

City of Ashland
ASHLAND PARKS AND RECREATION COMMISSION (APRC)
ASHLAND SENIOR ADVISORY COMMITTEE (ASAC)
Meeting Minutes
September 11, 2023

Committee Members Present:

- Jim Bachman
- Anne Bellegia
- John Engelhardt
- Mike Gardiner, Chair
- Debra Johnson, Vice Chair
- Bob Kaplan
- Noriko Toyokawa
- Patty Winner

Committee Members Absent:

- Cori Frank

Staff Present:

- Isleen Glatt
- Natalie Mettler

CALL TO ORDER

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

OPENING

No guests.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Motion: Engelhardt/Bellegia m/s to approve the minutes from July 10, 2023. Voice vote – all AYES. Minutes approved.

ADDITIONS OR DELETIONS TO AGENDA

None.

PUBLIC INPUT

None.

OPPORTUNITIES FOR HOUSING, RESOURCES & ASSISTANCE (OHRA)

Dennis Slattery, OHRA Board President, and Cass Sinclair, OHRA Executive Director, presented on OHRA's new shelter, current services and older adults served. Slattery reported that OHRA has expanded to serving all of Jackson County, and their name now stands for Opportunities for Housing, Resources and Assistance. They run the year-round OHRA Shelter and Resource Center with the goal of taking people from crisis to stability. They offer a housing-first model of assistance. The OHRA Resource Center is the only no barrier walk-in resource center in Southern Oregon. Their current annual budget is \$2.5 million, including over 30 grants, an increase from a few years ago when they operated a 5-month winter shelter and resource center on an annual budget of \$200,000. Their goal is to grow operations, but fundraising is challenging, especially to cover Resource Center ongoing operations, for which applicable grants are scarce.

OHRA opened its current facility in April 2021, offering a 52-room low-barrier shelter where guests can stay for up to six months and the Resource Center which is open Monday-Friday 9am-2pm. They have ten Resource Navigators on staff, including one who is bilingual/bicultural. They offer a shower trailer and laundry services on Tuesdays and Thursdays. They partner with many other local agencies, some of which offer some services onsite, including: OHSU nursing program (street nurses), La Clinica (on-site mini federally-qualified health

center offering mental and medical health services), Department of Human Services, Consumer Credit Counseling and Addictions Recovery Center. During April 2021-June 2023, OHRA helped 387 families into new housing and 432 families avoid eviction. They currently have a state rapid re-housing grant through January 10, 2023, and are prioritizing spending those funds to ensure housing stability for more clients. Older adults are the fastest growing segment of the housing-challenged community and usually about a quarter of their shelter rooms are occupied by guests over age 65, which has resulted in an increased need for mobility devices and ADA-accessible rooms.

The following was covered in discussion:

- If there is no space at the OHRA shelter, unhoused people are referred to other services including other shelters. There is currently about a 1.5-year waitlist to get a Section 8 Housing voucher. OHRA now has about 100 people on their waitlist; Rogue Retreat has around 200 people on theirs.
- Priority for space in the shelter is determined via a federal continuum of care tracking system into which OHRA staff add information from guest intake assessment. This system scores individuals based on their vulnerability and other demographic factors, such as age and disability. Those with the highest scores get shelter priority. OHRA does not screen for mental health. Guests are aware of the scoring system.
- OHRA Resource Navigators focus on building relationships with guests to maximize their ability to help. This may mitigate the reluctance of some older adults facing housing challenges for the first time in their lives, and who are unfamiliar with navigating the social service landscape or feel shame at asking for help. Homelessness is a multi-layered issue requiring a multi-layered approach to accommodate diverse needs.
- Ashland Senior Services Division does extensive resource referrals but does not have enough staff to do much navigation assistance; staff frequently refer people to the OHRA Resource Center. OHRA provides navigation assistance but not case management; case management is very limited in Jackson County.
- OHRA has plans to branch out into outreach navigation services. Resource Navigators are trained by more senior staff. OHRA Resource Navigators are not mandatory reporters for Adult Protective Services.
- During an appointment with a Resource Navigator, a client may request specific assistance, or the Navigator can identify need(s) with a checklist. Vulnerability assessment is only done for potential shelter guests.

