

City of Ashland
PARKS AND RECREATION COMMISSION
SENIOR PROGRAM SUBCOMMITTEE
MEETING MINUTES
May 17, 2017

Present: Commissioners Gardiner and Lewis; Director Black; Superintendent Dials; Senior Program Manager Dodson; Executive Assistant Dyssegard; additional Senior Program staff and supporters

Absent: None

I. CALL TO ORDER

Chair Gardiner called the meeting to order at 1:35 p.m. at the Ashland Senior Center, 1699 Homes Ave in Ashland.

II. PUBLIC COMMENT (for items not on the agenda)

There was none.

III. ADDITIONS OR DELETIONS TO THE AGENDA

Accomplishments of the Senior Program—added to the agenda and addressed as the first item of business.

Dodson reported on Senior Program staff accomplishments since the last Senior Program Subcommittee meeting on May 3. A partial list included:

- Senior Program survey meetings with 1) APRC staff and 2) SOURCE
- Bingo research
- “Local Talent” series (Topic: “Wonders of Thailand and Cambodia”—approx. 15 participants)
- Cinco de Mayo celebration
- Sewing / clothing repair class
- AARP Safe Driving class
- Senior Center community garden plots lined up for the 2017 season
- Grant writing volunteer identified
- Donate button discussed for Senior Center / APF websites
- Food & Friends fundraiser discussed for later in 2017

Gardiner thanked Dodson for her list of accomplishments and asked that future lists be provided in advance of subcommittee meetings. Black asked how the volunteer grant writer had been recruited; Dodson said a Senior Program participant volunteered after hearing of the need. Gardiner added that since the last meeting, APRC’s 2017-19 biennial budget presentation was provided to the Citizens’ Budget Committee; it appeared to go well.

IV. OLD BUSINESS

a. Review Subcommittee Goals

The five goals of the Senior Program Subcommittee were briefly referenced:

1. Through the gathering of information, gain a greater understanding of the Senior Program and the function it serves the citizens of Ashland;
2. Explore new ways of marketing and program innovation to ensure that the greatest number of citizens are benefited by the Senior Program;

3. Evaluate the organizational structure of the program and ensure that the organization of the Senior Program and the goals for innovation are aligned for efficiency and service delivery;
4. Seek advocates of the Senior Program and new ways to increase community involvement through volunteerism; and,
5. Evaluate the current Senior Program policies and create an official subcommittee of the Ashland Parks and Recreation Commission reporting directly to the Commissioners to ensure collaboration and governance.

b. Update on Community Survey about the Ashland Senior Program

Black said two senior survey meetings were held since May 3. Participants included APRC staff and former and current SOURCE staff, including SOURCE Director Eva Skuratowicz. Discussion points included:

- Define how survey information would be used
- Determine the audience
- Discuss public perception of goals and outcomes
- Determine if it will be a random sampling or a targeted audience or a combination of both
- Create a process to eliminate duplications
- Consider timing and distribution
- Review survey options; random, targeted, active (door-to-door)
- Consider cost estimates

Discussion continued about the value of random surveys, use of focus groups and distribution methods: City utility bill mailer, Winter-Spring recreation guide and City of Ashland website. Black estimated that Ashland's ZIP code of 97520 had 12,000 households (homes both inside and outside City limits).

Options for offsetting costs included use of internal staff and the use of funds set aside in the Ashland Parks Foundation account earmarked for the Senior Center.

It was requested that the survey move forward quickly. Black said staff would put draft questions together based on samples from other communities. Dodson spoke about an impressive senior survey she reviewed / center she visited in Santa Clara, CA. She said their center was free to residents living within city limits.

In terms of senior population levels, Black said the information was accessible via census figures. Gardiner said the goal was to reach out to younger seniors (55+) and attract additional clientele. Black said Ashland had a significantly high number of seniors ages 55 and older: for the 97520 ZIP code (all-inclusive, both inside and outside city limits, total population of approximately 25,000), the number was around 12,000. Dodson asked how the current Senior Center building could accommodate large numbers of additional participants, given space restrictions. Dials suggested staggering programming to eliminate overcrowding.

