

City of Ashland  
ASHLAND PARKS AND RECREATION COMMISSION (APRC)  
ASHLAND SENIOR ADVISORY COMMITTEE (ASAC)  
Meeting Minutes  
September 13, 2021

Committee Members Present:

- Anne Bellegia
- Cori Frank
- Mike Gardiner, Chair
- Mike Hersh
- Debra Johnson
- Kathy McNeal
- Stef Seffinger
- Sandy Theis

Staff Present:

- Isleen Glatt
- Natalie Mettler

**CALL TO ORDER**

Gardiner called the meeting to order at 3:33pm.

**OPENING**

Citizen guest: Rob Casserly (OLLI)

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

**Motion:** Theis/Bellegia m/s to approve the minutes from July 12, 2021. Voice vote – all AYES. Minutes approved.

**ADDITIONS OR DELETIONS TO AGENDA**

Glatt introduced Cori Frank, a new member of ASAC, who applied online and interviewed with Bellegia, Gardiner and Glatt. Frank is a retired RN with a strong interest in senior issues. She has attended Senior Center events, volunteers at senior-focused agencies like Ashland at Home, and regularly helps her elderly neighbors.

**PUBLIC INPUT**

None.

**ASHLAND EMERGENCY FOOD BANK (AEFB) SERVICES FOR OLDER ADULTS**

Glatt introduced Isaak Oliansky, AEFB Executive Director, noting that access to food is one of the critical needs for low-income seniors. She commended Oliansky's expansion of AEFB's home delivery program, which benefits many local seniors.

Oliansky shared that he came to his current role about a year ago, after working with non-profits in Portland that focused primarily on the unhoused population. He gave a snapshot of AEFB's background and current operating status. Even though AEFB had to close to public access due to the pandemic, patrons have been able to pick up a food box once or twice a month and access a free table outside four times a month. Ashland and Talent residents are eligible, and proof of income is not required. AEFB is funded by local grants and community support. There are about forty active volunteers currently working regular shifts.

Home delivery is currently serving about 45 clients. Oliansky sees expanding home delivery to seniors as priority, to reach those with access barriers. The criteria to qualify are flexible; Oliansky will work directly with clients to determine if they're an appropriate fit for home delivery. Orders can be submitted via phone, email or mail. Food boxes can also be picked up on behalf of others, such as a senior neighbor.

Johnson asked what percentage of AEFB clients are seniors. Oliansky estimated about 20-30%. Bellegia asked whether the food boxes have standardized content or can be customized to fit clients needs and preferences. Oliansky confirmed that food boxes are fully customizable. Hersh, who volunteers with AEFB, added that there is an amazing variety of products available, including pet food and hygiene products. Bellegia asked about the process for donations. Oliansky clarified that donations can be made directly at AEFB during open hours or through Ashland Food Project. Johnson asked whether AEFB provides perishables such as meat. Oliansky answered that Albertsons and Safeway donate frozen meat. Gardiner asked what supplies AEFB purchases directly; Oliansky listed staple items such as oils, pasta, bulk and supplementary items. Bellegia asked if AEFB is also open to SOU students. Oliansky confirmed and added that AEFB has a relationship with SOU's food bank. Glatt noted that SSD frequently refers food-insecure clients to AEFB as well as SNAP and Food & Friends. Both are critical services that can supplement limited income and address physical barriers in going food shopping. Hersh has long brought AEFB surplus to the Senior Center for patrons to pick up; this surplus is now being distributed with Food & Friends meal pickups. Theis added that she is glad the AEFB can continue to provide customized food boxes during the pandemic, unlike many other food banks. Gardiner asked what percentage of food box delivery clients are seniors; Oliansky estimated about half or more. Gardiner asked what percentage of AEFB supplies come from the Ashland Food Project; Oliansky estimated about 60-70% (about 30,000 lbs every two months).

## **PROPOSED EDITS TO ASAC BYLAWS**

Glatt explained the changes proposed by Glatt and Gardiner, as shown in the redlined copy in the meeting packet:

- Make member term end dates consistent
- Stagger member terms to rotate members in and out
- Members who start mid-term may serve two full terms after completing their initial partial term
- Elections should be held at meeting prior to July 1 so a Chair is in place for each new fiscal year
- No term limits for Chair and Vice Chair (to allow someone who is willing and able to continue serving, if re-elected each year)
- Clarify subcommittee vs. workgroup to ensure compliance
  - Subcommittee: formal committee with appointed members that reports back to ASAC and complies with Oregon public meeting laws
  - Workgroup: more flexible group that reports to ASAC at their discretion

**Motion:** Hersh/McNeal m/s to accept the ASAC Bylaws as edited and recommend adoption to Ashland Parks and Recreation Commission. Voice vote – AYES (Bellegia, Hersh, Gardiner, Johnson, McNeal, Seffinger, Theis), NAY (Frank) – Motion passed.

