

City of Ashland  
PARKS AND RECREATION COMMISSION  
SENIOR PROGRAM SUBCOMMITTEE  
MEETING MINUTES  
May 3, 2017

**Present:** Commissioners Gardiner and Lewis; Director Black; Superintendent Dials; Senior Program Manager Dodson; Executive Assistant Dyssegard; Senior Program Advisory Board Members, Volunteers and Participants

**Absent:** None

**I. CALL TO ORDER**

Chair Gardiner called the meeting to order at 1:33 p.m. in The Grove, Otte-Peterson Room, 1195 E. Main Street in Ashland.

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

There was none.

**III. ADDITIONS OR DELETIONS TO THE AGENDA**

There were none.

**IV. OLD BUSINESS**

**a. Review Subcommittee Goals**

Black reviewed the goals of the Senior Program Subcommittee:

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. Report on Survey of Senior Community**

APRC Director Black said a small group of APRC staff met in April to discuss a senior community survey. He asked Senior Program Manager Dodson to provide an update. Dodson reported speaking with SOURCE, an SOU agency, and learning that a 2013 City survey by SOURCE, for the "road diet," cost over \$13,000 and required an intergovernmental agreement. It was hoped that a hybrid version could be arranged for the senior survey, costing half or less and utilizing APRC staff for assistance. Black said using staff might cut the price in half. Lewis said a "menu" of survey options from SOURCE would be helpful; Black and others agreed. Dodson said another meeting with SOURCE and APRC staff was set for Monday, May 8. Black said staff was asked to issue the survey sooner rather than later. Distribution methods were discussed: City of Ashland utility bills, direct mailings and others. Black said the Ashland Parks Foundation could possibly offset a portion of the survey cost.

## **V. NEW BUSINESS**

### **a. History of Senior Program and Involvement in the Community**

Referencing the original founding documents, Dodson reviewed the history of the Senior Program. She said it began in 1973 as a social service organization with a mission of serving low income, frail and elderly persons. It was stated that Ashland's senior demographics changed over time: current offerings included information and referrals, some risk intervention (less than before), social services, senior advocacy and transportation assistance such as facilitation of RVT Valley Lift vouchers. It was reported that the Senior Center was transferred from the City to APRC in 2006.

Black said Ashland seniors appeared to have grown more affluent over time; Lewis noted that many professionals moved to Ashland over the years.

Staff discussed the building (housing the Senior Center) in terms of its uses and alterations over time.

Dodson said some seniors still needed the traditionally provided social service piece; however, wellness currently posed a larger need. Lewis agreed and said the wellness, recreation and social components appeared to have taken precedence. Gardiner said Dodson was pointing out that Senior Center staff continued to provide the same offerings as before; however, the seniors' needs had changed. He asked how Senior Program staff could best fill any voids; Dodson said the survey would help answer those questions. Lewis suggested adding programs and services that would draw additional people to the center.

### **b. Volunteerism at the Senior Center**

Volunteers were discussed in terms of their growth in number and contributions. When asked, Dodson said she could not operate without volunteer assistance. Volunteers helped with blood pressure clinics and meal deliveries through Food & Friends, to name just two offerings. Volunteerism was invaluable for seniors as it kept them contributing. Black said volunteer intake and management was handled through the APRC Volunteer Coordinator, including volunteers for the Senior Program. Volunteer hours were tracked for APRC overall and separately for Food & Friends. Black said 4,382 volunteer hours were logged for Food & Friends alone in 2016, with 500 hours reported for the Senior Program. Combined, those hours were equivalent to several full-time employees.

#### **Public Input**

**Mike Hersh**, Food & Friends volunteer, said the meals delivery program allowed delivery persons to check on seniors living alone or in difficult circumstances. They were then able to report to Dodson with any problems or concerns.

Black said the number of volunteer hours reported to the Volunteer Coordinator in 2016 was 500; however, the actual number was likely between 900-1,200.

Dodson said Food & Friends operated out of the Senior Center free of charge, a significant contribution by APRC. Black said without the support of the community and City of Ashland, it would be difficult for them to operate their program. Discussion continued about Rogue Valley Council of Governments (RVCOG) operating both the meal prep and meal deliveries (Meals on Wheels) for Food & Friends. Gardiner asked if APRC financially benefited from those efforts; Black stated that the citizens benefited but not APRC.

