

JUNEAU COMMISSION ON AGING

City & Borough of Juneau

Minutes of Regular Meeting

September 11, 2014

CALL TO ORDER

The Commission met at the Senior Center. MaryAnn VandeCastle called the meeting to order at 9:32 am. Other members present: Elizabeth Terry, Pat Watt, Mary Lou Spartz, Dixie Hood, and Cliff Cole. Charles Wilson was absent. Also attending were Cheryl Putnam, Laura Lucas, and Elizabeth Cole.

DECLARATION OF A QUORUM

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

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

The minutes for the regular meeting on August 14 were approved.

PRESENTATION ON MUNICIPAL AND JUNEAU FINANCE, AND TAX EXEMPTIONS

Pat Watt presented an overview of municipal finance as it relates to Juneau and the issue of senior tax exemptions. (Attached is an outline of her presentation.) She highlighted the factors that Assembly members must grapple with during each biennial budget process.

- Juneau's unique situation: huge geography, broad range of services provided, and small population to support both of these.
- The services the community wants, the revenue sources that are within local control, and which revenue source to use in what manner.
- Fiscal policy must also consider equity (what's fair) and capacity (how much is available).
- The Assembly is working to identify a sustainable fiscal path into the future. Its Tax Exemption Subcommittee is meeting almost weekly to fully understand the options available to the City, as well as the potential ramifications of each option.
- Public input will be sought in the fall.

Pat reviewed options as it relates to senior exemptions. The cost to the city of these exemptions is so significant that the Assembly will most likely have to address them if it is to meet its goal of a financially sustainable future. Our Commission will be expected to advise the Assembly. Our task is to represent the needs of seniors, especially those who are less well off, whilst also bearing in mind the needs of the community as a whole.

PRESENTATION ON SENIOR ECONOMIC CIRCUMSTANCES

MaryAnn VandeCastle presented some information on the economic situation that Juneau seniors are in. Unfortunately reliable data is not available. The American Community Survey is conducted by the Census Bureau between the 10-year census counts. Its results are based on a sample and have a high margin of error. However, it is often the only data available. (A copy of MaryAnn's presentation is attached.)

PRESENTATION BY LAURA LUCAS ON THE AGING AND DISABILITY RESOURCE CENTER (ADRC).

SAIL is the designated agency in Southeast for operating the federal/state Aging & Disability Center. Laura Lucas is the ADRC Program Coordinator. Cheryl Putnam on the SAIL Board of Directors was also present at the meeting. The mission of the ADRC is to help seniors, those living with disabilities, and caregivers to access long-term supports in their community regardless of age or income. The goal of the program is to help people to live as independently as possible. Last fiscal year, the Southeast ADRC provided assistance to 1,369 individuals, representing 3,169 service contacts. 279 individuals were assisted through a one-time phone conversation. Laure estimated that 2/3 of individuals were female and perhaps up to 50% were seniors. The greatest needs expressed by seniors are for assisted living, affordable housing, and transportation. The ADRC is “where to go when you don’t know where to go” and SAIL offers a variety of different assistance including the following:

- Loan closet to lend durable medical equipment for a short time, or to try out (wheel chairs, walkers, crutches, etc.)
- Assistive technology items (magnifiers, pocket talkers, etc.)
- Consumer Service Fund to help with unaffordable purchases
- Referrals to experts, resources in other locations, grant opportunities, other organizations (e.g. Lions Club), help with filling out paperwork
- Taxi Vouchers
- Sign Language Interpreters
- Benefits counseling
- Home MAP assessments (Modifications for Aging in Place)
- Peer Counseling (support groups)
- Deinstitutionalization support to help people move back into community

OLD BUSINESS

Food Pantries. We are awaiting Charles’ report for the Salvation Army and Helping Hands. Once we have those, then the summary will be finalized and distributed. However, findings so far suggest that the food-bank/food-pantry system is failing to meet the food security needs of seniors.

Elder Caregiver. The Elder Caregiver program of the Tlingit Haida Central Council has been rescheduled from August 26 September 16. This will in ANB Hall at noon, 2nd floor conference room. MaryAnn and Liz will attend. This group is interested in potentially collaborating on a Senior Service Directory.

Resource Fair. The state Department of Health and Social Services Adult Protective Services Branch is holding a Resource Fair at the Mendenhall Library from 10am to 3pm on September 19. MaryAnn will attend, staff a COA table, and report back on what she learned.

NEW BUSINESS

Meetings: The Alaska Commission on Aging will be meeting in Fairbanks from September 15-18. The business meeting is accessible by teleconference. The toll-free number is 1-800-315-6338, pass code 53250#. Also, the Alaska COA has created an Alzheimers Roadmap and is putting together a task force to brainstorm ideas about how to implement it. Liz will participate remotely if she can. Immediately after our October meeting, Pat will drive to the meeting of the

Southeast chapter of the Retired Public Employees of Alaska. Their monthly meetings are on the same date as the Commission, but at 11:30am in the Valley. This group is concerned about senior tax exemptions.

Future Speakers: Today's *Juneau Empire* had a letter from the Statewide Suicide Prevention Council (see <http://juneauempire.com/letters/2014-09-11/letter-be-suicide-prevention-advocate-week-all-year>). Since seniors are at risk for suicide, a speaker on the topic would be good. Also, perhaps we might invite former Juneau COA member Marie Darlin to bring us up to date on the state Commission on Aging activities.

Candidates for Election: The group considered how it might best talk to candidates about senior concerns prior to the October 7 municipal elections. Three candidate forums are scheduled for the public to hear from those seeking Assembly or School Board seats.

- September 17, at UAS from noon to 1:30pm
- September 18, at the airport at 11:30am
- September 30, in the Assembly Chambers from 7pm to 9pm

It was decided to invite candidates for state office (who will be voted on at the November election) and the winners of the local election to come to our meeting on October 9. As usual, the public will be also invited.

CONCLUSION

The next meeting will be on Thursday, October 9, at 9:30am at the Senior Center.

The meeting adjourned at 11:40 am.