## **STANDING REPORTS**

### **a. APRC Update**

Gardiner reported that, in relation to the Walker Elementary remodel, APRC approved eight designated parking spots on Hunter Court, in addition to handicapped spots and loading zones, exclusively for Senior Center patrons during operating hours (Mon-Fri 8:30am-3:30pm). The spaces will be marked later, probably

when construction starts. In Lithia Park, the tennis courts have been resurfaced and striped for pickle ball and are seeing lots of daily users. Progress is also on track for the Japanese Garden to be completed by November 2022.

Theis asked about the current City Council discussion of the APRC budget; she is concerned about how this might affect the SSD. Gardiner echoed Theis's concern, sharing that it feels like APRC has been targeted for cuts. APRC has been trying to voice their collective opinion about the importance of the facilities and programs they offer. Unfortunately, with all the turnover in City staff and on the Council, the lack of experience and history may lead to recommendations that are disruptive to APRC. There will be a City Council meeting on September 21 to decide on the second-year funding in our current 2021-2022 biennium. At the August meeting, APRC did not have the chance to make their full presentation. Gardiner stated that citizen support is needed.

Bellegia added that citizens may not be sufficiently aware of the impacts to them. Those who are critical of APRC and the current budget are organized and vocal; other citizens seem to be complacent, assuming the status quo will continue. She asked about the level of advocacy that ASAC could be doing, not just for the SSD but APRC as a whole, because there are so many seniors in our community who benefit more broadly from APRC services. For example, our parks are a democratic, free and multigenerational resource that benefit all. Gardiner clarified that public opinion is an important feature of a healthy, open democracy. More input from current APRC service users, and those who expect such services to be available in their community, would be helpful. The current Council discussion is narrowly focused on funding, not the long term and bigger picture of all the services to the community that APRC provides. Bellegia agreed that citizens need to concretely understand what they might lose (e.g. Nature Center, ice rink, etc); this will resonate more than an abstract change in funding. Glatt will email information on relevant upcoming meetings and how to make comment, but state regulations prevent staff from providing direction on advocacy. Theis added that ASAC members can call or email their input, as private citizens.

Seffinger noted that the Council needs to see the economic connection between parks and livability. Our parks and other APRC services increase the quality of life in Ashland and attract new residents and commerce. We're a City that wants to be compact, so we need green spaces to ensure livability. We need to look more broadly too, at the role that all this plays in our long-term future. For example, the Nature Center teaches children to be good stewards of the environment, which is critical in combatting climate change.

Frank asked if the Council's recommendations will be available to the public. Gardiner directed all to the City website for the announcement and relevant documents for the upcoming September 21 meeting.

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

Seffinger added briefly to her comments above that the City continues to struggle with staff shortages. Some Departments are not supportive of a potential vaccine mandate.

#### **c. Education Report**

Mettler reported that planned computer labs instructed by Jackson County Library Services (JCLS) had to be postponed due to the surge in pandemic conditions. Because there had been a strong response to the planned labs, staff is keeping an interest list and will alert patrons when this activity is rescheduled. Other planned upcoming events include: Lithia Park guided walk for seniors and family/friends on Oct 13 and monthly festive drive-through events (September cookout, Halloween, Thanksgiving, Christmas). Staff are also working with potential instructors to offer one-time presentations to stimulate interest in new future classes. Mettler

responded to a question about why SSD is not currently offering outdoor programs: unpredictable smoke and heat and limited staff support. Zoom programs are struggling to retain enrollment as patrons seemed burned out on Zoom or lack the digital skills to access online programs.

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

Glatt referred to her report included in the meeting packet. She added that staff have held two volunteer trainings for Ashland Senior Phone Buddy. There are now ten trained volunteers who have been matched to participants continuing from the previous Senior Phone Buddy program. Recruitment for more volunteers is continuing, and more trainings are being scheduled.

A new floor has been installed in Senior Center entry way and dining room areas, paid for with donations to SSD via Ashland Parks Foundation. The new durable vinyl planking helps mitigate tripping hazards caused by the former patchwork of flooring with peeling seams.

Black and Glatt will present at John Stromberg's OLLI class "Work of the City" on October 27.

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

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

Theis reported that the group is continuing to meet and in the process of determining specific initiatives to pursue, as well as putting together the next step of the AARP Livable Communities requirements. Bellegia noted that more time should be allocated for a more thorough update on this group's work. Theis suggested this could be accommodated by assigning her as guest speaker in a future ASAC meeting. Glatt agreed but noted that the following are still planned for future presentations: Linda Reid on affordable housing, Rebuilding Together Rogue Valley, City of Ashland utility and other discounts relevant to seniors. Gardiner will schedule these, depending on availability, and can adjust the order of items on the agenda to allocate more time to Theis, in addition to a regular guest speaker.

**Next meeting** – Monday, November 8, 3:30-5pm

**Adjournment** – 5:02 pm

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