

## SENIOR AFFAIRS COMMISSION

### MINUTES OF THURSDAY, JANUARY 15, 2009

**COMMISSIONERS PRESENT:** Chairperson Paley, Vice Chairperson Kinsella, Commissioners Britschgi, Cooperman, Jones, Simon, and Truscelli

**COMMISSIONERS ABSENT:** None

**STAFF PRESENT:** Parks, Recreation & Community Services Superintendent Chris Beth, Linda Griffith, Bruce Utecht, Kathy Bede

**GUESTS PRESENT:** Mayor Rosanne Foust, Vice Mayor Diane Howard, Council Member Barbara Pierce, Claire Apffel, Former Mayor Brett Britschgi, Zena Vigileos, Alan Yosef, Dennis and Hector Berglund, Leona Cassidy, Maxine Cottrill, Jean Lawler, Danny Sanchez, Lynette Allen, Pina Truscelli, Cecelia Harris, Alice Pease, Jack Berghouse, Linda Kowalski, Rita & Phil Brox, Jim Celloti, Ray O'Dell, Jean Greenberg, Fred Dutch, Sylvia Vonderlinden

Following lunch at the Veterans Memorial Senior Center, prior to the regular meeting of the Senior Affairs Commission, Vice Mayor Diane Howard and Mayor Rosanne Foust presented their State of the City Address.

#### **ITEM 1 – Redwood City State of the City Address (Summary) - Vice Mayor Diane Howard and Mayor Rosanne Foust**

Vice Mayor Howard and Mayor Foust spoke of the prudent financial decisions the Council has made over the years to maintain a balanced budget with adequate reserves to provide a high level of service for Redwood City residents even in these difficult economic times.

The City faced significant challenges in 2008. One of the toughest was the development of Downtown Precise Plan. The Northern California Chapter of the American Planning Association awarded Redwood City's Downtown Plan with its 2008 Comprehensive Planning Award. The plan is now stalled in the legal system. The City Council is aggressively pursuing an effort to get the Precise Plan EIR reinstated and moving forward.

The City also faced a contentious election this past year surrounding the Cargill properties. Time must now be spent mending the wounds created by that confrontation.

Redwood City, like all cities, sustained investment losses in the wake of the global economic upheaval. It will be a tough challenge providing high level community service with declining sales and property taxes and a fiscally irresponsible state government.

Though 2008 was difficult, Redwood City has accomplishments to be proud of. We have a new City Manager with experience, leadership and commitment to community building. His office helped launch the Environmental Initiative Program which focuses on long term sustainability and creating a healthy environment.

The City assisted 10 companies to become certified in the County's Green Business Program. The Neighborhood Liaison Program has renewed commitment to our neighborhoods by strengthening bonds to build stronger communities with workshops, meetings and trainings.

Redwood City's commitment to the environment continued with the progression of the recycled water project, the new free shuttle program, landscape water management, free home energy audits, and rebates on high efficiency appliances.

The Community Development Services Department, which includes planning, engineering, housing, redevelopment, building and code enforcement, worked with the Library team to open the new Redwood Shores Library. They are also working to develop the New General Plan.

In 2008, Downtown was the site of 116 public events with over 80,000 visitors and an estimated \$1.4 million in revenues. Courthouse Square was awarded the 2008 Project of the Year by the American Public Works Association and the Award of Excellence from the California Redevelopment Association.

Parks, Recreation and Community Services continued to provide concerts, art shows, theatre performances, outdoor movies and dance events. The Department also completed the installation of new synthetic turf at Sandpiper and Marlin Parks, developed after school programs that serve over 900 children at seven school sites, and received three Statewide Awards of Excellence from California Parks and Recreation Society.

Finance Director Brian Ponty was commended for his expertise and dedication in guiding the City through these difficult economic times. The Police and Fire Departments are protecting us very well and providing valuable safety programs to the community.

2009 will bring many opportunities and challenges. The City Council will be discussing the new 5 year Strategic Plan priorities for Redwood City. They include youth and education, economic development, and government operations as goals and objectives. An Annual Report will be issued that is tied to specific and measurable goals. We are facing a fiscal challenge with a 20% threshold of approximately \$23 million in reserve. The infrastructure of the business community is critical for the City to provide the quality of services.

One opportunity is to complete the New General Plan by the end 2009. A challenge is the Downtown Precise Plan lawsuit. The City is committed to resolving differences that have arisen from it.

Another opportunity is the high speed rail bond that recently passed. It is an 8 segment project that will run from Northern California through the Central Valley to Los Angeles and beyond. Cal Train, San Mateo County Transit District, Joint Powers Authority, Transportation Authority, business organizations and 17 cities are involved from downtown San Francisco to Gilroy. A scoping session is starting for the environmental impact report. Redwood City may be one of two high speed rail stops on the mid peninsula, as well as Millbrae, San Francisco and San Jose. It could bring jobs and infrastructure and needs to be thoroughly evaluated.

Another challenge is the many retirements that are expected in Redwood City, San Mateo County, and California. The Human Resources Department is planning for new retirees and seeking new qualified staff.

Economic Development is also an opportunity to keep Redwood City businesses and the community happy and profitable so they can contribute to our general fund and tax base. We also need to support current businesses and new green jobs to promote growth.

The downtown cinema/retail complex is another challenge. The empty downtown store fronts are a concern. The Council is committed to figuring out how to help property owners fill empty spaces.

Another opportunity is opening of Stanford Medical at the old Excite @ Home site in February 2009 with 400 new people on that campus. Stanford University would like to develop the connecting parcel for offices. The challenge is that current zoning does not now permit that. The City will need to review the feasibility of changing the zoning.

