

City of Ashland
ASHLAND PARKS AND RECREATION COMMISSION (APRC)
ASHLAND SENIOR ADVISORY COMMITTEE (ASAC)
Meeting Minutes
November 8, 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 3:30pm.

OPENING

Guests present: Rob Casserly (OLLI), Jennifer Bruce (OHSU student), Deidre Golberg (OHSU faculty supervisor)

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Motion: Theis/Seffinger m/s to approve the minutes from September 13, 2021. Voice vote – all AYES. Minutes approved.

ADDITIONS OR DELETIONS TO AGENDA

Glatt requested all members' permission to take a screenshot of this Zoom meeting; image will be edited and used as an ASAC group photo on the Senior Services Division (SSD) website and other marketing materials. Members agreed, and Gardiner added this item to the end of the meeting.

PUBLIC INPUT

None.

ASAC MEMBER INTRODUCTIONS AND BACKGROUND

All ASAC members and APCR staff each introduced themselves with a little background information for the benefit of newer members.

INCREASING SOCIAL CONNECTION FOR OLDER ADULTS IN ASHLAND

Glatt credited Theis with making the connection for SSD to work with OHSU students in practicums that are appropriate for community agencies such as SSD. OHSU nursing student Jennifer Buce presented the results of her spring 2021 practicum with the SSD. The project goals were to assess the current state of social connection and available resources for seniors in Ashland, assess the Ashland Senior Phone Buddy (ASPB) program and research background literature on the issue of social connection. This issue is significant because Ashland has 6.7% more older adults (65yrs+) than the national average and social connection (or lack thereof) has important health outcomes. Of the 97 Ashland residents surveyed (62-98 years of age), many reported more social isolation due to the COVID-19 pandemic. They also reported that phone calls were the most helpful means of maintaining

social connection during this time. Her recommendations for the ASPB program were to institute quarterly check-ins with participants, better publicity to promote the program and to proceed with the new volunteer model (versus former peer-to-peer model). Looking forward, the program needs to recruit more volunteers, build more community connections and assess digital access.

Hersh asked how the survey sample was validated as significant and typical. Glatt responded that staff and faculty guided the students toward a convenience sample methodology, and the students also tried to reach a broader sampling from different settings. Theis asked what the biggest takeaway from this research had been. Bruce answered that it was the need for programs to help people feel more connected, especially in these unprecedented times. Johnson noted that pets also help combat loneliness. Bellegia added that Zoom has also helped many stay connected. Theis, speaking as a current ASPB volunteer, praised the training and regular volunteer meetings, which help volunteers feel supported.

Gardiner asked if the largest need for ASPB is for more volunteers; additional volunteer recruitment ideas were discussed. Glatt will send the ASPB recruitment flyer and job description to ASAC members to share as they can.

LIVABLE ASHLAND UPDATE

Theis reviewed that the initial application for Ashland to join AARP's network of Age-Friendly Communities was approved by the City Council and APRC and accepted by AARP in February 2020. She stressed that the focus is on all ages, not just seniors, to minimize any dichotomy and conflict or competition among generations. Unfortunately, the COVID-19 pandemic and 2020 wildfires have slowed momentum on the steering committee's work and stakeholder participation. Theis and Bellegia are Co-Chairs of the Livable Ashland steering committee. Other members represent Mountain Meadows, JCLS, Ashland-at-Home, Asante Ashland Community Hospital, Ashland Community Hospital Foundation, AARP Southern Oregon, APRC SSD, SOU, RVCOG, and Ashland City Council. Participation is still desired from the Ashland Chamber of Commerce and Ashland YMCA.

Theis explained that a needs assessment has been conducted with data from prior surveys. This looked at needs across lifespan, highlighting intergenerational initiatives, with the rationale that if something isn't good for everyone, it's also not good for seniors. She added that this steering group arose out of the ASAC Advocacy working group. It is a body without funding or authority, but it can do valuable work identifying and assessing livability issues in the community, convening meetings of stakeholder representatives and encouraging collaboration among stakeholder organizations to benefit the overall community. The group will seek increased visibility in Ashland and the Rogue Valley and work to advocate for local government support for Livable Ashland initiatives. The steering group is using AARP's 8 Domains of Livability to guide their work: 1) Outdoor spaces and buildings; 2) Transportation; 3) Housing; 4) Social participation; 5) Respect and social inclusion; 6) Work and civic engagement; 7) Communication and information; 8) Community and health services. An example of stakeholder collaboration to achieve livability goals might be working with APRC and neighborhood groups to install park benches by playgrounds, making those spaces more all-age friendly.

Currently, steering committee members are in the process of choosing initiatives that align with their agencies' goals and interests. They are also working on a report for AARP and continuing needs assessment and recruitment for additional members. Bellegia added that Livable Ashland initiatives are budget-neutral, as member stakeholder organization are doing or will do much of this work. Donations can also be solicited to cover other costs. Currently there is an opportunity to bridge inequalities that have emerged or been exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic. WHO and AARP are interested in seeing the expansion of all-age friendly work in Southern Oregon and Oregon overall. The aspiration is for initiatives to benefit all income groups.

STANDING REPORTS

a. APRC Update

Gardiner reported that the City Council has approved the APRC budget through the second year of the current biennium (through June 2023). But funding is not secure beyond this date. Commissioners and staff are working on a recommendation for stable funding to present to the City, hopefully in December.

b. City Council Update

Seffinger voiced her concern that seniors need to make their needs clearer to the City Council; she is worried such needs aren't prioritized as they should be. She also reported that recruitment for City Manager is proceeding with three candidate interviews scheduled. An important upcoming Council item concerns wastewater treatment.

c. Education Report

Mettler shared that staff is currently working on the APRC WinterSpring 2022 Playguide, which covers program offerings during January through April 2022. She explained that SSD has not offered a monthly education event since the summer due to low registration for Zoom classes. Instead, staff has focused on promoting relevant programs offered by partners, such as the upcoming OLLI Plan 4 Care series. Staff is working with JCLS to develop an ongoing computer lab for older adults. They are also developing a walking group program.

d. Senior Services Superintendent Report

Glatt referred to her report included in the meeting packet. She added that staff have emailed patrons about vaccine and booster access. She also gave a brief reopening update: staff plans to slowly resume in-person programs in January, with public health precautions in place. Food and Friends is also planning to resume limited congregate meals in January, but details are not yet finalized. Finally, she shared that she was part of a City stakeholders meeting discussing recommendations on how to respond to future extreme heat and other extreme weather events.

ITEMS FROM ASAC MEMBERS OR WORK GROUPS

None.

Next meeting – Monday, January 10, 2022, 3:30-5pm (likely Zoom but hoping for in-person soon)

Adjournment – 5:01 pm

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