

JUNEAU COMMISSION ON AGING

City & Borough of Juneau

Minutes of Regular Meeting

July 14, 2016

CALL TO ORDER

The Commission met at the Senior Center. Chair VandeCastle called the meeting to order at 1:15 p.m. Other members present were: Eileen Hosey, Mary Lou Spartz, Carol Trebian, and Brynn Keith. Also attending was Sioux Douglas.

DECLARATION OF QUORUM; APPROVAL OF MINUTES DEFERRED; AGENDA APPROVAL

It was declared that a quorum of members was present. Approval of the minutes of the Commission's June meeting was deferred till the next meeting. The meeting agenda was approved.

DISCUSSION WITH SIOUX DOUGLAS

Members briefly questioned Sioux Douglas, president of SCSSI, a local senior non-profit organization, about the assisted living facility the group is hoping to build in the Vintage Park area. Members receive frequent questions from community members regarding the availability of assisted living care in the community. Sioux gave the group an overview of the situation. Currently the Juneau Pioneer Home has 124 people on its active wait list and 1,843 on its inactive list. The home has 47 beds and no expansion is planned. The need for assisted living in Juneau is critical, due to the fast-growing number of seniors. Two market demand studies have confirmed the high level of demand. If people know of individual seniors needing this type of care now, let Sioux know their names so she can develop a count and also let people know when they can sign up.

Right now SCSSI is in the process of putting a financing package together for an 88-unit facility, which would include 34 memory care beds. Cost of the project is estimated at about \$25 million. There will be Medicaid beds available. It is the intention of SCSSI to serve a diverse group of Juneau residents. They hope to have the facility up and operating by the end of 2017.

Eileen commented on the many people she encounters in her job at Southeast Senior Services who desperately need assisted living care. She said it was very encouraging to hear that such a facility is being planned for Juneau.

Brynn asked whether, if a resident of the facility were to run out of money, they would be kicked out. Sioux said they could move to Medicaid funding at that point. The Pioneer Home offers a State-funded payment assistance program. That won't be available at our privately run facility. She clarified that SCSSI itself will not be operating the facility. It has no experience in that area. However, it will ensure that the right operator is selected for Juneau. It will need to be someone who fits our community culture. SCSSI is collaborating with many local groups, including SEARHC, Tlingit & Haida, UAS, etc.

Eileen asked whether funding could be available through the Juneau Community Foundation. Sioux responded that she is on the board of the JCF. All of their funds are earmarked for specific purposes; seniors are not one of the specific groups designated as funding recipients.

SPEAKER: ERANN KALWARA, JPD COMMUNICATIONS/DISPATCH SUPERVISOR

Erann Kalwara joined us to discuss the Smart 9-1-1 software system which the Juneau Commission on Aging has suggested the CBJ look into adopting. The system could facilitate more informed emergency responses for seniors and all borough residents needing assistance by allowing individuals to pre-enter details on their medical conditions, contacts, location, access details (e.g., presence of an aggressive dog or best door to use), etc. JCOA member Ric Iannolino had written a report describing how the system works in Honolulu, Hawaii, which is very pleased with the program.

Erann told us that Juneau's police and fire chiefs are interested in exploring possible use of the program here. She has evaluated Smart 9-1-1 and concluded that it would offer a benefit to local residents – but also that it is difficult to quantify that gain. How many Juneau individuals would add their data to the system, and how often would that information end up benefitting them in an emergency situation?

There is a \$30,000 cost to implement the system, and then an annual \$25,000 cost to maintain it. Her department's budget cannot accommodate this cost in FY 2017-2018. They could consider it for FY 2019.

Brynn asked what the current budget is for the local 9-1-1 emergency response system. Erann said it is over a million dollars per year.

Eileen asked if the City would re-consider if they could be provided with the names of specific people who would benefit from such a system. She works with many frail elders at Mountain View, Fireweed Place, Marine View and other locations where they would be at huge risk in the event of a fire, natural disaster, etc.

Sioux asked, "Doesn't EMS already know these people?" Erann responded, "No! We are often shocked to find them. Many are under the radar."

Mary Lou noted that in the event of a building-wide emergency, residents of senior apartment buildings are told they must take the stairs to evacuate the building. People who are physically incapacitated obviously can't do this.

Eileen suggested that the Smart 9-1-1 decision be looked at in light of the faces of real people we know are out there. Seniors are a three billion dollar a year industry in Alaska; we should not view them as a drain on the economy.

Sioux asked whether it would make a difference if we presented numbers of homebound people.

Erann said that, yes, it could make a difference if City decision-makers knew who the end users of the system would be. Of course, it would not be seniors only, but would also include children and younger adults with special needs, and vulnerable persons living temporarily in a local household.

