



Clark County Commission on Aging
Webex Remote Meeting
Vancouver, Washington

MEETING NOTES

Wednesday, July 20, 2022
4:30 p.m. – 6:00 p.m.

Members Present: Chuck Green (Chair), Franklin Johnson (Vice Chair), Sue Cameron, Cass Freedland, Amy Gross, Meghan McCarthy, Mel Sanchez, Larry Smith, and Tanya Stewart

Absent:

Note: **highlighted text** indicates ideas to consider for the commission's annual major findings and recommendations.

1. Welcome and call to order

Chair Chuck Green opened the meeting and completed a roll call of the Commission members.

Approval of agenda

The agenda was approved

Approval of May 18, 2022 work session and regular meeting notes and June 15 retreat notes

The notes were unanimously approved.

2. Program Highlight: Senior Property Tax Exemption Program

The Assessor's Office provided an overview of the Senior Property Tax Exemption Program.

For a copy of the presentation, please refer to the slides available at:

<https://clark.wa.gov/community-planning/commission-aging-meetings>

Commission Q&A

- **Larry Smith:** What's the marketing of the program? It seems like a perfect opportunity for Neighborhood Associations to get involved. Is there an effort to get the word out to these organizations who can share with their neighbors? **Assessor's Office Team:** Yes. We have contacted Homeowners' Associations, and many have posted information on their websites. We are also looking at mobile home parks for 55+ and sending out information to them. We will also have a booth at the County Fair this year on Senior Day. We do publicize in other ways too like valuation notices and tax bills. We started outreach for the program about 4- or 5-years ago. At that time, we started with organizations like the Luepke Center, Firstenburg Center, and Battle Ground Community Center. We have tried to go out to where applicants are and meet them there. The last few years have been hard to do in-person outreach. We tried to do it virtually. Now that things are opening again, we will be restarting some in-person



For other formats, contact the Clark County ADA Office
Voice 360.397.2322 Relay 711 or 800.833.6388
Fax 360.397.6165
Email ADA@clark.wa.gov



outreach. We would like to get the word out not only to seniors but also Veterans Associations so those who are qualified for the program know about it and are able to apply.

- **Chuck Green:** In a conversation with you a few months ago, I understood that maybe half of people eligible for the program are signed up for it. Has that percentage improved since then? **Assessor's Office Team:** In 2017, there were about ~6,063 people in program. Now that number is >7,000. The number is growing. We process about 3,000 applications per year. One unique thing about the program is that every 5-years, the Department of Revenue relooks at income levels for the exemption program based on the median income for each county. There was a change from \$40k to \$50k in the 2020 tax year, which allowed more people to qualify. We anticipate another change in the 2025 tax year that would allow more people to qualify. As people retire and their income becomes more limited, the option may increase for more people. We have not reached everyone eligible, but we are working on it.
- **Sue Cameron:** Do you send anything out with assessments on property or with tax bills? **Assessor's Office Team:** Yes. It is on the assessment notice and the insert the Assessor issues each year. We try to push out information on the program a few times per year. A lot of times when people get their tax mailing they just look at the numbers.
- **Chuck Green:** Recommends commission members involved with Rotary or other community groups use those vehicles as ways to get the word out about the program.

Public Comment

- **Fouad Bayomy:** For people who are older or disabled, is there an option for those who may have more than 50k, such as an income around 75k, where they may have a reduction in taxes but not a complete exemption? Could that be looked at? **Assessor's Office Team:** The program is set up by the state legislature and they set the qualifications. I would suggest that you reach out to your state legislators to suggest changes such as what you mentioned. The local Assessor's Office doesn't decide on those qualifications.

3. Moderated Discussion/"Fireside Chat": Innovation Through Connection with Faith Communities

Amy Gross and Cass Freedland introduced the discussion and the guests, including:

- Rabbi Elizabeth Dunsker, Congregation Kol Ami
- Genise Dance and Pastor Tim Dance, Mt. Olivet Baptist Church
- Dr. Fouad Bayomy, Islamic Society of Southwest Washington

Discussion highlights

What services do you/your congregation use, and others which you would like to have available for the aging adults in your community?