With regard to recreation programs offered at the center and whether instructors were volunteers or paid for their services, Dodson said they were volunteers, which kept costs low for senior participants. She reported that the T'ai Chi, Yoga and Somatics programs were doing well and growing in number of participants. Black asked whether volunteer instructors spoke directly to Dodson about their program offerings or worked with the APRC Volunteer Coordinator for processing into the system. Dodson replied "both." Black said the Volunteer Coordinator needed to be made aware of every possible volunteer option within the APRC system so volunteers knew what was available.

Dodson said the program could always use more volunteers. Black said volunteers at the center kept seniors actively involved while providing invaluable assistance.

### **c. Cost Recovery Review**

Black said APRC Commissioners, through their biennial goal setting process, decided on subsidy levels for all APRC programs and services. Nearly every APRC offering was subsidized at some level. Commissioners highly valued subsidies for senior programs and swim lessons as they were considered valuable community resources. As an example, the Daniel Meyer Pool had been subsidized at 60% while golf received a lower subsidy. Gardiner said APRC was tasked with managing funds allocated during each biennium and cost recoveries needed to improve. He spoke about the Citizens' Budget Committee and their suggestion that APRC become entrepreneurial. He voiced support for looking at each program in terms of lowering costs and improving recovery rates.

Two suggestions for improving Senior Center cost recoveries included charging a minimal fee for use of the center (as little as \$10/year) and charging back the City for administrative services and offerings facilitated by Senior Program staff. It was pointed out that upon transfer from the City to APRC in 2006, no funds were provided by the City. Without APRC, the City would have to pay for the services provided by Senior Program staff. Dials pointed out that funds held in the Senior Program category within the Ashland Parks Foundation accounts were not included in past cost recovery figures. Discussion continued about the semi-annual grant period for the Ashland Parks Foundation (APF) and how the Senior Program could request a grant through APF for assisting seniors in paying a minimal annual membership fee. It was suggested that grants and staff time, including time spent on maintenance for the center and assistance from the Volunteer Coordinator, be factored into future cost recovery analyses.

Dodson spoke about seniors' reluctance to ask for financial assistance. She said they were proud and did not use services or programs they could not afford. Lewis said many seniors would be able to afford a \$10 annual fee.

Black talked about Medford Parks and Recreation programs and services, including bingo, donations received through their foundation and their overall revenues and expenses. Black said the money they generated through annual membership fees was a small portion of their budget. He said the Medford Senior Center served a larger population and relied on volunteers for assistance.

Black and Dodson talked about making it easy to donate to the Ashland Senior Program (into the Ashland Parks Foundation) by including a "Donate Now" button on the Senior Program website. The button would then redirect people to the Ashland Parks Foundation website where they could easily make donations to the Senior Program.

Options for attracting more seniors to the Center and increasing revenues included:

- A "Senior Café" meals program, including a salad bar option.
- Asking the City to reimburse APRC for Senior Program facilitation of City programs, including bus passes, Valley Lift vouchers and three utility programs.
- Asking the City to partially reduce their Central Service Fee to APRC for the (above) facilitation.

Gardiner talked about attending an ORPA workshop in which senior class options were brainstormed, both educational and informational. He asked how APRC could expand its offerings to attract more seniors. Lewis asked Dodson to suggest options that could work, as she knew the goings-on at the center. Dodson talked about several new and upcoming class offerings. Gardiner noted Dodson's 2017 APF request for a grant to help pay for the Senior Program survey. Dodson was asked if she needed a new Senior Program van. Dials said the Senior Program currently used a donated van (shared with the Adapted Program). Black referenced the \$29,000 of donated funds currently set aside in the Ashland Parks Foundation account for the Senior Program and said that would not be enough to pay for a new van.

**d. Ashland Parks Foundation, Funds Dedicated to the Senior Program**

The group agreed that the topic was covered (above).

**VI. NEXT STEPS / SET FUTURE MEETING DATE**

Dodson asked what the subcommittee and staff wanted her to do next. Black suggested setting up the “Donate Now” button on the Senior Program site and reporting about it at the next meeting. He asked her to do some brainstorming about program innovations (new programming) and provide suggestions about how to acquire a new van.

The group agreed to meet in two weeks: May 17, 2017, at the Senior Center.

**VII. ADJOURNMENT**

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 3:15 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Susan Dyssegard, Executive Assistant  
Ashland Parks and Recreation Commission