



Clark County Commission on Aging  
Webex Remote Meeting  
Vancouver, Washington

## MEETING NOTES

Wednesday, February 15, 2023  
4:30 p.m. – 5:30 p.m.

**Members Present:** Cass Freedland, (Chair), Franklin Johnson (Vice Chair), Chuck Green, Amy Gross, Mel Sanchez, Larry Smith and Tanya Stewart

**Absent:** Sue Cameron, Meghan McCarthy

**Councilors:** Karen Dill Bowerman (Chair), Michelle Belkot, Sue Marshall, Gary Medvigy, and Glen Yung

**Absent:** None

**County Manager:** Kathleen Otto

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. The County Council and commission members introduced themselves. Cass Freedland announced that there was a quorum for the meeting.

#### Approval of agenda

The agenda was unanimously approved with an amendment to add an agenda item regarding letters of support.

#### Approval of November 16, 2022 and January 18, 2023 work session and regular meeting notes

The notes were unanimously approved.

### 2. Letters of Support

The commission voted to approve the revised letters of support policy with the changes proposed in the work session.



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### 3. Presentation: Clark County Commission on Aging 2022 Annual Report

The Commission on Aging members presented the findings and recommendations made in the 2022 Annual Report.

#### Discussion highlights

Councilor Medvigy asked if the commission plans to submit any budget requests for projects. Chuck Green responded that the first budget request ever made by the Commission on Aging (COA) was for the funding for the Aging Readiness Plan (ARP) update. He mentioned that the commission prefers to limit its requests due to the overall budget limitations for the County. Chuck mentioned that if COA were going to request funding, to the commission would continue to work with the Community Planning staff as to the best timing to make any requests. Chuck also mentioned that COA receives requests for letters of support for grant requests from other agencies, so the commission voted to revise that policy earlier today.

Councilor Chair Bowerman mentioned the importance of the commission's innovation through connection focus topic. She wants to challenge the commission to define what is meant by connection and develop ways of integrating the needs of the paid and unpaid caregivers into the ARP. She suggested considering how the caregivers are mentioned in the plan that looks at the big picture due to the importance of the issue. It may not be easy to do, but is important.

Cass Freedland discussed the need to connect with each person and to have a safety net of friends and family to assist older adults as needed. She recognized that not everyone has that, so connecting people together is critical. Technology can be helpful, but not all aging adults prefer virtual communication methods. This presents a gap with organizations that are increasing their online communications and presents a need for balance between what organizations offer and what older adults want and need.

Larry Smith commented that some of the caregiving positions are low wage positions, including healthcare, service providers and related positions. He noted it is a challenge that we have in our community to get workers to be attracted to jobs that are important for the older adults and the wages for the position need to be considered as part of that work.

Councilor Marshall commented how important caregivers are and it can be difficult to reach the caregivers with support groups and other services. It can be hard for them to find the time to even participate in an online forum a few times a month. The level of stress experienced by caregivers can make them experience health care issues themselves. Councilor Marshall requested more information on the numbers of volunteer caregivers in the community.

Franklin Johnson commented that one of the sessions this year focused on the faith communities and the commission found that some of the churches have very

innovative ideas for supporting older adults. He mentioned one program called OASIS, which stands for Older Adults Still in Service, that does work to support caregivers and those in the aging community. When we looked at the results of the pandemic and connectivity or the loss of connectivity was so significant to a lot of the adults, the commission tried to understand some creative ways of maintaining those contacts. We found that a lot of our service providing organizations made some really innovative changes to be able to maintain those connections and maintain the services. The commission is now looking at how those innovative ideas can now be incorporated in the ARP.

Councilor Medvigy mentioned pandemic related funds that the Council helped distribute including grants that were given to non-profits. If there are non-profit organizations that support the needs of aging adults, Councilor Medvigy suggested that the commission reach out to those groups and let them know that another round of grants will be coming soon.

Cass Freedland recalled some of the comments heard in COA's faith community discussion in 2022. Sometimes the church/mosque/synagogue is the only connection that an aging adult will have with their community. During the pandemic, faith organizations set up systems to check on older parishioners and serve them in other ways but getting information out to those in need was very challenging.