STANDING REPORTS

a. APRC Liaison

Commissioner Bachman reported that APRC is currently focused on personnel issues, onboarding former Commissioner Leslie Eldridge as new Interim Director and hiring a Parks Superintendent and Executive Assistant. Engelhardt asked if the Grove will again become available for the AARP Tax-Aide program, now that Ashland Utility Billing has offices in the Otte Pederson Room. Bachman clarified that APRC and the City are currently in discussion of how to share the Grove. The Grove gym will remain available for APRC programs.

b. City Council Liaison

Councilor Kaplan shared that the Council approved the purchase of the office building at 2200 Ashland Street to serve as an emergency shelter, with funding from the Governor's Executive Order regarding the state's housing and homelessness crisis. The City will partner with OHRA to run the shelter. Plans for the building

also include housing the City's Emergency Operations Center. Council is currently speaking to residents in the area of the planned emergency shelter and will also hold a community meeting for residents to give input.

Kaplan added the following information during a question-and-answer period:

- *Does this mean that, in the long-term, Pioneer Hall and the Grove will no longer be tapped to serve as emergency shelters?*
Not necessarily. The 2200 Ashland Street facility will be able to house 30 people in a congregate setting, per funding requirements, but the current camping area behind the Police Station will be maintained.
- *Will the shelter just be for extreme weather and smoke?*
No. Per the Governor's Executive Order, the shelter will house people with the goal of moving them into permanent housing, with the assumption that continuing supportive services will be available in permanent housing.
- *What happens if there is extreme weather but the shelter is already at capacity?*
Per discussion with Linda Reid, City Housing Program Specialist, the City might revert to the model of appealing for community help to help shelter those in need. Glatt added that some local churches have shared that they are struggling to find volunteers because their congregations are needing a break from this ongoing need.

c. Education Report

Mettler pointed to new fall season programs and presentations in Glatt's Superintendent report in the agenda package. She added that the recent collaboration with the Guitar Society of Southern Oregon attracted a large audience, a trend that echoes the record participation at the summer's Ice Cream Social. She also invited ASAC members to volunteer at the upcoming ASSD vaccination clinics.

d. Senior Services Superintendent Report

Glatt highlighted the following in her Superintendent's report: Out of several initiatives she has pursued, two are successfully underway: COVID-19 and influenza vaccine clinics in October for Ashland older adults and their caregivers and a Conversation Clusters seating pilot in three parks around Ashland. Initial explorations for two other projects, a senior job fair and a digital access project that sought to install hot spots in low-income senior housing, revealed that they were not viable at this time.

ITEMS FROM ASAC MEMBERS OR WORK GROUPS

a. Update on Age-Friendly University application

Toyokawa announced that SOU has been admitted to the Age-Friendly University Network, making it the third university in Oregon to earn this status. She added that next steps involve addressing the need for a labor force, ideas and financial resources. She is focusing on the latter, applying for educational grants. Her long-term goal is to establish a Center for Lifespan Development, which will be focused on intergenerational programs. Other goals include hosting community lunches on the SOU campus and developing a new course to respond to community business needs. She is increasingly incorporating more intergenerational activities in her SOU classes and will share these models so her colleagues can replicate them.

b. Livable Ashland Alliance update

Bellegia reported that Ashland Community Health Foundation is interested in serving as fiscal sponsor to the Livable Ashland Alliance but has certain requirements that would change how the Alliance currently operates. The Alliance decided to pause pursuing fiscal sponsorship. They are instead focused on educating the community on their initiatives and planning to hold a stakeholder meeting to invite audiences from beyond their current Steering Committee.

c. Other items from ASAC members

Bellegia shared that in October OLLI is offering “Community Health and You,” a free, public lecture series featuring specialists from Asante speaking on health topics.

Johnson shared that JCLS’s upcoming Big Ideas lecture series will feature some topics of relevance to older adults.

Next meeting – Monday, November 13, 2023, 3:30-5:00pm (Zoom)

Adjournment – 4:59pm

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