

JUNEAU COMMISSION ON AGING

City & Borough of Juneau

Minutes of Regular Meeting

February 20, 2014

CALL TO ORDER

The Commission met at the Senior Center. Chairperson MaryAnn VandeCastle called the meeting to order at 9:37 am. Other members present: Cliff Cole, Marie Darlin, Dixie Hood, Mary Lou Spartz. Also attending was Jerry Nankervis, Borough Assembly member, and guest speaker Wayne Stevens, President/CEO of United Way of Southeast Alaska.

DECLARATION OF A QUORUM

It was declared that a quorum of members was present.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA AND MINUTES

The meeting agenda was approved with no changes. The January 9th meeting minutes were approved with several minor edits.

REPORT ON RELATED MEETINGS

Dixie reported on the Committee of the Whole meeting she attended with the intent to convey JCOA's comments on the proposed transit plan. No questions or comments were allowed at the meeting. However, Dixie was able to speak with a Juneau Empire reporter, and received some good newspaper coverage regarding our position that holiday service should be added to both Capital Transit and Care-A-Van service. Such a change would benefit seniors, employees of the big-box stores, and others. To add holiday service would cost an additional \$20,000 if service hours were the same as Sundays, or \$30,000 if service hours were the same as weekdays.

Mary Lou attended the Alaska Commission on Aging (ACOA) quarterly meeting the previous week. She and MaryAnn gave a brief scheduled talk to the Commission. They discussed our one-page 2014 data update on Juneau's growing senior population as

well as the Commission's activities of the past year and its future plans. Mary Lou, MaryAnn, Marie, Cliff (and Bette) attended the ACOA's senior community forum at the Juneau Senior Center on the morning of Feb. 11th. A summary of the issues discussed at the event was included in the meeting packet. This forum was part of the ACOA's process of gathering public input as they begin work on their next four-year State Plan for Senior Services.

Marie attended the ACOA member and senior community forum as an ACOA member. She was pleased with the turnout for the forum – about 25 people. The same format is used in all the communities around the State that the ACOA visits. ACOA members spent Wednesday of the previous week up on the hill, advocating for funding increases for the Family Caregiver Support program and the Nutrition, Transportation, and Support Services (NTS) program. The legislators were interested in the stories of family caregivers, as many of them have had this experience themselves. The needs of families dealing with ADRD (Alzheimer's Disease and Related Dementias) were also discussed. At its meeting, ACOA heard from a number of officials, such as DHSS Commissioner Bill Streur and Division of Senior & Disabilities Services Director Dwayne Mayes. Commissioner Streur collaborates especially well with the ACOA, Marie noted.

Dixie asked about support for Medicaid expansion, and other Affordable Care Act measures that could benefit seniors. Marie responded that the ACOA doesn't plan to oppose the Governor's position on the Medicaid expansion. MaryAnn believes the ACA Medicaid expansion actually would not affect seniors (at least those covered by Medicare) one way or the other. There is confusion on this issue, so we'll seek out more information about the ACA's impact on seniors.

PRESENTATION ON ALASKA 2-1-1 SYSTEM BY WAYNE STEVENS (United Way of Southeast Alaska)

The 211 program was mandated by Congress over a decade ago. In Alaska, it's run by the United Way. It's designed to be a single point of entry to the social services system. People who don't know where to start in finding information about available services can simply pick up the phone and dial 211. The aim is to connect people who have a need with the available resources to meet that need.

The program is run through United Way's Anchorage call center, located in the Anchorage emergency services center. They take the non-emergency calls, and are able to hot-transfer any emergencies to the Fairbanks Crisis Line. All operators are trained to work with callers and pass a certification in resources work. The 211 call center is open from 8:30 a.m. to 5 p.m., Monday through Friday. They have found that the vast majority of calls come in during those times. They have a website as well,

where information about available community services is listed. Any non-profit organization can be included in the data base. Listings are free. Agency information must be updated annually. There are 456 Southeast Alaska agencies listed. State and federal programs are also included in the data base.

Online, the services are listed by category, keyword, name, borough, or region. It CAN be confusing. They are considering providing training on how to use the website. It gets a fair amount of traffic.

They are currently trying to connect all food resources in Juneau, help to consolidate their efforts, and serve unmet needs. They are looking at possibly combining a summer breakfast program with reading, knowing that summer programs can help kids in consolidating skills. Various churches are tweaking their food programs.

We'll send Wayne an invitation to our upcoming Senior Food Forum.

At the present time the call center receives about 75 calls a day from Southeast Alaska. 80% of the calls are for referrals; 20% are for information ("where do I go to get...tax forms, adult basic education, etc.") Common call subjects include housing, food, shelter, and utility assistance. In an emergency, 211 works closely with 911, handling any non-emergency calls seeking information. The system is actually designed for much more phone traffic than it's getting.

Some of the frequent topics of inquiries from Southeast Alaska include utility payments, food pantries, subsidized rental housing, rental payment assistance, community clinics, the Aging & Disability Resource Center (ADRC), and general health information, including Affordable Care Act questions. However, ACA navigator services are not included in the 211 system – it's "too much of a moving target." There is a navigator at the hospital several afternoons a week, and a permanent navigator office located at NAMI's office.

Marie noted that we can help Southeast organizations get themselves listed on the system. We'll be doing some radio spots for Older Americans Month in May – we can plug 211 for both local residents and service organizations. We will also be putting together a senior and caregiver resources brochure and web page.

Juneau Commission on Aging members will test out the 211 system in the coming months with our questions related to senior issues. We'd want to be sure the system is functioning well on these questions before promoting it to seniors.

OLD BUSINESS

MaryAnn reported that the printer she consulted with (Commercial Signs) to get an estimate for the cost of the senior/caregiver services brochure convinced her that a simple tri-fold brochure on regular-weight paper would be much cheaper to print and mail than the original folded card-stock sheet we had discussed. The total budget request for printing and mailing (using the City's bulk mail permit) came to a little over \$5,000. It has been submitted; we'll be notified when the Assembly decides whether to authorize the funding.

Mary Lou suggested we check with Capital Copy if we do receive the funding. They may be able to offer a good rate on the printing. We should keep an eye on the Finance Committee's schedule regarding budget decisions.

We'll review our 2014 goals at the next meeting. MaryAnn will prepare a proposed list of our goals for the year for others to respond to.

NEW BUSINESS

Marie told the group about an upcoming Power of Aging Conference which the Alaska Commission on Aging is planning to hold in Anchorage on May 1st. There will be four panels of speakers, on topics such as housing, financial security, etc. They want individual seniors to attend, not just providers. The Governor has been invited. Conoco Phillips is one of the sponsors. AHFC will be paying for the lunch. They're still working out the details – Marie will keep us posted. They're not sure yet about whether they'll be able to sponsor travel costs for out-of-town participants.

Dixie noted that public input is now being invited on massive proposed increases in Juneau's water and sewer rates. There should be a hardship exemption available, or an across-the-board exemption for all those age 65+, similar to the sales tax exemption. Seniors (most of whom are on fixed incomes) could be grandfathered in to current rates. MaryAnn will check on the dates input will be accepted, and will prepare a response on behalf of JCOA, running it by Dixie before sending it in.

Next meeting date: We'll stick with March 13th, our regular second-Thursday meeting date.

The meeting adjourned at 11:30.