

**Aging Readiness Task Force
Meeting #9 – September 15, 2011
Clark County Public Services Center
Hearing Room #680
2:00 – 4:00 P.M.**

Member Attendees: Bob Holdridge, Bob Watkins, C.T. Thurston, Colleen Kuhn, Erica Dahmen, Erica Kelly, Gail Haskett, Jesse Dunn, Karin Woll, Kathy McLaughlin, Kiersten Ware, Lisa Rasmussen, Roger Jarvis, Todd Martin

Members Absent: Bud Van Cleve, Cory Bolkan, Dexter Garey, Ed Rankin, Erik Schott, Jada Rupley, Jan Wyninger, Jim Wilson, Marti Sanders, Mike Teefy, Steve Goff

Guests: Bill Turlay, Chuck Frayer, Dave Kelly, Ed Horsfall, Karen Evans, Klaus Micheel, Larry Smith, Melissa Crocker, Vicki Vanneman

Staff: Commissioner Boldt, Bill Barron, Colete Anderson, Jacqui Kamp, Oliver Orjiako, Mary Beth O'Donnell

Jesse Dunn opened the meeting at 2:00 by welcoming guests, elected officials and staff. A motion was made to approve the minutes as presented for the August 11 meeting. Motion was seconded and unanimously approved.

The agenda was reviewed. Jesse asked for public comment and there was none at this time.

The first item of business was task force approval of recommendations for the plan document. It was moved and seconded to approve the recommendations. Discussion of the recommendation follows.

Commissioner Boldt thanked everyone for their time, the incredible experience, and the wealth of knowledge which the committee brought to the table. He thanked Oliver and staff who have done so much between the meetings and on the final document. This is a new era and the first step in good things to come. It will be lived for generations.

Bob Holdridge distributed an issue paper he wrote to the group. He supports adding a recommendation for a continuation of the task force, or a community communication group in some form, to get the word out to the public. His paper hints at a doomsday coming based on what's happening in Washington and Olympia and the available resources. He believes we have to educate the community or this work will end up on a shelf and never get put to use.

Lisa agreed there's been a tremendous amount of work done, but now the hard part is how to get the word out to the community. It's important to know what the community wants and thinks before the task force goes before the Board. We have to know we're all on the same page and whole-heartedly believe in the recommendations. There is a short time frame to do this. She is asking the committee to spread the word through their churches, people in the community, and all contacts.

David Kelly thanked Commissioner Boldt for hearing the idea and following up on what he felt was an important task. He is the person who took up the mantle to look at aging in our communities. It is an honor for us to have that type of leadership from an elected official that says I'd like our community to do this. Also, to Bill Barron who had the foresight to work with the other commissioners who approved a look at this. Oliver, Colete and Jacqui have done a great job moving forward with the issues. Reading the recommendations, it seems we've hit on something that is really important. There are so many issues that are parallel and will affect the seniors in our community. Our society will have to react to the types of things that aging brings. Health, transportation, housing are all areas that will be impacted by the aging population. Now we have a blueprint so we can judge future activities and how we're doing. The task force members came with their ideas and thoughts and they've been captured in a very positive way.

Karin commented that between the Columbian and the various publications in Clark County, it would be helpful to publish an article on what the task force has been doing over the last year. Also let the people know about the public forum where the plan will be presented.

A suggestion was made to place more emphasis in the plan on health and wellness and not so much on general decrepitude.

Following that, a motion was made to amend and/or expand the recommendations for the healthy communities and supportive services chapters, to promote the emphasis on wellness and healthy lifestyles. This motion was seconded and unanimously approved by the task force.

Jesse called for a final vote to approve the recommendations, as amended. The vote was unanimously approved.

Discussion was opened on the future role of the task force in continuing with the implementation of the plan in the community. Comments were as follows.

Lisa has talked with members of the task force and other community partners and concludes there is a need for a commission resulting from this task force. It would be an ongoing commission, not just for the next year, or even five years. It should be championed by someone and the success will be determined by how it's constructed. We have awesome champions in Commissioner Boldt, Bill, Oliver and staff so that would be one place to start. Secondly, look at task force members and see who is willing to join knowing it's going to be a long process. She proposes that other agencies in the community are also involved to ensure its effectiveness, as well as members of the general public. Having the public workshops and meetings on weekdays between 9:00 AM and 5:00 PM excluded a huge part of the population that has to work. There are willing volunteers to help from 6:00 PM on, or on the weekends. Besides the county, we need buy in from the cities, agencies and all the community. We need solidarity and substance, something similar to the Planning Commission.

