



Clark County Commission on Aging
1300 Franklin Street, 6th Floor
Vancouver, Washington

MEETING NOTES

Wednesday, April 17, 2019
4:30 p.m. – 6:00 p.m.

Members Present: Chuck Green, Amy Gross, Linda O'Leary, Larry Smith

Absent: Marian Anderson, Ali Caley, Marjorie Ledell, Donna Roberge

1. Welcome and call to order

Linda O'Leary opened the meeting.

Approval of meeting minutes

Due to low attendance, the January 15 and March 20, 2019 meeting minutes will be approved at a future meeting.

Aging and Disabilities Resource Network meeting update

Amy Gross provided an update on the Aging and Disabilities Resource Network, part of the Area Agency on Aging & Disability of Southwest Washington. Sunny Wonder with Council for the Homeless gave a presentation. There is now a housing hotline to help people find housing. There has been an increase in homeless seniors. A public health nurse in the group noted that elderly patients often won't share that they are homeless and she needs to use other indicators to find out if any additional resources might be needed. Andy Silver with the Housing and Health Innovation Partnership also presented. One problem this group is trying to tackle is that systems are hard to innovate, and funding typically drives the problems that get worked on, rather than designing the system that is needed. The Housing and Health Innovation Partnership is working to overcome this challenge and is building a housing team with multiple nonprofits.

2. Presentations: Open Space, Recreation, and the Connection to Health

Details on each presentation are available in the CVTV video recording and presentation slides.

Presentation #1: The Intertwine Alliance Health and Nature Initiative

Presenter: David Cohen, The Intertwine Alliance

Presentation highlights:

- We are now seeing a plethora of research that shows the health benefits of spending time outdoors and connecting to nature. The research points to parks as being a must have and not just a nice to have amenity.



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- The Intertwine Alliance has hosted a series of health and nature forums where they get people in the parks and healthcare sectors in the same room together. Out of these forums, this group developed the Intertwine Nature & Health Initiative with the following tenants:
 - Use investments in nature to improve community health
 - Understand that the decisions we make factor in the health of underrepresented communities
 - Raise awareness of the health benefits of nature
 - Conservation and health organizations work together
 - Residents increase time in nature
- Intertwine Alliance definition of nature: encompasses all members of our plant and animal kingdoms; the land which surrounds us; water – our oceans, rivers, and lakes; the sky and its many transformations; and all the elements and processes that are a part of the complex community of life on Earth. Nature can be near or far; microscopic or monumental, managed or wild.
- What's the link between nature and health?
 - Physical activity
 - Air quality
 - Biophilia hypothesis
 - Physiological stress recovery
 - Attention restoration
 - Microbiomes
- The nature and health initiative has identified the following focus areas:
 - Nature in our Schools
 - Workplace Wellness and Nature
 - Inserting Nature into our Health Care System. (This was the primary focus of the presentation.)
 - Active Transportation – Bikes and Pedestrian efforts
 - “One-on-One” with Nature
- Prescription play. There are about 50 prescription play programs throughout the country. The idea of prescription play is to connect a parks district with a healthcare provider and try to get people who aren't active, to be active. There are barriers of why people don't use parks, i.e. safety, language barriers, etc. The programs are essentially behavior change programs, helping to reduce disparities and helping the healthcare sector leverage environmental resources and vis versa.
- Portland Rx Play pilot. In Portland, Kaiser Permanente partnered with Portland Parks & Recreation, OHSU and Tualatin Hills Parks & Recreation District to address children ages 6-12 at risk of childhood obesity. One focus of this effort was to get people to go to community centers.. Although the program is small, it has successfully served low income and communities of color by connecting them to parks and recreation programming, decreasing barriers to access via a program navigator that provides a warm hand off to families at the parks/recreation center. Prescriptions are being written by Kaiser, OHSU, and now Providence. Prescriptions are being “filled” by Portland Parks and Recreation and Tualatin Hills Parks & Recreation District.
- Expansion of Rx Play. Now there is an effort to expand the Rx Play program to include more healthcare and activity providers, to address a wider range of health issues/concerns, to integrate the health-nature connection, and to expand its reach. The expansion is starting in East Portland, and there has been interest in Clark County and Washington County. The expanded program will focus on all ages, such as identify older people who need social connection and will look at intergenerational programs.

