



APRC mission - in 2015-2017 budget

The mission of the Ashland Parks and Recreation Commission is to: Maintain and expand park, recreational, and educational opportunities and provide high quality, efficient and safe services with positive experiences for guests and other participants while **maintaining community participation in the decision-making processes** and protecting the environment.

To help with this mission I propose:

ADA accommodations for older citizens interested in following the public process regarding the Senior Program and the APRC meetings in general:

- Televisе meetings and study sessions to accommodate those who have transportation challenges or who can not drive at night safely
- Amplify meetings and study sessions to accommodate those with hearing loss
- Put senior issues at the beginning of the agenda to accommodate those who can not sit for long periods of time
- Post agendas on line and at Senior Center at least three working days ahead of time to accommodate those who have to make transportation arrangements
- Provide enough chairs and room capacity so everyone who has made the effort to attend can participate in the public process.
- Please be polite and respectful in allowing Seniors to sit first .

Public Comment to 9/25/17 APMC Regular Meeting - for public record

Sue Wilson, 1056 Dead Indian Memorial Road, Ashland

I have listened to all of the audio recordings of the senior subcommittee meetings. (1/24/17, 3/28/17, 4/17/17, 5/3/17, 5/17/17, 8/8/17)

I am speaking today regarding the senior subcommittee's Aug. 7th recommendations memo. It contained *many misleading and in my opinion false statements, resulting in incorrect conclusions and very poor recommendations*. I do not have the time to address them all.

The memo misstated:

- the Senior Center manager's presentations and attitude.

Anyone listening to the audio of the subcommittee would be impressed with the Center Manager's professionalism, openness, knowledge, skill and experience. She showed willingness to explore new ideas and was light-years ahead of everyone in the room as to senior issues, centers and programs.

- The memo misstated the reporting of Senior Center activity.
- The memo gave a misleading comparison to other senior centers that had higher populations, higher staffing and budgets that were from two to four times the size of Ashland's Senior Program budget.

The memo did not reveal that the 2009 Oregon Rec and Park Association survey showed that Ashland's Senior Center compared very favorably in the services it offered ... and that most centers provided social services, as well.

- The memo also falsely stated the Senior Program's advisory board role, intentions and as well as actions.

The advisory group is a non-voting, non-decision-making discussion group. The senior manager considers their input and makes the decisions herself. Most organizations would consider this as a best practice. The group gave



Heidi Gottlieb 1218 Rose Lane Ashland

Public/written comment - Ashland Parks and Recreation Meeting Sept 25, 2017

*I too wish I could lavish praise but pickleball is not my sport tonight*

To Mr. Black and members of the APRC:

"How to build a more robust and inclusive senior services program"

First you needed to deconstruct what WAS a robust and inclusive program.

You began by doing the exact opposite of the recommendations of the 2015-16 Ashland Parks and Recreation performance audit.

You laid off very knowledgeable and very dedicated senior program staff and temporarily reassigned their duties to staff who are unfamiliar with the served population, who lack the comprehensive knowledge of the senior services provided, let alone the unique needs of seniors or **these Ashland seniors in particular**. You continue to ignore how very disruptive this is to individuals who have difficulty navigating for their self interests. You told the public that the senior center is broken and that your actions will fix and improve it and that frankly, you need "new blood" to run the program. You disregard public input and *ed* tell us we are creating false facts. *told*

Then you change program over site. You place program management at a distance from the people they serve. Why? So they won't be tempted to personally care for the people they serve? So they will more closely align and serve the APR administration and the APR commission instead?

