

City of Ashland
ASHLAND PARKS AND RECREATION COMMISSION (APRC)
ASHLAND SENIOR ADVISORY COMMITTEE (ASAC)
Meeting Minutes
September 12, 2022

Committee Members Present:

- Anne Bellegia
- Cori Frank
- Debra Johnson, Vice Chair
- Jim Bachman
- Kathy McNeal
- Mike Gardiner, Chair
- Noriko Toyokawa
- Sandy Theis

Staff Present:

- Michael Black
- Isleen Glatt
- Natalie Mettler

Committee Members Absent:

- Stef Seffinger

CALL TO ORDER

Gardiner called the meeting to order at 3:30pm.

OPENING

Guests: Paul Collins (CERT), Sydney Jenkins (Ashland Fire & Rescue)

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Motion: Johnson/Bachman m/s to approve the minutes from July 11, 2022. Voice vote – all AYES. Minutes approved.

ADDITIONS OR DELETIONS TO AGENDA

None

PUBLIC INPUT

None.

PRESENTATION: ASHLAND DISASTER PREPAREDNESS

Paul Collins, Ashland CERT volunteer, and Sydney Jenkins, Fire & Life Safety Specialist with Ashland Fire and Rescue, presented about Ashland's Disaster Preparedness (see [presentation slides](#) and [evacuation map](#)).

Collins and Jenkins added the following information during a question-and-answer period:

- *What should one do if a disaster strikes when you're not in your home zone?* Sign up for local alerts for the area you are in. (Nixle is a national service, although not all communities have implemented access).
- *Should neighborhoods update the Map Your Neighborhood exercise, and does CERT or another agency check on the validity of neighborhood plans?* Regular updates to neighborhood plans are good, but CERT has limited resources to help with updates.
- *Are there plans to help SOU students during a disaster?* Outreach to SOU is ongoing, to get students more educated and involved in disaster preparedness. SOU has a dedicated emergency response staff person.

- *Does CERT has any responsibility or role in a mass shooting incident?* CERT training includes a terrorism component, but that CERT volunteers are only able to assist in situations where there is no immediate danger to them.
- *How does the Firewise program fits in with CERT?* Firewise is a separate program, but CERT volunteers can help educate the community about Firewise.
- *Will Ashland Fire & Rescue will be able to assist Ashland homeowners with home modifications to be compliant with SB 762?* The parameters of SB 762 are still being determined, but that Ashland Fire & Rescue will likely not have direct help for this.

Gardiner asked if CERT was involved in the recent go-bag display at Ashland Senior Center. Frank explained she shared her personal go-bag for the display and has since received calls from citizens asking for help assembling their own go-bags. She is working with SSD to organize future education opportunities. Glatt added that people appreciated the go-bag display because it was personalized and low-tech. Mettler noted that people are continuing to come to Senior Center to pick up go-bag contents lists, highlighting the importance of having printed information available for the public.

Collins reminded all that the preparedness booklet [Ashland is Ready](#) is available for download. Bellegia recommended including a list and photo of go-bag contents in a future *Senior News* newsletter.

Theis asked about a CERT member joining the Livable Ashland Alliance. Collins mentioned that CERT will be offering a course through OLLI in their next season.

IMPACT OF BUDGET CUTS

APRC Director Black summarized budget cuts to APRC as \$151,000 to materials and services and \$199,000 to personnel, which included reducing funding for the 0.75 FTE Office Assistant position at SSD to .25 FTE. He added that the City also took about \$200,000 from APRC's ending fund balance last fiscal year. APRC is hiring 1.0 FTE position based at the Recreation Division but with .25 allocated with SSD. Black will try to restore funding for an SSD office assistant position in the next budget biennium. He noted that this fiscal impact is compounded by the past few years and that funding is not secure going forward. Experience has shown that APRC takes the biggest cut from the General Fund when resources are limited, with the traditional thinking being that public health, safety and welfare should be prioritized (Fire, Police, Public Works). He cautioned that the services provided by APRC are critical for community wellness.

During discussion:

- Gardiner asked if any APRC programs have had to be cut. Black pointed to Pioneer Hall and other cuts, as well as the contraction of regular programs. He noted that the public is probably not very aware of these changes. Glatt echoed the change in level of service across APRC, with the Grove and Senior Services having to cut public open hours, and observable maintenance impact in parks. She also noted that Recreation is changing how it manages its programs, offering less support to instructors. Black commented that this erosion of services is obscured by other changes wrought by the pandemic.
- Bellegia disagreed about the public not noticing changes, stating that she has heard public criticism about the greens at Oak Knoll golf course, trash pickup and brown spots in parks. Black acknowledged that the golf course is a divisive issue but pointed out that it is a green space that can be used for more than golf, which APRC is exploring. Black noted that the issue with the golf course

has mostly to do with water supply. Bellegia explained that the public is not aware of the distinction between the golf course and the adjoining park, emphasizing the missing public information piece.

