to advocate with the City for sufficient budgetary funding. She also asked if funds could be brought in from the Ashland Parks Foundation. Black responded that money for grants will be brought in from the Ashland Parks Foundation, but only around \$75,000. Black asked ASAC to review APRC's goals to determine how they might help with the funding source issue.

## **STANDING REPORTS**

### **a. APRC Update**

Gardiner reported that he and Black will attend the March 9, 2021 Planning Commission meeting about Walker Elementary's planned parking lot expansion on the corner of Hunter Court. It has local impact on Ashland Senior Center as well as tennis and pool traffic. Gardiner and Black will advocate for a mutual benefit between APRC and the Ashland School District in the parking lot plan. Gardiner also noted that while the APRC goals for the coming biennium are not yet fully prioritized, he, personally, is still advocating for a new community pool to replace the current, aging Daniel Meyer facility, located next to the Senior Center.

### **b. City Council Update**

Seffinger reported that she stressed the important role of SSD and APRC during the Alameda fire and ongoing COVID-19 pandemic at the March 1, 2021 City Council Study Session. She also reported that the City's process for hiring a City Manager is currently unresolved as the recruiting organization has pulled out due to predicted difficulties both with recruitment for Ashland Fire and Rescue and the City's restrictive expectations of a City Manager.

### **c. Education Report**

Mettler shared that SSD is not offering a March educational event as staff is focused on the planned March 10 COVID-19 vaccination drive-through clinic for Ashland seniors aged 65+. The following Zoom presentations are planned for later in the spring: Healthy, Easy Cooking for Seniors (4/14/21) and Veterans' Benefits: Are You Missing Out? (5/12/21).

Theis congratulated and thanked staff for the successful Ashland Radio Hour performance on 2/10/21. Bellegia noted that recordings are available for the Winter 2021 OLLI lecture series "New Directions in Healthcare." Glatt and Mettler will coordinate with Bellegia about sharing these recordings.

### **d. Senior Services Superintendent Report**

Glatt referred to her report included in the meeting packet. She noted that registration for SSD online events is increasing, with higher attendance at the January (Identity, Meaning and Purpose for Aging Adults) and February (Ashland Radio Hour) events. She also highlighted that staff and volunteers have been focused on COVID-19 vaccine access for Ashland seniors (65+) for the past few weeks: compiling an interest list of Ashland seniors seeking a vaccine and connecting those individuals to vaccine opportunities. They have

already connected over 100 individuals to local vaccination opportunities, such as through Asante and Ashland Family Practice. Staff is partnering with Ashland Fire & Rescue (logistics), Mercy Flights (vaccine supply), and SOU (vaccine clinic site) to offer a vaccination drive-through clinic for 160 Ashland residents 65 on March 10, 2021. SSD is handling the scheduling for this event and it is very labor intensive, with over 450 outreach calls made by volunteers and staff since early February.

Glatt introduced Sybil Bowser, new temporary Office Assistant for SSD. There will be no permanent hire until the 2021-2023 budget is approved.

Glatt announced that SSD will no longer be hosting the Low-Income Foot Care Clinic that had been offered at Ashland Senior Center for over a decade. This program, funded mostly by a grant from Soroptimist International of Ashland, served low-income seniors with qualifying clinical conditions. City Risk Management and the City's insurer evaluated the program and determined it is not appropriate for the City to provide medical services, even more so when the Foot Clinic partners could not meet the required insurance levels. The interpretation of liability risk has changed over the past decade, and the City has a responsibility not to endanger the security of its funds and essential services. Glatt noted that there may be public concern about this decision and that ASAC members could assist by listening to public feedback. Theis, as a retired nurse, supports this decision as she has long been concerned with the appropriateness of SSD offering this service.

## **ITEMS FROM ASAC MEMBERS AND WORK GROUPS**

### **a. Livable Ashland (Theis)**

Theis clarified that the Livable Ashland: An All-Age Friendly City initiative is an ASAC workgroup with many additional organizations participating. The Livable Ashland steering committee continues to meet monthly and is making progress on the needs assessment on which she reported at the last ASAC meeting. They are discussing the following potential projects:

- 1) Intergenerational programs (with Jackson County Library Services, Ashland YMCA, SOU, OLLI)
- 2) SOU's Livable Corridor project
- 3) Asante in Ashland to become a geriatric hub (per Asante Administrator Dr. Lee Shapley)

Seffinger added that the Livable Ashland steering committee has also educated the City Council about prioritizing senior needs in their budget planning. Bellegia asked Seffinger to keep an eye on budget issues in the National Community Survey (NCS), which is important for future planning. ASAC could add benefit by providing input to the NCS, as 33% of Ashland is aged 65+, in comparison with 16% nationally.

Glatt asked if ASAC should directly advocate to the City Council about the budget process. Seffinger suggested that ASAC could help by offering public input in Council meetings, submitting letters to the *Ashland Tidings*, and soliciting news coverage about significant work like the current vaccination clinic efforts, for which SSD has expanded to serve many new community members.

### **b. Other Items from ASAC Members**

Gardiner thanked SSD staff for their work connecting Ashland seniors to the COVID-19 vaccine. Seffinger added that positive stories, such as personal accounts of those SSD has helped to access the vaccine, can help in advocacy to the City Council; Bellegia, Glatt and Theis will orchestrate this effort.

**Next meeting** – Monday, May 3, 3-4:30 via Zoom.

**Adjournment** – 5:04 pm

*Respectfully submitted by Natalie Mettler, Senior & Adult Services Coordinator, Ashland Parks and Recreation Commission*