- **Rabbi Dunsker:** the important service we have for my folks is C-Tran. Where we are located, there are no bus lines. If you can't drive or don't have a car, it is a long walk to a bus for someone who is already having a hard time walking. C-Tran allows people to get to us but hasn't been perfect. We also have a lot of critiques of C-Tran. What I hear from folks is the timing. It can take a long time to get where they need to go. They can't guarantee making it on time. I have folks who are temporarily unable to drive, so they are not set-up for C-Tran or anything like that, but we end up spending time arranging rides for them. A system that is easy and temporary for folks who can then get back into their cars quickly would be very useful. This may be something C-Tran does, and I just don't know about it, but that is where I see the greatest need amongst my

congregants right now.

- **Genise Dance:** I would like to list some of the services we use for our congregation, primarily with our Older Adults Still in Service (OASIS). The Oregon Health Authority resource center helps with distribution of masks, hand sanitizers, COVID-19 tests, and vaccination administration; we also use them for rental assistance and utilities which have been so instrumental to our congregation as well. We also use them for community health rules and guidelines. We use the Black Mental Health of Oregon for food distribution, free food that is available not only to our congregation but to the entire community with a drive-by model in which you can receive all sorts of good food on a weekly basis. We also use His Heart Foundation for counseling, mental health, for mentoring and restoration. It is really a counsel referring service to help our congregation. The Chronic Disease and Health Immunization Programs – we have had clinics held in our family life center open to the entire community; information on health community regarding heat prevention that we send out about cooling stations, ride to care using TriMet, and that type of information. We use AARP and their recycling information. We use pre-service collaboration for technical support using of Zoom, information about gentrification and aging in the black community, displacement, neighborhood health inadequacies through an anti-displacement lens, also sharing information about veterans' care support programs, and peoples' market. We use the REACH program for community supported agriculture food boxes and the Multnomah County health department prevention programs. **Cass Freedland:** Do you have individuals within the church who are responsible for each of those, or is one person doing all that outreach? **Genise Dance:** It's the entire church body. We have different ministries, for example, the health ministry helps provide guidelines, the OASIS ministry makes sure the information goes out to our senior citizens and is disseminated throughout the congregation prior to church services if in-person. We are also virtual as well, so congregants can also go online to find the information.
- **Dr. Bayomy:** I am happy to be here and learn about services to use. The Islamic community in Vancouver is very small. There is one mosque. There is no membership, so we don't know exactly how many people belong. During the past year, I have been in contact with several members of the Muslim community, and I am not aware of any formal services the mosque uses. Most of the needs of older people are provided by volunteers within the community itself. For example, there is a free monthly mobile dental clinic. This service is not just for the elderly, but for anyone who needs it. Burial services are provided through financial support from volunteer donations. I think we need a center of information where when someone needs something, we know who to ask, i.e., assistance for rental housing. Many in our community are refugees and people may experience challenges with communication. Education is also important on who to contact when you have a question. Some members don't speak English and a local program to help with learning English such as tuition for community college/free language programs would be very helpful. Local volunteers do a lot within the community, i.e., during Ramadan time and with food assistance. Through the Food Bank, there is a program where we donate to the food bank, but we would like to have the ability for those who need to use the Food Bank to also have access to it.

How do you form relationships with local service providers when you need to interact with the service they provide?

- **Rabbi Dunsker:** In thinking about what does the county do for us versus what do we figure out on our own, we do a lot of figuring it out on our own. I neglected to say that we have a lot of interaction with the Sheriff's Department because I call them to reach

out. In thinking about what some of the other guests have talked about with different services, for the Jewish community, we are a part of the greater Jewish community in the Portland area where we have the Jewish Family and Children Services. If I need rental assistance, I call them. If I have someone having a psychological problem, I call them. I use them quite a bit and as a community, we donate to support those services as well. So, I'm not necessarily as tapped into what Clark County or Vancouver could give us differently than what I already know and use through the Jewish community. So, the answer to your question, Amy, is "I don't know"? So, thank you for the question.

