



**Municipality of Anchorage
SENIOR CITIZENS ADVISORY COMMISSION**

**SUMMARY MEETING / PLANNING SESSION MINUTES
June 24, 2015**

Members Present	Members Absent	Guests
Joan Fisher, Chair Stuart “Cam” Rader, Co-Chair AnnaBell Stevens Kevin Turkington Theresa Brisky Carol Jackson Ella Craig Dawnia Clements <u>DHHS Staff</u> David Levy Judy Atkins Steve Ashman		

The meeting started with a quorum in attendance.

I. Call to Order

Chair Joan Fisher called the meeting to order at 10:08 a.m. at the BP Energy Center.

II. Approval of Agenda

Chair Fisher called for approval of the agenda. So moved by Commissioner Stevens; second, Commissioner Jackson. **Agenda approved.**

III. Approval of Minutes

Commissioner Stevens moved to approve the minutes from the May 27, 2015 meeting; seconded by Commissioner Brisky. It was noted that the guest’s name should be Penny Burt. **Minutes approved with correction.**

IV. Overview and Introductions – Steve Ashman

Mr. Ashman, Division Director for Public Health Initiatives and Partnerships, agreed to be the facilitator for the Planning Session. He indicated that since there is so much to do, he will be keeping the conversations on track so that every topic will be touched.

Mr. Ashman asked each Commissioner to introduce themselves, tell us how long they have been with the Commission and what they would like to see happen in the future.

Mr. Levy distributed a packet containing background and demographics on Senior-related issues. He posed the questions. Where do we want to go into the future? What direction can we go where we feel we can accomplish the most? Where can we shine a light on important issues? Should there be a role for seniors on ALL municipal commissions, since every topic affects a senior in some way? These questions will be explored. Commissioner Turkington noted that the statistics presented for race are rapidly changing as Alaska becomes a more diverse population.

Commissioner Craig asked what the age is when determining whether you are a senior or not. She stresses the importance of consistency.

V. Planning for the Future – 2016 and Beyond

GOAL: Approach each of the following topics with Commissioners providing input on the Pros and Cons in each area

Transportation. One big transportation plus for Seniors in the Anchorage area is the Municipal's AnchorRides program. They go everywhere. Some of the disadvantages are waiting a long time for pickups, forgotten pickups; the application process. Commissioner Turkington says we need to work with AnchorRides to further educate them on those who uses it; additionally as the staff what causes delays on their end. We need to find out what riders need to make their ride better. AnchorRides provides 180,000 rides per year with 96% performance rating. Commissioner Clements indicated that when we are advocating for senior transportation it might behoove us to look at the positive sides to services provided despite negative issues. Commissioner Jackson suggested that Commissioners take an excursion to the AnchorRides office to get a better idea of the program. One other idea was to add more services and ask people to pay.

Economic Well-Being. There are a significant number of seniors living in poverty in the Anchorage area. They don't know what assistance is available to help them out of poverty. What can the Commission do to prevent people from being in poor situations? Whereas our parents based retirement on pensions or social security, things have changed in that there are not too many pensions out there, a deflated economy, and low interest rates have become the new norm. With assets plummeting, preparation is needed. What do seniors spend in the Anchorage community? What does poverty look like for seniors? A lot of things could be done to improve their predicaments for example finding assistance and information at the Aging & Disability Resource Center (ADRC). ARCS's have greatly improved their service over the years. Commissioner Turkington provided newer demographics on medium income levels for seniors. He will provide additional updated demographics at the July meeting.

Health Care. 30 years ago it was an issue, and it still is. Next year, H.R. 1381, an amendment to the Federal Funding Accountability and Transparency Act of 2006 to improve access to information in the legislative and executive branches of the

Government and of other purposes comes into play. Providers must start providing their prices, a process they are fighting. It will bring to light the high cost of insurance in Alaska. Commissioner Fisher commented that the Affordable Care Act (ACA) did do very positive things: pre-existing conditions were waived and creating assistance to pay for health care. Most people don't know that. Many Alaskans retire early (58-62) and don't realize that they must have insurance coverage – Medicare doesn't kick in to 65. This is another education piece for the Commission urging seniors in retirement planning to be prepared to pay for health care. Commissioner Clements asked the question-should we have another forum? It helped to give people a way to express themselves. A host of medical professionals attended the last one, giving credence to the seriousness of the issue. There is bad information out there; inform the public. Most of the health care issue is out of our control; what could/should we do? How do we take our bite of the issue? A forum would help – have another! How could we make it more focused and interesting?

