



Clark County Commission on Aging
Webex Remote Meeting
Vancouver, Washington

MEETING NOTES

Wednesday, October 21, 2020
4:30 p.m. – 6:00 p.m.

Members Present: Chuck Green (Chair), Larry Smith (Vice Chair), Amy Gross, Franklin Johnson, Linda O’Leary, Tanya Stewart, and Pamela Wheeler

Absent: Nancy Dong, Meghan McCarthy

1. Welcome and call to order

Chuck Green opened the meeting.

Roll call and excusals

The group excused two members, Meghan McCarthy and Nancy Dong.

Approval of agenda

The agenda was approved.

Approval of meeting minutes

The August 19 and September 16 meeting minutes were approved.

2. Recognition of county staff for support of the Commission on Aging

COA presented a proclamation to staff and made a motion and approved it for the Chair to sign the proclamation and send it to the County Council and County Manager.

3. Presentations: Impact of COVID-19 on older adults’ access to food, supplies, and medications

Details on each presentation are available in the video recording and presentation slides posted on the Commission website.

Presentation #1

Presenter: Mikayla Springob, Area Agency on Aging and Disabilities of Southwest Washington (AAADSW)

Presentation highlights:

- AAADSW received funding through the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act and Families First Coronavirus Response Act



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- Immediate impacts of COVID-19: closure of senior nutrition congregate meal sites (typically open every day of the week in various places throughout Clark County), significant increase in demand for home-delivered meals (AAADSW contracts with Meals on Wheels for this service and this trend has been seen nationwide), reduced use of transportation program services (typically helps older adults get to medical appointments and other essential services), reduction in number of transportation volunteers (many volunteers were older adults and consider high-risk)
- With decline of transportation volunteers, saw increase in nutrition volunteers (i.e. meal delivery)
- Nutrition - Senior Farmers Market Nutrition Program (SFMNP): state program which provides funding for fresh produce and honey at farmers markets, saw increased demand for SFMNP vouchers, but had the same number of vouchers available as last year and could not serve more people. Switched from in-person to mail-in approach for vouchers and shift worked pretty well.
- Nutrition - Meal delivery through Meals on Wheels People
 - Data for Clark County:
 - Meals on Wheels had 347 new clients between 3/13-5/31/2020. This does not include those who privately pay for their meals (approximately 45% increase)
 - Of new clients, included 149 who live alone (60%)
 - Of new clients, included 151 with household income less than \$20,000 (53%)
 - Home delivery survey – Used to deliver each day ordered (i.e. if ordered for delivery 5x/week, would receive a delivery each day). With increased demand, switched to 1x/week delivery model. For the 1x/week approach: meals include some hot meals, some frozen, some fresh foods, some shelf-stable foods. Based on survey, 75% of recipients prefer 1x/week delivery and will continue beyond COVID-times. Survey takers said the new delivery schedule provides more freedom in their own schedule because they do not have to be home at a specific time as often. It also cuts back on wasted meals when clients are not home to receive delivery.
 - Wellness checks and friendly chats address social isolation in lieu of in-person congregate meals. Between April 1 and May 31, 2020, wellness checks completed with 28,018 calls to 4,035 individuals, an average of 683 calls per day. Friendly chats volunteers had a more social focus. Volunteers made an average of 79 calls per day. Of those reached with friendly chats: 410 live alone, 107 veterans, and 445 had income under \$20,000.
 - Partners reported that they had excess food and were able to provide more than usual (ex. egg farm donated eggs to Meals on Wheels)
 - Ongoing adjustments to service delivery: will maintain the 1 day per week delivery system. Now open 4-days per week, Monday through Thursday.
- Transportation
 - Significant reduction in overall requests for transportation
 - In Clark County, the biggest reduction was in volunteer transportation (AAADSW contracts with Catholic Community Services)
 - Side effects of COVID-19 is that many volunteers are in high-risk groups
 - Providers reported an uptick in requests for transportation since July and more volunteers are returning. Providers are still able to meet needs.

