

SENIOR AFFAIRS COMMISSION

MINUTES OF THURSDAY, APRIL 9, 2009

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

COMMISSIONERS ABSENT: Commissioner Truscelli

STAFF PRESENT: Bruce Utecht and Kathy Bede

GUESTS PRESENT: Alan Josef, Merrylen Sacks, Susan Houston and Zena Vigileos

The regular meeting of the Senior Affairs Commission was called to order by Chairperson Kinsella at 1:00 p.m. at the Fair Oaks Senior Center, 2600 Middlefield Road, Redwood City, California.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

M/S: Cooperman/Jones: To approve the March 12, 2009 minutes as written. Motion passed.

ITEM 1 – CIVIC ENGAGEMENT – GETTING COMMUNITY INVOLVED IN SENIOR AFFAIRS – Merrylen Sacks

Merrylen Sacks reported that the senior population is growing rapidly. People now may have 20-40 years of retirement and most want to stay active during that time. Volunteering provides civic engagement by helping and working for improvement in the community. Volunteers are recruited through 'Volunteer Match', emails, the chamber of commerce, newspapers and newsletters. Serving on committees, teaching and project based activities often appeal to recent retirees and high school students. It was recommended that a list of the specific skills needed for volunteer positions be included in job descriptions. New volunteers want meaningful work, learning experiences, their talents and skills to be recognized, intergenerational and diverse experiences and social continuity.

ITEM 2 – WORK PLAN & FOCUS TOPICS REVIEW – Joe Kinsella

The Senior Affairs Commissioners decided in previous meetings what their individual areas of interest and focuses would be for the coming year. Chairperson Kinsella explained what he had done to research and improve conditions for one of his concerns, the senior homeless population. His focus was to gather information for homeless or at risk seniors. He met with the staff at the Main Street Shelter, Bruce Utecht, manager of the Veterans Memorial Senior Center, and Teri Chin, manager of the Fair Oaks Community Center about services for homeless seniors and resources available to them in Redwood City.

He learned that directories and handbooks are issued by county agencies and that most homeless seniors with needs are usually referred to Fair Oaks Community Center for assistance. He then composed an 'Introduction to Senior Homeless Issues' which states some of the particular needs of that population and some sources of general resource information.

His next step is to extract from the various publications only the information pertinent to this particular population. The objective is to provide a concise resource guide to homeless or at risk seniors that addresses the primary issues of significance for them.

Chairperson Kinsella stated that his purpose in presenting his findings today is to lead by example. He encouraged his fellow commissioners to develop their own areas of interest. He invited them to contact him to discuss possible steps for taking those fields to the next level.

ITEM 3 – FACILITY SUBCOMMITTEE REPORT – Joe Kinsella

Chairperson Kinsella reported that the consultant for the new senior center building is finishing the draft document which states what is wanted to achieve through this facility and what the building will look like. It should be available within next few weeks and sent to the Parks and Recreation Department. A meeting will then be scheduled for the working group to review and comment on the draft. Once those comments are included in the document it will be presented at either the May or June Senior Affairs Commission meeting for their comments. It will then go back to the Parks and Recreation committee.

The content of the presentation is in development. The project will not be included in the capital improvement program. The plan is to design a facility with the preferred features and then make adjustments to that design according to the economic realities of its development.

ITEM 4 – TRANSPORTATION UPDATE – Jodi Paley

Commissioner Paley reported that the commuter shuttle has been operating for two years now. June will be the one year anniversary of the mid day shuttle. Though no figures are currently available, the use of the free city shuttle has increased and the use of the VMSC van with a \$1.00 fare has decreased. The VMSC will have a new van in use in the coming weeks which may attract new riders. The VMSC van transports seniors between their homes and the senior center. The city shuttle transports passengers in Redwood City, primarily east of El Camino Real and south of Woodside Road. Redi-wheels service to Fair Oaks has improved recently.

Alan Yosef reported that TRIPS has been operating for 2 years. Since the inception of the program providing volunteer drivers for frail elders, 5,148 rides have been provided to 69 riders for a total of 22,499 miles.

ITEM 5 – DOWNTOWN SENIOR DISCOUNT PLANNING – Barbara Britschgi

Vice Chairperson Britschgi reported that she and Commissioner Simon met with PRCS Superintendent Chris Beth and Lucas Wilder regarding the possibility of having some senior discount offers downtown. A ‘Senior Sundae’ was planned for August 23, 2009. Big band music from the 1930s and 1940s will play, parking downtown on Sundays is free and Young’s Ice Cream will be contacted to help with the event. Ideas for the event need to be presented before June.

She also reported that more free parking areas will probably not be made available downtown because of the expense involved. The idea of seniors be able to purchase parking permits is being considered. Some free parking is available now and validation is also available.

PROGRAM UPDATES

-Veterans Memorial Senior Center – Bruce Utecht

Bruce Utecht announced that April 16th the VMSC will celebrate Volunteer Appreciation Day with guest speakers, an entertainment program presented by the staff and provide a free luncheon to all invited volunteers in attendance.

-Fair Oaks Senior Center – Zena Vigileos

Susan Houston, of Family Service Agency, announced that a proposal was sent asking for the help of Stanford Business school first year graduate students to conduct a study of focus on baby boomers, how to outreach to them, what needs they will have and to develop a marketing plan. They will make a presentation to the board of Family Service in May. One of the findings of previous studies is that the more volunteers are involved in services the better programs are. She will inform the Senior Affairs Commission of the results of the study.

Zena Vigileos reported that they've been working on applied research for the last few months. They are conducting a second round of surveys to analyze patrons who have participated in the wellness model to study their progress from the start of the programs to now and how they have benefited. The statistics will be analyzed and used with the Stanford fellows to document what is currently being done and what needs to be done. Both strengths and weaknesses will be revealed.

Announcements

Commissioner Simon reported that she had attended the San Mateo Health Plan meeting held at Fair Oaks as well the recent Housing and Human Concerns Committee meeting.

Items for Next Month's Agenda

- Updates on items discussed at this meeting and a guest speaker

Adjournment

The regular meeting of the Senior Affairs Commission was adjourned at 2:20 p.m. It will be reconvened at 1:00 p.m. on Thursday, May 14, 2009 at the Veterans Memorial Senior Center, 1455 Madison Avenue, Redwood City, California.