

BELLEVUE NETWORK ON AGING  
ANNUAL RETREAT  
MINUTES

January 7, 2010  
8:30 a.m.

Bellevue City Hall  
Room 1E -112

MEMBERS PRESENT: Lynne Robinson, Berta Seltzer, Diana Thompson, Howard Katz, Eileen Rasnack, Bill Merriman, Jullie Gray, Bob Megargel, Heidi Ressler, Hannah Kimball, Peg English, Richard Englund, Cindy Sharek, Beverly Heyden

MEMBERS ABSENT: None

STAFF PRESENT: Cathy VonWald, Alex O'Reilly, Terry Smith, Department of Parks & Community Services

OTHERS PRESENT: Sharon Carlsen, facilitator

RECORDING SECRETARY: Gerry Lindsay

The meeting was called to order at 8:07 a.m. by Sharon Carlsen who presided. All committee members were present with the exception of Heidi Ressler, who arrived at 8:22 a.m., and Chair Robinson, who arrived at 8:27 a.m.

#### GOOD MORNING

##### A. Welcome and Introductions

The Network members introduced themselves and indicated what would make 2010 a successful year for them.

Mr. Katz said there are issues in the city that will affect older adults that should be addressed. The issues include light rail and the need for another facility catering to older adults during the daytime.

Mr. Merriman suggested the Network needs to be very clear about its mission of looking after the city's senior population, especially during the current financial crisis.

Ms. English said she would like to see the Network focus on housing and communities for the aging population, as well as the issue of elder abuse.

Ms. Seltzer said she would like to see the Network work on the issue of universal design, and would like to see the Network expanded to other Eastside cities.

Ms. Heyden highlighted affordable housing as an issue the Network should focus on.

Ms. Sharek voiced the need to keep a close eye on issues before the state legislature that concern older adults. She agreed with the need to study universal design and reaching out to other communities and encouraging them to have their own senior organizations.

Ms. Kimball highlighted the need to make known in the community the services that are available to older adults and making sure they are able to access those services.

Mr. Englund said he would like to see the Network engage older adults as a resource for solving many of the problems facing the community.

Ms. Rasnack said older adults in the community have a great many needs. She agreed that keeping abreast of what is before the legislature will be vitally important and key to many of the currently existing services for older adults.

Ms. Gray said her hope for the year was that the Network would continue its momentum in the areas of housing, transportation and education about available services and issues concerning older adults.

Mr. Megargel said he wanted to see the Network focus on keeping older adults as mobile as possible. A good way to do that would be to see a better transportation system developed within the downtown core. Aging in place should be a goal for the organization. While the legislature is in session, the Network should keep close tabs on what issues are being discussed and what actions are being taken.

Assistant Parks Director Terry Smith took a moment to thank all of the Network members for their service to the city. He allowed that there are a number of highly important issues facing the city, not the least of which is the financial situation. Recognizing the issues and making sure people are aware of them will be important both for the long term and the short term. The Network should spend some of its time during 2010 focused on doing things differently, considering best practices, and seeking efficiencies and effectiveness. He said there are a lot of people in the community who really do care; the Bellevue Cares initiative launched in 2009 proved that to be true.

Human Services Planner Alex O'Reilly said she works closely with the Network because older citizens are one of the age groups served by the city's human services division. On the Eastside in general and in Bellevue specifically there are populations that are in need. There are many outside of the area who believe the Eastside does not experience homelessness or have persons who are in need, and who believe that all of the retired persons living on the Eastside are wealthy.

Ms. Ressler commented that poverty does exist in Bellevue, and there are disparities from neighborhood to neighborhood with regard to the degree to which the residents are willing to get involved.

Chair Robinson said she wanted the Network to work on identifying and working with the gatekeepers in the community, those who have access to people who are trapped in their homes and who might be the first to notice that an elderly resident has not been seen in a while. The identified gatekeepers need to be educated, and additional gatekeepers need to be brought in. She added her support for delving into the issue of universal design as well.

Ms. VonWald reminded the Network members that she is currently involved with a four-month fellowship in the City Manager's office but would be retaining her responsibilities with the Network.

## BNOA SO FAR

### A. Review of Mission Statement

Ms. VonWald noted that Kirkland formed a senior council a couple of years before the Network was formed in Bellevue. They came to Bellevue and proposed forming a similar

group, which kicked off the process of the senior services review in 2000. The review was completed in 2002 and served as the basis for the Vision 2009 document. The Kirkland model served as a foundation for designing the Network, though some improvements were made. While the Kirkland Senior Council is a city commission and reports directly to the City Council, whereas the Network reports to the Parks department. The Network has positioned itself, however, as a group to look to for advice and counsel; the decision makers and policy makers recognize the key role the Network plays.