- Adaptations to service delivery include grocery/food box delivery and essential errand shopping and delivery. CARES funding has helped cover the delivery cost of these items.
- Catholic Community Services has had requests from outside agencies and churches to do pick-ups from food banks and food pantries and deliver items to older adults or shop for individuals and then deliver. The organization has also seen an increase in essential errands shopping and delivery, i.e. prescriptions.
- Ongoing needs
 - Funding: many providers have spent most of their COVID-related funds. Service has been high and it is harder for providers to find things, i.e. to-go containers and personal protective equipment. Providers need ongoing funding to support the increased service levels
 - Advocacy: being fully aware of the unique needs of seniors and people with disabilities and advocating for them whenever possible

Q&A and Comments from Commission on Aging:

- **Tanya:** For the data on wellness check-ins and chats, is there additional data since May? **Mikayla:** I do not have additional data yet. The providers are very deep in service-delivery mode. I can reach out to get updated numbers and then send to Jacqui. **Tanya:** That would be great and any outcomes tracked.
- **Franklin:** With the wellness checks and chats, did Meals on Wheels People uncover any other issues or trends? **Mikayla:** The main thing is the social isolation is getting harder as the pandemic continues. This is not surprising, but I don't know more at this time. Our clients are missing their friends. It has now been 7-months without congregate sites. **Franklin:** Were the friendly chats really embraced? **Mikayla:** They were. Friendly chats reached over 650 people and could have made a big difference for those people. Will see if can get any additional data.
- **Amy:** When the program started delivering meals and packages with frozen or shelf-stable meals, did you know if people had appropriate equipment to prepare those meals? **Mikayla:** I believe Meals on Wheels did. They conduct an assessment when someone signs-up to receive meals and I think there are questions such as: do you have the ability to safely prepare a meal in your home?

Presentation #2

Presenters: Alan Hamilton and Emily Kaleel, Clark County Food Bank

Presentation highlights:

- Food Bank Overview:
 - Food bank mission: to alleviate hunger and its root causes. Since the onset of COVID-19, we have been very focused on getting people food today. The food supply change was very interrupted and most root cause work was largely put on hold because involves face-to-face interaction.
 - Food bank network: Clark County Food Bank is a regional food bank. The Food bank does a lot of direct service, but most is done through partner sites throughout the county.
 - Food pantries: the food pick-up environment is more COVID-friendly than other methods because it is a low-touch experience. We see lots of people of all ages and that includes a high percentage of seniors.
 - Hot meal sites: mostly on pause right now

- Special service sites: program someone enrolled in and many don't include the senior community
- 21 food pantries
 - All stayed open during COVID-19
 - Most run by independent non-profits
 - All operate differently, some drive-through, others allowed inside and have pick-up boxes, etc.
 - Can find all food pantries on the Clark County Food Bank website
 - Some people uncomfortable going to a new pantry site. If anyone has any questions or concerns, can call the Food Bank.
- Delivery options
 - These are special COVID-19 options which didn't happen
 - Providing individual home delivery if can't pick-up food
 - Contact senior living facilities weekly and drop boxes weekly and Caples Terrace (for individuals graduating out of foster care)
 - Safe Park – can park car overnight
 - Isolation and quarantine hotels and motels
 - Human Services Council and Meals on Wheels have also ramped up delivery
- Meal sites
 - Some sites still completely closed
 - Others are open but modified approach, i.e. free hot soup has direct service to homeless individuals in a park
- Coordination
 - Food meal distribution in Clark County is messy, i.e. neighbors helping each other, churches helping congregation
 - Clark County Food Bank does not try to coordinate all of it, but tries to be a resource where possible
- Data on senior clients. Out of approximately 100,000 people:
 - 27.6% respondents were 51-64 years old
 - 21.8% respondents were 65+ years old
 - 33.7% respondents indicated that at least one individual in their house was 65+ years old
- Languages spoken – 76% English, 11% Spanish, 13% Russian
- Race origin – 65% White/Anglo, 5% Slavic, 6% Black/African American, 11% Latino/Hispanic, 4% American Indian/Native American, 9% Other
- Challenges seniors experiencing during COVID-19:
 - Mobility and access to the food, i.e. can be less mobile to begin with
 - Transportation: may require volunteers to get places
 - Concerns with contracting COVID-19: large volunteer base involved with the Food Bank. Many are seniors and stopped coming to volunteer with COVID-19
 - Lots of people offered to buy food for neighbors through social media
 - Now reaching out and offering to deliver
 - Embarrassment can be a big deal. The drive-through success is partially because you don't have to get out of car and be seen openly.
 - Drive-through success b/c convenient, safe, and less embarrassment in process and seen openly. Big deal for folks who have pride and dignity. Can be barrier
 - Isolation
 - Language barriers: many seniors are Russian speaking and may not read, write or speak English