More opportunity and challenges are capital projects like a new senior center and playing fields for the Redwood City community. In the current economic climate, public and private partnerships are probably needed to accomplish such projects. Business and non profits donate to local charities and schools. We need to consider how they affect the community.

The Cargill property is 1,400 acres of opportunity and challenge. There are very different views about what should be done with it. The Council has been asked to consider that site separately from the General Plan. They will look into it and carefully evaluate all options to try to come to the best decision for the whole community.

2009 will be a very full year. Redwood City pride is important for everyone to participate in, especially during these challenging times. Businesses, individuals and government, working with hope and respect, can improve the Redwood City community together.

At the conclusion of Mayor Foust's address, the regular meeting of the Senior Affairs Commission was called to order by Chairperson Paley at 1:45 p.m. in the Redwood Room of the Veterans Memorial Senior Center, 1455 Madison Avenue, Redwood City, California.

## **APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

**M/S Paley/Kinsella: To approve the November 13, 2008 minutes as mailed.  
Motion passed.**

**CORRESPONDENCE:** None

**ORAL COMMUNICATIONS: Chairperson Paley introduced Past Mayor Brett Britschgi and thanked him for attending the meeting.**

## **ITEM 2 – ELECTION OF OFFICERS**

**M/S Cooperman/Jones: To nominate Commissioner Barbara Britschgi as Vice Chairperson of the Senior Affairs Commission.  
Motion passed.**

**M/S Simon/Cooperman: To nominate Vice Chairperson Joe Kinsella as Chairperson of the Senior Affairs Commission.  
Motion passed.**

Newly elected Chairperson Kinsella thanked the Commissioners and staff for their support and expressed hope in the new national leadership and its appeal for community service.

### **ITEM 3 – WORK PLAN REVIEW & FOCUS TOPICS**

A Work Plan Review was distributed to all Commissioners and staff. Chairperson Kinsella asked if anyone had any comments about it.

Parks and Recreation Superintendent Chris Beth announced that Linda Griffith would help out for a couple of months through the transition. The Community Services Manager position is expected to be filled by the middle or end of February. He assured the Commission that their work plan will be part of the new manager's work as well and there is a commitment to working together with the Senior Affairs Commission.

Vice Chairperson Britschgi stated that she appreciated the work plan preparation day and going over all the various topics, though it was overwhelming.

Chairperson Kinsella suggested that all Commissioners review the material for a discussion at the next meeting, and particularly to come up with achievable goals within their designated areas of interest.

Linda Griffith recommended going over the items to confirm the Commissioners' interests and discuss how to implement those ideas.

Commissioner Cooperman commented that the many items listed as Goals and Objectives need to be prioritized into fewer, more concrete items and discuss how the Commission would work with the Council for realistic achievement.

Commissioner Truscelli questioned whether some of the items listed in the work plan were appropriate for the Senior Affairs Commission to undertake.

Vice Mayor Howard suggested that the City Manager's office be contacted and asked that any legislation pertaining to seniors be sent to the Senior Center staff so they can bring it to the Commission's attention.

Commissioner Simon commented that some of the items listed could be collaborative efforts with other groups that the Senior Affairs Commission might help facilitate.

### **ITEM 4 - PROGRAM UPDATES**

#### **-Veterans Memorial Senior Center – Bruce Utecht**

- Several lectures are scheduled in January:
  - Weight Loss - 1/5/09 - Free
  - Memory Screening - \$25.00 – filling up fast
  - Financial Safety for Seniors – 1/21/09 – Free
- Love is in the Air Dinner Dance – February 13<sup>th</sup>, 6:00 – 9:00 p.m., cost is \$25.00 each

#### **-Fair Oaks Senior Center - Zena Vigileos**

- The health and wellness model has been adopted at Fair Oaks with classes in Tai Chi, Yoga and Soul Line Dancing, which is very popular.
- Free healthy breakfasts are being provided every morning at 10:00 a.m.
- Funding of senior programs is of serious concern in this current economic crisis and need to be more of a priority.

- Free quarterly diabetes blood screening will begin in February. Diabetes is very prevalent throughout the senior community.

### **Announcements**

-Commissioner Jones announced a Senior Center Stakeholder Forum in Sacramento on February 4, 2009 and provided registration forms to all those interested in attending. She also thanked Bruce for providing Fair Oaks Senior Center with free banjo entertainment for Valentines Day. Commissioner Jones commended the Rotary Club for its dedication to the seniors of the Fair Oaks community. They are assisting in the Brown Bag Program by delivering to food to those in need and reporting back any observance of concern that may be encountered in doing so. The Rotary Club has also paid for holiday programs as well as volunteered and served lunches at the Fair Oaks Senior Center.

-Alan Yosef reported that the TRIPS Program contract was extended to June 30, 2010. Last month, 17 seniors were served by the program in 310 trips for an average of 4.7 miles per trip and a total of 1,500 miles. The shuttle is not affecting the TRIPS program because the seniors who use the program are too frail to make use of the shuttle van.

-Linda Griffith reported that Tom Passinisi and the Planning Commission were very pleased that the Senior Affairs Commission and Housing and Human Concerns Committee had met in a joint session recently and hope to continue working together to address senior housing needs.

-Vice Chairperson Britschgi addressed the Senior Affairs Commission's involvement in the Housing Element of the General Plan. Commissioner Cooperman suggested attending other board and commission meetings.

### **Items for Next Month's Agenda**

1. Further discussion of Work Plan Review
2. Friends of the Veterans Memorial Senior Center Board of Directors

### **Adjournment**

The regular meeting of the Senior Affairs Commission was adjourned at 2:30 p.m. It will be reconvened at 1:00 p.m. on Thursday, February 12, 2009 at the Redwood Shores Library, Room D, 399 Marine Parkway, Redwood City, California.