Someone made a recommendation that the county commissioners create a bona-fide commission called Elderly Services, for example. There might be resource problems because eventually a commission needs a staff or a person, and other costs come up. If we had a saleable item, perhaps we could come up with resources. In the beginning we wouldn't need to be a budget, it would be manned with volunteers.

Commissioner Boldt agreed. From the beginning, he envisioned the group would run the show with his assistance and the staff. This group is unique, unlike any other commission that the county has, due to the experience of its members. He thinks it would be good to be there to assist. There are people from the city present today, which is a key that we need to bring in the cities. As the cities annex, they are going to be a majority of the county and a majority needing services. He thanked city council member Larry Smith for his participation and hoped that the other cities would embrace this.

Councilman Larry Smith was asked for his input. He feels the task is extremely important as everyone is faced with an aging population that impacts the services provided. He would like to see some type of an advisory group that is countywide that feeds back to the various cities. From an affordability standpoint that's probably the best way to go. Most cities provide the urban services more than the county does in certain cases.

Lisa believes the commission needs to be made up of representatives from the city, county agencies such as public health and community services, C-Tran and the like so when they advise or recommend there is community power. It also helps the Commissioners make policy changes. Larry said make sure the advisory group spells out its specific purpose so false expectations regarding resources aren't created. There are various groups looking for resources and not everyone gets what they ask for. It needs to be a cooperative body.

Gail Haskett feels there's a need for action rather than a need for a lot of advice. They should take responsibility for action, not be 90% advisory. That's because people need to make a commitment for

action, not just leave it up to the politicians. Her proposal, along with what Lisa said, is to focus on what action we can take. Form a small group like a steering committee and create a mission statement for its future with specific things that they can accomplish on their own. They would have influence on the city council or other groups with a cohesive message of specific ideas on how things can be done, not just advice that they want it done. Make it a powerful group that could accomplish things without waiting for others to accomplish them. Form subcommittees with action responsibilities then bring those to the city council or commissioners with ideas. Looking for funding right now is not a good idea as there are lots of people competing for money. We have to put some teeth behind it which doesn't always involve money; it involves time, good planning and implementation. A steering committee of 5-7 could get together, hash out what can be accomplished if this is a possibility, and come back with job descriptions for different committees that support the mission statement. Gail is willing to be part of it. She is on the vulnerable adult task force which aided in the elder justice center being formed.

Bill Barron reminded the group what they've just accomplished. The task force has a mission statement, a multi-faceted plan (which was just approved) and recommendations that are well documented and worked through. Now it will be vetted with the public and presented to the Commissioners bringing it to a place where implementation becomes very important. That's what you want to talk about now. The Commissioners invested in this because they wanted to hear what you had to say about this new public policy issue. You've done a marvelous job.

We have a model in place in the Center for Community Health, combining two county governmental districts. We built a new facility and they're functioning well. When that happened, the Board adopted the public health advisory committee who advises them on matters of public health. Advisory is not a bad word. You're advising the elected body of the largest jurisdiction in the county, the Board of County Commissioners, on a significant subject. These resources cost tax payers' dollars. Taxes were raised 1/10th of 1% as a result of the need expressed by the advisory board. Over the next two years, this goes to the Public Health Department. People representing various walks of life in this specific public policy area have come together and to say this is how we think it should be done. This is public policy making from the grass roots up.

How do we implement? We looked to the model of Arlington County VA. They wrote an implementation plan, a framework for implementing the very plan that you've done. Something to think about is having Commissioner Boldt take it to the Board, write an implementation plan, and then it becomes a matter of who implements it and where the money come from. One of the names mentioned is Vanessa Gaston, Department of Community Services Director. There may be capacity for delivering aging readiness services within the existing structure. Not within existing resources, but the possibility exists for the Board to look at what already exists and at least evaluate the feasibility of taking an implementation plan, giving it to an existing county department (countywide in scope) for delivery of services, or coordination of delivery of services. In the Community Services department we don't take on a lot of staff but contract services out. It is an efficient and effective method which gets most of the services to the most clients we can serve. We're a subdivision of the state which has the ultimate policy making authority, but this Board counts on the public constituency to implement that policy and authority. Bill thinks this will carry huge weight with the Board, not only in what's being recommended, but in how it gets implemented.

