



Clark County Commission on Aging
Webex Remote Meeting
Vancouver, Washington

MEETING NOTES

Wednesday, November 16, 2022
4:30 p.m. – 6:00 p.m.

Members Present: Cass Freedland, (Chair), Franklin Johnson (Vice Chair), Chuck Green, Meghan McCarthy, Mel Sanchez and Larry Smith

Absent: Sue Cameron, Amy Gross, Tanya Stewart

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

1. Welcome and call to order

Chair Cass Freedland opened the meeting and completed a roll call of the Commission members.

Approval of agenda

The agenda was unanimously approved with an amendment to add an agenda item to recognize the outgoing County Councilors.

Approval of October 19, 2022 work session and regular meeting notes

The notes were unanimously approved.

2. Silver Citizen Award

The Commission on Aging presented the 2022 Silver Citizen Award to Katlin Smith.

3. Moderated Discussion "Fireside Chat": Innovation through Connection, Caregivers

Meghan McCarthy introduced the discussion and the guests, Claire Houlding with Three and Me and Beth Sanders with LifeBio.

Discussion highlights

Conversation with Claire Houlding

How do you connect most effectively with community members?

- Claire Houlding teaches art classes and likes seeing people connect on a parallel level and sees it as a way to address the isolation of older adults. Even for people who don't think they are crafty, when people start making things with their hands, sitting next to other people, there is just something that happens. Conversations come about and connections are made.



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- Claire shared that her grandmother is 94 and through that she has had first hand experience seeing how badly COVID-19 has impacted her grandmother's age group. For example, her grandmother doesn't have a computer or smart phone, so connections are exceptionally hard. She gets news programs on her TV and has no other way of reaching out to other people on any other level. She lives in Germany which is super socially minded when it comes to caring for those 65 and over. There have been social programs in place for decades that aren't in place anymore because of the pandemic. Claire's grandmother has lost a lot of friends because of her age through passing away, moving away, or being in care facilities, and she is so isolated. It is frightening to watch and it is not an isolated incident.
- Through the City of Camas, Claire is involved with a pilot program where the city and partner organizations/businesses are trying to get those who are isolated or lonely to come back to some kind of low stress social program, where they can meet other people and make something.
- Claire noted that when she designs art projects for people, she is very mindful that the artwork needs to be functional. She often works with wood, which brings up nostalgic feelings. Projects are also designed for people who might have trouble seeing or arthritic hands.
- The feedback Claire has had when crafting with a group of retirees is the absolute joy that they have from making something and meeting like-minded people.
- Claire hopes to have a similar program in Vancouver too. She doesn't just want to teach art classes; she has a vision that we can use multiple small businesses in the local community and once a week or once a month there is a day to bring your retired community together with local small businesses like art therapists, massage therapists, people who know about retired finance, photographers, beauticians, yoga instructors, etc. The event would take place for a morning or afternoon, where community members are doing meaningful things together with other people. A program like this could start slowly and expand from there. Claire envisions using community spaces that are standing vacant a lot right now. She noted there are beautiful buildings, restaurants and hotels that would be interested in partnering on some level to support this vibrant and essential age group. She loves that there is an opportunity to bring older adults back into the fold in a safe way.

How did commission member Tanya Stewart find you, or how does the community find you?

- With Tanya, Claire knew her because their kids went to school together and they stayed connected because of their shared interest in elder care. They have talked a lot about how to improve the lifestyles of people who are marginalized.

What do you see as the challenges in moving forward with your vision?

- Claire commented that if we together use our strengths, get the community fired up about reaching out to those 55+, we can form plans where small businesses rotate, where people can contribute to retirees and caregivers. Caregivers are exhausted; if we can include them and give them a respite, taking groups for a half-day or maybe eventually a full day, it can help caregivers refocus.

Will you describe the Camas program in more detail?