Ms. Carlsen reminded the Network members that they serve on a volunteer organization. She said that is important to keep in mind in determining what tasks should be undertaken. The Network has a clear mission but cannot take on every issue. The only way to be truly effective will be to carefully select which tasks to take on.

Ms. VonWald praised the Network for the adopted mission statement and said it is descriptive in the way it brings together an awareness of needs and resources. Ms. Carlsen agreed and suggested that it does not need to be made more specific.

The Network agreed the mission statement did not need to be revised.

#### B. Review of 2009 Accomplishments, Feedback on Committee Structure, and Revisiting the BNOA's Structure for 2010

Ms. Carlsen said it was her understanding that the system of committee structuring that was put in place after the 2009 retreat did not work well for the Network. She allowed that it is always tricky to figure out how to structure a group; in the end, however, all that matters is whether or not it works.

Ms. VonWald commented that while the names chosen for the committees did not seem to be a good fit, the tasks that were identified were all carried out. The organization worked even though the committee names did not.

Mr. Katz pointed out that all the real work of the Network is done by the committees. The group meets as a whole primarily to find out what the various committees have done and what they are planning to do. The important task is figuring out what each committee should be focused on.

Ms. Carlsen offered a proposal for how to structure the committees based on information provided her by Ms. VonWald, Chair Robinson and Vice Chair Kimball. She noted that outreach and awareness has always been important to the Network, as has safety and support, and housing. She suggested those topics should each have their own committee. A fourth topic, timely initiatives, may not need its own committee but should not be left out. Rather than being the focus of a committee, timely initiatives could be addressed by assigning members to sit on or work with specific groups and then report back to the full Network. The Easy Rider Collaborative and the Eastside Human Services Forum are two good examples, and a third is legislative issues.

Ms. English asked how the group can know that something it wants to do can be tagged to the work already being done by someone. Ms. VonWald said Network members have been involved from the start in the Easy Rider Collaborative, an organization that has ties to a number of agencies that are looking at mobility issues as they relate to Bellevue. That is one established effort the Network can tag onto. The Eastside Human Services Forum is another group that has as part of its focus the needs of older adults, and so it will be important to get Network members involved in that group. Anyone who is involved with a group that has older adults as its focus should keep the Network informed.

## 1. Education Committee (Safety & Support)

Ms. Thompson said the committee worked behind the scenes to have a number of different senior-related videos shown on BTV. New programs are being sought. The committee also was responsible for having a number of articles printed in the *Bellevue Reporter*, including articles on elder abuse, handling heat in the summer, safety, hearing, and the conversations older adults should have with their children while they are still capable of making good decisions.

Ms. Thompson said senior day at the farmer's market was a good success and should be repeated. Different agencies were invited to have a booth at the farmers market in order to share information with attendees. The participating agencies enjoyed the outreach opportunity, and those who received the information were grateful.

Ms. Thompson said the Vial of Life program has been a project of the Network as a whole. The program has been well publicized in Bellevue. AARP is planning an article on the program, and Ms. Thompson said she may be asked to serve on their Vial of Life publicity committee.

In addition to the article in the paper on elder abuse, the committee was successful in getting the Bellevue City Council to declare international Elder Abuse Day. Ms. Thompson said she made a presentation to the Council on the topic, which was shown many times on BTV.

Mr. Englund noted that the Vial of Life data form contains a great deal of personal information, including social security number. He suggested that anyone knowing what information is contained on the form could easily target homes with the Vial of Life sticker on the front door. Ms. VonWald said before the program was formed by the Medic One Foundation, the Kirkland and Bellevue subcommittees were working together to develop a similar program. The subcommittees determined that the form should not include a social security number. Ms. Gray said the only reason for including the number is that social security numbers are tied directly to Medicare records. Anyone filling out the form can certainly opt to leave that line blank.

Ms. Thompson suggested that if the Network feels strongly the forms should not include a line item for social security number, the group should draft a letter asking that it be omitted from the next printing of the forms.

## 2. Research Committee (Needs Assessment)

Ms. Rasnack said the work done to assist in updating the needs assessment could be termed a special initiative. The committee did the organizational work, but everyone on the Network participated in the different community conversations. The full Needs Update document is set to be released and posted online by January 15.

Ms. O'Reilly said the collaboration with the Network was a good one. The work to update the Needs Update is done very two years and hopefully the Network will consider participating again in 2011.

## 3. Advocacy Committee (Housing and Mobility)

Ms. Seltzer said the committee focused more on mobility than it did on housing through its teaming up with the Eastside Easy Rider Collaborative. The group conducted a community

conversation at the Crossroads Community Center focused on working together to solve client transportation challenges. A panel consisting of representatives from Sound Transit and King County Metro, and a mobility coordinator from another county, was formed to discuss the issues and offer information.

