

City of Ashland
PARKS AND RECREATION COMMISSION
SENIOR PROGRAM ADVISORY COMMITTEE (S-PAC)
MEETING MINUTES
May 16, 2018

Committee Members Present:

- Sandy Theis, Citizen Member (S-PAC Chair)
- Mike Hersh, Citizen Member (Senior Program Stakeholder & Volunteer / S-PAC Vice Chair)
- Rob Casserly, Citizen Member (SOU, OLLI Program Manager)
- Mary Russell-Miller, Citizen Member (SOU Faculty Member)
- Stef Seffinger, Ashland City Councilor
- Mike Gardiner, APRC Commissioner

Staff Members Present:

- Michael Black, APRC Director
- Rachel Dials, APRC Recreation Superintendent
- Susan Dyssegard, APRC Executive Assistant
- Natalie Mettler, APRC Senior Program Assistant

I. Opening (Black, 2 minutes)

APRC Director Michael Black called the meeting to order at 2pm at the Ashland Senior Center, 1699 Homes Ave in Ashland. For this first official meeting of S-PAC, he gave a brief background: S-PAC was formed by the APRC, per their authority to create an advisory committee following the transfer of the Senior Program to APRC. He welcomed all participants and introduced the City Council liaison (Stef Seffinger) and APR Commissioner representative (Mike Gardiner) and indicated there is one more citizen position on S-PAC to be filled.

II. Approval of Minutes (n/a)

As this was the first meeting of S-PAC, there were no minutes to approve.

III. Additions or Deletions to the Agenda (all, 1 minute)

None.

IV. Public Input (5 minutes)

Shea Cathey, 1054 Terra Ave in Ashland, Oregon, is an active volunteer at the Senior Center (Food & Friends volunteer, Young at Art instructor, new blood pressure nurse). She is a former Registered Nurse who moved with her family to Ashland almost a year ago, from Louisiana. When researching places to live, she found that Ashland was often portrayed as a retirement community. Given this, she was surprised when she got here, at the lack of support for seniors. She feels APRC is missing the mark on what they offer the community through the Senior Program/Center; because of Ashland's demographics, APRC should be setting the bar for a

successful Senior Program. She hopes that the incoming Superintendent will be local and have experience running a successful senior center and be willing to fight for the senior community.

V. Establish Chair and Vice Chair for S-PAC

Director Black stated that according to the current bylaws, a Chair and Vice Chair are required for this Committee. He opened up discussion on how these roles would be filled – by election or nomination.

Discussion

Mike Hersh said to let the Chair and Vice Chair positions rotate, with each person serving for one month. This would help avoid excessive burden on any one S-PAC member. With six S-PAC members, if Commissioner Gardiner could also serve in these roles, each S-PAC member would only have to serve for two months of the year. Director Black confirmed that Commissioner Gardiner would be able to serve, there being no restrictions prohibiting that. Rob Casserly proposed first identifying the Chair, then tackling a possible rotation schedule. Commissioner Mike Gardiner suggested that, with S-PAC being a small group, anyone who wished to be chair could volunteer, so there would be no need for nominations. Casserly agreed there was no need for written ballots, and that the group could handle the election of a Chair and Vice Chair verbally.

MOTION: Casserly moved / Hersh seconded to nominate Sandy Theis as Chair. Theis accepted the nomination. The vote was unanimously yes.

Director Black asked if there were any volunteers for Vice Chair.

MOTION: Commissioner Gardiner moved / Theis seconded to nominate Hersh as Vice Chair. Hersh accepted the nomination. The vote was unanimously yes.

Discussion

Theis asked for thoughts on having the Chair and Vice Chair positions rotate. Commissioner Gardiner commented that he's not necessarily opposed but feels it would make S-PAC's work more cumbersome. He suggested instead setting limits on the Chair's term, such as one year or less. Mary Russell-Miller requested that S-PAC's monthly meeting schedule be set first. Theis concluded that the rotation issue would be an agenda item for the next S-PAC meeting.

