



**REGULAR MEETING  
Approved Minutes**

*The Commission On Seniors convened in a regular meeting on WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 13, 2014, Boards and Commissions, First floor in room 1101, 301 W. 2<sup>nd</sup> Street in Austin, Texas.*

**Chair Ann Kitchen called the meeting to order at 1:05p.m.**

**Board Members in Attendance:**

|                  |                      |                 |
|------------------|----------------------|-----------------|
| Jacqueline Angel | Erica Garcia-Pittman | Dan Pruett      |
| Dr. Tom Coopwood | Ann Kitchen          | Jennifer Scott  |
| Cecilia Crossley | Fred Lugo            | Monica Saavedra |

**Staff in Attendance:**

|                           |                             |
|---------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Willie Williams, COA-HHSD | Edna Staniszewski, COA-HHSD |
|---------------------------|-----------------------------|

**1. CITIZEN COMMUNICATION**

- None.

**2. APPROVAL OF MINUTES FROM THE JULY 9, 2014 MEETING.**

- Commissioner Fred Lugo motioned to accept minutes with correction that Jennifer Scott was not present in the July's meeting.
- Commissioner Jacqueline Angel seconded the motion to approve amended minutes
- Motion passed 9-0-0.

**3. NEW BUSINESS**

A) Presentation by Ronnie Mendoza from Austin Energy (Customer Assistance Program)

- Mr. Mendoza discussed the variety of program components: Discounts, Financial Support Plus 1, Medically Vulnerable Registry, Education Classes, Weatherization, Community Connections Resource Fair, Case Management Project, Affordable Energy Policy Summit, and the Pilot Projects.
- On-line bill pay and instructions are available to everyone. Please contact their office at (512) 494-9400 to receive bills electronically via email.
- A next step for Austin Energy is to submit recommendations to several departments and eventually to Council in September.
- Commission on Seniors:
  - i. Commissioner Dan Pruett and Commissioner Jennifer Scott to create a working group to investigate the training information that ought to be included in Austin Energy customer assistance training program. Once information collected then present to board for recommendation to Austin Energy.

- ii. Questions for working group to consider:
  1. What percentage of the people in the CAP program are senior adults?
  2. Of those senior adults, what components are they currently utilizing?
  3. What percentage of senior adults need to transition to the Arrearage Management Program?
    - a. Could we provide guidance and assistance to make those numbers not so large?
    - b. For those senior adults in the Arrearage Management Program, how can we provide guidance and additional assistance?
  4. Could we also have a complete age distribution so that we can focus on future populations for those nearing retirement age?
  - No action taken.

#### 4. OLD BUSINESS

##### A) Commission Work Plan – Standing Item.

- i. Presentation by Jacqueline Angel and Chair Ann Kitchen
  - Commissioner Angel and Chair Kitchen discussed the Senior Property Tax Exemptions and Abatements.
  - **Option #1:** The People’s Property Tax Education Group has proposed a state law change to allow a freeze of all property taxes for all tax entities on residential homesteads when the property owner reaches age 65 and only if the appraised value of their residential homestead is at or below the median appraised value within each Texas County. This proposal expands a property tax freeze for all property taxes from all taxing entities not just the tax from the affected school district (Texas Property Tax Code (TPTC) §11.13, §11.26, §11.261, and/or other sections; People’s Property Tax Education Group State of Texas, Travis County Proposed Legislation, 2014).
  - **Option #2:** Another option is a benefit program that reduces property tax assessments by as much as 50% based on a sliding scale. Under the “sliding-scale” option the full discount is given to seniors whose incomes are less than \$22,000. This discount decreases progressively and is zero above \$44,000 (senior 2010 median household income, Robinson, 2014). See The New York State Department of Taxation and Finance, 2014 for details of the program.
  - **Option #3:** Encourage seniors to apply for a reverse mortgage through an FHA approved lender. The HECM allows seniors who have equity in their homes to supplement their income.
  - No action taken.

## **5. STAFF BRIEFINGS**

### A) Overview of City of Austin Commission on Seniors.

- i. Location of the September's meeting:
  - Meals on Wheels and More Conference Room  
Second Floor, RM 232  
3227 E. 5<sup>th</sup> Street  
Austin, Texas 78702
- ii. Council has approved for Board members extension to serve through June 2015.
- iii. Regarding the Taskforce survey recommendation, item has moved to the September Council agenda.

## **6. FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS**

### A. September presentations by:

- i. Capital Metro
- ii. City of Austin Parks and Recreation

## **ADJOURNMENT**

- Meeting adjourned at 2:33p.m.