



Clark County Commission on Aging  
Webex Remote Meeting  
Vancouver, Washington

## MEETING NOTES

Wednesday, April 21, 2021

4:30 p.m. – 6:00 p.m.

**Members Present:** Chuck Green (Chair), Larry Smith (Vice Chair), Nancy Dong, Amy Gross, Franklin Johnson, Meghan McCarthy, Linda O’Leary, and Tanya Stewart

**Absent:** Pamela Wheeler

### 1. Welcome and call to order

Chuck Green opened the meeting

#### Roll call and excusals

Pam Wheeler was excused from the meeting

#### Approval of agenda

The agenda was unanimously approved

#### Approval of meeting minutes

The March 17 meeting minutes were unanimously approved

### 2. Moderated Discussion/ "Fireside Chat": First and Early Responders

Details on each presentation are available in the recording on the Commission website.

**Guests:** *Chief Robert Milano, Vancouver Fire Department and MaryJane Rose and Victor Magana, American Red Cross, Cascades Region*

#### Discussion highlights with Chief Milano:

*Do you offer services to older adults, and if so which have been used most during the pandemic?*

- Working towards having a central location of resources for seniors. On calls, run into seniors who may no longer be able to care for themselves. The only option the fire department currently has is protective services through the state. There can be a range in time in how quickly the state is able to respond. When people are in crisis, the last thing they need to do is wait for help. The Fire Department is looking at a way to build out some sort of live portal to point seniors to other levels of services in the county. They could then share that information with people while they are in crisis.

*For those of us who do not know, what is the difference between an EMT and a Paramedic?*

- All firefighters are EMTs, which involves about two semesters of work. Paramedics go through a 2-year program, similar to a registered nurse program, but with a different focus on immediate care training.



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*What can people do to better prepare for the next pandemic?*

- Countywide, agencies have gotten information out and have been creative at changing how they are sharing information over time. There is some COVID fatigue and it's important to continue to have a good level of messaging that gets out to the aging population about the best current practices.

*Does the fire department help with any neighborhood organizing?*

- The Fire Marshall's Department has a home fire safety program. It's a national program where citizen volunteers will come to your door with fire safety information. They have a tablet and can show you a video of things you can do in your home. The video is translated into 30 different languages. It has been a really successful program. It is paused due to COVID, but hopefully it can resume soon.
- We are working on a fall and slip program. This is the most common type of call we receive. We want to advocate for ways to alleviate some of those risks.
- We don't have programs that work directly with neighborhood associations.

*Is there a web address or location where people can go to volunteer?*

- You can learn more about the Fire Corps Volunteer program on the City of Vancouver webpage: <https://www.cityofvancouver.us/fire/page/fire-corps>

*What's on your wish list?*

- An employee position who could do the follow-up with our high-risk communities who use 911 a lot. This person could find different avenues for these customers other than 911. This person could also help with different community involvement opportunities too.

### **Discussion highlights with Victor Magana and MaryJane Rose:**

*What does the Red Cross do for older adults and what services have been needed most in the last 14-months?*

- The Red Cross gets involved before a disaster, during a disaster, and right after a disaster. Our focus is on community partnerships to provide services.
- Our before disaster/preparedness/readiness work is to help people be able to respond or pivot and have the things they need to be better prepared in an emergency.
- With older adults, there is a huge need in making sure people know who their point of contact is for medical devices, equipment, etc. and how long they can sustain certain items when not at home, and a plan to work within those needs. In an emergency, it may take a while to get those services. This was a huge challenge with us with COVID-19 and displacement from fires.
- Being prepared in advance includes having things like a list of medications, list of physicians, a go-bag ready with copies of medical cards, phone numbers and that information. It's very helpful to a first responder and to the Red Cross in event of opening a shelter. With the fires this past year, we could have saved a lot of time in tracking down that information with individuals. We advocate for a 2-week ready kit.

*Do you mostly work with individuals, neighborhoods, or groups?*

- It depends on the aspect of our work. We give disaster presentations to groups, i.e. elementary school pillow case project and presentations about what you would need in your go-kit to groups like rotary boards, neighborhood association and private companies.

