



Santa Cruz County Seniors Commission

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Meeting Minutes

DATE: Tuesday, October 20, 2020
TIME: 12:30 PM – 2:30 PM
LOCATION: Remote Meeting
PRESENT: Lynne Simpson (1st District), Antonio Rivas (Vice Chair - 2nd District), Mark Johannessen (2nd District), Lois Sones (3rd District), Enda Brennan (3rd District), Carol Childers (Chair - 5th District), Lynn McKibbin (5th District)
EXCUSED: Michael Lewis (1st District), Louis J. Tuosto (4th District), Patricia Fohrman (4th District), Charles Molnar (CSL Ex Officio Member)
ABSENT: None
STAFF: Kaite McGrew (Commissions Coordinator), Mitsuno Baurmeister (County EEO Officer)
GUESTS: Deanna Trinidad (Long Term Care Ombudsman), Patty Talbot (Seniors Council), John Daugherty (Santa Cruz Metro)

- Call to Order/Roll Call/Agenda Review
Meeting convened at 12:40PM.
- Approval August 18, 2020 Meeting Minutes
Motion/Second: Brennan/Sones
Motion passed unanimously.
- Public Comment:
Talbot reported that the *Stakeholder Advisory Committee* for the Governors Master Plan for Aging forwarded over 800 recommendations to a cabinet-level committee who will prepare a final report in December. Daugherty reported that his office is located at the Pacific station now. Metro buses and Metro Paracruz are running, but masks are required, and social distancing is being employed.
- Senior Legislature Report:
Commission reviewed 2021 CSL Legislative Priorities and Outreach Plan.
- Long Term Care Facilities and COVID-19
Deanna Trinidad, *Long Term Care Ombudsman*, reported on County Ombudsman office activities.
 - The primary Ombudsman function is to resolve problems related to the health, safety and rights of long-term care residents. While not a regulatory agency, they can elevate issues to regulatory agencies. They are not mandated reporters, and they follow the express wishes of the resident. Three certified ombudsman staff serve congregate living residents in Santa Cruz County.
 - Because of the pandemic, Ombudsman staff and volunteers cannot be on-site as often; fewer volunteers are available; and the State has classified them as non-essential workers, making it difficult to reach residents. The number of complaints is reduced and now come primarily from family members instead of residents. Residents are now more isolated, more dependent upon facility staff, and, therefore, more cautious about the possibility of retaliation for complaints made about the facility. Retaliation against complainants can be anything from abuse to micro-aggressions (e.g. not responding timely to requests for assistance with personal care).

Congregate living residents are more vulnerable and isolated than ever and access to Ombudsman staff is now more essential than ever.

- 5.3. Conflicting and constantly changing guidelines create confusion and challenges in three main areas: resident transfers, visitation restrictions and COVID-19 testing.
- 5.4. Ombudsman outreach efforts include posting information online and at facilities (inside and outside); a Department of Aging phone line for non-emergency emotional support; and sending personalized cards to all congregate living residents across 3 counties.
- 5.5. South Santa Cruz County has a higher confirmed positive COVID-19 rate than the rest of the County, even before the recent outbreak in a Watsonville skilled nursing facility. Adequate PPE remains a concern, particularly for Ombudsman staff who will eventually visit more than one facility per day during re-opening.

6. Senior Center without Limits (SCWL)

Sones reported on a Community Bridges distance learning/activities program provided in collaboration with Parks and Recreation departments for Santa Cruz City, Watsonville City and Santa Cruz County. The program is available to County residents over the age of 60 with access to internet and a device. Grant-funded tablets are provided to qualified residents, and program staff work with local internet service providers to provide low-fee internet service to low-income seniors.

7. New Business/Action Items: None

8. District Reports:

8.1. District 1:

Simpson reported that Village Santa Cruz is sponsoring a free online presentation by Assistant District Attorney Douglas Allen on shopping safely online.

8.2. District 2:

Johannessen reported that AAA is hosting a virtual roundtable on social isolation to address the causes and impact of social isolation on seniors.

8.3. District 3:

Sones advocated with Supervisor Coonerty regarding the County's efforts to provide County-wide Wi-Fi. Commissioners are encouraged to advocate with their Supervisors.

8.4. District 4:

Rivas reported that the Spanish-speaking seniors experience additional isolation because of language, cultural and geographic barriers. He continues to monitor the recent COVID-19 outbreak in Watsonville.

8.5. District 5:

Childers reported on the aftermath of the CZU Lightning Strike Fires and evacuation. Seniors in District 5 are also dealing geographic isolation. All *Meals on Wheels* recipients have returned to their homes. Meals on Wheels is working with Listos to deliver emergency kits in anticipation of seniors being stranded by debris flows. Valley Churches United and the Mountain Community Resource Center (Community Bridges) continue to support the community.

9. Staff Report

Staff reported that the Commission on Disabilities will be discussing the lack of respite caregivers during the pandemic which also impacts many senior family caregivers. Commissioners are invited to attend.

10. Adjournment: Meeting adjourned at 2:02 PM.

Respectfully submitted by: Kaite McGrew, *Commissions Coordinator*