The Intertwine has developed software to track data and the navigator programs. They are planning to launch the broader program in spring 2020 in East Portland and expand from there.

- Health and nature initiative next steps
 - Tie work closer to issues of health equity
 - Advocate for injecting the benefits of the health and nature connection into broader conversations about social determinants of health
 - Create a platform for further explorations of the health and nature connection

Q&A and Comments from Commission on Aging:

- **Larry:** video in Seattle regarding homeless challenge and parks, any comments?
Response: yes, it comes up a lot. The Intertwine is hosting an April 29 summit that includes a panel on cross-sector conversations. We have learned, for example, that you might put a park in a neighborhood and the people living near it leave because of gentrification. Homeless issue is a complex challenge and the housing, homeless, parks and recreation sectors, etc. all need to be at the table. I think the cross-sector conversations aren't happening right now. Homelessness is one issue where sectors all converge. Lots that can be done on the ground level and at a strategic regional level, the conversations can't be isolated.
- **Amy:** what would it look like if a park was accessible to seniors in various stages of aging? **Response:** why don't we have seniors advising us? ADA is not enough. We need to understand what is safe for a senior, i.e. they don't feel like they are going to get run over on their way to the park. I think there will be a future where there are different parts of parks for different kinds of activities. This world is built for 30-year old males. How do we design our community for 8 and 80-year olds? It's a design and urban planning question. I think we'll get there, but at this point we're just starting.

Q&A and Comments from Public:

- **Christina Marneris, Area Agency on Agency of Southwest Washington:** you speak to the heart of my work. We're focused on social determinants of health. Do you invite aging and disability staff to your work? **Response:** we're still so early in the process. I was just in a room with people involved in aging. It's all about connecting the dots. We are starting to build relationships and awareness. We're still very parks and rec oriented. We're starting to grow and the aging and disability sector is a great expansion area for sure.
- **Milada Allen, Felida Neighborhood Association:** thanks for talking about parks and really implying the need to be proactive. We know we have young and old population and parks to be considered infrastructure and not an amenity.
- **Jean Ann Edward, Human Services Council:** transportation accessibility will be a huge thing. Are there transportation folks involved? **Response:** yes, but we are still working on removing silos. Transportation and access is key, such as getting to the park. We need to build in money to pay for people to get to parks. We are trying to be mindful, but there are lots of barriers. We understand that transportation is such an issue, especially with aging and ability and travel distances. We also see this in the need for walkable neighborhoods, when we still design them as if we all need cars. Transportation to parks is hard and complicated. We are trying to put lots of voices together.

Presentation #2: Ridgefield Parks Board, Managing Park Development and City Growth
Presenter: Marie Bouvier, Ridgefield Parks Board

Presentation highlights:

