

D R A F T annual report from JCOA to CBJ

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TO: Assembly Human Resources Committee Chair Greg Smith

FROM: JCOA Chair Emily Kane

Cc: JCOA committee members including Assembly member Michelle Hale

RE: JCOA July 2022 – June 2023 Annual Report

The purpose of the Juneau Commission on Aging (JCOA) is to advise the Assembly on issues regarding seniors in Juneau and to promote awareness of all aspects of life affecting our seniors, and the role of seniors in the social and economic life of CBJ.

We take seriously our duty to “promote senior citizen participation in the planning and development of programs which benefit and enhance the health, safety, and welfare of senior citizens.” Our charter mandates that we “build a coalition among established groups and support programs working to address the needs of seniors,” which we have. We take seriously our duty to “collect facts and statistics, and make studies of the conditions and problems pertaining to the employment, health, financial security, social welfare, and other factors that bear upon the well-being of older Juneauites,” which is an ongoing focus of our work. We are actively engaged in our duty to “support the Assembly’s Economic Plan as it relates to the senior economy.”

In the past year the nine members of JCOA have been focused on the top contenders for senior needs in our community based on data gathered during our 4<sup>th</sup> decennial survey (2019-2021), from Listening Sessions in partnership with our local AARP, and via our monthly meetings where we share intel about senior-focused projects in our community. Summaries of our accomplishments include:

- 1) Created a coalition partnership to tackle the lack of home-health care personnel, focusing on training and compensation through grants. There exist major turn-over and egregious vacancies in these positions not only in Juneau and SE Alaska, but nationally. More information about the formation and mission of SREC (Southeast Regional Eldercare Coalition) is attached.
- 2) Created two housing position papers: one for developers, “Building Age Friendly Housing in Juneau,” and another for CBJ employees, “Can You Support Age Friendly Construction in Proactive Ways?” (attached). We urge you to read these papers, which give detailed examples of what can be done to support the creation of new housing with universal design.
- 3) Qualified as the second Alaska community to receive recognition by AARP’s national “Network of Age-Friendly States and Communities.” Anchorage received the recognition in 2022. This is not just an honor, but a responsibility, and the JCOA will continue to partner with Juneau AARP Community Action Team (CAT) to increase the all-age friendliness of our community. (Award certificate attached)
- 4) Established a subcommittee focused on increasing opportunities for senior recreation, fitness and social connectedness. The US Surgeon General recently warned that our elders are suffering from epidemic levels of boredom, loneliness and helplessness. We are committed to alleviating this plague.
- 5) Co-sponsored 3 “Listening Sessions” throughout the city to gather information from seniors about their perspective and needs in eight domains of livability. These sessions included presentation by CBJ staff (Ruth Kostik) on the 4 major tax relief programs offered to seniors by the borough. (graphic of the 8 domains attached)

Going forward, the JCOA will continue to request support from the Assembly in accomplishing our mutual goals to ensure the safety and wellbeing of our senior population, many of whom form an important source of volunteer support and whose savings are a vital basis for upholding the CBJ economy. Very specifically we would like the Assembly to give deliberate consideration to paving the way for three major missions which require your buy-in.

- A. Change the building code, likely incrementally, towards universal design. This will require both “carrots” (grants, CBJ incentives, easements, increased density allocation, etc) and “sticks” (mandates for universal design for permitting new multi-home structures).
- B. Create a position for a “senior navigator” who would be housed at CBJ or perhaps at Teal Street, who would act to facilitate matching seniors’ needs with local resources. There are many agencies and organizations which serve seniors, many of them somewhat tangentially, and JCOA sees a deep need to have a central coordinator connected to CBJ, JCOA, CCS, SAIL, Bartlett, Teal Street, ORCA, Hospice and Home Care, Cornerstone, United Way, Chamber of Commerce, Rotary, Lions Club, The Alaska Commission on Aging, etc.
- C. Related to item B, deploy CBJ IT resources to significantly expand the JCOA webpage to become a robust resource hub for seniors in our community. JCOA envisions not just a list of services, but a more lively document, ideally an algorithm, which would allow seniors to start with their need (transportation, a friend to play cards with, cataract surgery, retro-fitting their bathroom, help filing taxes, etc) and easily find the resource most likely to help them.

Please contact me or any of our members for clarification and information about where CBJ already has momentum towards any of our stated goals, so that we can help you accomplish our shared mission.

Sincerely,