

Ashland City Council Regular Meeting - Nov. 7, 2017 public forum

There has been talk of whether the Senior Program should be the City's program or the Parks and Recreation program. I see it as not either the City's or the Parks'. It's the Ashland citizens program ... and has been for 43 years. The City and Parks' role is to administer it responsibly.

So when there is public outcry about the Parks' recently laying off the entire Senior Center staff, thus endangering our seniors' well-being ... and we come to the City Council asking for help to rectify the harm ... the City responds by saying 'we cannot do anything ... it's out of our jurisdiction ... city charter prohibits us to interfere.' The City also says it is a "personnel issue" when it is not. The staff was not terminated for cause which has employee appeal rights; they were involuntarily laid off. The Municipal Code has provisions for rehiring laid off staff.

That the City is prohibited to act or interfere is not true. While the city charter does dictate that the Parks Commission shall have control and management of all the lands dedicated for park purposes and all park funds, the municipal code states ***The City Council is the final decision-maker on all city policies and the use of city resources.*** Also the August 9, 2014 Memorandum of Understanding, the MOU, between the City and Parks that was signed by the Mayor and City Council state the MOU is not legally binding. It also states that under the Ashland City Charter, the Ashland City Council is the sovereign authority over all matters of City-wide concern.

In addition, Parks has repeatedly stated its desire to work with the City to determine whether the senior program should be located in the Parks or City budget. It is in their 2017 Strategic Planning Goals statement. It was also discussed at length as something that was needed at the Parks' senior subcommittee meeting in January 2017. And the latest Parks View article in the Daily Tidings Oct. 25th, Parks stated that the essential senior programs are social services that are logically a responsibility of the City, and not specifically part of Parks' mission.

So the City has the authority to intervene, and Parks is asking them to ... yet the City Council is standing by and doing nothing. I say wake up ... WAKE UP, and do your jobs. The seniors need your help now more than ever.

Sue Wilson
1056 Dead Indian Memorial Road
Ashland, Oregon 97520