*\* RYCOG ~~exec~~ director*

Then you create an ad hoc advisory committee, allegedly made up of "program participants and related professional field experts." Which SOUNDS good, right? Let's examine that briefly. That committee will now be comprised of half or more of the very people who made and support these decisions. The APC will appoint the members. They may also select and hire a *facilitator* that Mr. Black says he 'has in mind' for the job. Why? To persuade the public that you are fair and representing the people? It's not working. *Appreciate that you have 5 citizen members.*

*I do wonder if Mr. Black is the same* *earlier this month* At council, you promise to communicate better, to make sure the seniors are aware of the meetings that affect them at the senior center. To date, no such notice has been seen at the senior center. This meeting for example—as recently as this morning, there was no notice to be found at the center. *to provide signage*

Next, you plan to revise senior center functions and explore options to increase revenue to offset the costs of running the senior center. You are targeting the senior program, which I might add has been consistently under its relatively small budget, while the APR budget as a whole for 2015-2017 was more than \$300K over budget. What's up with that?

Most importantly you repeatedly show disregard for the safety net of social service for seniors who depend on the center and its programs for stability. And their families, whether they live here in Ashland or not, who rely on the center for a safe haven for their loved ones. You are either not understanding the ripple effect of these actions or your viewpoint is lacking vision and care and compassion. Many of us believe the senior center and its programs, as a social service, do not belong under the auspices of the current Parks and Recreation Dept.

You disregard public input. Four fifths of the park commission voted for this dismantling process in early August. You four do not faithfully represent the people. It's simply wrong. *You have lost our trust.* *I repeat*

the opinion that transfer to the City should be explored. However, no one ever acted upon it.

Also, while the January 24th subcommittee meeting focused on this transfer to City option, no mention of the transfer option was made in the rest of the subcommittee meetings ... there was no public reporting of the status and/or outcomes of City contact and discussions by APRC.

To conclude here, the subcommittee's recommendations are faulty due to misleading information. It's recommended action to layoff the Senior Center staff who have the most expertise on senior issues was negligent. It ignored the crucial needs of Ashland families and their elders, both now and for the future.

How can we trust the Commission going forward? We can't ... you have lost our trust.



**Attention: Mike Gardiner, Chair, Ashland Parks & Recreation Commission**

RE: Senior Center, Ashland, OR

Meeting Date: September 25, 2017

Submitted by: Mary Bertrand, Ashley Senior Apartments

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**Reorganization**

According to the Facts on the Ashland Senior Program;

It seems that for whatever reason the Parks & Recreation Commission has voted to adopt recommendations to reorganize the operations of the Ashland Senior Center that were supported by the "Senior Program Subcommittee." (Remember this committee, it is also listed at the end of these facts). I have no idea whether there was also a survey conducted by senior citizens throughout this area that would have provided valuable insights to the merits of this already existing program. A survey after the fact is suggested for the Three month transition period however.

However this subcommittee was formed less than a year ago, so it hardly seems possible that there was much time to research the advantages and/or disadvantages of making such major changes as the following:

**I. Leadership**

The Director was dismissed immediately. Yet as of this late date in September 2017 there is not a Director for the Senior Center. I ask:

- 1) Had there been complaints from the Seniors using the Center about her leadership? Not just one but several???
- 2) If she was not performing her job correctly, was there a procedure where she was warned to make corrections?
- 3) Why was she dismissed when another one was not even available to replace her? The way it is presently being handled would suggest that the function of a Director isn't that important. WRONG!!!
- 4) Interesting that I can not find any information on the Website about this REORGANIZATION regarding the importance of leadership( Just that it is recommended that "to accomplish transition to a new Senior Program, lay off current staff and temporarily reassign duties among other APRC employees to maintain care services") And certainly nothing about the importance of one who understands and cares about those who utilize the center.

**ASHLAND SENIOR CENTER (continued, p.2)**

Submitted by Mary Bertrand

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**II. Finances**

- 1) According to the statement by Mike Gardiner, Chair, Parks & Recreation Commission, ""We will also be researching ways to increase revenue and ensure the program's resiliency for years to come." It seems that could and should have been done on a consistent basis during the years prior to this major change. It is easy to find resources on the Web for Funding for Senior Centers, so I wonder if there has ever been a Grant writer utilized for these purposes. For example, The Older Americans Act specifically authorizes funding for the operation, "acquisition, alteration, or renovation of existing facilities of multipurpose senior centers.

Perhaps you have already contacted the Area Agency on Aging and the State Unit on Aging to determine how the OAA funding is used at the local level. If not, that should be done immediately.

