

City of Ashland
ASHLAND PARKS AND RECREATION COMMISSION (APRC)
ASHLAND SENIOR ADVISORY COMMITTEE (ASAC)
Meeting Minutes
January 10, 2022

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

Citizen guest: Linda Peterson Adams

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Motion: Theis/McNeal m/s to approve the minutes from November 8, 2021. Voice vote – all AYES. Minutes approved.

ADDITIONS OR DELETIONS TO AGENDA

None.

PUBLIC INPUT

None.

HOUSING AND HOMELESSNESS SOLUTION IN ASHLAND

Linda Reid, Housing Specialist with the City of Ashland Planning Department, gave an overview of the City of Ashland's Affordable Housing Program (see [presentation slides](#)). The Affordable Housing Program uses financial and land use policy incentives to promote and regulate the stock of affordable housing in the community. As an entitlement jurisdiction for Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funds, the City receives around \$175,000-200,000 annually from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) to meet national goals and objectives centered around the development of viable urban communities, principally for low/moderate income persons. She gave an example of HUD income guidelines that are used to determine eligibility, which the City also uses. While HUD funding is only for those who are Extremely Low Income at 30% of median income, the City also offers other programs to cover persons up to 120% of median income.

Reid added the following information during the question and answer period:

- The new units at Mountain Ave and E Main St, which many thought were meant to be affordable, are not considered affordable by the formal definition. For affordable housing units, the City uses a formula to calculate many factors, such as correlation between number of bedrooms and size of household, taxes, loan

cost, and HOA costs if any, to then set the maximum price for developers and target income for buyers, with deed restriction.

- HUD income guidelines are specific for home purchase rather than rental, however the City's independent program does have provisions for rental cost. Maximum rent is based on income level, or rental price is pegged to a separate HUD program called HOME.
- Duration of deed restrictions differs for different programs. The City's Housing Program began in 1992 with the deferment of System Development Charges (SDC) and with the option for homeowners to buy out earlier with interest. In 2004, the City updated their resolution and shifted from SDC deferral to deed restriction with no buy-out option. Currently, there is a 60-year period of affordability for rental units and 30-year period for home ownership or annexation (because standard mortgages are 30 years).
- Income levels are specific to our region (Jackson County or the Medford-Ashland Metropolitan Statistical Area), based on census data.
- Two regulated affordable housing complexes in Ashland are specific to seniors: Donald E. Lewis Retirement Center and Ashley Senior Apartments. These complexes may also admit a few non-seniors (disabled or housemates of seniors), and seniors may live in all other low-income complexes.
- The senior complexes do not feature universal design, nor is there a retrofit planned for existing complexes. However, newer developments are better at incorporating ADA standards for visitable units. In addition, tenants can request "reasonable accommodation" to make changes to their units, which their landlord may choose to grant. Tenants have to cover the costs of these alterations as well as the cost to return the unit to its original condition when vacating.
- The CDBG funds the City receives require a Consolidated Plan, part of which is focused on homeless populations, to whom 'presumed benefit' is applied (assumed low income without income review). Locally, regional coordination and interagency cooperation supports efforts to address the homeless population's needs through the Jackson County Continuum of Care. The City does not directly own or manage any properties for the homeless population. They disburse CDBG funds to non-profits and community partners to offer services for the homeless population. Still, the need is greater than funding and resources can address.
- CDBG funds come directly to the City, and the State also gets funding to distribute to communities without CDBGs, through community action agencies such as ACCESS. Additional recent funds have come from the CARES Act. The County does not use any housing or homeless funding directly but rather funnels funds from Emergency Solutions Grants to homeless service providers such as OHRA and Rogue Retreat.
- 30 new units affordable housing units are under construction in Ashland at Rogue Ridge Apartments, and 5 units under planning approval (Habitat for Humanity and KDA homes partnership). There are currently 406 affordable housing units in Ashland, including rental and ownership units, which is less than 5% of Ashland's housing stock. There are a few additional units that are part of the City's unique housing program.
- The vacancy rate is difficult to determine, but census data suggests that overall rental vacancy is around 4%. However, the Southern Oregon Rental Owners Association believes the rate is less than 1%, based on anecdotal reports from rental owners.
- There is a 3-year waitlist for newer units at Snowberry and Hyde Park. Jackson County Housing Authority (JCHA) also has a 3 to 4-year waitlist for their Section 8 Affordable Housing vouchers. JCHA gives voucher holders 60 days to find a unit whose rental cost is around \$850-900/month; holders may apply for an extension if they can't find a rental in time. Unfortunately, private market rents tend to be higher, so it is often challenging to find qualified housing. A person may be on housing waitlists in multiple cities, but that there is

an application fee per unit. The two low-income senior housing complexes in Ashland typically have a 2 to 3-year waitlist. Such affordable housing is a long process and not for emergency needs.

