

Senior Citizens Advisory Commission

Meeting Minutes: July 15, 2014

Jordan Conference Room, 11:00 am

Attendees: Chair Brett Seekins, William Marshall, Bruce Nelson, June O'Neill, Barbara Page. Excused: Pat Bredenberg, Elizabeth Baillie

Visitors: Russell Packett, Director of Cape Elizabeth Community Services, Sarah MacColl, Community Services Advisory Commission

Staff: Matthew Sturgis

1. Chair Seekins called the meeting to order at 11:02.
2. The minutes of the prior meeting were reviewed; motion to accept the minutes made by Barbara Page, seconded by William Marshall, unanimous approval.
3. Chair Seekins introduced Sarah MacColl and Russell Packett from Cape Elizabeth Community Services. Chair Seekins explained to Russell and Sarah whom the Commission have met with so far. He explained the Commission is interested in speaking and working with Community Services. It is in the hopes of meeting with the different groups that the Commission may answer their charge with useful information. The senior concerns identified so far are isolation, nutrition, transportation, but not much in the areas of collaboration. There are multiple silos and independent players looking to enrich people's lives, but not coordinated. Chair Seekins and June O'Neill have spoken with Jen DeRice specifically about the upcoming senior expo planned.
 - a. Russell Packett and Sarah MacColl introduced themselves and entered into a conversation with the Commission. Russell Packett explained that Community Services offers health and fitness opportunities for the community, but there are challenges in reaching out to seniors, and to seniors with limited income and without transportation resources.
 - b. In the past a senior discount had been offered but fiscal reasons made it go away. There are "scholarships" available, not for just the young but for all age groups. The discount issue came back up during the budget cycle, with the Cape Elizabeth Town Council placing \$10,000 in the budget of Community Services for funding the senior discount. Community Services does not think that it was not the most effective use of funds, as the funding could be applied for transportation, additional programming, and benefit the community at large.
 - c. Russell Packett explained that when it came to addressing the discount it was recommended for Community Services to speak with the Senior

Citizen Advisory Commission on a recommendation for its use. With the new brochure about to be printed, they would like the group's input.

- d. Bill Marshall asked what was the discount was based on? Russell Packett explained it was an age based discount for being over 62, not means based just age only. The argument made by seniors opposed to the elimination of the program was that it was not about the cost, but about a feeling of being disrespected.
- e. Barbara Page said she just learned about the scholarships, and that they are means based. Russell Packett confirmed that they are means based as the funds are part of the Thomas Jordan fund and there are specific guidelines to its disbursement. Barbara Page responded that she found out about the scholarships by chance, and that most of her neighbors do not know that they are available. She also stated there used to be transportation for recreation, but that it was not well used. But her thought was that if more information on scholarships was available then seniors may use it as a resource. To this point Russell Packett responded that perhaps a use of the \$10,000 would be to fund senior specific scholarships.
- f. William Marshall asked if the \$10,000 came from the Jordan Trust. Russell Packett responded that no, it was tax funds. To that end, Russell Packett stated that the Community Services budget was \$1.7 million, with \$465 thousand coming from tax dollars and the remainder from user fees.
- g. Sarah MacColl spoke about the Advisory Commission. She explained that the Commission looks at the "bigger picture" and the discount was a trigger that showed there were greater needs for seniors and how budgeting needs to work. The organization also wants to add needs meeting programs that provide for the most people, and the discount takes away from that ability.
- h. There was discussion among the Commission and its guests regarding the discount. Some thought the idea of a discount out of respect as not a compelling reason. If there was an inability to pay due to fixed income then maybe a means tested discount, as there was a statement regarding the fixed income argument as being a fallacy. One additional thought was that if the services discount was means based then seniors may not explore it as divulging income information could be embarrassing and considered an intrusion. Some older residents pay high property taxes and feel that this may be a way to get a return from them as they are not high volume users of services like schools. With a high cost of living and a tax burden, senior services should have additional funding.
- i. There was also discussion along the concept of use of funds, where there should be funding for transportation and / or programming for seniors.

Such planning should also take into account the economic diversity of the community. Also there may be a reluctance to apply for scholarships as it may be considered a hardship.

- j. The conversation again came back to the discount for seniors. Russell Packett thought that results on attracting seniors would improve if there was access and the ability to fund programming and it could be better way to spend the \$10,000. He would like a recommendation from the Commission on the best use of funds. June O'Neill pointed out that you can't offer a discount and then take it away, that would be problematic. Chair Seekins pointed out that Community Services may want to look at additional funding for bus out of the trust fund, as that could be a significant expense. Sarah MacColl inquired of the ability to phone conference with the Council Liason to ask what is the best use of the funds, other than a discount.
 - k. There was an additional general discussion that the financial question is coming forward. Specifically challenging is an educational budget that increases with a decreasing enrollment. Meanwhile there is an increasing enrollment of senior population. Community Services is a large component of the senior question and the Commission looks forward to further conversation.
4. Senior Expo. Does the Commission want to do the Expo with Community Services? The Expo is planned for the week after the date planned by the Commission. Does the Commission want to co-sponsor? Biddeford had 1,000 people at their event.

William Marshall stated that it would be good to have the Council's consent to co-sponsor. Bruce Nelson would not be opposed to being an attendee / vendor, but not co-sponsor. June O'Neill explained that it would be more like a trade show, with vendors and service providers. Chair Seekins pointed out that it is an opportunity for greater participation from the public. The Commission may get better results from more people, and that a lesser capacity may be wise.

The Commission did not decide at what level of involvement to have. Chair Seekins will reach out to Councilman Walsh and ask his thoughts on what level, if any, the Commission should be involved with the Expo. Also, he will ask if the Commission should get involved with the decision on Senior Discount, as most felt it was beyond the purview of the Commission.

- 5. Next Meeting: The next meeting will be July 22, 2014, 11 am, in the Council Chambers.
- 6. The meeting adjourned at 1:05 pm.