**III. Activities including Location**

According to Facts on the Ashland Senior Program by Mike Gardiner, "What APRC will be doing is reorganizing the Ashland Senior Program over the next several months in an effort to better serve those who are 55 and older in Ashland.

- 1) I ask: Has there been research done that addresses this task? i.e. what programs are needed for those who are 55 and older that are not already being offered in Ashland especially through the Parks and Recreation Department?
- 2) What are the advantages of moving some of the programs to the Grove? Has anyone in the Senior Community been informed of what these programs will be and the advantages of holding them at the Grove?

**In Conclusion I would ask:**

Is this a Cart Before the Horse syndrome? It seems that A Senior Program Subcommittee was the group that made the recommendations for these changes. Now at the end of Mike Gardiner's Statement, "In addition APRC will form an Ad Hoc Senior Advisory Committee. This committee will be formed to start work in October 2017. APRC will also form an official Senior Program subcommittee of the Commission after the ad hoc committee has completed its work. (According to the Facts on the Ashland Senior Program, there is already a Senior Program Subcommittee. Now another one will be formed???? Both committees will help form the vision of the future of the Ashland Senior Program." Which committees? The one mentioned at the beginning or another one formed after the Ad Hoc Senior Advisory Committee?

September 25, 2017

To: Ashland Parks and Recreation Commissioners

Michael Black, Director

Community of Ashland

RE: Senior Programs and Center

These are the voices of community members in Ashland and their public comments about the Senior Center recommendations recently approved by the APRC. They are unanimous in their opposition to same. I will submit these for the public record. As a retired Social Worker, family caregiver, support for friends, and senior, I add my voice to theirs. Some have spoken; many more are about to.

This process is tainted by meetings earlier this year with no public notice. Now, an Ad Hoc Committee, hastily formed, stacked by APRC and City employees and officials, is set to begin. Inadequate public notice was given. No notice was even printed in the Tidings to apply. Only three of nine members are slated to be qualified, professionals or dedicated volunteers. There was an unrevealed vetting process to determine qualifications, which may not have been equally applied to participating city employees, officials, or staff. Michael Black advocates hiring a facilitator; he states he has one in mind. Usually facilitators are expensive. An inadequate three months, going into the holidays, has been allotted.

This process violates the broad based, multi-pronged approach recommended in the Audit. It stressed reaching out to the entire community, especially Seniors. It noted that special efforts must be taken to involve Seniors who do not use computers to ensure their full inclusion. This is a primary concern to me.

No such process is being implemented. Seniors at the Center state no one from this body, that states you began this process two years ago, has ever come to speak to them. The damaging and disruptive changes since early August were totally avoidable had the APRC followed good professional standards. It would likely take 6 months. What's the rush?

*Plan 1st - change after*

Stunned Ashlanders are asking why? For those of you who use computers, please read the public record on the APRC website. The audit and minutes might shock you as they did me. For those who do not use computers, a process must happen that allows them to hear, digest, and respond to any changes and participate fully. That is going to take some time.

This is what this community <sup>requests</sup> ~~deserves~~ and deserves. Let's repair the damage done and proceed in a mindful, respectful way. These are our elders; we may all be on our way to that status. We all deserve better.

Gwen Davies

*Post Review*  
**Parks and Rec meeting, 25 September 2017**

Bend >90000 population

McMinnville 36000 population

Springfield 60000 population

In order for the senior program to continue to function, even at its current level, it will need to start earning revenue.

*AGG 7  
MEMO*

If we fail in this endeavor (senior program's ability to earn at least 75000\$ in revenue to offset expenses) it is possible that we will not be able to afford the program and any service that we currently offer ... could be lost.

