



Guest Opinion: A response to parks commissioners

By Mary Bertrand

Posted at 12:01 AM

In response to the “message from Parks & Recreation commissioners” in the Thursday, Oct. 26 Daily Tidings:

I quote, “Nonetheless, we, as elected commissioners, steadfastly believe that our efforts to introduce change within the Ashland Senior Program is both necessary and important for the long-term future of this vital program.”

I agree with this concept, but the way it was handled by means of poor communication methods and unexplained processes created a lot of unnecessary “stressful feelings.”

For example:

Leadership

There’s a cartoon in the New Yorker that says it all. Two people are sitting at a table and one says, “Do you really care, or are you just being a good listener?” There was a caring, good listener as a leader at the senior center.

My logic might be off, but it seems that this leader should not have been dismissed until a leader perhaps better suited to the Parks Department standards could have been hired.

Smooth transitions in leadership positions are extremely important for any organization. This concept could have saved a lot of turmoil and misunderstandings created by the action that was taken. As far as I know, there is no leader presently at the senior center. How is that working?

Finances

I decided that it would be interesting to find out how the other senior centers in Jackson County are run. I agree with the Parks Commission that there definitely needs to be an increase in revenue from the operations of the senior center.

I have already questioned why “there had been minimal movement towards commissioners’ requests that the Senior Program seek creative ways to increase revenue via grants, partnerships, and other creative means.”

This is what I discovered. The Ashland Parks Department has a much larger amount in their budget for the senior center than any other senior center in the county.

One senior center under a parks department does obtain a very small amount of funding from that budget. They have fundraisers to pay for all costs.

Another senior center is a 501(3)(c), so they definitely are responsible for raising funds and budgeting accordingly. That city does budget a small amount for their operations.

How do these other senior centers generate income? They rent out the building. They charge membership fees. They have a thrift store in the building. I may be wrong, but I have heard that some of these ideas had previously been presented to the leader of the Parks Department and had been disregarded. If this is true, there should be some explanation why not. Also, if this is true, then the lack of income from the Senior Program falls on the decisions made at the Parks Department, not at the director of the Senior Program. Just saying!

— *Mary Bertrand lives in Ashland.*



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