VI. Senior Services Superintendent Hiring Process Update (Black, 15 minutes)

Director Black started by clarifying that the Senior Services Program (SSP) is its own division within APRC, with a Superintendent who will be the main liaison between S-PAC and the Parks Commission, as well as the City Council and other groups discussing senior issues. He said that he, Commissioner Gardiner and Councilor Seffinger had been advocating for S-PAC to be the go-to group for community senior issues and to advise City Council and other groups. This Senior Services Advisory Committee is broader than just the Senior Program/Senior Center and will be a crucial advisor to other groups on senior issues. Black emphasized that S-PAC would only provide recommendations in an advisory capacity, not decision-making, but he believed those would be taken seriously given the emphasis APRC was giving S-PAC, the Senior

Program and the new Superintendent position. Theis said she appreciated Black defining the S-PAC role as broader than just the Senior Center, as that mirrors her own view on how the committee should function. Black acknowledged that S-PAC's advisory role wouldn't just happen naturally, and that S-PAC will initially have to put themselves on the forefront to comment and advise, when appropriate and needed. With time and opportunity to advise on relevant issues, it will become natural for groups making decisions affecting seniors to look to S-PAC, whose advisory role will grow beyond that of serving the Parks Commission. Black stated that until the Superintendent arrives, he will be the APRC staff representative for S-PAC. Susan Dyssegard will handle meeting and other logistics, and Natalie Mettler will cover the meeting minutes.

Councilor Seffinger provided a brief background on S-PAC, saying that about four or more years ago, an attempt was made to form a Senior Committee but it never became formalized. She believed that things had changed and would be different now with S-PAC. She said the City Council wanted to schedule a joint meeting with the Parks Commission to determine how to best work together and to find where roles intersected, particularly regarding S-PAC's advisory role, and to formulate recommendations on senior-related budgetary and other issues. She said there is not much S-PAC can currently do to impact City decisions, but the combined knowledge and experience of S-PAC members will certainly facilitate influencing Council decisions in the future.

Director Black reiterated setting up S-PAC as the go-to group for senior issues in the community. He said that this a good group to start with and will evolve into the go-to group. He said a joint City Council – APRC meeting would be coming up soon, and encouraged S-PAC to attend. He introduced Rachel Dials, Recreation Superintendent, as a significant part of the Senior Program, who will be working a lot with the new SSP Superintendent and Coordinator, expanding and improving recreational offerings and more.

Director Black proceeded to summarize progress on the Superintendent hiring process. 48 applications were received from all over the country, and HR eliminated several candidates based on whether the job requirements were met. The second round of evaluation entailed a staff review of the applications and sending out a written exercise with a couple of specific questions centered around the community and the recent discord over changes to the Senior Program, asking for their suggestions on how to mend the rift between the community and the APRC/Senior Program and how to work with the community to improve the Senior Program. The questions were sent out to fifteen candidates. Since then, the applicant pool was narrowed down to seven candidates, because some didn't fully respond to the written exercise while others didn't follow the exercise directions. Among the finalists, five are local (Ashland, Talent, Medford) and two are out-of-state (Washington, Ohio). The plan now is to move ahead with interviews. Black proposed June 1 as the date for interviews. As APRC won't be able to pay for candidates to travel to Ashland for their interviews, APRC will set up a Skype or phone option for interviews. He recognized that Skype/phone interviews aren't ideal but they do offer a good opportunity to candidates who would like to interview for the position but are unable to travel to Ashland. Black will work with City HR to come up with a hiring panel, tailoring the process to fit the position (i.e. Superintendent level). The panel will comprise seven to eight people: two S-

PAC citizen members, one APRC Commissioner, one stakeholder (a patron of the Senior Program), Superintendent Dials, Director Black and one other City Department Head. If a clear front runner candidate emerges, APRC, based on recommendations from the hiring panel and S-PAC, may make a job offer. If there is no clear best candidate, there will be a second round of interviews.

Discussion

Theis requested clarification on whether the “Commissioner” on the hiring panel would be from APRC or the City Council, or if there would be one representative from each body, or both. Director Black stated that he’s gone back and forth on Council and Commission representation, but said that APRC hiring panels typically comprise a Parks Commissioner whereas City Council doesn’t usually have Councilors on their hiring panels unless it’s for a Department Head, City Administrator or an analogous position. He clarified that by “Commissioner” he meant Parks Commissioner. Hersh said that the panel make-up sounded reasonable, and that he expected Black to be the panel chair as Black bears ultimate responsibility for the Superintendent hiring. Black asked for feedback about having two S-PAC members on the panel. Theis said it was a good idea. Black expanded that he wasn’t including the entire S-PAC as this would be an additional burden, and having all members present would constitute a S-PAC meeting. Theis asked if Commissioner Gardiner would be the Commissioner on the hiring panel, to which he responded it was most likely.

