

Date: November 7, 2017

To: Mayor John Stromberg and Members of the City Council

From: Mary Bertrand, Ashland, OR

RE: Ashland Senior Center

Ashland is a marvelous place to live. The opportunities for cultural events, educational opportunities and recreational activities are endless. Yet the political scene makes me think of Laurel and Hardy or the Marx Brothers or even Stephen Colbert and the other late night comedians. Any of the above could provide great laughter for the contradictions and foolishness that is presently going on within the Parks and Recreation Department and the City of Ashland concerning the Senior Center. There doesn't seem to be any checks and balances for the P & R Department under Ashland's City government, and like my dad would say, "I smell a rat."

- 1) According to one of the City Councilors, The City of Ashland says it's not in their jurisdiction and that the City Charter states this. That the Parks and Rec Commission is independently elected and have control over all parks related programs. (Sneak Preview, 9/01/2017)
- 2) On a website of another City Councilor, one of her goals is: "continued development and services for our senior population including age friendly housing, better transportation options, support services that allow seniors to age in their homes." I haven't noticed any improvements because of this elected official.
- 3) The website for the City of Ashland lists the Senior Program Advisory Board but "Please remember that they are volunteers on behalf of our community and should only be contacted on matters related to this particular commission, committee, or Board." This is either such an obvious statement that insults our intelligence or a means to discourage us from contacting those who are "assigned on behalf of our community."
- 4) Again under the City of Ashland, The Parks Commission states that REORGANIZATION WILL BE TAKING PLACE

"Better services." Have these "better" services been listed somewhere??? Granted there are a couple of new programs (free pharmacy services, etc. that wouldn't require "reorganization")
"Research ways to increase revenue". I don't understand why this is something new, and not been done already. I read the minutes of the subcommittee and a lot of ideas get floated around but I don't get the impression that there is an actual budget committee that could improve the present situation. "Ensure the Programs resiliency for years to come." This sounds like a veiled threat. It's been functioning quite well for many years now. Would the reorganization help make it more permanent?? I doubt it.

But the most **Egregious** " is the following: "The Operations and Staffing will be reduced." and from the

Subcommittee goals, "Through the gathering of information, gain a greater understanding of the senior program."

These two statements tell me that the Parks Director and Commission members as well as the City of Ashland Mayor and Councilors don't get it. Reduce the staff and add more services. That is an obvious contradiction.

Full time Staff without question is the MOST important facet of the Senior Center. It's not the activities that are listed in the calendar or the Parks Department Brochure that are probably well run. It's what goes on in the office of the Program Director where folks who probably don't even participate in the listed activities stop by and are in need of empathy, compassion, and consideration. They are in need of someone who can appraise their concerns/problems and give them an appropriate referral in order to improve their present status. In addition, visits to the homebound are incredibly important. That has already been taking place without reorganization. Someone can have all the degrees in the world, but without that "caring" concern in addition to "reduced staffing", it is doubtful that "Better Services can be provided.

So with all these contradictions and faulty statements, it's understandable that there is so much anger and misunderstandings out there in this otherwise wonderful community.