

West University Senior Service Board Minutes

February 2016

Present: Michelle Moore (Chair), George Baker, Sarah Ballanfant, Ruth Becker, Candyce Beneke (Secretary), Selby Clark, Susan Davis, Rebecca Dozier, Carlos De La Torre, Judy Faulkner, Virginia Lootens, Stan McCandless, John Palmer Absent: Becky Arnold, Joe Mitchell Visitors: Burt Ballanfant, City Council Liaison Staff: Toby Brooks, Tim O'Connor Guest Residents in Attendance: Alida Drewes, Dick Yehle

Minutes:

The meeting was called to order at 2:05 p.m. A quorum was present. Michelle Moore moved to approve the Minutes of February 11, 2016 as presented. Carlos De La Torre seconded. The minutes were approved with minor name changes and a change that Sarah Ballanfant was present at the January meeting.

Council Meeting Report (Burt Ballanfant):

Councilman Ballanfant gave the report of City Council. He noted that most of the city business at the last meeting was on the "Consent Agenda" and, thus, there was no discussion. He reported that Councilman Reilly offered several items/motions for discussion, but they died for lack of a second. Carlos asked about any resolution to the sidewalk parking issues. Councilman Ballanfant replied there were no changes at this time.

Activities and Previews (Toby Brooks): Toby reported on numbers attending several recent activities of the Senior Services Dept. The David Lacky Antiques Roadshow - 50 people; La Grange Quilt Museum - 34; Sweetheart Luncheon - 65; Polish food and discussion by a Good Neighbor Team volunteer; and Gardening by Linda Gay - 23.

APAC Report (Virginia Lootens): Virginia passed around minutes from the Feb 5 and February 11 APAC meetings. She discussed various items on these agendas. Several Board members suggested that Virginia should apply for the Silver Haired Legislators program!

Good Neighbor Team (Becky Arnold): In Becky's absence, Toby noted that the Good Neighbor Team meeting will be held next Thursday to finalize items to include in our spring bags. She reported that at the January meeting, team members signed and mailed Valentines Cards to our seniors.

Parks and Recreation Report (Tim O'Connor): (presented second at this meeting)

Tim noted that most of his report could be found on the most recent Weekly PARD Operations Summary report he sends out by email. However, he reported on two projects. First, he discussed the West End of Colonial Park project. The crew hit and severed a 2 inch gas line due to operator error. The line was open for 5.5 hours, but there was no evacuation and no one was injured. Fire engines were on site. Tim expects that part of the park to be open in mid to late April. Second, Tim discussed the Summary of Senior Benefits document put together by him and his staff. Carlos discussed the Annual Operating Budget and asked about breakdown for various services. Tim will provide this breakdown for the City Council and for the Senior Board soon. *The Summary of Senior Benefits document will be posted on the web site, published as an addendum to these minutes. (See Addendum A) *Tim suggested putting cards in the Good Neighbor Team bags to remind seniors about these benefits. *Toby also agreed to look at ways to published these Senior Services Benefits in City Currents - probably only listing a few each quarter, as deadlines for the summer had been missed. Dick Yehle commented that the City of West U. does inspections for Southside Place for their services. (due plus billing purposes of billing it is important to get a true cost center to know what to charge Southside place for such services)

Previous Business/Action Items:

1. Task Force for Senior Tax Exemption. Michelle discussed the action item of appointing a Task Force for studying further senior tax exemptions. She reported that she talked with City Manager Chris Peifer about additional exemptions for those seniors over 80. The City Attorney told her this could not be done. Carlos asked if tax benefits were being diluted in West U (he stated that values have increased from \$1.5 to 5 billion in 17 years). The Task Force is: Carlos De La Torre, Ruth Becker, George Baker, Michelle Moore, and Rebecca Dozier. *They are looking at coming up with a “reasonable” increase for senior tax exemption to present to the Senior Board.

2. Update on Precinct Bus Issue. Harris County Judge Ed Emmett sent a reply letter to each of the signers of the letter that we (bus riders) sent to Harris Country Commissioner Steve Radack regarding frequent breakdowns of the precinct buses. A representative from Comm. Radack’s office also called each signer. Both men were apologetic about the breakdowns, and said that the buses were being sent back to Atlanta to redo the air conditioner systems. He noted that Bellaire and West U. Baptist Church use the same buses and have had no problems. Toby commented that the buses have been fine on the last two bus trips.

3. Senior Benefits. Tim discussed this topic at the beginning of the meeting under the Parks and Rec report. *Carlos suggested that we cover these benefits for our volunteers at the Good Neighbor Team meeting to help get the word out to our 135 seniors and survey with spring deliveries.

New Business: Discussion/suggestions for additional Senior Benefit initiatives

1. Toby noted that at the March meeting, Metro wants to come give a 20 min presentation on their new services. The services focus on having a more pedestrian-friendly route system and new options on how you pay. *Add to March agenda for the Senior Board.
2. Michelle suggested partnering with Uber. *Are Uber passengers insured? *John Palmer noted that we need more detail on the Uber program. Cabs are well regulated.
3. Candyce mentioned a voucher program with Yellow Cab that she heard about. *Stan suggested that we check into how to possible contract with them to drive our seniors to local appointments, etc.

Citizen Comments: Alida Drewes - incorporated via Addendum B

Adjournment: Selby moved to adjourn. Judy seconded. Meeting adjourned at 3:10 p.m.

Addendums: A. Summary of Senior Benefits (attached); B. Citizen Comments (below)

(*) Items marked for follow-up!

Addendum A: Summary of Senior Benefits. See attached.

Addendum B: Comments by Resident Alida Drewes (worded as closely as possible to her oral statements)

1. Do not edit citizen’s comments. All information should be available per the Open Meetings Act. (Candyce reminded her that comments need to be summarized for meeting minutes and that she is welcome to submit a written summary to include as an addendum.)
2. Look to Bellaire for how to service seniors where she said customer service is excellent.
3. Her disabled daughter should be treated with respect.
4. Using tax paid services as a bargaining chip is wrong.
5. The Harris County precinct bus people were very agreeable to talking and that the Senior Board should have been done versus sending them a letter.
6. Seniors should not pay taxes when no services are given.
7. Services for disabled citizens should be developed by the West U Senior Services.