Russell-Miller requested to backtrack to ask if HR was ok with doing five face-to-face interviews and two Skype interviews. Black said yes, and that APRC had recently done so for another hiring. Personally, he thought Skype interviews put the applicant at a disadvantage, but it was their choice. Hersh asked if all seven interviews would be conducted in one day. Black said yes, and that it would be do-able, if a long day – starting at 8am and finishing by 4:30pm would allow for 45 minutes per interview, 15 minutes for panel discussion per interview, and an hour lunch break. Theis asked if there would be an HR representative on the hiring panel. Dyssegard replied that HR was currently too busy and she would be taking their role on the panel, as she had filled that role in the past for APRC. Councilor Seffinger pointed out there were requirements to follow in the hiring process (including: developing interview questions, developing a statement of confidentiality, having a rating system), to which Black responded that he and Dyssegard were aware of those and would follow them.

Director Black said HR would prepare the interview packet and approve the questions, but he emphasized that interviews should be about getting to know the candidate and it was better to ask the right questions rather than a multitude. He gave the example of a recent hiring process he participated in, where none of the submitted questions were actually asked at the interview, but that was an opportunity to see how the candidate managed their time and handled a situation that was unexpected. Councilor Seffinger asked whether there would be a writing station with questions requiring a response. Black pointed out that they candidates have already submitted responses to a written exercise, but maybe they would be asked to write something like a press release or another relevant document to the Superintendent position.

Hersh asked if S-PAC members would receive a copy of the candidates' responses to the written exercise questions, to which Director Black replied yes, all S-PAC members would receive the 2-page responses to the written exercise, plus all the materials submitted by each candidate.

Russell-Miller asked whether there would be background checks. Director Black said yes, all candidates would have a background check, as well as all City of Ashland (CoA) checks for new hires: driving, sex offender, felonies, etc. Hersh asked if the applicants knew they would have to be fingerprinted. Director Black said he was not sure about that at this point. Hersh said that, as a police volunteer, he had to be fingerprinted. He added that fingerprinting facilitated a closer interaction and assessment of the applicants, which is important given how closely the Superintendent would be working with community seniors. Black acknowledged Hersh's comments and said he would talk to HR and the Police Chief about the right level of scrutiny into the applicants' backgrounds.

Casserly returned to the topic of the two S-PAC representatives on the hiring panel and stated he could volunteer to be on the hiring panel if needed. Theis stated that she would be busy on June 1 with a caregiver conference. Black clarified that the June 1 date for candidate interviews was not set in stone, so could be changed. Theis replied that all S-PAC members are busy so asked the others on S-PAC who would be willing to be on the hiring panel. Russell-Miller indicated she would like to sit on the panel. Hersh said that Fridays [June 1 is a Friday] are good days for him in terms of availability. Theis said that makes two S-PAC members for the hiring panel: Hersh and Russell-Miller.

Director Black said there might be a chance to do a meet and greet, or open house, at the Senior Center with all of the finalist candidates, for the entire S-PAC to be able to meet them, although there was potential for some awkwardness. He would only arrange such an event if there was interest from the S-PAC members not on the hiring panel, and stakeholders, for their benefit. It would be held in the evening after the interviews. He pointed out again that this would be another potential disadvantage for applicants doing Skype interviews.

Commissioner Gardiner interjected that the Superintendent position was an important, high level one to fill, but not as much as a Department Head. He stated as his personal opinion that all should put their faith in the interview panel to make the right choice. He also agreed that meet and greets are always awkward when all applicants are in the same room. Councilor Seffinger asked about the difference between doing a meet and greet before or after the interviews. Black clarified that he meant to do a meet and greet before the hiring decision had been made. Russell-Miller pointed out again the disadvantage of a Skype interview, as those candidates couldn't be additionally assessed based on their social interactions in a meet and greet situation; Councilor Seffinger, Director Black and Hersh all agreed. Hersh added with all the vocal, active community members in Ashland who might contest the hiring choice of the panel, it might be better for the hiring panel to go ahead and pick their best candidate, then do a meet and greet after that selection was made, to minimize potential community backbiting and discord. Hersh stated that he was confident that APRC has set up a hiring system and would guarantee a very good Superintendent. Director Black agreed and thanked S-PAC for bringing up good points. He

asked if everyone on S-PAC agreed to do the meet and greet after the Superintendent was selected; all agreed.

Director Black asked if June 1 was an acceptable date to hold the candidate interviews. Gardiner, Russell-Miller, Hersh and Dials all gave their ok. Black said he would also ask the Police Chief to participate for his perspective, and asked for a suggestion for a stakeholder representative, requesting that that information be emailed to him or shared with him at some point in the future.