Some of the features of the Smart 9-1-1 system are already available in the City's current data management systems. For example, the CAD system can include next of kin contact information,

so they can already provide that information to responders. Both CAD and the City's records management system have a manual search component, so a search can provide some helpful details as a stop-gap.

Sioux suggested the City ask the Smart 9-1-1 company if there is another city our size that uses Smart 9-1-1 so that we could get a realistic idea of what it does for them.

Erann said there are other companies out there that offer a similar type of software. Evaluation to establish the best fit for Juneau involves looking at the technology side, the operations side, and the people side.

Data entry would not be a problem. Existing staff can handle that. However, a potential problem with this type of project is that members of the community do not appear inclined to provide these kinds of online updates, for example with regard to property records. While there is a need for a system to identify vulnerable people, the question in this case is whether there would be an adequate public response.

Sioux suggested they might want to partner with social service agencies, who could encourage and assist their client base to enter their personal details. Erann responded that it's possible they could get grants to help with start-up of the system, but probably not with its ongoing operation.

Sioux urged Erann to ask the Juneau Community Foundation for the money. "Pick a model, create a budget..."

Eileen emphasized that the problem is growing. She had 8 people referred to her in the past week alone. They live in all parts of the borough. (Southeast Senior Services receives the referrals when people are discharged from the hospital.) These are people with needs that nobody knew were out there. We need an awareness of the dynamic nature of senior needs, and their level of frailty. It's a community's obligation to be aware of people's plight. They pay taxes and have spent/invested their money in this community.

Mary Lou noted that seniors have been hit especially hard this year, with cuts to various senior benefit programs, personal care, etc. Eileen added that a lot of clients have just enough income to NOT qualify for Medicaid. Mary Lou asked Eileen if the churches are aware of seniors' needs. Eileen said they are not, because people are very private about their needs. They don't want to ask their kids, neighbors, etc. for help.

Returning to the Smart 9-1-1 project, Erann said the City has just done a big revamp of its 9-1-1 system; it's not quite up and running and flowing smoothly yet. Their next project is going to be to make it possible to text to 9-1-1. After that, they could work on Smart 9-1-1. Another proposed project is a "reverse 9-1-1" system to notify all residents of a given area of emergency situations such as a dam break, SWAT call in the neighborhood, etc. This would be a feature that would not be used often, but would have a high criticality – when needed, it could save lives. The City may want to look at vendors who can provide both these programs. They would need our group's help to make it work – community outreach to inform seniors of the program and encourage them to participate.

There may be some inaccurate assumptions out there. Smart 9-1-1 is not that widespread a system. Could it help travelers to Juneau if they had an emergency need while here? Only if they

have registered elsewhere. But Sioux noted that it could help our many “snowbirds” who travel from Juneau to other communities (if those communities use Smart 9-1-1).

Erann observed that, down south, there are many Public Safety Answering Points (PSAPs). These overlap, and all would need to have Smart 9-1-1. For example, Palm Springs has many PSAPs, and all would need to be able to tap into Smart 9-1-1. California has interesting 9-1-1 procedures. Some states use a 9-1-1 surcharge to fund enhancements to 9-1-1.

Sioux asked Erann whether this proposed system has the chiefs’ support. Erann replied with an emphatic Yes.

MaryAnn asked about the use of the currently available “flexible fields” in the data base. Can these be used to search on a person to see where they belong? (Say, in the case of a wandering dementia patient...) Erann said it’s more difficult to attach information to an address or phone number. 80% of the calls they receive now are from cell phones – with no specific location on record.

Carol asked if CBJ partners with Tlingit & Haida. They have received some federal money for addressing safety concerns, especially those involving transportation. (Carol gave Erann a copy of a T&H newsletter containing more information.)

Erann responded that the chief meets regularly with T&H. She herself met with tribal court representatives regarding protective orders. She noted that 9-1-1 gets a lot of “person issue” calls (runaways, for example) that are not law enforcement related per se. Unfortunately they cannot offer a way to find all vulnerable people.

Erann spoke to the local emergency planning committee about Smart 9-1-1. They thought it sounded like a great project, but wondered about the balance of cost versus actual impact.

MaryAnn noted that Juneau could potentially experience a number of types of disasters – avalanche, earthquake, tsunami, fire, etc. There should be a way to contact people in an area quickly.

Erann said she worked the Gastineau Apartments fire. The electricity to the building had to be cut. All ambulance operators were working the fire, so one of the ER docs drove an ambulance. The City’s emergency management director later helped them get a \$750,000 state grant to upgrade the local 9-1-1 system. Erann also noted that the Red Cross is in charge of supplying shelter, food, and housing in the event of a disaster, whether large or small. MaryAnn raised the issue of pets – most Red Cross shelters do not take pets, and this can create a major problem, especially for seniors, who may refuse to go anywhere without their canine or feline companions. But Erann said that they did in fact house many pets after the Gastineau fire, with a temporary humane shelter set up on site.