Dodson mentioned a potential upcoming tax bond for the proposed pool project (replacing the Daniel Meyer Pool with a larger community pool). She said SOURCE Director Skuratowicz told Dodson that knowing how survey information would be used could help in structuring survey questions. She said Skuratowicz mentioned that information gathered could be used for grant writing and assist with the issuance of a bond. A staff-level informal meeting with Skuratowicz for the purpose of information gathering was suggested.

V. NEW BUSINESS

a. Review Revenue & Cost Recovery Options

Black referenced the Willamalane Adult Activity Center's cost recovery pyramid and goals / targets and the monetized / non-monetized benefits provided to their community. Cost recoveries ranged from 0% for non-monetized / non-programmed park and recreation facilities and support services (*community benefits*) to 200% for concessions and vending, merchandise, overnight or extended trips and others (*individual benefits*).

Dodson said she reviewed several ways APRC could increase revenues to the Senior Center. Two options included a donate button on the Parks Foundation and Senior Program sites (with associated marketing and promotional efforts) and bingo. She said the Medford Senior Center bingo program generated \$30-40,000 per year before expenses but required 5-6 volunteers to operate (one for State gambling paperwork alone, per session). The program operated 3x week, drew 20-25 people per session and cost between \$10-50 per person per session. It required a regular space and was not limited to seniors but was open to anyone 18 or older.

Public Input

Mike Hersh, 932 Morton Street in Ashland, asked for a definition of cost recovery according to APRC: was it simply money in a register? If the actions of the Senior Center saved needy seniors some money, wasn't that part of cost recovery? He said those 65 and over were the seniors needing services. If seniors under 65 received services and were willing to pay for them, that could help subsidize services for seniors 65 and older, those most in need of services. He said it was important to carefully define cost recovery. He suggested telling Council how much money was saved for elderly seniors; he said APRC should care about the City rather than the Parks Commission itself.

Pieter Smeenk, 325 Ridge Road in Ashland, said cost recovery was a good thing but needed to be relevant to revenues and expenses. He explained what was outlined about cost recoveries in the 100+-page Senior Center book distributed earlier in the year.

Black said APRC was doing its best to define goals and determine what justified a cost recovery. He said there was room for the Senior Center to have a higher level of cost recovery. If funds were saved in one category through cost recovery, higher subsidies could be provided in other categories.

Gardiner said nearly every APRC program or service offering received subsidies (except for the Calle Guanajuato lease program, which was self-sustaining); however, the Senior Program received the highest level of subsidy (99%). Gardiner asked how more funds could be generated from this program, more value provided to the community as a result and a higher recovery achieved. He asked the group to look at potential opportunities. He said once the Senior Program was evaluated, just as all other APRC programs were evaluated for cost recovery, the group could begin trying to increase recovery levels. The Ashland Parks Foundation could be used as a grant resource for senior scholarships if fees were charged for programs or a membership fee was implemented. Dodson said seniors would not ask for services or programs they could not pay for. Gardiner asked her to not shut down efforts currently under discussion (to increase programming while also increasing cost recovery levels). Dials said there were examples where senior centers received revenues without doing much work (travel program bookings and others).

Dodson asked about the cost recovery rate of parks in the APRC system: were people charged for using parks? Black replied that parks were for every user in the City. Programs and services for special groups, however, typically generated some cost recovery. While he was not trying to diminish the senior population, it was considered a special group. Dodson referred back to the Senior Program mission statement. She said helping seniors remain active kept them healthy and out of nursing homes.

Referencing the comments made by Hersh, Lewis said Hersh regularly spoke about the Food & Friends Program in terms of its connection with the Ashland Senior Program; however, the two programs were different. Food & Friends operated *out of* the Senior Center building but was a separate organization. Lewis clarified that APRC was trying to get more programming into the building. The group acknowledged that those who enjoy lunches at the center sometimes stay longer to enjoy a Senior Program offering. It was stated that the Senior Program needs to increase programming to draw in additional participants or decrease staffing levels.

Addressing Dodson, Gardiner urged her to understand how Commissioners were trying to expand programming and meet more seniors' needs. He asked her, as manager of the center, to advocate on behalf of the commissioners with Senior Program constituents. He said there was a chance for expansion of the Senior Center; everything was on the table at this time.