- **Genise Dance:** We call as well. We use Zoom, face to face conversations with different agencies, and roundtable discussions. We have used the CAAP (Coalition of African American Pastors). From that dialogue, we share information about different resources, mouth to mouth, through various ministries within the congregation, and in different broader community. We try to have a seat at the table with different state and local government officials as well. We attend different breakfasts, for example, to talk, share and communicate as much as possible on what we know. By having a seat at the table, then others can also provide information to us.
- **Dr. Bayomy:** As I indicated earlier, there is no formal way of communicating with service providers because we are not aware of services that our community has reached out to. We depend on internal people and each other in the community. The president of the mosque has been here for a longer period, and he is more resourceful, and he can do things like arrange the dental services. If somebody needs transportation help, he may call a member to help that way. So, there is no formal way, but I am hoping we have some sort of info center with database of who/how to contact/to help us find the help we need.

Questions/comments from service provers.

- Service provider guests included:
 - Shawn Donaghy, CEO C-Tran
 - Jeananne Edwards, Executive Director Community in Motion
 - Christina Marneris, Community Services Manager, Area Agency on Aging & Disabilities of Southwest Washington
- **Cass Freedland** welcomed the service provider guests and noted that they have heard some of the threads from the local faith community guests, and that CoA did a survey at the end of last year/early this year where we saw that faith communities were an essential connection for aging adults. In thinking about that and finding gaps where some organizations have a really refined way and history of working to pull together many threads within the organization and other organizations are trying to figure out how to make these connections, the idea today is to begin to unearth some of the stories and maybe begin finding ways to build more connections.
- **Christina Marneris:** Thanked the faith communities and shared that she could hear that they are all already doing so much. In SW Washington, AAADSW offers an Aging and Disability Resource Center (ADRN). That is probably the best point of contact for your or members of your community to reach out to when you have questions. You don't have to know the resource you're looking for; you just need to be able to tell us the concern. And then we can help direct you to the resource. We are a public service agency and won't try to sell you anything. We are interested in sharing the community resources that are available. The easiest way to reach us is by phone at 360-694-8144 or visit our website: helpingelders.org. I am happy to connect offline and share more in depth of how we could share presentations or whatever would be helpful to your community. A little more about the services we offer: within the agency, we help people

connect to resources that help them stay at home, i.e., assessment by a case manager to see if the person qualifies for in-home care. It might be that you have a community member recently discharged from the hospital and they need a few weeks of home-delivered meals. We could make a referral to Meals on Wheels People to help with that. We have a contract with the Clark County Food Bank to offer food boxes for older adults who might need nutrition services. I also heard one question about transportation issues. We would refer you to our transportation partners and AAADSW has a limited transportation offering, but it is mostly related to transporting people back and forth to medical appointments. As budget and capacity permits, we might be able to help with transportation for other needs. Because we are more specialized to older adults and people with disabilities, I also like to share information about our partner 211info, which is a great resource to find out about available resources in both Portland and SW Washington.

- **Rabbi Dunsker:** regarding in-home care, I find many of my folks, when they need it, they won't get it (stubbornness) and what would be so lovely is psychological care. Is that something you offer? **Christina Marneris:** for unpaid family caregivers, we offer counseling services for them. That family caregiver would receive assessment and their case manager would set up services for their needs. **Rabbi Dunsker:** It sounds like you provide services for the caregiver but not the aging person? **Christina Marneris:** It is likely we would do a referral to a behavioral health service provider for the older adult. In-home care sometimes comes into place last. The caregiver can be a good avenue. Once rapport is there with the caregiver, they might buy into other things. For people needing care in home, there is a shortage of in-home care workers. In Clark County, if you live in a rural area, it could be at least 16-weeks to get someone into the home. I encourage people to think about it early because it is a process.
- **Jeananne Edwards:** Community in Motion is a transportation provider. If you have a transportation issue, please reach out: 360-694-6577. If we don't know the answer, we will try to figure out who does. We have a few programs. We are the Medicaid transportation broker in the county to help with medical trips. We have other programs too, such as the following. We help people who need life-sustaining trips, such as for dialysis or cancer treatment. There is always a waiting list for this service, but we help as quickly as we can. We also have an employment transportation program, bike to work program, and a volunteer driver program in Clark County. The biggest challenge is having enough volunteers, especially since the pandemic. We take about 100 trips per month for seniors or people with disabilities through our volunteer driver program. We don't have requirements for what the ride is for; if we can find a volunteer, we can take you.
- **Rabbi Dunsker:** I have a question about your volunteer drivers. Are there background checks? What happens if something happens when they're driving? **Jeananne Edwards:** Our volunteers go through transportation provider driver training which includes passenger assistance training, background checks, and some medical training. We can do some other things too, for instance, if you have drivers who are willing to take people but need reimbursement assistance, we could set it up so that a driver just serves a specific person, or your community and we could organize reimbursement. We also have two minivans and accessible vehicle that nonprofits can check out and use. We could train someone from your community, or we could fine one of our drivers.
- **Shawn Donaghy:** I would echo the comments made and thank the faith-based communities and nonprofits who do so much work in the county and greater Vancouver-Portland metropolitan area. Thank you for what you do and our partners who help us out with pieces we can't always do. C-Tran has a decent service grid but