- The City of Ridgefield has shifted its approach to parks over the last 15 years. Fifteen years ago, there were not many parks, trails were not connected, and the parks that did exist were not that desirable (i.e. a tiny piece of a hill with a bench on it).
- Parks and trails are highly valued by community members and have been prioritized as the community develops. Why are parks important in Ridgefield?
 - Maintain health and quality of life for citizens of all ages
 - Retain connection to nature
 - Preserve small town character and livability
- Ridgefield has a six year plan to manage and enhance parks. They assess what they have and what needs to be done and plan how to address changes that come with growth.
- Ridgefield is experiencing exponential growth
- When looked at 6-year plan, the calculated investment for parks and trails would have been over \$30 million. That amount is larger than the city's entire budget.
- Needed an approach to not only build parks but to plan for their upkeep.
 - Park Impact Fees (PIF) are imposed on new development to meet the increased demand for parks that result from new growth (average about \$4,500 per home)
 - 25% of all developments must be dedicated to parks and open space. This is the largest ask in Clark County. The city established guidelines on what the parks and open space need to look like. They have very detailed ordinances and regulations.
 - Maintenance costs and costs for existing parks rest on the City. Need to plan ahead for those ongoing expenses.
- Wanted to see things that are different and draws people to the community. Created a flipbook for new developers in the area. Shows the kind of ideas we would like to see. We don't want to see the same standard playground or bench. The flipbook provides examples of different park ideas, such as:
 - Innovative play equipment
 - Ornamental gardens
 - Sensory gardens
 - Community gardens
 - Dog parks
 - Fitness parks
 - Mountain bike trails
 - Pump tracks
 - Nature parks
 - Public art in parks. Partnering with the Ridgefield Art Association.
 - Spray parks, splash pads, and water parks. High demand for these from kids.
 - Skate parks and skate spots
 - Sport courts and sport fields. The Ridgefield outdoor recreation complex has 6 multi-use sports field, a community center with a full catering kitchen, playground area, trails, etc.
 - Disc golf course
 - Earthworks parks. Not many of these, but have examples of a water retention area doubling as a park.
- Creating a park-forward city:
 - Support from city manager and city council

- Detailed ordinances and regulations that are very pro-park
- Ongoing citizen input
- Proactive in working with developers
- Forward-thinking park plans

Q&A and Comments from Commission on Aging:

- **Chuck:** I was manager of the development of the new Ridgefield sports complex and a good part of the funding came from real estate excise taxes. Also, having been involved in Ridgefield for a while, the Parks Board has been very integral in getting the council on board. I am honored to be a Ridgefield resident and thank you for your work.
Response: thank you, it's been a long road.
- **Amy:** are there any places that would be particularly suitable for older people in Ridgefield? **Response:** absolutely, our goal is for the city parks to be accessible for everyone. Some may be better suited than others. A tour recently of Harper's Playground in Portland, is an example of wheelchair accessible equipment and play area. Our community gardens have access around the bed so someone using a walker or wheelchair could use them and we do have seniors using the gardens. The outdoor recreation complex is accessible. It's about building the inclusion into everything we do. When we started there were parks for families with kids. Now, with everything, including picnic tables, we know they need to be accessible by a path. It's been a learning process for all of us. Creating parks that serve the entire community has been a huge eye opener.
- **Larry:** I think it's so important to share with what you are doing with the Association of Realtors and the importance of property being sold next to a park cannot be understated. Same thing with the Building Industry Association. They understand this, and it's good to be reminded. In the City of Vancouver, we also enjoyed a good relationship with the school districts. Ridgefield is a great example of taking care of young and seniors as it's growing. **Response:** we did flip the model on its head by proactively bringing things to developers beforehand. It has been a great way to make progress in what we want to see in parks. The latest version of the flipbook was just completed and will be available online. With trails, we needed to show them, here's the gap, your job is to fill it in. 9 times out of 10 they're behind us.

Q&A and Comments from Public:

- **Milada Allen:** I think you have been proactive and created a vision which created a focus to building amenities the government doesn't have the budget to do. If you can make it easy for the developer to know where the opportunity is, I congratulate you on that.

Presentation #3: City of Vancouver Parks and Recreation Senior Programs

Presenter: Angela Brosius, Firstenburg Community Center

Presentation highlights:

- Healthy communities - a gathering place
 - Social opportunities are very important. We celebrate 90+ birthdays. Invite all guests to come and celebrate because not everyone has family around.
 - 70-80% of older adults suffer from at least one chronic condition
 - Challenged with health concerns, physical inactivity and behavioral health
- Why? Does it matter? The stories...

