



Municipality of Anchorage

Ethan Berkowitz, Mayor

Senior Citizens Advisory Commission

July 13, 2018

Dear Mayor Berkowitz,

The Senior Citizens Advisory Commission (SCAC) would like to take this opportunity to thank you for attending our Older Americans Month Celebration at the Anchorage Senior Activity Center and to update you on what we have been doing over the past year and what areas we are targeting in the coming months.

Three new commissioners were approved in February bringing our commission to capacity. Members now include long standing commissioners Dawnia Clements and AnnaBell Stevens, as well as Theresa Brisky, Kevin Turkington, Hattie Gardner, and Gayle Schuh. Our new commissioners are Jenna Bruner, Jim Bailey, and Dr. Emily McMahan. Our backgrounds are diverse but our concern for Anchorage seniors bring us together and contribute to the perspectives we share.

Advise the Mayor We were so pleased that your special assistant, Amy Coffman, solicited our opinion before applying for the AARP Challenge Grant. Our thoughts were to target a one-time project that can provide enrichment for seniors over a sustainable period of time. The idea to provide “Intergenerational Outdoor Fitness Equipment” does exactly what we hoped it would do to maximize the impact without putting undo stress on future sustainability. We eagerly await the results of your application.

Older Americans Month (OAM) The Older Americans Month Celebration kicked off with your comments to our seniors and the reading of the proclamation from the Municipality. “Engage at Every Age” brought us together to recognize the energy seniors all over the country bring to their communities, for they are both our connections to history, and our guides for the future. Our new process to select the Ron Hammett Award winner engaged former winners and new commissioners to select from the applicants and yielded Ray Tinjum as this year’s honoree. Ray has been a Volunteer Long Term Care Ombudsman serving the residents of Marlow Manor for many years and was honored to be recognized.

Outreach and Education As part of our mission it is our job to be informed about various agencies and programs that benefit seniors. We have had presentations from the following groups in an effort to educate ourselves. Most recently we heard about the opioid crisis and

learned about the disposal bags that are available. We have had an overview from the Chugiak Senior Center and learned of their partnership with AnchorRIDES to assume future transportation needs in the area. The Alaska Geriatrics Interdisciplinary Leadership Development Program (AK GUILD) let us know that they create new leaders who improve care systems and support health and quality of life for older adults. We toured the Turnagain Social Club and heard from the Salvation Army about their Safe Seniors emergency preparedness and disaster planning last fall. As a follow-up they met with us again this spring to show us their progress and detail how they meet with seniors individually to prepare their medications, phone lists, and emergency go-kit. Access Alaska is a valuable resource for independent living services for people with disabilities and their Durable Medical Equipment program is widely used by those seeking devices to assist in their daily living. The presentation by Easy Park emphasized their Safety First initiative.

AREA of Concern One area of concern came to light as one of our commissioners heard from a resident at a multilevel senior living facility. When a fire alarm sounded the elevators were disabled and several residents with limited mobility struggled to navigate the stairs to safety. Fortunately, this was a false alarm and no one was injured. It did bring to light the fact that during emergencies many residents need assistance. When we addressed this issue with the residence we were told that tenants can request “exit accessible rooms on their applications”. This is a solution that leaves us uncomfortable as residents mobility issues can change after being accepted. We plan to follow through with the Anchorage Fire Department to solicit their input to this potential hazardous situation.

Future Plans During our June meeting we will begin plans to host special presentations at the Senior Center geared to highlight National Awareness Months. For example, October is National Fire Prevention Month, so we plan to work with the fire department to have a special presentation about safety and fire prevention aimed specifically at Anchorage seniors. Our goal is to host three awareness presentations per year.

We would like to extend our appreciation for your leadership as Mayor of Anchorage and look forward to continuing our role, offering advice on the aspects of aging which bear upon the welfare of our senior citizens and their families.

Sincerely,

The Anchorage Senior Citizens Advisory Commission