

JUNEAU COMMISSION ON AGING

City & Borough of Juneau

Minutes of Regular Meeting

December 10, 2015

CALL TO ORDER

The Commission met at the Senior Center. Chairperson VandeCastle called the meeting to order at 1:15 p.m. Other members present were: Pat Watt, Brynn Keith, Carol Trebian, Ric Iannolino, and Mary Lou Spartz. Eileen Hosey was absent. Also attending were Deputy Director of CCTHITA Le Florendo, CBJ Finance Director Bob Bartholomew, CBJ Sales Tax Administrator Clinton Singletary, Assembly member Jerry Nankervis, Alaska Commission on Aging (AKCOA) member Marie Darlin, and former Juneau Commissioner Dixie Hood.

AGENDA; DECLARATION OF A QUORUM

The agenda was adopted. It was declared that a quorum of members was present.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

The minutes of the regular meeting on November 12 were approved.

REPORTS OF MEETINGS ATTENDED

Ms. Watt reported that she had attended several Aquatics Board/Committee meetings. The new pool fee schedule will go into effect in January, with a much simplified price structure (only 4 types of passes: daily, 10-visit, monthly, and annual; passes will be good at both pools). The goal is to get more people into the pools and the new price structure is designed to encourage repeat visits. The single use pass will be more expensive, but the other passes will be cheaper, with the annual pass being the best deal. Seniors will continue to get a reduced rate.

COMMISSION RETREAT:

Le Florendo has agreed to facilitate the Retreat. A Committee of Carol Trebian, Ric Iannolino, and Pat Watt met on Dec 4 to do some preliminary retreat planning. Given that the Commission has 4 new members, one goal of the retreat is for members to get to know each other and experience working together. Additional goals include for everyone to get on the same page as to who the Commissions customers are, what these customers want for us, and thus define more clearly what our mission is. Additionally, we hope to set a few strategic goals for the coming year – projects that we can realistically accomplish given our limited resources.

The Retreat will be from 10am to 4pm on Monday, January 11. This will be instead of the regular Commission meeting in January. Under the Open Meeting Act, the Retreat will be considered a Work Session, so the public can attend as observers, but not as participants. Le Florendo will facilitate the retreat and asked that Commissioners come prepared with some short 5-7 word phrases/sentences describing what they would like the Commission to be five years from now.

The planning Committee recommended holding the Retreat at the Mendenhall Valley Library in the Large Conference room which has facilities for serving food and for audio accessibility. Ms.

Spartz said she definitely did not want that location. Mr. Iannolino and Ms. Florenda will explore the feasibility of using the executive board room in the Central Council Tlingit and Haida Indian Tribes of Alaska (CCTHITA) Edward K. Thomas Administrative building.

ROLL OUT OF CHANGES TO SENIOR SALES TAX EXEMPTION

Mr. Bartholomew summarized the changes to the Senior Sales Tax Exemption that will go into effect on January 1. Two week ago a notice was mailed to the 3,800 Seniors who hold Tax Exemption Cards – see attachment. At the same time a notice was mailed to the estimated 4,000 businesses who collect sales taxes. Additional public education regarding the changes are planned for both radio and print media. Mr. Bartholomew indicated that staff have worked carefully with legal staff and state Department of Revenue to ensure the rebate will not be misconstrued as revenue.

The application period for the low-income sales-tax rebate will begin on January 1, and close on June 30. This is modeled on the current process for the hardship exemption on property taxes. The application can be done by mail if desired. Rebate checks will be issued at the end of September each year. CBJ estimates that approximately 1,600 seniors will qualify for the rebate.

Mr. Singletary explained some details to clarify exactly which utility and food items will be exempt. For utilities, if a senior owns multiple dwellings, then the tax exemption only applies to utilities for the senior's primary residence. The food exemption is the same as for the Food Stamp program – which essentially means that it applies to edible grocery items purchased for home consumption. Retail businesses are already set up for this, so the tax change should be simple at the checkout counter. An area for potential confusion has to do with deli items: the easy way to explain this is to say that hot items will be taxable (similar to restaurant food), and cold items from the deli will not be taxed (edible items purchased for home consumption,)

More information on the changes are on the CBJ website through a link under the “Hot Topics” section. (See www.juneau.org)

Mr. Bartholomew responded to a question about the impacts of the current state budget crunch on the CBJ budget. He noted that these are several: a loss of approximately \$2 million per year in revenue sharing, elimination of capital grants and funds for school maintenance; and the trickle down effect of changes in the state economy.

NEW BUSINESS

Death of Mayor Fisk:

Ms. Spartz shared a card she had received from Mayor Fisk, and suggested the Commission send a note of condolence – and appreciation – to Mr. Fisk's son. Ms. Keith agreed to prepare such a letter.

Impact of Governor's Budget on Senior Citizens

The group agreed to leave action on this topic in the hands of the Alaska Commission on Aging, while encouraging Commission members to study the issue and act as individuals.

Legislative Priorities

Ms. VandeCastle noted that she had been tasked at the last meeting with drafting a letter to the Assembly explaining what the Commission saw as priorities, and urging the Assembly to pass these on to the CBJ lobbyist. She will have the letter ready for review and approval at a short business meeting to be convened immediately after the Commission Retreat on January 11.

Fireweed Place Elevator

Fireweed Place, a 67-unit Independent Living apartment complex for seniors, has a single elevator that is 20+ years old and in need of major repairs and upgrades. This work will take place from January 11-18. Unclear communication with residents has caused some anxieties as to how seniors can be accommodated while the elevator is down. Mr. Iannolino will contact SAIL to see what assistance might be available, and Ms. VandeCastle will talk with the building manager to ascertain how best to alleviate the anxieties of affected seniors

CONCLUSION

The next meeting of the JCOA will be a Retreat to be held on January 11 from 10am to 4pm. Ms. VandeCastle will confirm the location once that is settled. The regular February meeting will be on Thursday, February 11 beginning at 1:15pm at the Juneau Senior Center.

The meeting was adjourned at 3:15 p.m.