



Commission on Senior Issues

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Meeting Minutes – University City Commission on Senior Issues

October 21, 2019

Location: Heman Park Community Center

Attendees Present: Wayne Flesch, Gloria Nickerson, Elaine Henton, Diane Clark, Sandra Hewitt, Karl Reid, Kathleen Straatmann, Marcia Mermelstein (Staff Liaison) Stacy Clay (Council Liaison)

Guest: Lynda Euell-Taylor, Deputy Director of Recreation

Mr. Flesch called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.

Roll call was done by Ms. Marcia Mermelstein

Approval of Minutes

There were no corrections to the minutes. Mr. Reid moved that they be approved, Ms. Henton seconded, and the motion passed.

New Business – Mr. Flesch stated that he didn't feel that a majority of University City residents are aware that there is a Senior Commission and a Coordinator of Senior Services. He asked the commission members for suggestions about how to help "spread the word" about the commission, about what it does, when it meets, etc. Suggestions included: putting up posters in City Hall, Centennial Commons; having commission members attend City Council meetings on a regular basis to make a short report. Ms. Nickerson pointed out that there is information about the Senior Commission and senior resources on the city's website. Ms. Mermelstein pointed out that there is detailed information in the Senior Resource Guide about the Senior Commission.

Ms. Straatman suggested that a short "blurb" about the Senior Commission be created each month for Stacy Clay to use as an announcement/report at each council meeting in order to keep council members and attendees apprised of senior programming and issues. Mr. Clay stated that he would be willing to make that type of announcement. Ms. Euell-Taylor suggested that a large article could be put on the "splash" page of the Recreation Guidebook that will come out in April. That page is used to feature a particular program or service. She also suggested that the Senior Commission have a table at the "Go Red For Women" program that will take place in February. Another suggestion was that at future senior programs we give participants a short questionnaire asking them how they heard about that particular program (ROARS, web page, flyer, from their church, etc.) so we could see which means of marketing are the most effective,

St. Louis County Older Commission Report – Mr. Flesch talked about Seniors Count (Proposition S), which was offered to voters in 2016 to provide, through a small property tax increase, a fund that would have been used to provide services to provide older people access to services that could help them stay independent in their homes. The proposition did not pass in St. Louis County or St. Charles County, but it did pass in the city of St. Louis. He stated that at this point, it is looking like Proposition S will probably not be put on a future ballot for county voters. There is a cost to get an issue on a ballot, and there are currently very tight budget circumstances in the county that may prohibit having enough to cover that cost. Mr. Flesch also mentioned that the County Older Adult Task Force has been discussing the issue of elder abuse, because there is data

showing an uptick in reported incidents of elder abuse, particularly when it comes to financial exploitation. The question is how to educate older adults about what to watch for and who they can report the abuse to. The challenge is whether an older parent would ever be willing to prosecute their own relative, because of their dependence on them for assistance; it is very difficult to make this type of abuse stop. Mr. Clay stated that banks are becoming more watchful about the accounts of older people, using fraud protocols if they see unusual transactions of money happening in an elder's account. Mr. Flesch will be attending a meeting of the St. Louis Elder Financial Protection Multi-Disciplinary Team at the Jewish Federation next week.

Senior Coordinator Report – Ms. Mermelstein reported that there are 28 homeowners who will receive assistance at the upcoming Make A Difference Day program. She stated that volunteers from Our Lady of Lourdes served as the coordinators this year, rather than city staff, and that there had been less publicity about the event because of the uncertainty of who was going to be in charge of the program. She informed commission members that there will be some middle school students who are coming to the center on October 24 and November 7---about 20-25 students will come each time to participate in a program with 20-25 of the older participants. Students have been paired with older participants, and each elder will receive a letter from their “pen-pal” before the program, with questions the student has come up with for them. After a 20-30 minute “getting to know you” conversation, the pairs will work together to decorate holiday cookies that will be shared with the entire group. Pairs will eat lunch together, and at 11:30 or 11:45, a talent show will be presented by the students. Commission members were encouraged to attend on October 24 if they would like to assist with the program.

Ms. Mermelstein reminded commission members that at the last meeting there had been discussion concerning the creation of a question/answer document that could respond to many of the issues that had been raised in the comments from the Senior Survey conducted in the spring of 2018. She distributed a sample sheet with those questions, and suggested that could be a starting point that commission members could make additional contributions to. Ms. Euell-Taylor stated that the finished document could be used as an insert in a future issue of the ROARS newsletter.

Council Liaison Report – Mr. Clay reported that the council voted to disband the Human Relations Commission. That commission had come into existence in the 1960's or 70's, became inactive, and then Mayor Welsch reconstituted it about five years ago. They have not been meeting for at least a year, so the council members decided that it didn't make sense for that commission's existence to stay on the books. City Council still wants to make sure all citizens feel that they're being treated fairly and feel part of the community. Since age is considered a “protected class,” commission members can give suggestions to Mr. Clay in the future about what a new commission dealing with human rights might look like, or what the critical issues are that older adults are facing.

Other Updates/Topics of Concern –

- Ms. Mermelstein announced that she has submitted her letter of resignation to the city, and that November 1 will be her last day at work. The Senior Center participants will hear the announcement at tomorrow's program, and they will be reassured that the Tuesday/Thursday program will definitely continue. Mr. Flesch thanked her on behalf of the commission for her contributions as the Senior Services Coordinator.
- Mr. Reid pointed out that he, Ms. Henton, and Ms. Nickerson will all have terms on the Senior Commission that will expire in November. Mr. Reid and Ms. Nickerson were told that they will be eligible to be re-appointed for another term, but Ms. Henton will be done. Ms. Nickerson asked whether Ms. Henton could continue on the commission if a new person has not been appointed---it was suggested that if another commission member has not been appointed by November, she can choose to stay until the new person starts attending. Mr. Clay said he would look into the appointment process and report back to the commission.
- Mr. Flesch reported on the recent study session concerning the Senior Commission that took place prior to the October 14 City Council meeting. He thanked those members who had been able to

attend, stating that the strong showing was evidence of the commitment of members. He felt this was a good start in terms of future communication with City Council, and he hopes our group will be invited back to continue the dialogue with council representatives.

Ms. Straatmann moved to adjourn the meeting, Ms. Nickerson seconded, and the motion passed. The meeting was adjourned at 7:18 p.m.

Next Meeting: Monday, November 18, at 6:00 PM. – Heman Park Community Center