Black spoke about three other senior program agencies in Oregon: McMinnville, Bend and Willamalane. He provided an overview of their populations, structure, staffing, revenue and sources, programs, expenses, cost recovery, meals programs, social services and other details. Dials spoke about an annual Willamalane fundraiser that included a silent auction raising approximately \$20,000 per year. Speaking about the other agencies, Black noted that most of their programs and services had cost recovery levels, from booking fees for trips to a café-style lunches to a woodshop. He said there were more needs and desires in Ashland than APRC could provide. He and Dials talked about a “pass program” that other agencies had implemented, allowing parks system users to access other organizational offerings. Black said program offerings needed to fulfill identified needs within the Ashland senior community. Dodson said a survey would help with sorting out those needs. When asked what Dodson thought could work in terms of expanded programming to generate cost recoveries, Dodson said bingo might work, but at The Grove.

Dodson asked whether the current “recreational immunity” status for Senior Program instructors would be jeopardized, should higher recovery rates be required (with regard to instructors’ exemption from providing liability insurance coverage). Black said APRC hadn’t been challenged on grounds of recreational immunity. He reiterated his request for new programming ideas to generate revenues.

Gardiner said the City and others looked to APRC staff and Commissioners for justification about financial support for programs and services throughout the APRC system. He said staff and commissioners needed to serve as advocates for services and programs provided. Lewis spoke about “cost-to-benefit” ratio and suggested gaining more benefit for APRC’s costs; specifically, more people receiving services at the Senior Center. Dodson replied that the building would need to be improved or expanded to accommodate an additional volume of customers. Black said there were many options to consider and it was important to get moving: make lists of ideas, borrow ideas from other agencies, determine how to get things done. Dials spoke about the Salem Senior Center and their “50 plus” program. She offered to give Dodson more information about that. Black said a list of options could include “progress” and “outcome” columns associated with each item, as well as timelines, to make it easier to report back to the commissioners.

Black strongly encouraged Dodson to come up with a list of options for expanded programming toward cost recovery; Dodson said she came up with new ideas all the time. Gardiner clarified that he wanted Dodson to create a list of programs to generate cost recoveries. Dodson asked if the Senior Program’s model was moving from a donation-based system to a cost recovery-based system. Black said it was possible to have cost recoveries at the Senior Program. He said an expansion of senior offerings could reach a broader senior audience while providing a higher level of recovery.

When asked about speaking with the City about returning the Senior Program to their budget rather than APRC’s budget, Black said the option was still on the table as well as all other options.

b. Next Steps Discussion

Gardiner said next steps included creating a Senior Program Advisory Committee.

Dodson asked for clarification about the Parks Commission’s vision about continuing to provide a Senior Program for the purpose of / value associated with caring for seniors in Ashland. Black stated that the purpose would continue to be to provide services to the senior community in Ashland. Gardiner added that the point of recent Senior Subcommittee meetings was to creatively expand the existing program. Lewis said expansion of services for the senior community at the center was important. He said APRC needed to justify funds spent on each program and service. He suggested expanding programs and services rather than decreasing them. Dodson referred back to the survey and asked if a shorter version, going out quickly and coming back quickly, could be generated. Lewis expressed support for the idea.

Black said the Senior Program was supported by APRC and APRC had fiscal responsibilities around tax dollars spent on each program and service it provided. He said it was okay to talk about generating revenues while simultaneously supporting the Senior Program and all other APRC programs.

Gardiner expressed disappointment about Dodson's question regarding APRC's interest in providing for seniors in Ashland. He said the group had just spent 2-1/2 hours talking about how to expand programming; this showed obvious support for the Senior Program by APRC and the Parks Commissioners. He suggested moving forward in a constructive way. He again asked for Dodson's support in achieving the goals as stated above.

Dodson asked that the subcommittee not personalize the discussion as it made her feel that she had done something wrong and she felt she had not done something wrong. Black emphasized that the meetings were not about an individual but about the larger Senior Program. He said the APRC Recreation Superintendent was frequently asked similar questions about cost recoveries, given her role as a senior staff person in charge of programs and services.

VI. SET FUTURE MEETING DATE

The group agreed to meet again, within the first two weeks of June.

VII. ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 4:00 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Susan Dyssegard, Executive Assistant
Ashland Parks and Recreation Commission