

JUNEAU COMMISSION ON AGING

City & Borough of Juneau

Minutes of Regular Meeting

April 8, 2014

CALL TO ORDER

The Commission met at the Senior Center. Chairperson MaryAnn VandeCastle called the meeting to order at 9:35 am. Other members present: Elizabeth Terry, Dixie Hood, Mary Lou Spartz, Pat Watt, Marie Darlin, Cliff Cole. Also attending were Elizabeth Cole, Mayor Merrill Sanford, Vice-Mayor Mary Becker, Assembly member Jerry Nankervis, and CBJ Finance Director Bob Bartholomew.

DECLARATION OF A QUORUM

It was declared that a quorum of members was present.

PUBLIC COMMENT

The Commission moved this portion of the agenda up to accommodate the schedules of the Mayor and Vice-Mayor who had come to address the Commission. Members of the Commission introduced themselves. The Mayor and Commission discussed the roles and relationships governing advisory bodies appointed by the Assembly. The purpose of advisory bodies is to provide input to the Mayor and Assembly. While there may be differences of opinion, it is important that those differences be aired albeit through the proper channels. Appointed advisory bodies act as a sounding board for the Mayor and Assembly, and their voices provide the Mayor and Assembly with the pulses of the various sectors of the community that the bodies represent. The Commission voiced a need for more staff support to assist with preparation of meeting packages, and other administrative tasks – noting that the Commission is often the repository for senior issues that arise between its regular meetings. The Clerk's office is incredibly helpful, but at times can be short-staffed. The Commission meetings and all official documents conveyed to the Assembly are public information, and as such are posted on the CBJ website's Commission on Aging web page (<http://ow.ly/vzUp4>).

PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION WITH BOB BARTHOLOMEW

CBJ Finance Director Bob Bartholomew overviewed historical and projected revenue from sales and property taxes. The foregone revenue as a result of the senior exemption from both taxes is significant.

The property tax exemption for seniors and disabled veterans is a requirement of state law, and represents an unfunded mandate. CBJ has implemented an optional additional hardship exemption. Currently, the property tax exemption "costs" the City about \$2.5 million in foregone revenue, up from \$1.5 million in 2006.

The sales tax exemption is a local option and defined in the CBJ Code. Administrative efficiency and enforcement are hampered by the reliance on paper records created by vendors. Some

9,000 tax exempt cards have been issued over time, but it is unknown how many are in active use – or to what extent the exemption might be being misused. The number of tax-exempt cards issued by CBJ is rising rapidly – from 312 in 2006 to 588 in 2013. (According to the Juneau Economic Development Council, Juneau’s current senior (over 65) population stands at 3,262.) Currently, the sales tax exemption “costs” the City about \$2.8 million in foregone revenue - up from \$1.3 million in 2006.

The combined “cost” of property and sales tax revenue as a result of the two senior tax exemptions is projected to rise to almost \$10 million by 2025.

To address current and projected budget issues, the administration and application of the sales tax exemption will need to be examined and potentially reconfigured. Commission members recommended that Ketchikan’s sales tax code be reviewed – it places limitations on the application of exemptions. It was also recommended that the Assembly seek broad public input prior to making major changes in its fiscal policy, especially as it relates to tax revenue.

REPORT ON RELATED MEETINGS AND CONTACTS

The Report from the Food Forum was distributed and next steps considered. For our next meeting, Liz will obtain the list of food pantries from the United Way. In conjunction with SAIL, Commission members will plan to see if there are accessibility issues that need to be addressed at any of the pantries.

OLD BUSINESS

To kick off May as Older American’s Month, the Alaska Commission on Aging is sponsoring a *Power of Aging* conference in Anchorage on May 1. Juneau’s Commission members were encouraged to attend. Details can be found on the Alaska Commission on Aging website (<http://ow.ly/vzTCC>). Similarly to last year, MaryAnn will work with Mary Lou to get some radio coverage. A draft proclamation will be forwarded to the Mayor for consideration by the Assembly.

Due to lack of time, review of 2014 Commission Goals was deferred, as were reports from meetings attended and contacts made since the last meeting.

NEW BUSINESS

The Juneau Economic Development Council received four proposals in response to its RFP to secure a vendor to conduct a demand assessment for assisted living facilities in Juneau. Once a contractor has been selected, the Commission will invite dialogue with the firm.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Due to lack of time, approval of minutes was deferred to the next meeting.

CONCLUSION

Next meeting will be on Thursday, May 8 at 9:30am at the Senior Center.

The meeting adjourned at 11:40 am.