- The City of Camas received a grant. Right now they are running a pilot program with a few contributors, including Claire. Claire does arts and crafts. Someone else is offering exercise programs, and a third person is giving talks on meaningful topics. The city is

providing the facility and subsidizes the facilitators/events. The community members are getting some love, and are getting pampered and adored.

- From Claire's point of view, she also tends to give reduced fees to people who really need to be reconnected.

Do you see anything, as you build the vision, that could help with technology or innovation? We're all striving to rebuild connections post-COVID; do you see doing some of that impacting how you connect with people?

- When Claire looks at the community not using social media, she recommends going back to flyers, newspapers and local magazines. She often drops flyers off at care homes.
- Claire recently received feedback that they love bulletin boards at places like the library and supermarket.
- She noted that we all have our own networks and if we can reach out to other small businesses, we can reach more people.
- She noted the need to market offerings, but not in the modern sense.

Anything else you want to add or highlight?

- Claire noted that the Camas program is just a pilot and she hopes we can grow and take it further. She would really love to collaborate with commission and each others' circles.
- Claire noted bringing children together with the older community and crafting together is incredible. In the events that she hosts, grandparents often bring grandchildren. The joy the kids bring and wisdom the elder people can give benefits both communities.

Conversation with Beth Sanders

Could you in your own words describe LifeBio?

- LifeBio has an app that voice records peoples' stories and can process those stories to create books.
- LifeBio serves up questions and people can answer them and voice record.
- Beth loves families getting together and recording someone they love. Sometimes youth volunteers can help. The company had a project in Ohio, where there were older adults interviewing students. And then the students interviewed the older adults. In some projects the conversations happen over the phone, such as during COVID.
- The company has an app for the face to face conversations. They also developed a telephone based ways to record the conversations too.

Meghan noted she has the LifeBio question cards. She realized it was hard to get her grandparents to talk about different things, but noticed if she asked the right question, it could unlock amazing memories. It can be helpful to have a bit of a guide or prompt that can touch on different areas of memory, which then becomes a priceless gift for future generations.

- Beth described that when LifeBio created its new app, they had outside people look at the questions. She noted that nobody has led a perfect life and people may only share partial stories. However, the questions and storytelling can really meet a need.
- Beth shared that people are so incredible. If you have lived to be 65+, you have an incredible amount of information. It's like you're a living library.
- Beth noted that we also have a workforce problem in healthcare and we have a burgeoning aging population, so how we are going to involve young people in the lives of old people? Art, story, music...these things can come together. If we can't do things

face to face, we have to pivot. That is why we figured out how to connect people by phone.

- Beth shared an example of a project where the company is working with a health plan. The health plan is paying LifeBio to reduce loneliness in their population. That's how big, important and expensive the loneliness problem is. Her company works on ways to increase connection and reduce loneliness.
- Beth noted she loves to brainstorm. Each community has its own local resources, and her organization operates on a national scale.

National resources can be helpful. It is nice to have the local perspective today from Claire and Beth bringing a national perspective. Generally, we invest a lot in childhood development, and as soon as someone hits a certain age, there are a lot fewer resources toward elderhood to address loneliness, cognitive delays, etc. The UK has a Minister of Loneliness because they feel there is a need for that. It is exciting to hear that LifeBio is working with a health plan.

- In another recent LifeBio project, they are matching people with each other, to reduce each others' loneliness. All they are doing is providing the tech behind the scenes. LifeBio give the participants something to talk about, and for 3 months the phone automatically rings and two people talk to each other.
- Beth also shared that there's a great model in Alabama. There is a network of 24 churches in Alabama with a 4-hr, 3-day a week program. If you can plug a model like that into your local area, it could be a lower cost way of using buildings in your local community for something like that.

All of the world is trying to figure this out and we want to learn from other communities. What have been some of your challenges connecting? Anything we might be able to help with?

- Beth noted that Dementia friendly communities are happening across the community. It's incredibly important. LifeBio included people living with dementia in their research. It was considered revolutionary that they involved people with dementia. The best feedback they received came from the people with dementia because they didn't hold back.
- You may want to think about roundtables with people to identify where there are gaps. Involve people experiencing things like dementia and their families.
- Beth found that working with a population in Florida that rarely leave their home and with a lot of chronic conditions, they have figured out ways to reach people who are very socially isolated with very limited income.