Move the Ashland Senior Program back to the recreation division. ***Where was the program prior to this?***

Reduction of staff would only affect the drop-in traffic. ***What about your fiduciary responsibility to me? I pay 4.398\$/1000\$ in taxes to Ashland. 31% of that goes to Ashland Parks and Rec. Why did you fire the experienced director of the senior program, pay her for a months salary while preventing her to do her job. You are wasting my taxes.***

The goal of 75000\$ for 2017-2019 represents 0.57% of your Parks and Rec budget. ***Do you expend same effort for other 2-year 75000\$ savings?***

The overall budget to run this program is about 170000\$/year.

***How do you think to generate 500\$/week from the present senior program and 1000\$/week from the expanded program. Where will the 55+ contributors come from? Have you evaluated competing programs for your target***



***participants?*** In Ashland we have a vibrant YMCA, a vigorous OLLI program, pickleballers, tennis players. ***Are these the 55+ers that will come streaming to your enhanced programs?*** At each of your study programs in Bend, Springfield and McMinnville they have facilities more favorable to their programs. They have larger populations. They have fewer competitors.

The manner in which this program has been introduced to Ashland has been a lesson in how NOT to launch changes. I am not confident that we will see a positive outcome. Ashland will regret ruining a successful program in the hopes of improvement.

Dear Parks Commissioners: Thank you for your service to our community. I recently sent an email (pasted below) to our City Council and Mayor expressing my grave concerns over recent actions taken by the P&R Director, Mr. Black. Two Councilors responded and suggested I relay these concerns to you.

Michael Black's decisions to terminate Chris Dodson, when I've experienced how well she performs her critical job, and to spend a gargantuan sum for non-local people to make plans for Lithia Park show poor form and feel harmful, not helpful, to our community. I've noticed a steady stream of back-pedaling in the ADT, but the whole Senior Services situation stinks to high heaven. Mr. Black's tear-down of Senior Services and his spend-up for external consultants is not what I or many other citizens want to see happen in Ashland. Frankly, these decisions reek of arrogant power moves rather than thoughtful or collaborative leadership. Your oversight to protect our community from these harmful actions feels imperative and is respectfully requested.

Thank you, Commissioners, and I hope to hear about your remedies soon via individual replies to this email.

To City of Ashland Councilors and Mayor

Dear Leaders:

Echoing other citizens, I believe that the Senior Center with its outreach of social services should be under the auspices and control of the City, not the Parks and Recreation department. Also, I request in the strongest manner that Christine Dodson be re-hired as the Senior Program Manager.

During spring, 2016, I had to move my father, age 88, and my mother, age 89, from their two independent Ashland households into a senior community within weeks. My father was diagnosed with Alzheimer's and suddenly could no longer drive to get meals. As a single mom who works full-time, I was in crisis trying to keep him fed. At the same time, notice came that the house my mom had rented for twelve years would be put up for sale. She had to move, and we all know about Ashland's impossible rental market.

Chris Dodson met with me immediately and gave suggestions that saved the day. She helped arrange Meals on Wheels for my father to cover the interim

and gave me advice on how to get both my parents placed in a local senior living community. The latter was somewhat of a miracle given my father's limited means. Chris's explanation of that market helped me negotiate a discount that meant my father could afford his unit.

Chris also educated me on many critical issues. I needed every bit of that knowledge quickly to assist both parents: Medicare supplemental coverage, potential Medicaid support and the many conditions involved, the need for us to obtain a Power of Attorney and Advanced Directive for my dad, and many more. Other government agencies I called before contacting Chris did not help me with actionable information or practical solutions. The Senior Center, with Chris as its Program Manager, can provide invaluable service for stressed out family members as well as the seniors.

These are not matters that should be handled by the charming Parks and Recreation staff members who registered me for ballroom dance classes at the Grove in prior years. Rather, they can mean life and death for our vulnerable elders in Ashland. I recommend that Senior Services be moved to more appropriate governance by the City. I hope it is



possible to make a wise course correction,  
retaining Chris Dodson's deep expertise. Her  
relationships with the seniors and volunteers that I  
witnessed at the Center during my visits there are  
irreplaceable.

Thank you, and I look forward to your replies and  
intervention to remedy a dangerous situation.