Additional task force comments:

Karin Woll: One of the reasons the task force has been successful is because we've always had a focus and a plan from the beginning. As an ongoing commission, our first focus is to assist and aid the county in implementation of this plan. This gives us an absolute reason for being. She would like to see the commission become a clearing house or voice for seniors to talk about aging issues in the community. Not one that is unapproachable, but representing the community. We need members to be actively involved, have their voices heard and be comfortable participating.

Bob Holdridge: We're moving into a different era. The focus we're looking for in the future is on the community, not the government. The cities and counties will raise taxes but only when there's support from the community to do so. Our biggest job is convincing the community of the need. We know what

that is, but they need to be informed and accept responsibility. Then the government can begin to function to provide services that are needed.

Vicki Vanneman: It's about a role of raising awareness, being advocates and being the conduit between the public and the decision makers.

Erica Kelley: Everyone has their own opinion about what it should look like. Hers has "coordination" written heavily across it. She asked to see a copy of the Virginia implementation plan. Jacqui said it will be sent out to the group.

Jesse asked for comments from the public.

Lynn Helsell: Lives in Salmon Creek and has worked on a project for CREDC. Funding is always an issue. There's a need for major corporations, such as Microsoft or Comcast who do business in the community, to get involved through their foundations as a way of funding specific projects identified by the group.

Sherry Dickerson: Before you form another governmental body, look carefully at what they would do. Make sure there's not something else existing that can be tapped into. Sometimes passionate people start things and there's another group already doing a similar thing. Maybe there's melding that can be done.

Bill Turlay: Remember communication through the Senior Messenger getting word out to those over 50 with about 30,000 in circulation. This is a lobbying effort. There's nothing wrong with that if you have a good cause and this is an excellent one. I hope the advisory committee seeks input from all senior citizens. Baby boomers have a tough row to hoe with decreasing amounts in Medicare, Medicaid, Social Security. Looking at it from his side, you have revenues less expenses which leaves a budget deficit or surplus. Once the county has made all cuts possible, the only way to reach a surplus is to increase revenues. That's what our community is trying to do here, increase economic development so we can increase revenues, which allows us to do more programs like this.

Chuck Frayer: Member of Vancouver Parks and Recreation commission. We have some models already in place like the Parks and Rec commission, that serve the county and the city overall in that area of business. We have the cornerstones from all the work that's been done in place. Now we just need to look at what those are and how we can have an effect on the future. The survey taken at the fair only represented 669, but it gives us an indicator of where the public is. Almost 25% said the most important thing is support services for aging in place, something that is going to affect all of us. When a commission is developed, that has to be the number one thing they go after. What is aging in place? We all have a different take on that. To get a better idea from the public, a formal mailer could be sent out with the same questions. That would give the commission a good idea where they need to go. Also, because the topics are so broad, whatever is developed has to be partnered among all the entities we're talking about such as housing, parks, health care, and transportation to be effective. We cannot drop this. It's not going to be free; it's going to be expensive. He challenges the city council and county commissioners to step up and find some funds. Put some money behind what we're talking about if we're going to be effective. We need to be able to throw funds behind it to let it start like it needs to.

Vanessa Gaston, Director of Community Services: Thanks to the task force, staff, Commissioner Boldt, Bill Barron, Oliver, for the wonderful, comprehensive report. She has been to some workshops and listened to the comments. She echoes what others have said. A lot of effort is going on in the community where people are trying to figure out how to address needs with reduced resources. It's frustrating because intentions are good but it's becoming a duplication of efforts. The same people are going to different meetings focusing on the same goal. She sees the regional health alliance as a strategy underneath support services and suggests taking the portions of this report on health and support services, and even housing, and plugging it into the regional health alliance because their goal is to pool the payers of those services together along with all the providers. As implementation is developed, set priorities and plug them into the regional health alliance so that the needs of the aging population can be

front and center. Ask Commissioner Boldt and the rest of the members on that board to push for funding because the dollars are short and unless some new revenue comes in, there'll be competing interests. Everybody wants something funded because the needs are so great. Take advantage of things happening now and how you take the report to get other people to use it as part of their planning to make it happen.