County Manager Otto mentioned that the county can share news releases with COA on grant processes to share with the community especially in connection with issues that affect older adults like housing and transportation.

Councilor Marshall noted that the Comprehensive Plan update was coming up, which looks at housing, transportation, etc. She encouraged the commission to participate in the public process for the project.

Councilor Belkot asked if information regarding services that are available or for work that COA is doing is shared with *The Messenger* newspaper, a publication that is directed toward older adult issues. Jenna Kay responded that COA meeting information is shared with *The Messenger* and some service providers also share service information with *The Messenger*. Staff can work with COA to increase those opportunities as well. Larry Smith commented on the positive aspects of the newspaper and how much it is read by older adults at the Springwood Retirement Center.

Councilor Belkot commented that when she campaigned, due to COVID-19 restrictions, candidates were unable to go into retirement communities and talk to people and she found *The Messenger* to be very helpful in getting the word out.

Councilor Yung outlined that he does not have extensive experience with issues related to aging, but he is more familiar with issues related to mental health. He asked if there is one specific point for connection to older adult service providers for those in

the community. Cass Freedland commented that the Area Agency on Aging and Disabilities of Southwest Washington, or AAADSW, is the best “one-stop” resource. (More information is available at [helpingelders.org](http://helpingelders.org) or at 888-637-6060). He noted that Columbia River Mental Health Services (more information is available at [www.crmhs.org](http://www.crmhs.org) or at 360-993-3000) and Lifeline Connections (more information is available at [www.lifelineconnections.org](http://www.lifelineconnections.org) or 800-604-0025) are other good resources for mental health issues.

Councilor Marshall commented that there can be a lag transitioning people from the hospital to long term care which results in people staying in the hospital longer and can have an impact on hospitals. The cost of long term care insurance is very high, and many cannot afford it. Larry Smith commented that some residents in his facility have run out of personal funds and can no longer afford the payments for the retirement center which is a significant challenge.

Tanya Stewart commented that Medicaid can help some of those that do not have the resources to pay for long term care and acknowledged that there are barriers to accessing Medicaid, including significant paperwork.

#### 4. General Public Comment

Christina Marneris discussed the benefits of *The Messenger* newspaper and mentioned that AAADSW has a monthly caregiver article. She outlined that the *Senior Finder* is another great publication about resources that are available (The *Senior Finder* is *The Messenger's* annual guide to housing, governmental, transportation and health services in Clark County). She also commented on a question by Councilor Marshall earlier in the program regarding the number of unpaid caregivers. AAADSW does an area plan once every four years and in the most recent copy there was an estimate of 860,000 unpaid family caregivers in Washington in 2020. These caregivers are the backbone of the long-term care system in Clark County and the whole country. For more information on services that are available, please contact the Area Agency on Aging and Disabilities of Southwest Washington AAADSW, more information is available at [www.helpingelders.org](http://www.helpingelders.org) or at 888-637-6060.

#### 5. Communications

Cass Freedland outlined that on March 15, the Commission on Aging will be hosting its next public workshop on the Aging Readiness Plan update. The workshop will take place at Battle Ground City Hall from 3:30-5:00 p.m. Anyone who would like to share ideas and feedback on strategies in the Aging Readiness Plan is encouraged to attend the workshop or provide feedback online with a self-paced option. Information on how to do that is available on the project webpage at [www.clark.wa.gov/community-planning/aging-readiness-plan](http://www.clark.wa.gov/community-planning/aging-readiness-plan).

The Commission on Aging will also be accepting applications shortly. Anyone interested in joining the Commission is encouraged to apply. Applications are due by 5 p.m. on Friday, March 31. Details on how to apply will be provided in a county news

release, to be issued in the next few days. A copy of that news release will also be available on the County and Commission webpages.

Cass Freedland asked if there were any other announcements for the good of the order. Franklin Johnson outlined a few challenges that the COA had during the pandemic. The resources that the County Council makes available to the commission through the support of staff is very appreciated. Staff provided the resources for online and hybrid meetings which made commission meetings possible during the pandemic.

6. **Adjournment:** The meeting adjourned at 5:27 p.m.

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