Questions/comments from COA members.

- Chuck Green had a question for Claire about the art projects/products and if they for sale? Claire explained that you would attend a class to make the project. She never does a cookie cutter class and can personalize each project.
- Chuck Green noted that the speakers raised ideas around legacy. He noted that idea of providing or sharing a life experience or artistic experience is rather unique in what the commission has been discussing over the years. As the commission updates the Aging Readiness Plan, it's something the group could keep in mind.
- Cass Freedland recalled Larry mentioned bringing youth into the fold previously. She is thinking about ways for people to gain understanding, share and form emotional connection across the ages. What the guests are doing is so much deeper and profound that words like multigenerational can capture.
- Larry Smith noted it is refreshing each time we have individuals providing services, to hear the passion that comes out. It's so nice to have these type of people in our

community. You look them right in their eyes and can tell they are excited to do what they do.

Public comments

There were no public comments.

4. 2022 Findings and Recommendations

- Commission members suggested the following revisions to the draft 2022 findings and recommendations:
 - Chuck Green recommended adding a finding related to the ability to share a memory or to humanize somebody's life, memory, or legacy.
- Public comment on 2022 findings and recommendations: there were no public comments
- The commission unanimously voted to approve the 2022 findings and recommendations with the additional suggested revisions to add a finding related to humanizing somebody's life and legacy.

5. General Public Comment

- Mark Maggiora made a comment about appreciating the commentary from the two guests. He agreed with Chuck Green's comment about creating a legacy. He sees great value in older people showing young people what it means to be a legacy generator. He described how kids come out of life wondering "who am I?" and "what am I going to do?" The opportunity to tap into the wisdom of elders nearing the end of their lives, gives kids an opportunity to weave that into their own thinking.
- Mark Maggiora noted that one of the best forums/vehicles for intergenerational opportunities is through the school system and school family resource centers. He described how the school family resource centers are a good vehicle for weaving institutional access to resources, and also a vehicle for grassroots relationship-building and developing one's character. He noted the school system can't do it by themselves; there needs to be partnership and extension to community resource providers. Mark further explained that schools have a primary job to teach kids, but there is a need to build relationships beyond the school walls, so many kids from broken families with little family legacy, can weave healthy legacy into their lives.
- Mark Maggiora noted the legacy generation in the commission's findings and recommendations relates to living a life that makes a difference. Breaking down isolation and finding ways of how to transcend boundaries and break down structural boundaries is one of the best things the Commission on Aging can do. It could give hope to young people who may have little hope. He noted the commission was on a good track trying to articulate and give language to what is it we are trying to generate: overcoming isolation and tapping into the energy, passion, and purpose of living. He gave kudos to the commission for their great work.

6. Recognition of Outgoing County Councilors

- The commission unanimously approved a motion for the Chair to send a letter of recognition to the three outgoing County Councilors for their support.

7. Communications and Announcements

- Larry Smith reflected on the need for documentation. He has talked to the museum, National Park Service and City of Vancouver. As videos of community members are made, he wants to know how and where to document it. He described how there is a

cost involved, which can make this idea difficult to implement. Videos of WWII vets in the community, for example, can then be shared at a school assembly. Larry is trying to move the process along and is continuing conversations with the museum. He noted he was glad the commission has Katlin on tape. He noted young kids react to video; it's very inspirational. He thinks every organization should be thinking about how to capture individuals who have improved our community.

- Cass Freedland noted how Larry's comment reminded her of StoryCorps, where they set up kiosks and you could tell your story and it was catalogued. It would be fun to think about setting up at events as a way to start that process.
- Mark Maggiora in the audience noted a person behind the first community garden in Rose Village. [Note: did not capture full comment.]

8. Adjournment: The meeting adjourned at 5:57 p.m.

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