appreciates comments like those from Rabbi Dunsker about the holes that we need to try and manage. North and northeast of 205 is an issue where we are starting to grow and putting in new services. We have a reduced pass program. Historically we have done a van donation program: when vehicles go out of service, we donate vans in good condition to faith-based agencies or nonprofits. C-Tran has an amazing travel trainer program, which anyone can call, and we'll send our crew out to see what the best transportation fit is in your area. If we can't provide the needed service, we will find out who can help. Our employees are trained and they are not just a transportation provider, they also find ways to take care of the public. Some people can be reluctant to say I need help. Drivers may reach out to a person or partner with agency if services outside of C-Tran can help provide support. A lot of what we do overlaps with others' comments. We do have a good partnership with our friends at TriMet. With the VA specifically, there can be a lot of cross over between states. We are trying to make system transfers better, such as with reduced passes between the two transit systems. The best way to reach C-Tran is 360-695-0123, or through our website.

Questions/comments from COA members.

- **Larry Smith:** I thank all the service providers and faith groups. My comments are about the need to stay ahead of technology and that I'm struck by how much we rely on Zoom. Can you imagine 20-years ago if we had to go through COVID with no cell phones? It behooves us to stay up to date with technology and make sure community organizations have the technology support they need. If COVID continues its variations, we could be faced with this for several more years. As new technology comes along, I recommend you use it in your organizations, as it becomes so valuable with the growing senior population in the county and all over the country.
- **Franklin Johnson:** Pastor Dance, could you talk about the activities you started at the beginning of COVID to keep in touch with senior members of the church? **Genise Dance:** One of the first things we understood was that our members were isolated and not able to go back to in person services. Recognizing that, we partnered with Black Mental Health of Oregon to secure computers and iPads and Chromebooks for our seniors in Multnomah County. That was a true blessing to us. From that, we ended up teaching our seniors how to use Zoom and use an iPad to log onto the church website. Everything then continued with services and classes online. Many seniors signed up for classes to stay engaged because they wanted to be engaged. We even saw family members helping them learn to use their devices. Then, we ensured we had a format available with different committee members and leaders and a listing of all seniors in the congregation. We organized ourselves so all seniors received a call from a congregation member at least once a month. We could pray with them, engage with them, and talk about anything going on. **Pastor Dance:** We were able to also connect with agencies like Oregon Health Authority and other partners from the State of Oregon who had funds and reached out to us. We were not aware of the funds, and they made us aware. We were able to help not only our congregates but the community as well with the difficulties and times we were going through. We were able to organize vaccination sites where you could get checked, tested, and vaccinated. We made that readily available periodically and it was good for community safety. We communicated through our website, phone calls, group events, drive bys to distribute PPE, and we are still making COVID tests available for pick-up. One of the key things was they made themselves available to us and let us know who they were and what they could provide. They wanted to use us as a go-between to help get supplies out to the community.