Reid closed by stating that the City's housing program is robust and more than most other communities the size of Ashland offer, though it still falls short of the need. Medford has recently improved their housing program.

OVERVIEW OF LOCAL UTILITY ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS

Glatt stated that, in general, services for low-income residents are scattered and complex to navigate. The City offers several tiers of assistance programs for City-provided utilities; Glatt reviewed the list on the City's [website](#). The Senior Utility Discount is limited to very low-income residents and may offer 20-30% off a client's total utility bill. This discount also automatically enrolls them in the winter heating assistance program, ALEIP, which allows a more generous income limit and helps low-income City utility customers of all ages.

The City also offers assistance of \$100 on past due bills. Clients usually work with other agencies such as St. Vincent de Paul, Access, and Salvation Army to help pay the balance down to \$100.

STANDING REPORTS

a. APRC Update

Regarding APRC's work toward a long-term funding option for the agency, Gardiner reported that APRC is currently waiting for City Council to move forward with a planned survey to assess citizen priorities.

b. City Council Update

Seffinger explained that the City will survey the public on their priorities because there is not enough money in the budget to pay for everything. This applies to the General Fund money that is mostly used to fund essential services. City Council is discussing what constitutes essential services, and whether some services might be provided in an alternative way. For example, cities are not legally required to have a fire prevention program, so Ashland Fire & Rescue's Firewise fire prevention program is moving to using trained volunteers instead of paid professionals. Citizen feedback is also being solicited about planned upcoming projects, such as the wastewater treatment plant and climate action/carbon reduction. It will be important for many and diverse citizens to respond, as usually only a small group of active citizens are engaged.

Bellegia voiced concern and skepticism about valid methodological expertise being engaged in the survey project, to capture senior needs and voices, and avoid weighting special interest groups. Seffinger echoed these concerns and stressed that the Council needs to hear more senior voices. She clarified that the survey is currently being developed by SOU. While the timeline is not yet known, the hope is to have the survey results by the end of summer. Seffinger asked if ASAC might contact either/or the City Council or SOU group developing the survey and ask to be able to offer input so that the survey is representative. Gardiner added that APRC is crafting a letter to request such input on the survey questions, including jurisdiction of senior services. Glatt noted, per Councilor Graham, that the survey will be mailed to every City utility subscriber and that it will be important for the City and all partners, such as ASAC, to do outreach to encourage survey completion. The survey won't be weighted but will be analyzed by different demographic groups or constituencies.

Bellegia noted that it is tricky singling out seniors when their needs affect whole families, such as if adults are unable to work while caregiving for children and/or elders. The crafting of questions is important to capture these diverse needs. She feels that the Livable Ashland workgroup should have a seat at the table; their membership includes key organizations such as Asante. Seffinger added the importance of recognizing that Ashland's senior population is higher than the state and national levels. Theis added the importance of educating citizens, so they understand that Senior Services is overseen by APRC and not the City directly.

Gardiner said he would bring ASAC's concerns to the next APRC Commissioner meeting and ask about including them in their planned letter. Seffinger noted the importance of the parks and trails systems to Ashland's economic wellbeing and livability; it is also important to budget for this stewardship. Johnson asked if the survey results will impact any decision about APRC becoming a district. Glatt answered that this will be a different discussion after the survey.

c. Education Report

Mettler shared about upcoming educational presentations: Mindful Yoga for Chronic Pain (1/26/22) and West Africa Virtual Tour (2/16/22).

d. Senior Services Superintendent Report

Glatt referred to her report included in the meeting packet. She highlighted that RVTD is planning on resuming their Ashland Connector program, which had been stopped due to staffing shortages. She also noted, in relation to the Walker Elementary construction next to Ashland Senior Center, that the reserved parking signs for patrons will be going up along Hunter Court in the next few weeks.

ITEMS FROM ASAC MEMBERS OR WORK GROUPS

Theis shared that the Livable Ashland work group met and shared what different stakeholders are doing to continue building synergy. Bellegia added that while the work group is moving slowly, these are encouraging developments with a lot of potential.

All members are wanting updates on the City survey process.

Next meeting – Monday, March 14, 2022, 3:30-5pm (Zoom)

Adjournment – 5:10 pm

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