- I have worked with a 55+ community where based on their geographic location, it would be hard for first responders to get there quickly in an emergency. They need to be able to sustain themselves for a while before help would be able to arrive.
- We also can share resources with groups like “Map my neighborhood.”
- All Red Cross services are free.

*What is a typically Red Cross week like for you [MaryJane]?*

- In addition to board duties, I work as a Red Cross logistics coordinators to make sure supplies are ready in case of a disaster i.e. trailers are stocked and ready to go.
- I work on various projects within the Cascades Region listening to what’s happening with local disasters and disasters throughout the country that we could be called on to respond to. Mostly, I am staying on top of and up to date with information and training.
- One example is if there is an apartment fire, the Red Cross would send out DAT responders to assess what’s needed and if we have to establish a short term shelter. We have people ready to do that. We have blankets, cots, etc.

*How do you interface with the fire department?*

- The fire department notifies the Red Cross when there are house fires, for instance, to provide services to those who have been displaced.
- We assess immediate needs and can help families find a place to stay.
- We also collaborate on smoke alarm education.
- One of the first priorities of incident commanders, once a fire is under control, is to meet up with residents and find out their needs. The incident commander can then call the Red Cross and they can respond quickly and integrate with crews.
- Firefighters also donate blood regularly to the Red Cross and help raise money to donate to community members in need.

*Are there older adults in the community without smoke alarms? How do you find out and help them get them?*

- Anyone can contact the Red Cross. They would need to share their name, phone number and address. The Red Cross can speak with the person and can help get smoke alarms installed. We can also talk about fire safety.
- The Red Cross can also help provide smoke alarms for those who are deaf or hard of hearing.

#### **Q&A with Commission:**

- Tanya: there are some EMS teams that are working with hospitals to support non-emergency needs of seniors like senior check-ins. Is this something we are considering in our area? Chief Milano: we ran a trial a couple years ago with the Legacy hospital system. It was not very successful and was discontinued. We do not have a current program. Because of the pandemic, telehealth is more readily used and insurance companies can bill and pay for that. That is definitely something that will come into play more in the future.
- Larry: are we still offering CERT training? Chief Milano: yes, we still have it. It’s been on pause due to COVID. We have a new coordinator who oversees the program.
- Amy: could you explain what CERT stands for? Chief Milano: Community Emergency Response Teams. CERT training provides a core curriculum to neighborhood groups. In a major emergency, the primary public safety agencies are busy. Neighborhoods can provide emergency relief for a short period of time.
- Nancy: when a senior calls for help, they might not know what care they need and will call 911. Is there a charge for the community for those kinds of services? Chief Milano: there is

no charge for any response. That is paid for through your tax dollars. If the patient requires transportation to the hospital by ambulance, the ambulance company would provide a bill for the transport to the hospital, which may or may not be covered by insurance. We use a patient-centric approach with a fire apparatus and contracted ambulance provider. Fire trucks have the same supplies as an ambulance but they don't have the ability to transport someone to the hospital. Fire department paramedics provide immediate care on the scene and then transfer the patient to the ambulance paramedic.

- Nancy: with the Red Cross broken down by region, if there is a huge emergency, do you dispatch people from out of state or out of region? How does that work? Victor: we build capacity looking at a county, trying to have x# of volunteers per county. For instance, in Clark County, we have enough volunteers who could sustain a shelter. But if we needed to this here for more than 2-weeks or a month, we would start opening up requests to national volunteers to help sustain the shelter. If we have the resources available, we will do what can with local volunteers and then reach out if needed. A recent example is that Vancouver Red Cross volunteers helped with the fires in Oregon last year.
- Tanya: you talked about the preparedness kit, is there a checklist or app for that? MaryJane: we can provide a link and literature on that. The information we have has items listed of what you would need at a minimum in your kit. We also have other items listed that you could consider adding to your kit. Tanya: seems like a great holiday gift.
- Franklin: can you talk about the percentage breakdown of fire vs. medical calls? Chief Milano: about 75-80% of our calls are medical and the remainder are fire related emergencies (structural, wildland, refuse, vehicle fires, etc.). We also have a 4-county area search and rescue team that would respond to national disasters or technical rescues. Our marine program includes a fire boat. Our regional hazardous materials team has technicians would provide hazardous material response in the 4-county area.
- Victor: the Red Cross responds to approximately 8 calls per month for families displaced by a fire. In 9/10 cases, the family doesn't have a preparedness kit ready.