Ms. Seltzer reported that Hopelink, the organization selected to serve as the parent entity for the Eastside Easy Rider Collaborative, received a government grant to fund a part-time mobility coordinator. The coordinator is tasked with, among other things, providing administrative support for the Collaborative.

The committee delved into housing issues by inviting Arthur Sullivan of ARCH and planner Janet Lewine of the city to share information. Those two persons will be good contacts if the Network turns its attention to the issue of universal design.

The committee also kept an eye on the Bel-Red corridor issues, especially as they relate to housing opportunities for older adults.

Ms. Seltzer said the Collaborative is expecting the Network to continue to play a role in the coming year.

Mr. Megargel asked if consideration has been given to reaching out to the private sector, specifically taxi operators. He suggested that if something could be worked out with them, they could be providing services to older adults during the time they would otherwise be just waiting for their next customer. Ms. Seltzer said the Collaborative is involved in researching a wide range of possibilities, including both public and private transportation options.

Ms. Seltzer suggested that there should continue to be a push for affordable housing in the Bel-Red corridor. Ms. O'Reilly commented that the economic slowdown has caused much of the development activity in the city to halt, including non-profit projects aimed at generating additional low-income housing units. The plans are still on the books, however, and many of the projects are just waiting for capital. She suggested it would be a good idea to continue tracking affordable housing need and availability as they relate to older adults in the community. The Eastside Homelessness Advisory Committee tracks affordable housing and is a group the Network might want to be associated with.

Ms. VonWald noted that the city in the coming year will be working to update its Comprehensive Plan. That will provide the Network with an excellent opportunity to weigh in on issues such as accessory dwelling units, universal design, and affordable housing. The Planning Commission will have the lead for that task; it would behoove the Network to appoint someone to attend the Planning Commission meetings and offer pertinent information.

#### 4. Outreach

Chair Robinson said she continues to be amazed at the amount of work done by the Network. She said the outreach committee met with a number of successes during the past year. Presentations were made to the City Council, the Holy Cross Lutheran Church, the Vuecrest Community Association, the Parks Board, the Human Services Commission, the Hearing Loss Association of Washington, Senior Net, and the Lake Hills Community Association. By having a booth at various community events, a number of direct contacts were made and resource information handed out; the list of community events included the Blueberry Festival, the farmers market, and the Home Is Where The Heart Is fair. Information was also published in *Neighborhood News* about the Network and available resource materials.

Ms. Thompson said a Power Point presentation has been developed for presentation to groups as an outreach mechanism. What is needed, however, is more groups with whom to share it. Part of the work of the outreach committee should focus on identifying groups.

#### 5. Joint BNOA/KSC Committee

Ms. Thompson said the first year of the collaboration with the Kirkland Senior Council was spent working on the Vial of Life program, and she suggested the Network should continue to work together with Kirkland on that important program. The second year of the collaboration focused more on legislative matters and included writing the congressional representatives about the Elder Justice Act. She suggested the group should continue to focus on advocacy in the coming year.

Ms. Ressler asked if there are plans to conduct another senior housing forum. Ms. O'Reilly said meeting was designed to roll out the housing report done by Aging and Disability Services. There are no plans to hold another meeting. Ms. VonWald allowed that the meeting had generated interest on the part of several communities to form their own senior councils, and there may be merit in working with them to achieve that goal.

Ms. O'Reilly noted that the Eastside Human Services Forum is still working on its work plan for the year but it has added a focus area on older adults. One aspect could be assisting other communities in developing councils on aging. She said the Forum would be happy to work with the Network to flush out the details. Ms. VonWald suggested a member of the Network should be appointed to sit on the Forum workgroup.

Ms. Ressler suggested it would be helpful to put publish a calendar showing the dates for the various meetings that Network members regularly attend. Ms. VonWald said she could do that.

#### 6. Other

Mr. Katz said the annual softball game that pits city staff against seniors in the community is a wonderful event. He said Network members play on the city's team. The seniors team defeated the city four years in a row until the 2009 game which ended in a tie. The event is sponsored by the Parks department.

Ms. Thompson said she would like to see the Network continue writing letters to legislators and participate in Senior Lobby Day in Olympia, which in 2010 will be on February 18. Ms. VonWald said the event is sponsored by the Washington State Senior Lobby. She said she would provide the Network with additional information as it becomes available.

**\*\*BREAK\*\***

#### C. Planning for 2010

Ms. Carlsen informed the Network that during the break she and Ms. VonWald reviewed the notes taken during the preceding discussion regarding issues highlighted as possible focus areas for 2010. She observed that four years after its inception, there are some things the Network does every year, including researching and showing helpful videos on BTV, submitting articles for publication in the *Bellevue Report*, the Vial of Life program, participating in the farmers market senior day, supporting an annual Elder Abuse proclamation, and the Older Americans Month proclamation. She said she heard comments regarding the need for the Network to continue to be involved with legislative issues both on its own and in conjunction with other groups, participate in writing letters, participate in

Senior Lobby Day, and may want to consider developing position statements for various issues, possibly in league with the Eastside Human Services Forum. The Easy Rider Collaborative is well established and the Network should continue to provide a supportive role by having a seat at the table.

