

City of Ashland  
ASHLAND PARKS AND RECREATION COMMISSION (APRC)  
ASHLAND SENIOR ADVISORY COMMITTEE (ASAC)  
Meeting Minutes  
May 9, 2022

Committee Members Present:

- Anne Bellegia
- Debra Johnson
- Jim Bachman
- Kathy McNeal
- Mike Gardiner, Chair
- Stef Seffinger
- Sandy Theis, Interim Vice Chair

Staff Present:

- Michael Black
- Isleen Glatt
- Natalie Mettler

Committee Members Absent:

- Cori Frank

**CALL TO ORDER**

Gardiner called the meeting to order at 3:36pm.

**OPENING**

Citizen guests: Noriko Toyokawa, Rob Casserly

Gardiner welcomed Bachman as new Parks Commission liaison. All present observed a moment of silence in honor of ASAC member Mike Hersh.

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

**Motion:** Theis/Bellegia m/s to approve the minutes from March 14, 2022. Voice vote – all AYES. Minutes approved.

**ADDITIONS OR DELETIONS TO AGENDA**

None.

**PUBLIC INPUT**

None.

**RESULTS OF ASHLAND CONNECTOR PILOT & RVTD SERVICES AVAILABLE FOR OLDER ADULTS**

Paige West Townsend, RVTD Planning and Strategic Programs Manager, presented on the outcome of the Ashland Connector Pilot and gave an overview of other RVTD services for older adults (see [presentation slides](#)). The Connector is no longer running due to a lack of drivers, even though there are sufficient vehicles and funding. Money from the Statewide Transportation Improvement Fund (STIF) supported the creation of new fixed route lines in the County as well as the Connector pilot. The Connector is an “enhancement;” a microtransit service that is able to access above the Boulevard in Ashland, where RVTD fixed routes buses are not able to go. There is also a proposed new fixed route line for Ashland, which would cost about the same as the Connector (\$400,000/year). Going forward, the City will have to choose between funding the Connector or the new fixed route.

RVTD has extended its ADA service area to City limits, no longer just within ¾ mile of a fixed route line. This means that the Valley Lift paratransit service can now go to Mountain Meadows and Skylark. In addition, both Connector vans are now lift-equipped for wheelchair access. Bellegia asked if the Connector service decreased

ridership on the Valley Lift. Townsend replied that seemed to be the case, even though Connector drivers cannot provide the hands-on support of Valley Lift drivers.

Glatt added that RVTD is a critical partner for SSD in providing transportation options for seniors. SSD also offers Touchpass and Valley Lift coupons to eligible seniors. The Touchpass can be used on both the fixed route buses and Connector.

Townsend reported the that Connector pilot was successful. It averaged 4 passengers per revenue hour; 3 passengers per revenue hour is considered a healthy average. By comparison, a healthy average for fixed routes services is 17 passengers per revenue hour. Fixed route buses are more cost effective, but the Connector provides a different kind of service to a different audience.

Townsend offered an overview of RVTD's other services that often benefit older adults:

- Valley Lift: paratransit service that requires qualification from medical professional; conditional eligibility possible (i.e. for extreme cold or heat)
- Valley Lift Plus: eligibility granted by Oregon Health Authority to Valley Lift clients who need an additional  $\frac{3}{4}$  mile access (for total of 1.5 mile away from fixed route lines); targeted towards clients who are very isolated at home and provides a limited number of trips per week/month.
- Translink: non-emergency medical transport for Oregon Health Plan and CCOs clients.

The hope is to resume the Connector service once drivers can be hired.

### **ELECT ASAC OFFICERS FOR 2022-2023**

**Motion:** Seffinger/McNeal m/s to appoint Mike Gardiner as ASAC Chair and Debra Johnson as Vice Chair for 2022-2023. All AYES. Motion passed.

### **BUDGET UPDATE**

The APRC and City Council updates were part of the Budget update.

Black gave a brief history of APRC funding: the 1908 founding charter of APRC states that the Commissioners determine how to use all resources. APRC works to balance which programs are subsidized out of the City's General Fund and which operate on revenue. SSD is heavily subsidized, with a projected annual budget of around \$400,000 and projected revenue of \$16,000. In addition to the General Fund, which draws on collected property taxes, additional funds come from Recreation Division revenue, facility rentals, City fees for maintenance of non-Park areas, and a portion of the City's Food and Beverage Tax. The latter is used for new capital projects, but in 2023 only will be allowed to be used for operations. The overall APRC budget is approximately \$7,500,000/year, which is lower than it has been in the past.

The City Manager has asked all City Departments to provide reports on potential 5% and 10% cuts to General Fund money in Department budgets. For these cuts, APRC is looking at cutting equipment replacement, staff training and some staffing, such as management furloughs and not filling vacant positions. Recently, the City Manager has requested that Departments also provide reports on cutting 5% and 10% of enterprise funds (i.e. Food and Beverage Tax). This constitutes an additional \$550,000 needing to be cut. In order to maintain service levels with this degree of budget cuts, parts of or whole APRC programs will have to be cut. Parks take priority as it is harder to bring them back than Recreation programs, once they are lost. Budget cuts will be discussed at the May 23 City Council meeting.

Bellegia asked if the situation is really this dire, since Finance Director Chan implied otherwise when lecturing to an OLLI class.

Seffinger responded that her understanding, from the City Manager, is that it is not appropriate to use Food & Beverage tax funds for maintenance and that voters should decide how that money is used. She reminded all about the upcoming City survey seeking input from citizens in prioritizing how the General Fund is allocated and looking into the possibility of raising revenues. The Council subcommittee overseeing this survey has not met recently and Seffinger has not yet seen the survey questions. The survey will not affect the 2022-2023 budget.

Black added that the APRC Charter specifies funding to the agency will come from a levy on property taxes. The City has changed that to include Food and Beverage Tax funds in response to the ongoing budget crisis.

Bachman added that the budget issue is a moving target and changing weekly.

Bellegia recommended ASAC members advocate to the City Council before their upcoming meeting about protecting the SSD. There is concern about cuts since the SSD is heavily subsidized.

## **STANDING REPORTS**

### **a. Education Report**

Mettler shared about upcoming educational presentations: The Sense of Touch (5/11/22). Social and cultural events are planned for June and July.

### **b. Senior Services Superintendent Report**

Glatt referred to her report included in the meeting packet. She highlighted that staffing changes will cause some changes. Rather than cutting activities, Ashland Senior Center will reorganize programs to enable closing to the public on Fridays, starting June 1. Staff will be able to work on projects and other non-public serving work on Fridays.

In partnership with AEFB, SSD has established the Mike Hersh Memorial Food Pantry at Ashland Senior Center, which is managed by APRC-SSD volunteer Zara Davis. Glatt requested all to think of candidates to recruit for ASAC to replace Mike Hersh. Bellegia commented that the contraction of services works against the value of the Division as it decreases the Division's reach.

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

This reported that Livable Ashland steering committee has submitted their assessment and update to Oregon AARP. The group is scheduled to present an update to APRC and will schedule another update to the City Council. The group continues to meet bimonthly, focusing on creating synergy among members to support ongoing work.

**Next meeting** – Monday, July 11, 3:30-5:00pm (planned for in-person)

**Adjournment** – 5:03pm

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