In the event of a large-scale disaster, people and communities would come together in mutual aid. Tom Mattice plans for this, meeting with other emergency managers statewide. During the Gastineau fire, the National Guard came in to provide security.

Brynn asked about the cell phone challenges – can they obtain location information about the call? Erann said they are just starting to work on improvements in this area. Some phones can triangulate your location to within 150 meters. Some can’t locate you within the downtown area.

Some have GPS chips in them. The locations provided may or may not be accurate in Southeast Alaska, depending on the weather. People may be able to register to receive Reverse 9-1-1 calls on their cell phones. With landlines, they know who pays for it and where it is located. The worst things are the throwaway phones, which are not linked to an owner.

The local 9-1-1 system receives a lot of “pocket dials” and “butt dials” – about 30 per day! People sometimes give a cell phone to a baby to play with, etc.

From here, Erann proposed that we keep open communication on this topic, and she can return in six months or so to update us on how the changes to the 9-1-1 system are progressing. In the meantime, they would certainly appreciate any data we can provide on WHO the vulnerable people in the community are and HOW the Smart 9-1-1 system would benefit them.

The Fire Department will put up free house numbers, if your home does not have them.

The current data system is able to flag unsafe residences, for example if the home is unsanitary, belongs to a hoarder, etc. City departments (Police, Fire, Community Development, etc.) have started to collaborate on these “social issues.” Community Development can go in and write citations demanding that people clean up, etc.

Eileen noted that emergency responders used to make referrals to Southeast Senior Services, and asked if they still did. Erann stated that the responding officer decides if another agency needs to be involved.

Carol raised the issue of the bear problem. She had to avoid a bear near Glacier Valley school. Some people can't afford to pay for trash pick-up, and bears are then attracted to the area.

Erann told us that she expects that adding the texting option for 9-1-1 will take about six months. We can check back with her at that time for an update.

Mary Lou noted that we are about four years away from our next Juneau senior survey. We might want to add a question asking seniors how they would determine when they have become frail. Eileen said it usually takes a precipitating incident. Erann added that the DMV has a self-survey online to help you decide if you should still be driving.

Eileen said she will talk to her supervisors at SESS about putting together some estimates of the number of vulnerable seniors out there. Sioux suggested emailing the whole Community Resource Network. MaryAnn noted that given some well-established national age-based dementia rate estimates, Juneau's demographics can easily be translated into an estimate of how many local people suffer from dementia; all of them would be considered vulnerable. Other agencies that may be able to supply information on vulnerable seniors were mentioned: Compass Home Care, Cornerstone, Priority Home Health, Housing First, Smith Hall (St. Vincent's), the Filipino Community (Josalind Ferrer).

Erann would also like to get an estimate of how many local residents would participate in a Smart 9-1-1 type of system, where they would need to enter personal data in advance of an emergency. In the meantime, they won't be entering any information about drugs, etc. into the current system. People need to wear MedicAlert bracelets, keep a list of all the medications they are on, and post important information about their medical conditions on their refrigerator.

Eileen emphasized that seniors are so much more amenable to receiving help if they are included as part of creating the solution.

Sioux said it's important for local residents to have information on who to call regarding vulnerable seniors – phone numbers, not names (of people who may change jobs, etc.).

Erann asked Sioux who the developer is for the planned assisted living project. Sioux said that Ted Johnson of Marathon Development Group in Bellevue is handling the pre-development work for SCSSI. Anyone with suggestions of individuals or groups who may be interested in investing in assisted living in Juneau should contact Sioux. Sioux said she expects assisted living costs in Juneau to range between \$5,000 and \$7,000 per month.

NEW BUSINESS.

Funding for the Heating Assistance program has been reduced, but people are encouraged to apply anyway.

It was suggested that we do a Juneau senior survey more often than every ten years. Get some grant money from CBJ, Juneau Community Foundation, perhaps Native and Filipino associations. We could check with the McDowell Group to see how much it would cost to do a short survey of senior households – perhaps ten or fifteen questions.

People have questions about how local senior services are currently funded. Apparently all social services block grant funds are now being administered by the Juneau Community Foundation. These are earmarked for specific groups and issues, such as the homeless, the mentally ill, substance abuse, affordable housing, etc. Seniors per se are not included. Eileen noted that Housing First will prioritize the older homeless population, and of course seniors may be included in the identified groups. But we are wondering how we might seek a higher priority on addressing issues of concern to all Borough seniors.

