

City of Ashland  
PARKS AND RECREATION COMMISSION  
SENIOR PROGRAM SUBCOMMITTEE  
MEETING MINUTES  
January 24, 2017

**Present:** Commissioners Gardiner and Lewis; Director Black; Superintendent Dials; Senior Program Manager Dodson; Administrative Assistant Harshman; Senior Center Advisory Board Members and Senior Program Volunteers and Participants

**Absent:** None

**CALL TO ORDER**

Chair Gardiner called the meeting to order at 1:00 p.m. in the Siskiyou Room of the Community Development Building, 51 Winburn Way.

**ADDITIONS OR DELETIONS TO THE AGENDA**

Gardiner said the meeting might not follow the arrangement provided in the meeting agenda.

**DISCUSSION**

Gardiner said he expressed interest in 2016 about creating a Senior Program Subcommittee with a goal toward reviewing offerings provided by the Senior Program for the benefit of the Ashland community. Through the years he'd attended both national and Oregon-based parks and recreation conferences to seek out ideas for meeting the needs of community members, both for seniors and others. He referenced the 2016 Ashland Parks and Recreation Commission (APRC) performance audit that highlighted current and future offerings as well as any possible gaps in services. The Senior Program Subcommittee was then formed based on APRC goals and recommendations generated by the audit and the Commissioners' request for a subcommittee.

Following upon the 2007 Council resolution transferring Senior Program management from the City to Parks, Gardiner said the Commission sensed resistance from Senior Program staff about APRC management. Post-transfer, the Senior Program became a direct report of the Recreation Superintendent, who reports to the APRC Director, who reports to the Ashland Parks and Recreation Commission who report back to the Ashland community.

Gardiner said he reviewed the notebook compiled by Senior Program staff and volunteers prior to the January 24 meeting. He referenced the advisory board's December 23, 2016, meeting minutes in which the board expressed interest in meeting with Acting City Administrator John Karns about transferring the Senior Program from Parks back to the City. Gardiner asked Dodson about her plans to notify APRC staff and the Commissioners about her intention to hold that discussion.

Senior Program Manager Dodson said the meeting with Karns was neither scheduled nor held. She expressed that the Senior Program was different from a recreation program, a feeling held by many over the years; it was more of a social service safety program. When the transfer first occurred from the City to Parks in 2007, it was generally considered by Dodson to be a transfer based on the financial needs of the City, with the Parks budget more tolerant of an additional program requiring subsidies [Senior Program activities are provided to participants regardless of their ability to pay]. Dodson said the proposed transfer back to the City was not intended to be hurtful.

Director Black said the \$207,000 cost of running the Senior Program in the current fiscal year was generated from the City's General Fund. As for cost recovery, Black said it was used to measure program revenues versus costs. All APRC programs had cost recovery levels as approved by the Parks Commission based on community values. Cost recovery was a tool used by APRC and subsidized programs were not considered negative.

Dodson said that aside from Gardiner's one visit to the Senior Center for a meeting, she had not seen Parks Commissioners at the Senior Center while every City Council member had visited. Gardiner reiterated that Dodson was supposed to directly report to APRC management and communicate with them.

Black asked those in attendance to work through the issues rather than setting them aside. He said the Senior Program Advisory Board made a direct request for Dodson to look into transferring the Senior Program back to the City. If that was still of interest, a discussion was necessary. Black said he was shocked about the December 23 board meeting minutes; he wondered why the matter hadn't been brought up by Dodson in earlier one-on-one meetings, especially the one just the day before.

Black asked who read and approved the Senior Program board meeting minutes. He said all meeting minutes needed to be reviewed and approved by the Parks Commissioners. Dodson replied that her minutes were sent to her board. She said the first set of minutes was created just recently, in November 2016, at the request of APRC; before that they had not been taken.

Black said some of the Senior Program offerings came from Public Works; however, most of them were recreation-based. If the Senior Program became part of the City again, APRC would hopefully still be able to collaborate with them about recreational offerings. He said a meeting could be set up to explore the transfer option.

Lewis asked if the transfer was a unanimous consensus of the advisory board. Dodson said it was just a discussion, not a vote. Senior Advisory Board member David Chapman said the board had been reviewing the historical structure of the Senior Program; nothing nefarious was intended by the discussion.

Dodson agreed that many of the programs offered by the Senior Program were generated and supported by the City; at times it was a balancing act to report to APRC while working so closely with the City. She said a number of City Council goals were met by the Senior Program. She wondered if it could be both a City program and an APRC program. Black said APRC was not requesting reimbursements from the City for some Senior Program offerings.

Gardiner asked whether there was any value in continuing the discussion. He said APRC tried to align its goals with City Council goals. Everyone aligned together through the system to meet the goals of the City; therefore, the goals of the Ashland Parks and Recreation Commission were not different from the City's goals. Commissioners used the same guidelines for programs and services as the City. With the Senior Program currently under APRC, its goals needed to align with City / Parks Commissioner goals. Ideally all programs and services within APRC would collaborate, communicate and align together.

Dodson said she had found it difficult to straddle both City and APRC goals. Gardiner said Dodson needed to work in conjunction with APRC to meet her objectives and bill the City back for programs offered to the City. Black said Dodson's feeling of straddling indicated that she didn't feel at home with APRC or with the City. It would be best to determine where the Senior Program fit in terms of meeting community needs. He said the straddling needed to stop: the Senior Program needed to become one program under APRC or the City.

Lewis said Council had to be brought up to speed on this matter. With new councilors coming on board, there was even more reason for the Senior Program to notify them about the topic.

City Councilor Seffinger said Council had expressed interest in creating an ad hoc committee around senior issues.