- **Christina Marneris:** For us at AAADSW, we are really interested in forming relationships and continuing a dialogue. Faith communities are always a vital part of those relationships that we like to nurture. I would be curious to understand from the faith community leaders, what are better ways to connect and stay in touch with each of you? And are there other organizations that you are a part of where we can come and connect and share the resources available and so we are not such a hidden secret?
- **Rabbi Dunsker:** We are small. It is me and two other people in my office. And since COVID, we're not in the office at the same time. So, call me. I don't have a committee or ministry specifically for my older folks. I have a women's group who would be interested and a men's group who may be interested. Really, it's me, **if you have information that my folks need. Call me. Email is actually way better than phone.** My information is on my website: jewishvancouverusa.org. There are only two Jewish organizations in Vancouver, Kol Ami and the Chabad Jewish Center of Clark County, but we don't necessarily do stuff together. If you wanted to reach the Jewish community, you can contact me. You can come to my website, email me and we can set up a time to connect.
- **Dr. Bayomy:** For the Islamic Society of SW WA – there is one person to contact: Ilyas Mohammed, President of ISSWW. Our website, issww.com, has his contact information. You are also welcome to contact me personally.
- **Amy Gross:** I wanted to make a comment to Shawn. My husband and I have become C-Van consumers, and no matter what anyone else says, we love it, and it works for us and it's very efficient, thank you. **Shawn Donaghy:** Thank you. We have some amazing employees who work for us and I will make sure to share your comments.
- **Chuck Green:** My wife and I attend Vancouver Church and our services and other activities are on Sunday. I imagine most service and church activity times are off-peak times for transit service. **How do you get people to church? Jeananne Edwards:** We are the most flexible. We would put out requests to volunteers. We do have volunteers who will drive on the weekend. One of the best ways for us is to work with an organization to set-up a volunteer. Unfortunately, COVID really hit that type of support hard. People are comfortable going with someone from their own church, even if the volunteer driver doesn't drive any other time. We probably get 10-requests for weekend faith services and get 2-3 drivers. It is a shame we can't do a better job. **Shawn Donaghy:** C-Tran is working on service changes later this year. Probably 7-10 years ago, we pulled back on our weekend service quite a bit. We are trying to get away from Saturday and Sunday different service schedules. We want our weekend service to just be weekend service. We are working to get that on some of our routes now, but the goal is to get that back throughout the system. It is a work in progress, and it will be phased in. You'll start to see some of that later this year with earlier and later weekend trips.
- **Franklin Johnson:** How are you doing with driver staff? Any issues with enough staff and recruiting? **Shawn Donaghy:** It has not been an issue until recently. It is less about not being able to hire as the number of retirements. With tenured drivers, by the second year of the pandemic, they decided to retire. We are still getting drivers. It hasn't impacted our service during the pandemic, and we don't anticipate having to pull back on service.
 - **Chuck Green:** Congratulated C-Tran for receiving the 2022 North American Transit System of the Year, an honor bestowed by the American Public Transportation Association. **Shawn Donaghy:** Shawn thanked the whole C-Tran team for their amazing work which the award reflects and shared how surprising it was to receive the honor a second time.

Public comments

- **Comment:** The C-Tran representative mentioned providing transportation to faith communities and such. You also mentioned something about it being best if we can find our own volunteers. Is there any training you can provide for volunteers in a faith community who are providing transportation for people? **Shawn Donaghy:** We have had organizations reach out to us and ask us for our training program. We are happy to provide some of that guidance. If we as an agency do that, we must manage the volunteers and background checks, etc. We are always glad to connect and either point them to another organization or provide resources. **Jeananne Edwards:** I work with Community in Motion, and we would be glad to do that same thing. We can provide training and provide background checks. When we started our volunteer driver program, we first went to C-Tran. First, they funded our program, and second, they provided training and support on what vehicle to purchase. I think that's how all of this works here. If you have a need and reach out and get to one of us in the community, we will help you get to the right person.

4. General Public Comment

There were no public comments.

5. Officer Elections

The commission elected Cass Freedland as Chair and Franklin Johnson as Vice Chair.

8. Announcements

- Amy Gross provided an update that the Public Health Advisory Council has not met since the commission's last meeting. She also highlighted key takeaways from the latest COVID-19 talking points from Public Health.
- Chuck Green shared information about the new Safe Homes for Seniors program through Meals on Wheels People and AAADSW. The program provides home repair, yard maintenance, and safety improvements. If you would like more information, reach out to Chuck. His Rotary Club is participating in a July 30th service project with the program.
- Larry Smith shared that he attended the CDM Senior Hero Awards Ceremony. He passed out a handout related to the event. The event was well publicized and had a good turnout at a nice location. There are many folks helping the senior population and the event organizers did a good job with the publicity. It was fantastic to hear the comments of community members' service to older adults.

9. Adjournment: The meeting adjourned at 6:12 p.m.

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