- COVID impact on finances: the Food Bank has never had so many people reach out and say I've never done this before, I don't even know how to get food. Lots of brand new people.
- Food and People:
 - Fewer people and more sanitation with COVID-19
 - This impacts: how we get food, how we manage it or process it, how we distribute it, and who needs it
- How seniors get food
 - Food pantries
 - Meal sites
 - Human Services Council
 - Senior Living Facility Delivery
 - Individual Home Delivery
 - Family/Friend
 - Key questions ask those interested: where are you located and where can you go to get it? Will try to connect person with nearby food pantry. If have neighbor or friend who can help, encourage teaming up for support.
 - COVID-has helped people come together in ways haven't before

Q&A and Comments from Commission on Aging:

- **Chuck:** Wife involved with food donation project and a rotary club contributes to the Clark County Food Bank and various pantries. If there are organizations who want to directly contribute to you, who do they talk to? **Alan:** It is great to see the heart and compassion with community donation projects. We appreciate donations of money and time. Needs have never been greater and donations have never been greater. Can call Alan if have questions.
- **Tanya:** Physician and past experience with food banks is that food isn't always the healthiest and can contribute to food-related illnesses. Unaware of Food Bank's classes and nutrition education. Is there a future plan to continue progress towards really embracing healthy whole foods and making a statement to companies that make unhealthy foods by not accepting certain donations? I know there is a difference between hunger and nutrition. **Alan:** We have six full-time nutrition educators. All are running classes virtually right now. We do refuse lots of food, i.e. soda or candy. We don't refuse all of it, but some. Food banking has changed a lot over the past decade towards more fresh foods and less boxed items. We work with all hospitals and health clinics in the area and make diabetes and pre-diabetes. We hold grocery store shopping classes and walk around, read labels, shop the perimeter, etc. It's a lot of education and basics. We all need it. It's been disappointing to not be as strong right now as it has been. **Tanya:** Crusonia on the Delta is connecting agriculture and health. Will follow-up after with Alan.

Presentation #3

Presenter: Jeananne Edwards, Human Services Council (HSC)

Presentation highlights:

- Trends:
 - Significant decrease in all trip types April-May (72% decrease)
 - Majority of volunteers stopped driving because also largely older drivers and in a higher-risk group

- Slow rebuilding of essential trips. Currently down 34% over last year for transportation requests.
- Change in some trip types. Calls now for pick-up of library books
- Many are still isolated. Checking in with those who used to take rides and are not, to see if HSC anything can do to help
- Services available:
 - Medical transportation for those with Medicaid
 - Employment transportation
 - Volunteers in Motion – have lost many volunteers and unsure if will come back. Trying to figure out how to keep people safe who use their own vehicle to provide transportation. Still making trips for medical, nutrition, and social reasons
 - Trip Resource Center for directions and travel options. Lets you know the best option for getting from point A to point B
 - Delivery of essentials (food, pharmacy). Deliveries are up over transporting people. HSC took over from police departments when they stopped their prescription delivery program and can now deliver prescriptions. HSC volunteers and transportation brokers go to the drive-thru food bank pick-ups for their clients. Many clients have never had to use a food bank before or ask for help to get prescriptions and HSC is doing what they can to remove barriers
 - Pilot for North County Shuttle. Long-time in the making to get north county residents into Battle Ground. Not the best time for launching a shuttle service, but piloting it now with safety measures in place
- How to help:
 - Check-in with those you can. We are all isolated. The most vulnerable people in our community are very isolated
 - Technology challenges: HSC is helping people look things up on the internet
 - Need for more drivers
 - Spread the word about the North County Shuttle
 - Need continued funding. As HSC funders lose money, puts HSC more at risk. Federal PPP loan has been very helpful.
 - Open services: not all services are open right now and can make things more challenging, i.e. how to get fingerprints for a new volunteer HSC is onboarding

