



**COMMISSION ON SENIORS  
MINUTES**

**REGULAR MEETING  
(October, 2016)**

**The Commission on Seniors convened a regular meeting at City Hall in the Boards and Commissions Room – 301 West 2<sup>nd</sup> Street, Austin, Texas 78701**

**Chair, Janee Briesemeister, called the Board Meeting to order at 12:08 p.m.**

**Board Members in Attendance:**

<i>Janee Briesemeister, Chair</i>	<i>Emily De Maria Nicola</i>	<i>Joyce Lauck</i>	<i>Dan Pruett</i>
<i>Peter Varteressian, Vice-Chair</i>	<i>Erica Garcia-Pittman</i>		
<i>Natalie Cagle</i>	<i>David Gray</i>	<i>Fred Lugo</i>	<i>Sally Van Sickle</i>

**Board Members not in Attendance:**

*Thomas McDowell  
Elaine Cohen  
Martin Kareithi*

**Staff in Attendance:**

Laura Williamson, COA HHSD

The board introduced themselves.

**1. CITIZEN COMMUNICATION**

- i. No speakers

**2. APPROVAL OF MINUTES FROM THE AUGUST 10, 2016 MEETING.**

- Vice Chair Varteressian made a motion to accept the minutes.
- Commissioner Lauck seconded the motion.
- Motion passed 9-0-1 with Commissioner De Maria Nicola abstaining.

**3. NEW BUSINESS**

- A. Briefing and discussion on City of Austin ethics policies related to boards and commissions (Deena Estrada, Business Program Specialist, City Clerk’s Office)
  - Speaker was unable to attend due to work-related conflict

- General discussion regarding:
    - Commissioners conducting themselves as individuals rather than in any City or Commission capacity at campaign related events
    - Avoiding use of City-issued campaign email addresses for anything other than official City business related to the Commission
    - Only speaking on behalf of the Commission on items where the Commission has taken specific action on a position and given authority to Commissioner(s) to represent to viewpoints of the body as a whole
  - City campaign ethics handout from the City Clerk’s Office with general guidelines distributed
  - Decision to invite staff from the City Clerk’s Office for a refresher at the November meeting
- B. Discussion regarding housing for seniors (Angela Atwood, Board Chair, AustinUP)
- Residents 65+ years old in Travis County increased 29% from 2010-2014
    - Many struggle with costs of home repairs, replacements, and modifications
  - Almost two out of five Austinites are low-income
    - Federal government guideline is that a household should not pay more than 30% of income toward housing and utilities
  - 14 properties in Austin designated for seniors
    - 1,264 units at 100% occupancy
      - 1-2 year wait lists
      - Most are affordable at 50% or 30% MFI
    - Discussion regarding features of Wildflower Terrace and upcoming changes to Rebekah Baines Johnson property
  - Challenges and opportunities:
    - Upcoming Strategic Housing Plan & Housing Market Study
    - CodeNEXT Housing Affordability Code Prescription
    - Need for preservation of existing affordable housing
    - Need for development of “missing middle housing” – typically homes in mid range pricing that can include duplexes and smaller townhomes
    - Consideration of occupancy limits
    - Homestead exemption does little for owners with low-value homes
    - Discrimination against source of income for rent including Social Security, SSI, Section 8 vouchers, VA
    - Prevent displacement of low-income homeowners with “Preservation Property Tax Exemption” to communities at risk of being priced out
    - Pursue future general obligation bond elections for affordable housing
    - Relax regulations on shared housing communities and housing cooperatives

- Create a multifamily tax exemption program for developers who include affordable housing units
- Build on success of repair, replacement, modification and weatherization programs
- Expand rent, utility and mortgage assistance programs
- Improve connections between housing, transportation and health/social services
- Discussion regarding the process underway at the City of Austin for the Austin Housing Plan
  - Further discussion regarding the potential of having an item for action at the November meeting regarding the Austin Housing Plan if the timeline for the plan adoption still has time available for input