Housing. Thirty years ago the Commission was tackling the housing problem and the issue continues on today. Regulatory and red tape coding issues make it an unsavory climate for the developers and builders for housing that seniors need. It proves not cost effective for them. How much of an issue is the unavailability of land in the Anchorage area. What kind of housing is needed? Could the “tiny houses” trend be adapted in some way? What issues exist when building homes which are adaptable for health issues seniors may face? The home modification program was great for providing accessibility solutions to seniors who wanted to continue to reside in their home. Could the Senior Commission get behind an organization to restart it with government funds? Commissioner Rader asked for information about home exchanges and if it could be a possibility.

Senior Nutrition & Hunger. Commissioner Turkington indicated that although the Food Bank of Alaska is a great organization, the nutritional value of some of the food, specifically canned items, is not very good. (Many seniors go to the food bank to get their food). Commissioner Turkington also said that Meals on Wheels, a Salvation Army program, provide food to seniors however it is not thought to be nutritious. There is an opportunity to work with the Salvation Army and the Food Bank of Alaska to look into the nutrition content of the food donations. Also, how can we educate the senior population on nutrition? The other issue is food insecurity and hunger – how do we focus on that? One in 4 seniors is food insecure. Both topics are interconnected; people have a right to choose, we can only offer guidance/education.

VI. Tasks for the Future – Action Items

The Commission feels the need to understand more about the AnchorRides program in order to help them highlight their services and provide education to those who are on the receiving or giving end of this service. An idea was to take a bus tour, going around to the main “pickup” spots for seniors. Take a walk in their shoes.

Recruit a more diverse Commission – reach out to other communities within the Municipality. Become more involved with the Anchorage Economic Development Corporation, working with their Live Work Play theme.

Commissioner Clements would like to inviting speakers to the regular Commission meetings that are engaging and make a concerted effort to invite the Anchorage senior community.

The suggestion was made to plan a Senior Fair, co-sponsored by the Commission and an outside organization (funding) dedicated to making a difference in the lives of seniors and their family members by providing speakers, workshops, and educational opportunities. A subcommittee would be developed.

A presentation on the Meals on Wheels program, operated by the Salvation Army, would provide a greater understanding on the senior nutrition topic.

Additionally increased education about planning and zoning issues may help the Commission better develop a plan for senior housing. Provide information about the Universal Design plan for housing.

VII. Introduction of Incoming Chair

Commissioner Fisher formally turned the gavel over to Commissioner Jackson as she takes over the position of Chair for the Senior Citizens Advisory Commission. Commissioner Jackson is committed to this Commission and to the City of Anchorage. She will touch base with each Commissioner. Commissioner Jackson offered a huge Thank You to Commissioner Fisher for her dedicated years of service as the past Chair.

VIII. Announcements

Mr. Levy indicated that the offsite plans for the September Commission Meeting, a joint session with the Alaska Commission on Aging, is scheduled for September 17th, with plans nearly finalized. He is working with the Girdwood Medical Clinic to identify the needs of Seniors in the area. It is hoped that senior community members will attend this public meeting.

Mr. Levy announced an ADA Commission event celebrating the 25th Anniversary of the Americans with Disabilities Act on July 27th from 4-6 pm at City Hall, Room 155. Keynote speakers are Jeff Jesse with Alaska Mental Health Trust Authority and Ric Nelson with the Governor's Council on Disabilities & Special Education.

Commissioner Turkington was proud to report that the Charity Golf Tournament, benefitting the Arthritis Foundation on June 19th was a huge success, with approximately \$11,000 raised for charity. Everyone had an awesome time.

Chair, Commissioner Jackson asked for patience in her transition to Chair position. She is proud of the Commission's past accomplishments and is conscious of the challenges we face in the future.

IX. Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 12:55 p.m.