

JUNEAU COMMISSION ON AGING

City & Borough of Juneau

Minutes of Regular Meeting

April 9, 2015

CALL TO ORDER

The Commission met at the Senior Center. Chairperson MaryAnn VandeCastle called the meeting to order at 9:30 a.m. Other members present were: Mary Lou Spartz, Dixie Hood, Charles Wilson and Pat Watt. Cliff Cole was absent. Also attending were Assembly member Jerry Nankervis, Director of Parks and Recreation Kirk Duncan, Catholic Community Services' Marianne Mills who directs Southeast Senior Services, Mariana Moreno Goodwin, and Jim Nelson.

AGENDA; DECLARATION OF A QUORUM

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

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

The minutes for the regular meeting on March 12 were approved.

SPEAKER: KIRK DUNCAN, CBJ PARKS & RECREATION DIRECTOR

As the still new Director of Parks & Recreation, Mr. Duncan briefly reviewed his background in business and recreation management and consulting. In 1996, Kirk assisted in the design and construction of the Mt. Roberts Tram where he found that he really enjoyed Juneau. After a successful career aiding ailing ski resorts, he assumed the general manager position at Eaglecrest in 2004. After completing many physical, program, and financial improvements at Eaglecrest, Kirk took over as Public Works Director in 2011 and earlier this year became CBJ's Parks and Recreation Director. The department has responsibility for 2 aquatic facilities, an ice arena, a convention center, a youth center, youth and adult recreation programs, as well as maintenance of 56 parks and building maintenance for all city-owned facilities.

Mr. Duncan explained that last October the voters authorized the Assembly to establish an empowered Board (analogous to Eaglecrest) to operate the aquatic facilities. The Assembly will vote on an Ordinance to establish this Board on April 27. The Board would have 7 members appointed by the Assembly, and would be responsible for hiring and firing the Aquatics manager and would have fiduciary responsibility for managing the Aquatics budget. The top goal for Aquatics is to increase participation, and reduce the facilities' demands on the CBJ operating budget regardless of whether a new empowered Board is created or not. Participation has declined since a peak at the opening of the Dimond Park facility. At times the facilities are crowded, but at other times are sparsely used. A consultant has been hired to work with the Department and/or the Board over the next 6 months to develop recommendations for improving performance. If appointed, the selection process for Board members would be the same as for the other empowered Boards (Docks and Harbors, Bartlett Hospital, the Airport, and Eaglecrest. The PRAC (Parks and Recreation Advisory Committee) would continue its role in making overall recommendations to the Assembly for the Department's activities. The City

provides limited general fund support to Eaglecrest (and would to the Aquatics Board if appointed) because these recreational benefits add to the community's quality of life and attractiveness, and are helpful in drawing new – and keeping current - residents necessary to maintain or expand the local economy. Without support, the Juneau population is too small and isolated to sustain self-supporting operations of these types.

Mr. Duncan asked what Commission members felt should be parks and recreation priorities for seniors in the community. After some discussion, it became clear that low impact recreational activities are very important to seniors. This includes easy access to walking and swimming opportunities. A good trail and walking system with specified walking routes kept free of snow and ice in winter is desired. The possibility of designating certain sidewalk routes/ to be kept clear as walking loops in winter was mentioned – either through plowing and sanding, or sub-surface heating. Another concern of Commission members was the lack of benches along some routes for tired walkers to take an occasional rest on (for older residents and visitors alike). Mr. Duncan shared his contact information and asked those present to tell him of particulars of candidate areas for winter walking and or benches, and ideas for increasing swimming participation by seniors.

SPEAKER: MARIANNE MILLS, DIRECTOR OF SOUTHEAST SENIOR SERVICES

Along with a few hundred other invitees, although only a few from Alaska, Marianne attended the Western state regional conference in Seattle last week as part of the 2015 White House Conference on Aging. The first White House Conference on Aging was held in 1961, with subsequent conferences in 1971, 1981, 1995, and 2005. and the format changing over time. Ideas from these conferences helped establish Medicare, Medicaid, Social Security, and the Older Americans Act. Since Congress has not reauthorized the Older Americans Act nor provided funding for the 2015 Conference, the White House determined to nonetheless convene the gathering as cost-effectively as possible. Consequently, this year the conference was divided into 5 regional conferences, and public engagement is also being sought through social media, webinars, and other non-traditional methods.
(<http://www.whitehouseconferenceonaging.gov>).

Top concerns at the meeting were:

- **Retirement security:** Financial security in retirement provides essential peace of mind for older Americans, but requires preparation for retirement while still in the workforce.
- **Healthy aging:** As medical science advances, the opportunities for older Americans to maintain their health and vitality should also progress.
- **Long-term services and supports:** Older Americans overwhelmingly prefer to remain independent in the community as they age. They need supports to do so, including a caregiving network and well-supported workforce.
- **Elder justice:** Seniors, particularly the oldest, can be vulnerable to financial exploitation, abuse, and neglect. The Elder Justice Act was enacted as part of the Affordable Care Act, with a vision of protecting seniors from scam artists and others seeking to take advantage of them.

Another theme was the importance of seniors having in place an Advance Directive (Living Will and Durable Power of Attorney for Health Care) to provide guidance for medical and health-care decisions (such as the termination of life support and organ donation) in the event that a person becomes incompetent to make such decisions.as they move towards the end of life.

OLD BUSINESS

May is Older American's Month, and discussion continued from the Commission's prior meeting as to possible activities. MaryAnn checked out the cost of lunches if we were to hold such an event as discussed last time. The group felt it would be cost-prohibitive since it would likely be for 45-50 people since caregivers would be included. Perhaps we should look at doing this next year and seek donations well ahead of time. The requirements and parameters for advisory bodies doing fundraising activities need to be researched. Aside from cost, the group felt any event should be inclusive. MaryAnn and Mary Lou are working on 5 short PSAs for KTOO and the Radio Center, including one with the announcement in Tlingit.

NEW BUSINESS

Mary Lou Spartz is concerned about the Legislature's proposed cuts to the Senior Benefit Program. It is too late for the Commission to prepare something to ask the Assembly to act on the issue, but the state Commission on Aging is following this closely and acting as warranted.

Dixie Hood got a call from Rep Harriet Drummond regarding a hearing today on HB 99, known as the "Death with Dignity" Act. According to the Bill's sponsor (Rep Drummond" this would allow terminally ill patients to ease their suffering and hasten an inevitable and certain death.) This bill preserves dignity and a person's right to live, and die, on their own terms according to their own desires and beliefs. Oregon enacted the first "death with dignity" law in 1994 through a citizens approved ballot initiative. The Supreme Court upheld the law in 2006. Washington followed with another ballot vote in 2008. Vermont passed the first death with dignity law passed by a state legislature. Similar legislation has now sprung up in twenty-five other states. A copy of the bill is attached, for the Commission's information. It is expected that this bill will be held over to next session.

The kickoff meeting for getting input for an update to the Juneau Coordinated Human Services Transportation Plan is tomorrow, Friday, April 10. Pat Watt will attend the meeting to represent concerns identified by the Commission in the past. An online survey is also available, with a deadline of Friday, April 17. See <http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/juneautransit>.

Dixie reminded everyone that the deadline for removing studded tires is April 15, with a penalty for non-compliance.

CONCLUSION

The next meeting of the JCOA will be on May 14 at the Juneau Senior Center.

The meeting was adjourned at 11:27 a.m.