- Frank asked how budget cuts directly affect senior activities. Glatt answered that while no senior programs have been cut, the cuts have impacted staff's ability to add new activities. The priority is to maintain existing activities and staff availability for information and referral.
- Bellegia asked how the Walker Elementary School construction on Homes Ave and Hunter Court is affecting Senior Center, pool, tennis courts. Black said that APRC is trying hard to minimize the impact and credited Maintenance Supervisor Wes Casale with coordinating with Adroit Construction to work around planned events.

UPCOMING REFERENDUMS

Gardiner explained two measures on the upcoming November 8 ballot that will have significant impacts on how APRC functions:

- Measure 15-210: City Manager and Council request for City Charter change to allow the City Manager to oversee all APRC employees like other City employees. If this passes, the Ashland Parks and Recreation Commission will be limited in its ability to direct policies overseeing City parks. Bachman added that while the Commission will still stand, operational issues will be shared with the City in ways not yet understood. The Commission would become one of the City's two standing commissions, alongside the Planning Commission. He fears this move would lead to the eventual dismantling of the Commission. Bellegia asked if the City Manager will have the power to fire or lay off current APRC staff. Bachman said yes. Bellegia noted the example of APRC's marketing staff person who was already redirected to work half time for the City, without APRC approval.
- Measure 15-211: Amendments to Food & Beverage Tax. Proposes to dedicate a portion of the Food & Beverage revenues to general government services and extend the sunset date to 2035. Under the 2016 measure currently in effect, 25% of collected Food & Beverage tax goes to APRC for capital improvement projects, and the tax sunsets in 2030.

In the 2021-2023 Biennium budget, the City Council had assigned an additional 73% (at total of 98%) of the Food & Beverage tax to APRC for fiscal year 2022-23, but those dollars were then redirected in the 2022 budget revision. The citizen group Friends of Ashland Parks and Open Spaces, reorganized as the PAC Preserve Our Parks (POP), attempted to file a citizens' initiative for the November ballot, asking that 98% of food and beverage tax revenue be allocated to APRC budget and to extend the tax to 2040. However, concerned about confusing the public, POP withdrew their petition when the City Manager and City Council voted to put the contrasting Measure 15-211 on the ballot. Measure 15-211 instead maintains 25% of the tax for APRC capital improvement and allows the City Council to budget the remaining 73% of the tax for "general government purposes including public safety, wildfire prevention, and emergency event housing."

Gardiner noted that POP is currently focused on public education about these two November 8 ballot measures, which they predict will, if passed, have a catastrophic impact on APRC and Ashland.

Bellegia clarified that the intended 98% allocation of food & beverage tax to APRC for fiscal year 2022-23, a departure from usual practice, was supported by the Council and Citizen Budget Committee in 2021, at the advice of the then Finance Director, with support from two attorneys.

STANDING REPORTS

a. APRC Liaison

Commissioner Bachman ceded his time as he covered what he wanted to report on during the previous agenda item.

b. City Council Liaison

Councilor Seffinger was absent.

c. Education Report

Mettler announced upcoming educational presentations: Jackson County Library Tech Basis Class (PC/Windows, 9/14/22), Author Talk: Sue De Marinis, *The Station Master's Wife* (9/21/22), Yoga Basics Workshop (9/28/22), Medicare Open Enrollment Presentation (10/26/22). She also named upcoming social events: Opening for Ashland Senior Center Outdoor Venue (10/14/22), Food & Friends Halloween Lunch (10/31/22).

d. Senior Services Superintendent Report

Glatt highlighted the following from her report in meeting packet: ASAC member Debra Johnson will be volunteering free guidance for Advance Directives at Ashland Senior Center, starting in October. The new outdoor activity space in Hunter Park next to Ashland Senior Center is almost complete, just waiting on installation of permanent benches and sign.

ITEMS FROM ASAC MEMBERS OR WORK GROUPS

Theis reported that the Livable Ashland Alliance steering committee has now presented a progress report to both the Ashland Parks & Recreation Commission and City Council. The presentation was well-received by both bodies. Theis and Bellegia will present the same progress report to ASAC at the 11/14/22 ASAC meeting. The steering committee had a productive meeting last week. Bellegia added that livability is an issue for the upcoming ballot measures discussed earlier.

Next meeting – Monday, November 14, 3:30-5:00pm (Zoom)

Adjournment – 5:03pm

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