- Walking reduces stiffness, increases flexibility and improves balance. The community centers offer many balance related programs.
- There are chairs set-up throughout the facility so it is easy to take a rest when needed, wherever you are, such as when walking around the indoor track.
- A large percentage of the community center membership is 65+. About half of the classes are men, which is a higher percentage than it's been before.
- Insurance agencies are paying attention and recognizing the benefits of community center type programs.
- People come to community centers for all sorts of reasons like: social, physical, emotional, loss of spouse, new to the area
- The community center has hand clickers to track your miles around the track and these are popular with some of the seniors
- Social opportunities – purpose/belonging
 - The community center is a social place to go
 - Many older adults attend regular classes
 - There are also silver classes geared to older adults
 - The weight room has adaptive equipment such as equipment that doesn't involve loading weights, it's all about air pressure
 - Pools have accessible ramps and water wheelchairs. The Firstenburg center has a therapeutic pool and the temperature it's set at is intentional.
 - Club time – about sharpening the mind, ie chess maj jog, etc.
 - Game room, ping pong is especially popular
 - Trips: not everyone has transportation, not everyone wants to drive or have to research the trip, and it's an opportunity to hike with others
 - Meals on wheels partnership – meal delivery and hosting meals
- Healthy engagement – welcoming environment
 - Social opportunities decrease depression and anxiety, while increasing hope and a positive outlook.
 - Offer free educational seminars, tax help, health care provider presentations and insurance seminars
- Community Awareness. Volunteers. Involved.
 - Volunteering connects people to the community and provides responsibility and purpose.
 - The City of Vancouver Parks & Recreation program has almost 1000 volunteers.
- All-Age-Friendly Livable Community
 - Many older adults like interaction with kids. Intergenerational interaction is really important.
 - Intergenerational opportunities at the Firstenburg Community Center:
 - Child watch
 - Playgroup
 - Camps
 - Grandparents
 - Employees
- Friendships created to try new things
 - Inviting others; sometimes it is a simple “hello” that leads others to new friendships and adventures

Q&A and Comments from Commission on Aging:

- **Larry:** I am a big supporter of **multigenerational community centers. Seniors need to be mixed with youth.** Many kids don't have grandparents and can see seniors being active. It's so fantastic. I take my grandkids there and they appreciate the seniors. And the importance of being near others with different perspectives. I appreciate the Firstenberg Center and what you are doing.

Q&A and Comments from Public:

- **Milada Allen:** Thank you for saying that. **There is a need for more community centers especially in mid-county.** I know how many people enjoy the trips as I used to coordinate them. It also gave me insight into the needs of the aging population.

3. Public Comment

- **Milada Allen, Felida Neighborhood Association:** [Milada provided a handout to the Commission on Aging members.] The handout is from the community perspective. There are 17,000 people in the Felida Neighborhood Association. We are part of the Neighborhood Associations of Clark County and also a 501c3. The neighborhood association advocated for an all-abilities children play and garden area for those 2-92. **We hear a lot about wheelchair accessible park equipment.** We want people's access to be equal and fair to be a part of society. The challenge is that building a park is expensive and we have not had partners or government support. I congratulate you on today's park issue, it is amazing what's being done. The handout is an example of a community park that has been 10-years of work including a custom made rainbow and heart. The pathways are wide enough for two wheelchairs to fit side by side. The Rainbow structure was designed locally. There is soft fall padding. The boat structure is wheelchair accessible and big enough for an adult.
- **Laura Hoggatt, Clark County Parks Division:** Thanks to the speakers and to the Commission on Aging for looking at this topic. One thing I hear from families is that the opportunity to get outside provides stress relief, and other physical and mental health benefits. **We are also hearing more about tree or forest bathing, a concept from Japan, on the benefits of sitting amongst the trees.** Thank you for this topic and the opportunity for multigenerational opportunities in the county.

4. New Business, Updates and Announcements:

The next meeting will be held on Wednesday, May 15, 2019 and the presentation will be on healthy trees and healthy communities.

5. Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 6:00 pm.

The Clark County Commission on Aging provides leadership and creates community engagement in addressing the needs and opportunities of aging.