#### **Q&A with Public:**

- Christina Marneris: I had not realized the Vancouver Fire Department had a pilot with Legacy. If there were any future movements to that, the Area Agency on Aging would be interested in learning more if there was an opportunity for us to support.
- Mary Bedford-Carter: do you collaborate with any fall prevention programs and specifically work with any senior or community centers? Chief Milano: we are not currently doing so. We have worked with many care homes where there was an increase in call volumes, helping train staff on how to get up from different positions. Unfortunately, that is where we have stopped. We are hoping to work towards a more holistic, community program.
- Glen Yung: I enjoyed hearing about housing options earlier. I appreciated hearing what was shared.
- Phyllis Robinson: Introduced herself as the new Chair for Villages Clark County, a membership organization for neighbors helping neighbors. Wondering if any of you would come speak to our group? Nancy: offered to speak with the group. Chief Milano: The Fire Marshall's office conducts our outreach programs. You can find their contact information on the City of Vancouver website. MaryJane: you can contact the Red Cross to request a presentation.

### **3. Commission Roundtable Debrief: What have we heard? Potential recommendations? Request(s) for more information?**

- Amy: volunteers can cycle in and help with national disasters. Participated in NYC with Superstorm Sandy. Most disasters I was involved with were local to where I was living. A lot of disaster work is hard work. It is nice to have leadership to help the process the continue.
- Tanya: I had no idea that the number one medical reason for calls was for falls. Fall prevention and education seems like something we could help with in some way. Second, disasters happen. I hadn't thought about a checklist or the disaster readiness kit and would love to see that information shared more broadly.
- Larry: seniors and their pets is a real issue. A senior does not like to be separated from their pets. It can make some people reluctant to seek help.
- MaryJane: we're in the middle of the sound the alarm campaign. If you have someone looking for that type of education, glad to help walk them through that. Regarding the pets comment, that is something we've been working on at shelters, so when someone has to vacate their home, we can also set up pet shelters.
- Franklin: the fire department had a program where they were preparing communities for disaster and the police and fire departments could be days away. What's the name of the program? Could that be something the commission could follow-through on?  
Chief Milano: the CERT team prepares neighborhoods and civic groups. One struggle with those groups is keeping track of them over time and keeping them engaged after the training. In the past we have done a CERT rodeo where all CERT members run through exercises periodically. If we don't practice, we lose those skill sets quickly.

#### 4. General Public Comment

- Bill Baumann: Mobility coordinator with the Human Services Council (HSC), wanted to share information regarding COVID-19 vaccines. The HSC has partnered with Public Health and Meals on Wheels to help get people to vaccination appointments. Contact the HSC if this is of interest to you or you have questions. Chuck: NACCC had transportation questions for their neighborhood members on what they can recommend for transportation options. Bill: CTRAN and CVAN are good options if they're available where you live. HSC can help connect older adults with a specialized program or volunteer driver program. In the past year, the HSC employment transportation funding was allowed to be repurposed towards transportation for essentials, i.e. food box pick-up from a food bank, prescription pick-up, etc. This includes the HSC's ability to provide transportation to vaccination appointments. Larry: Dr. Melnick spoke to the rotary club today. He said there are 150 licensed adult care homes in Clark County and they vaccinated each one of those homes. It was interesting to hear how our outreach efforts are helping.

#### 5. Communications and Announcements

- Al Bauer, former Senator, passed away this morning
- COVID-19 update: Amy mentioned a recent article in The Columbian regarding public health funds and risk of extra funding going away in the future. The number of cases and deaths is going up again. Vaccination is available for anyone 16 or older.
- NACCC update: Chuck gave an update to the Neighborhood Association Council of Clark County (NACCC) last week. The big discussion item was how to get people to/from medical appointments or vaccination appointments. Chuck shared Human Services Council contact information.
- Upcoming proclamations: Two proclamations will be made at the May 4, 10am County Council meeting. They will be about Older Americans Month and the Dementia Friend program.

- May 19 commission meeting topic: Serious Illness and Caregiver Support

**6. Adjournment:** The meeting adjourned at 5:49pm.

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