Sara-Lynne

Sara-Lynne Simpson  
Ashland, Oregon

## Ageism and Wealth-ism Are Alive and Well in Ashland

The Ashland Parks and Recreation budget provides a clear understanding of the APR's priorities based on where tax dollars are to be spent for parks and other community services. Parks Director Michael Black and the elected Parks Commissioners ad hoc committee have stated they are looking for ways to increase the financial contribution to the budget of the Senior Center.

Looking more closely at the APRC's \$18 million-dollar budget for 2017-2019, under the section, "Direct Services to Citizens," are four programs that APR supports: North Mountain Park, the Daniel Meyer Pool, the Ashland Rotary Ice Rink, and the Senior Center. Budgets for these services are apparently under \$250,000 each, as no revenue/expenditure detail is provided in the budget.

What is presented in the budget are two divisions that provide services to the citizens of Ashland, the Recreational Division and the Golf Division. For these, both revenue and expenditure line items are shown:

<u>Division</u>	<u>Expenses</u>	<u>% of Total Budget</u>	<u>Revenues</u>	
<u>Shortfall</u>				
Recreation Div.	\$3,190,000	17%	\$874,000	\$2,316,000
Golf Div.	\$1,163,000	7%	\$609,000	\$
<u>554,000</u>				
Total	\$4,353,000	24%	\$1,483,000	\$2,873,000

The Senior Center, with a budget of under \$250,000, represents less than 1.38% of the total \$18 million-dollar budget, and so the obvious question is why did Director Black and the commissioners zero in on the Senior Center, this already tiny slice of the APR pie, to extract savings, especially when the \$2,873,000 shortfall from the Recreation and Golf divisions offer far more opportunities for revenue recovery?

One answer may be ageism; another may be wealth-ism. If the squeaky wheel gets the grease, and if the elderly poor are the least likely to kick up a fuss, then the Senior Center might be the most politically expedient place to extract budget cuts.

The only Ashland city service that clearly focuses on our growing senior population is the Senior Center. Seniors engaged at the Center consider it like family, a place they find conversation, friendship, and meaning, as well as a nutritious meal. The most likely to participate at the Senior Center are the less wealthy; more affluent Ashland seniors can afford to travel to visit family and friends and can more easily pay to put healthy food on the table.

But many seniors in our community are facing increasingly dire financial insecurity. Social Security's annual cost-of-living increases have amounted to between zero and just one or two percent each year for the past several years, this at a time when medical expenses and the cost for supplemental health insurance premiums have skyrocketed. Many seniors can no longer afford to pay for medications and face the tragic choice of paying either for drugs or for food. At the same time, the rising cost of energy has resulted in huge increases in our local utility rates. And for those lucky enough to own their own homes, the City Council's increasing reliance on property tax increases to pay for budget shortfalls has made Ashland property taxes among the highest in the state. Seniors who retired a decade ago believing they would

be financially secure are awakening to the stark reality that they cannot survive on their Social Security and dwindling assets.

Clearly, a Center with events and services that provide such quality-of-life assistance is more than earning and paying its way; it is critically essential to many. None of the other APR programs can claim this. The APRC's decision to cut the Senior Center's budget and staffing demonstrates an appalling lack of understanding and empathy for the people it serves.

Requiring that the Recreational and Golf divisions break even would be seriously unpopular. Clientele of these divisions likely have more money and more influence with the Commissioners and Council. Commissioners and councilors don't attend Senior Center events to understand what a family of seniors is about or how staff draw volunteers to the Center for the care of our seniors.

To say the Senior Center needs to be brought into "Parks" is backwards; Parks staff and commissioners need to be brought into the "family" at the Senior Center to see what it means to belong to a truly inclusive community. I strongly urge that we find another facility for the APRC's dreamed-of, state-of-the-art, intergenerational recreational center. The Senior Center building is taken—by seniors who desperately need it and its services, and by the staff who know them best. If cost-cutting is needed, let the APR identify larger and less essential slices of the pie. Let the younger and more able to pay among our citizens bear the brunt of such cuts, rather than our most vulnerable.

Carol Voisin  
Ashland