Task Force discussion:

Bob Holdridge: Bring all the money that we're sending overseas and bring it back here so we don't have to worry about resources anymore. But that would require a shift in thinking of the American people.

Bob Watkins: He feels a great responsibility for his grandchildren. We need to focus on setting priorities and doing things within a reasonable budget. Corral expectations and tie them into reasonable financing and quit dreaming about something that is well beyond any possibility. The most important thing we can do in this county is make it extremely healthy financially to attract the kind of growth and strength that comes from a powerful economic system, the machine engine that provides goods and services for the people. He retired at age 78. We should do everything we can to keep elderly in the work force. The happiest people in the world are people that are working, no matter where that may be. This group has been thinking of the elderly as victims. He thinks the elderly need to focus on what they can do for society for their great grandchildren.

Jesse thanked everyone for their insight and proposals, and the public for their contributions and enrichment to the discussion.

Oliver thanked the task force, staff, Commissioner Boldt, Bill, David Kelly, Vanessa and the directors that worked in partnership to put this report together. It couldn't have been done without them and he is sincerely grateful for their work. He will work to develop an implementation plan and circulate it to everyone via email and solicit input. Today he reserved comment because he wanted to sit back and listen. He agrees with Vanessa's observation. The recommendations brought forth are huge. We've tried as much as possible to put them into short term, mid term and long term. They may be further refined in the implementation. Without the partnership of Vanessa's group, Public Works, Parks and other departments, this is not going to work.

Colete spoke on the report back to the community to be held October 27. We are planning for 250 and ask for help getting the word out. The facility is a classroom auditorium venue at Clark College with a parking lot right in front. In the foyer will be the fair display which represents a snapshot of everything we've done, what's important, the challenges, etc. along with handouts. We'd like everyone to come and sit down in front and also be greeters for the event. We ask each subcommittee chair or their designee to help staff and give the presentation for that topic. The goal is to focus on what challenges we've identified and what the key implementation steps are for that. Bill will be our moderator. We hope to have as many elected officials as possible attend and the Commissioners are all scheduled to be there. It's about community feedback - presenting the work we've done, fielding questions, asking if we missed anything. The audience will receive an index card to write down their questions as we go along then we'll sift through those and have a panel of experts (from Parks, Public Works, etc.) who can answer those questions. Greg Johnson from the Senior Messenger is going to do an article, as well as a paid advertisement in the Columbian about the event. Our Public Involvement Office has geared up to help get word out. They send out press releases and information packets to all neighborhood associations. We're also taking reservations online so we're sure to have room for everyone. If volunteers are needed we will let people know. The event is from 4:00-6:00 so there's not much conflict with students. The college is well served by C-Tran busses and the C-Van will deliver and pick passengers up after the event. The building is 100% ADA accessible.

A suggestion was offered that the website is prominently mentioned in the advertising so people can familiarize themselves with the document ahead of time.

Bill announced there will be a demo on October 20 from 3-5pm of the Neighborhood Electric Vehicles (NEV) in front of the Public Service Center. All are invited to come. Pete Capell from Public Works will be putting it on.

Lisa thanked Colete and Jacqui for their excellent support during the fair. She invited everyone that was interested in being a part of the next level to let Jesse or Oliver know. She is going to put her hat in the ring.

Erica also acknowledged the technical support.

Jesse thanked everyone from Commission Boldt, to staff, to those who served on the task force. He agrees with the sentiments expressed. This has been a wonderful, intelligent, thoughtful, dedicated group. It's a hallmark of American society that people willingly, on their own free time, and dime, come together to make their society better. It's been a remarkable experience so far and we're just through the first phase of this. Now comes the fun part, to be persuasive in communicating this message to the public, in being open to the feedback received from the public and be wise in how we proceed in laying out the foundation that we believe will serve generations to come.

The meeting adjourned at 3:30.