With regard to housing, Ms. Carlsen highlighted the desire of the Network to be involved in the process of updating the Comprehensive Plan, continue to focus on affordable housing issues, including accessory dwelling units, and to take up the issue of universal design.

Ms. Carlsen allowed that some of the issues previously highlighted could find a home under the outreach category. She said other outreach activities mentioned by the group included community presentations, participation at special events, developing networks in other cities, and meeting with hospital and healthcare leaders.

Mr. Katz said there is a need for a community center in the downtown. The center should have seniors as its focus for the main part of the day, transitioning to other users later in the afternoon and into the evening hours. Chair Robinson suggested that while there is a clear need for a community center in the downtown, it is not really an issue the Network should put on its plate. Ms. VonWald agreed but pointed out that the Network should consider making room for participating in citywide planning initiatives as they arise.

Ms. O'Reilly suggested the Network might also want to follow the work of the Transportation Commission.

Ms. Carlsen proposed a structure for 2010 involving three specific committees: 1) outreach and awareness, a committee for the purpose of promoting the work of the Network, identifying places to make presentations, explaining to seniors how to get the assistance they need, and assisting other cities in setting up their own senior councils; 2) safety and support, a committee focused on one or more project highlighting senior needs; and 3) housing, a committee targeted toward the issue of universal design, advocacy, education, and working with the city as it works to update the Comprehensive Plan. In addition, she proposed having as a priority appointing Network members to sit on specific groups, such as the Eastside Easy Rider Collaborative and the Eastside Human Services Forum, and to participate in city initiatives as they arise.

Ms. Seltzer commented that Network members appointed to attend the meetings of specific groups often do more than just sit in; their work is to partner and collaborate with those groups, and to influence them to the degree possible. As a category, those functions should be referred to as community partnerships.

Ms. Carlsen asked the members to consider whether or not there should be an oversight function to make sure a Network member is always at the various meetings. Chair Robinson expressed the view that collaboration with the various groups is important but not the primary function of the Network.

Ms. VonWald suggested that city initiatives should be called out separately as they represent new opportunities for the Network to participate in and expand its sphere of influence. She also suggested adding to the Network's meeting agenda a line item for reports regarding community partnerships and the work of other boards and commissions.

Mr. Merriman agreed with taking that approach. He suggested that by keeping tabs on the various groups, it will be possible to form specific task forces to address issues at their critical junctures. He also suggested that outreach, awareness and education are all related and should be lumped together.

Ms. Thompson suggested that everything having to do with ongoing projects is really outreach. She allowed that the education committee did a lot of outreach during the previous year. It would be too much to have all of those responsibilities given to a single committee.

There was general agreement that the Network should be involved in distributing the Vial of Life materials so long as there are materials to distribute. There was also agreement that outreach efforts should be the responsibility of the Network as a whole, not the individual committees.

Some felt the issue of legislation should be placed under outreach, while others thought it would fit better under special initiatives given that quick responses may be required. It was agreed legislative issues should be handled by an appointed committee focused on that single topic, even though the group would meet only during the legislative session.

Ms. Ressler asked about the possibility of raising awareness of the Network by developing and keeping updated an electronic bulletin board. Ms. VonWald said the Network can have and work on its legislative agenda, but it must be very careful about politics. The Network cannot endorse candidates or any specific initiative. Information about possible impacts can be put out there by the Network provided it is done in a way that allows people to make up their own minds.

There was agreement to establish three committees for 2010: housing, outreach and advocacy. The members selected the committees they wanted to be part of, then the three committees met together to select a chair, meeting times, and priority issues to be addressed. Ms. Rasnack was chosen to serve as chair of the advocacy committee; the housing committee chose Ms. Kimball to be the chair; and the outreach committee chose as its chair Ms. Ressler.

## WRAP UP

### A. Brief Evaluation

Mr. Katz noted that there had not been time during the meeting to review the Network's bylaws. There was agreement to review the bylaws at a meeting of the Network.

Mr. Englund suggested the new members will not be able to provide meaningful input with regard to the bylaws until toward the end of the first year. Ms. VonWald suggested that if after reviewing the bylaws there is a desire to make some changes, a subcommittee should be formed to develop a recommendation for the Network to review and approve.

Ms. Thompson said the meeting was a very good one in that it allowed for free and open discussion. Ms. Sharek agreed and said she had learned a lot through the process.

Mr. Katz complimented Ms. Carlsen on running a well-organized meeting and said he hoped she would come back again for the next retreat.

### B. Adjourn

The meeting was adjourned at 11:54 a.m.