Lewis said the APRC performance audit was one reason the current meeting was taking place. Audit results included a suggested expansion of the scope of community programs, not just for seniors. He said increasing

efficiencies between the City and Parks with regard to seniors was a worthy goal. The Senior Program included recreational programs, meals and other offerings but how could efficiencies be increased, with more offerings provided? He recognized that Dodson brought people with her to the current meeting to show the level of support she received from her staff, board members and the community. He said Council needed to be completely involved in this matter.

Black said this was the first discussion about the potential transfer. He suggested having a meeting with the Acting City Administrator, the Finance Director, Dodson, himself and others about the proposed transfer. He said that whatever entity was in charge of the Senior Center, the Senior Center needed to be completely on board with the decision.

Gardiner said it was not the Senior Advisory Board that would make the decision about a transfer; it was a City and Parks matter. He had hoped to discuss the recommendations from the performance audit at the current meeting; however, given how the meeting was unfolding, there was no value in discussing them at this time. In the future, once this matter was resolved, performance audit recommendations could be discussed. Gardiner said that as a senior himself and someone who enjoyed recreating, he had been inspired by his attendance at the national and state-wide recreation conferences (seeing all that was possible for seniors). However, if Dodson was not interested in aligning with APRC, there was no value in continuing with the proposed meeting agenda. Black said this was an identity issue: was Dodson best suited for the City or Parks? He felt the meeting was having a positive outcome; it created an opportunity to explore a best fit for the Senior Program.

Gardiner said that today, the Senior Program was part of APRC; that needed to be acknowledged as the current reality. Given the present reality, APRC had the power to influence Senior Program offerings.

Chapman said this would not be resolved for at least a year due to the current lack of a permanent City of Ashland Finance Director or Administrator.

Senior Program participant Mike Hersh (a Meals on Wheels volunteer for the past 15 years) said seniors as a group were very different from other groups. They were disproportionately mentally and physically handicapped. Parks and recreation systems typically lacked an understanding about senior populations. The Ashland Senior Program provided tender loving care to people with no other options for receiving it. Dodson and her staff also provided valuable lifelines to community members requesting information about senior resources. In terms of recreation programs, the Tai Chi class offered at the Senior Program generally consisted of many participants with physical limitations. The Senior Program generally reduced the painful processes associated with the end of life.

Recreation Superintendent Dials said the Ashland Senior Program was a great program. It was also extremely valuable to look around the state to evaluate how other senior centers operated; there were many excellent programs to review and emulate in Oregon.

Dodson shared a general daily schedule at the center: a meal served, cards played, friendships forged, all under the Senior Program umbrella.

Lewis asked why meeting minutes had not been written prior to November 2016. Dodson shared the history of the Senior Program being transferred from the City to Parks. She said her long-time policy board was later made into an advisory body. She said it served as a sounding board for her.

Black said any officially appointed subcommittee, committee or advisory board needed to report back to the Parks Commissioners; this board had not been officially appointed. After that was completed, meeting minutes would need to be taken and sent to the Parks Commissioners for approval.

Gardiner said Parks Commissioners were not remiss in not visiting the Senior Center or attending meetings; information generally flowed in the opposite direction, toward the managing organization.

Lewis said it was his duty as a Parks Commissioner (of the past 16 years, with a new four-year term just begun) to participate in subcommittees about topics he would not normally discuss (e.g., Lewis serves on the Golf Subcommittee but does not golf). He agreed with Gardiner that the Senior Program should communicate with the Parks Commissioners and report to them under the current reporting structure. He said that to read Senior Program minutes about matters unknown to Parks Commissioners was unsettling. He acknowledged Dodson's binder of information and said the Senior Program seemed to be in line with other senior centers around the state in terms of performance, funding and staffing.

Senior Program supporter Jackie Bachman talked about the value of Commissioners visiting the center. She said the Program made approximately 1,100 contacts each month with members of the public.

Gardiner said if the Program needed more space but didn't request it directly from the Parks Commissioners, they wouldn't be aware of that need.

Black said this was an opportunity for Dodson to interact with the Commissioners. Dodson said she was confused about the structure; she would prefer to go to her direct supervisor for whatever she needed; she would not go directly to the Commissioners. Gardiner said that was the proper chain of communication and staff would bring matters of concern to the Commissioners. Black reminded Dodson that she reported to the Commissioners about the Senior Program at a regular business meeting in 2016.

Dodson said her binder of information about the Senior Program was a helpful document that could be a resource now and in the future.

Chapman said most of the Senior Program Advisory Board meetings were informational; no decisions were made.

Hersh said that when larger companies purchased smaller companies, they chose the best manager for the smaller businesses and retained them as employees as long as their performances were adequate; they did not micromanage the small operational decisions of the manager. He lauded the work of Dodson at the Senior Program.

Black said this had been a good meeting because, though uncomfortable at times, it resulted in matters being laid out on the table.

#### **PREVIEW SUBCOMMITTEE GOALS - none**

#### **NEW BUSINESS - None**

- a. Performance Audit and APRC Goals
  - i. Review APRC Goals related to the Senior Program
  - ii. Review 2016 Performance Audit Recommendations
  
- b. Senior Center Advisory Board
  - i. Review board creation and makeup
  - ii. Review board mission and bylaws
  
- iii. Program Mission
  
- iv. Program Org Chart
  
- v. History of Senior Program and Involvement in the Community
  
- vi. Volunteers at the Senior Center

vii. Cost Recovery Review

viii. Ashland Parks Foundation Funds Dedicated to the Senior Program

**SET FUTURE MEETING DATES - None**

**ADJOURNMENT**

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 2:25 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Susan Dyssegard, Executive Assistant  
Ashland Parks and Recreation Commission