Q&A and Comments from Commission on Aging:

- **Pam:** Question for Alan, for the deliveries to senior living facilities, what kind of facilities are those? **Alan:** We are serving a number of locations, including: Kirkland Union Plaza, Mill Creek Senior Estates, Vista Court, etc. We don't anticipate all of these partnerships continuing, but with the crisis we were best suited to do this right now.
- **Franklin:** Question for Alan, you mentioned the overall lack of coordination and how it's messy. Can you talk more about that? **Alan:** The geographic distribution of food pantries is not perfect, the food flow in is not always consistent, how people distribute food is not always the same, changes in food pricing, timing of food surpluses, language barriers, etc. I don't think there is another way to do it, and all of these strategies are needed. Of course we are still missing segments of our community and keep adjusting our approaches.
- **Larry:** Alan, is there a partnership with Oregon food banks. I'm thinking about evacuations from fires. Do you exchange assistance? **Alan:** We do partner. Oregon was fine and didn't need our help with the recent fires. We have never had more food in our system than we have now.

- **Franklin:** to all the presenters, is there anything this group can do to aid the advocacy?
Alan: I love that the community I live in has a commission doing this work. I don't know if we can normalize the idea that getting help is ok. We work hard to reduce barriers and destigmatize the process of getting food, but the more we can all do to destigmatize how we talk about getting help with things like food, the better. We live in a world where words really matter. In our conversations, find ways to do more of that.
- **Mikayla:** I would echo what Alan is saying and on a micro-level, the best thing we can do is talk to the people and seniors we know, people in line in the grocery store, etc. Share the information you have here. We get a lot of referrals because of friends. Spreading information is very helpful.

Q&A and Comments from Public: None

4. Debrief: What have we heard? Potential recommendations? Request(s) for more information?

- **Tanya:** Learned a lot. I feel like there is an opportunity to spread information more. I would like the commission to do what we can. Also, as an individual, I feel more empowered to do more based on what I learned tonight.
- **Linda:** Many nonprofits have had to blur a lot of lines to get the job done. I appreciate the reason nonprofits exist is to fulfill their mission and help each other. I appreciate how they do it with respect and care.
- **Pam:** One takeaway is how your agencies adapted to the COVID [sound cut out]
- **Franklin:** I was tracking in all the presentations how you were agile and responded to the impacts of COVID. There are a lot of lessons learned through this experience. We will probably have a similar situation again sometime in the future. Your commitment and attentiveness to the clients you serve and efforts to reduce barriers is commended.
- **Linda:** Until a person is well-fed, nothing else will be accomplished.
- **Larry:** What we have learned is the importance of volunteers. They can never be taken for granted for what they do and provide to our community.
- **Chuck:** We also need to work on the county's broadband infrastructure.

5. Public Comment: None

6. Communications and Announcements

- **Liaison updates:** Amy provided a recap of her last conversation with public health that she shared during the September retreat. There are a few community groups who public health is having a hard time connecting with regarding COVID-19.
- **Liaison roles:** Amy will continue her liaison role with public health, Linda will continue her liaison role with the Human Services Council, Tanya will start as the liaison with ADRN, and Chuck will start as liaison with the Accessible Transportation Coalition with Tanya as back-up.
- **Nov. 18 CoA Meeting:** Housing challenges for vulnerable older adults during COVID-19
- **Nov. 18 COA Meeting:** Silver Citizen Award presentation

7. Adjournment: The meeting adjourned at 6:05pm.

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