Russell-Miller asked when S-PAC members could expect to review the candidates' submitted application materials, preferably tomorrow [May 17]. Director Black said those materials could be distributed by Wednesday next week [May 23]. Hersh said he would need the materials before next Tuesday [May 22] as he would be traveling. Dyssegard said it would be possible to get the applications and supplemental questions to the S-PAC members that day. Black said he would check with HR and that the rest of the materials could be distributed to S-PAC members maybe by Friday [May 18].

Russell-Miller asked if APRC would be coming up with the interview questions, and whether that could be a working document so S-PAC members could look them over. Director Black responded yes, and that he would appreciate feedback. He would try send the materials to S-PAC members by Friday [May 18] and didn't expect any problems with this timeline. Councilor Seffinger suggested also looking at the interview questions for the City Administrator position that the City had just finished drawing up.

VII. Discuss Process for Creating Bylaws and Other Guiding Documents for the Program (Black, 10 minutes)

Director Black said that this agenda item was primarily a scheduling issue, and he recommended waiting until the new Superintendent arrives so that individual could be part of this process, including goal-setting. He indicated that working together in this way would facilitate S-PAC getting to know the Superintendent and vice versa; all S-PAC members agreed. Casserly asked for examples of bylaws or other guiding documents from other City Committees, stating that he'd want to see these ahead of any decision-making on S-PAC bylaws. Councilor Seffinger said that this information was available on the City website. Casserly said he would access the site to have a look. Theis said this would be a good idea for everyone on S-PAC to follow. Black said that by the time S-PAC and the new Superintendent met, they would also be at a point to address the Program's mission and vision. Theis added that there might be a strategic plan, to which Black said such a plan already existed in past. Commissioner Gardiner added that all documentation from past Ashland Senior Program Advisory Committee (ASPAC) would also be very helpful. Theis reiterated this, saying S-PAC doesn't have to start from scratch.

VIII. Set Meeting Schedule (Black, 5 minutes)

Director Black said that the meeting schedule was for S-PAC members to decide, but APRC suggested not meeting more than once a month, unless there were extenuating circumstances. APRC could support monthly S-PAC meetings. Theis said that meeting once a month for a while

made sense, but it might be challenging to coordinate available times for all S-PAC members with summer coming [people traveling, vacationing, etc]. Commissioner Gardiner suggested waiting, other than setting up next month's meeting, until the Superintendent arrived to determine what meeting schedule will work best. Theis agreed, and moved forward with scheduling the next meeting, suggesting the week of June 4. Hersh suggested picking the day of the week first, and suggested Wednesday. Russell-Miller rejected this suggestion, stating that Wednesday afternoons don't work for her. Theis suggested using a Doodle Poll to find the best day for the next meeting, to which all S-PAC members agreed. Dyssegard said she would send the link to the Doodle Poll to coordinate, and APRC would suggest dates and times. Dials pointed out that holding S-PAC meetings at the Senior Center limited the days and times available for meeting to when Senior Program activities were not using the space, although there was the option of scheduling the meeting after the Senior Center officially closed at 3:30pm. Black stated that the upcoming S-PAC meeting would be held wherever it can be accommodated. Theis said it would be good to meet at the Senior Center, because of the nature of the committee and to build familiarity with the Center.

IX. Other Housekeeping Items (10 minutes)

Casserly said that an update on the Superintendent hiring process should be included in the agenda for the upcoming S-PAC meeting. Hersh requested that Dyssegard or Dials create S-PAC email and phone lists, so that the Committee members could communicate with each other. Black approved this request, as long as the entire S-PAC agreed. He cautioned that convening three or more members of S-PAC in an email, depending on the content and purpose of the email, could constitute a quorum and thereby count as a meeting, which would not be legal. Russell-Miller asked if it would be acceptable to share materials with other S-PAC members through email. Director Black said it would be better to distribute materials through Dyssegard who could make them available as links on agenda items, adding that S-PAC members should be careful of the discussions conducted in emails. Councilor Seffinger said that sequential emails in distributing materials was also not legal, and that the same caution with appropriate emailing should be applied to posting on Facebook and other social media. If posting to such sites, S-PAC members should do so clearly as themselves, and not on behalf of the entire S-PAC. Black closed by inviting S-PAC members to email him or Dyssegard with any questions or concerns, and stated that S-PAC would be working directly with the Superintendent once hired.

X. Items from S-PAC Members (all, 10 minutes)

None.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 3pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Natalie Mettler, Senior Program Assistant
Ashland Parks and Recreation Commission