The group decided to take a summer break for the month of August. Our next regular meeting will be on Thursday, September 8th.

SPEAKER: SUSAN BUS, SERRC

Susan Bus presented information on the MASST (Mature Alaskans Seeking Skills Training) Program, Alaska's version of the Senior Community Service Employment Program (SCSEP), which is part of Title V of the Older Americans Act of 1965. Currently there are 22 people placed in the program in Southeast Alaska, 12 of them in Juneau. The goal of the program is to get older Americans with substantial need back into the workforce. To participate in the program, they must be age 55 or older, have income less than 125% of the Alaska poverty level, not currently working, and interested in the program.

Individuals are placed in a work experience position at a host site, which is a government or non-profit agency. The program, which is mostly federally funded, is facing a big budget cut beginning in July, from 150 participants statewide to 99. There is a moratorium on new placements in Juneau, Hoonah, and Angoon. Other Southeast communities hosting MASST workers include Ketchikan, Sitka, Petersburg, Haines, and Kake, all at local senior centers.

Participants work up to 20 hours per week at minimum wage, \$9.75 per hour in Alaska. They can remain in the program for up to four years. These are prized jobs, especially in the villages. A new direction for the program is that now participants must look for work with the goal of moving into unsubsidized employment. The original intent of the program was that it was to be transitional, retraining older people and moving them back into the workforce. The program is a win/win for everyone – the employer, the employee, and the federal government.

In 2015, MASST served 194 older Alaskans. 26 of them obtained jobs outside the program. The average time in the program was 11 months, and the average entry level wage in unsubsidized employment was \$12.80 per hour. Susan noted that the population they serve is a challenging population to work with. 79% of the people in the program had two or more disabilities, and 64% were homeless or at risk of homelessness.

In Juneau, half of program participants are male and half are female. This year 58% are Native, 38% white, and 4% Black.

MASST participants may count computer classes toward their 20-hour week.

The program has occasional "wash-outs," usually due to lapses into active substance abuse. Some people close out for medical reasons, some pass away, and some leave the state. But most people are happy to continue to participate.

In 2015, the MASST program provided 33,632 hours of work for senior community service organizations, for a value of \$336,000 statewide.

Susan also talked about other services that SERRC (SouthEast Regional Resource Center) offers that can be valuable for seniors. They have offered computer classes in the evenings, with topics changing every month. However, due to funding cuts, these may be canceled. They do have a computer lab which is staffed with someone who can answer questions and help students learn about specific software. In response to a question, Susan said that SERRC still provides GED tutoring and testing.

Beginning in September, a Job Service staff person will be at SERRC twice a month to help individuals enter their resume into ALEXSYS (Alaska Labor Exchange System), the statewide job search data base.

SERRC also offers adult education services, including math and writing classes.

There are English as a Second Language classes at both SERRC's downtown location and Gruening Park. They are always looking for volunteers to be tutors – call Patty Bowman at 586-5718 if interested.

SERRC offers other classes, which vary monthly, and are featured on a monthly flyer which can be found on their Learning Connection website (www.serrc.org/tlc).

SPEAKER: DEE SHAW, ALASKA COMMISSION ON AGING

Dee Shaw, planner with the Alaska Commission on Aging, presented information from the ACOA's latest Senior Snapshot, an annual compilation of a wide range of data pertaining to seniors in Alaska. The Snapshot is the most up-to-date source of data on seniors in Alaska. (It can be found on the ACOA's website.)

Alaska has the fastest-growing senior population in the U.S. (largely due to an inflated baby boomer age population which arrived during the pipeline boom and stayed on). Our senior population has increased by 60% in the last ten years. (Nevada, the state with the second-fastest-growing senior population, saw an increase of 50% in the past decade.) Within Alaska, the Aleutians region has had the fastest growth of seniors, and the Southeast region has the highest percentage of its population that is age 60 and older – nearly 20%.

Retired seniors contribute approximately \$2.4 billion to the Alaska economy annually, not including health care spending and the earnings of those seniors who are still employed. The cumulative economic impact of all Alaskan seniors is estimated to be around \$3 billion per year, more than some of Alaska's largest industries, including fishing, construction, or retail. Seniors also volunteer in their communities at a high rate, and contribute caregiving for children, disabled adults, and other seniors. Many Alaskan seniors are raising their grandchildren.

More seniors rely on government assistance than ever before. This rate is increasing by two percent a year. Currently 7.5% of seniors use Food Stamps. While more seniors now need assistance, they are getting less assistance, with more people sharing the same pot of money. Funding for heating assistance has decreased.

Causes of death for seniors in Alaska feature a relatively high rate of accidental deaths. Many of these are alcohol-related.