**4. OLD BUSINESS**

A. Commission Work Plan – Standing Item.

B. Updates from Working Groups – Standing Item

i. Transportation

- a. Some discussions with the Mayor’s Committee for People with Disabilities to develop innovative plan for seniors that may look at using a transportation network company (TNC) model for people that are seniors or disabled

ii. Housing, Outdoor Spaces and Buildings

- a. Working group has not met yet, but have active membership with Commissioners and community members with plan to meet soon

iii. Social Participation, Respect and Social Inclusion

- a. Commissioners Lugo, Garcia-Pittman, and Van Sickle met and discussed developing an asset map for seniors looking for facilities and services including parks, libraries, schools, health services, etc.
- b. Working on identifying community members to participate in working group
- c. Proposed item for November Commission on Seniors meeting to make a recommendation regarding gathering information for all services and amenities and related funding amounts for parks, libraries, and health services currently available for seniors

iv. Civic Participation and Employment; Communication and Information

- a. Need people at the table to understand the skills needed from seniors that are looking for employment
- b. Developed list for outreach and set goals
  - Considering a questionnaire for seniors regarding what issues they would like covered
- c. Will reach out to libraries and community centers
- d. RTCC may have usable data

v. Community Health Services

- a. Focused on prioritizing list of policy areas, distributed on a one-page handout
- b. Includes representation from the Area Agency on Aging
- c. Interest in looking into the possibility of a navigation center for seniors that

- could serve as a referral center for services
  - Could be run and staffed by the City of Austin
- d. Discussion regarding dental care access as a big challenge for seniors
  - St. David’s has good model for bus that serves children, could look for a partnership with them or with the City to provide a mobile dental clinic for seniors
- vi. Age Friendly City
  - a. September meeting to update the Mayor’s Task Force on Aging members included ten attendees other than work group
  - b. May have request to present Age Friendly Plan to Council at a work session and take the Plan to Council after for potential adoption
  - c. Vice Chair Varteressian setting up meeting with City staff to discuss next steps with Imagine Austin
- vii. Update on Joint Inclusion Committee (Janee Briesemeister)
  - a. Upcoming briefing on health equity work at the City, the Commission on Seniors may want to consider a similar briefing be presented

**5. STAFF BRIEFINGS**

- A. Overview of City of Austin Commission on Seniors
  - i. Discussion regarding setting up joint meeting with the Mayor’s Committee for People with Disabilities in the spring or early summer of 2017
    - Could include presentation from new City of Austin Chief Equity Officer
  - ii. Discussion regarding potential format for 2017 Commission on Seniors meeting calendar

**6. FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS**

- i. Request City Clerk’s office to have a training to refresh the Commissioners on ethics for the November meeting
- ii. Potentially schedule an action item regarding the Austin Housing Plan if there is still time for formal input
- iii. Adoption of the 2017 Commission on Seniors meeting calendar
- viii. Potential action on a recommendation from the Social Participation, Respect and Social Inclusion Working Group to request a compilation of all services available for seniors
- iv. Staff to include the listing of previous future agenda items on minutes to retain items discussed.
  - 1. Affordable Housing
  - 2. Texas Veterans Commission
  - 3. Hispanic Quality of Life
  - 4. Veteran’s Affair Office
  - 5. Google representative
  - 6. State Veterans Services
  - 7. Foundation Communities
  - 8. Austin Energy – Weatherization and home repair
  - 9. Home renovation for seniors
  - 10. Housing and resources for senior musicians and artists
  - 11. Dell Medical School

**ADJOURNMENT**

**COMMISSION ON SENIORS MEETING MINUTES**

**(October 12, 2016)**

- Vice Chair Varteressian motioned to adjourn meeting.
- Commissioner Gray seconded the motion.
- Motion passed 10-0.
- Meeting adjourned at 1:58pm.