

Ageing Well Whatcom Steering Committee

Friday, January 7, 2022

By Zoom call

MINUTES

Attending:

Becky Kirkland, PeaceHealth Center for Senior Health
Chris Orr, Whatcom Council on Aging
Dave Lynch, Chuckanut Health Foundation Board/Family Care Network (retired)
Heather Flaherty, Chuckanut Health Foundation
Janet Malley, Whatcom Transportation Authority
Marie Eaton, Palliative Care Institute, WWU
Mary Anderson, Whatcom Transportation Authority
Ryan Blackwell, Northwest Regional Council
Sarah Lane, Health Ministries Network
Tammy Bennett, YMCA
Tessa Whitlock, Chuckanut Health Foundation
Tonja Myers, Christian Health Care Center

Regrets:

Adrienne Solenberger, Opportunity Council
Amy Hockenberry, Whatcom County Health Department
Dr. Chao-ying Wu, Chuckanut Health Foundation Board/Family Care Network
Heidi Bugbee, Generations Early Learning & Family Center
Melinda Herrera, Rosewood Villa

Welcome

Lara welcomed the group. Happy New Year!

Minutes from the November 5, 2021 meeting were approved as written.

Taking Stock

Members reflected on the most significant AWW accomplishments from 2021, and hopes and goals for 2022.

Most Significant 2021 Accomplishments:

The Art of Aging project

- The process, and seeing portraits displayed at the senior center
- The beauty of storytelling – the Jim Lortz portrait resonated with the theater community and was widely shared on social media

AWW grants

- Learning from the process (noted by both committee members and CHF)
- The projects that resulted from the funding
- Seeing the funds at work in the community
- Concrete action
- Thoughtful selection process
- Gave grantees a voice
- AWW's pocketbook shows AWW's intention, adds credibility

Other accomplishments

- Continuing to move forward in spite of COVID
- Surveys and discussions for the Blueprint update
- Truck giveaway (COVID vaccination incentive)

2022 hopes and goals - what would make 2022 the best year ever?

- COVID dissipates enough to host in-person gatherings
- Intergenerational work – housing and other areas
- WTA: the new Innovation Team to help the agency “think outside the bus” may be especially relevant to older adults and AWW
- Building momentum around aging well, inspiring and empowering stakeholders
- WCOA: determine WCOA’s role in implementing aspects of the Blueprint
- Partnership growth among Steering Committee partners and beyond – working with additional partners
- YMCA: do more outreach, provide more programming outside the building
- Refresh, reconnect, recommit to aging well work
- AARP Livable Community designation as a way to engage elected officials
- Take on role of convening to bring the voices of older adults to those in power; establishing this role so that older adults see AWW as a convener and channel for expressing their experiences and views
- Continue to bring people together around projects
- Refreshed Blueprint
- Document progress in Blueprint areas and how priorities have shifted for older adults
- Address loneliness and isolation
- Repeating the grant process is a high priority, including telling grantees’ stories from the first round
- Spread out the AWW work and leadership

Committee members also expressed COVID fatigue and concern regarding its trajectory, and noted personal goals of “hanging in there,” “taking it day-by-day,” and “surviving.”

➔ **ACTION: Lara will draft a statement of 2022 AWW priorities and send it to all for review and improvement.**

2022 Steering Committee Meetings

➔ **DECISION: The group agreed to return to monthly meetings in 2022 to increase connection and continuity.**

There was support for a combination of “regular” meetings (e.g., partner updates and reports, member recruitment, planning) and others focused on learning, collaboration and partnership building (e.g., presentation on area of interest, project or initiative, meeting with other organizations with aligned projects).

There was also agreement to host Spring and Fall all-Coalition meetings, with the Spring meeting dedicated to sharing the updated Blueprint (Fall meeting TBD).

Exploring the possibility of a different meeting day and/or time was proposed.

➔ **ACTION: Lara will send out a Doodle poll to assess best meeting times.**

Membership

- Lindsey Karas and Vinson Latimore have stepped down from the Steering Committee, so there are at least two vacancies to fill.
- In addition, from the Charter: ‘the general philosophy for Steering Committee membership values inclusivity and the concept of a “big-tent”’; the aim for membership is between 20 and 25 individuals, but this is flexible.
- It was suggested that delaying asking potential members might be best, due to demands of current COVID surge.

- Ryan shared https://www.urban.org/sites/default/files/publication/102820/community-engagement-during-the-covid-19-pandemic-and-beyond_0.pdf - see page 25 for a helpful worksheet.
- The group considered the approach of contacting everyone on the mailing list calling for interested people, but concern was raised about more people self-nominating that the committee could accommodate, and the challenge of a selection process.
- Heather stated she hopes no-one will leave the steering committee (ever!), but acknowledged that it may be necessary for some. She emphasized wanting the AWW steering committee to provide value to members, and invited feedback about how meetings and other activities could be made more valuable.
- Suggestions for additional members:
 - Lummi elder community – perhaps Danita Jefferson, Becky Bendixen, Juanita Jefferson
 - Medical community – community health center/Unity Care NW
 - Food security/food access – food bank
 - Business partners
 - Funders
 - Financial/guardian - Perhaps someone from Maxwell/Inslee?
 - Kenzie Nelson with VibrantUSA has expressed an interest in getting engaged
 - North Sound Accountable Community of Health
 - Bellingham Schools
 - Lighthouse Mission
 - A couple of housing perspectives since housing is such a strong need - i.e. Housing Alliance/COB and a housing provider

➔ **ACTION: Lara will outline a basic membership plan, including timing considerations, for Steering Committee review.**

Blueprint Update

The original plan was to have the refreshed Blueprint ready to share with the community by late January-early February, but it's clear that won't be possible. Heather, Tessa and Lara recently discussed the process and the importance of being deliberate and using it as an opportunity for engaging existing and new Coalition members and gaining community input. They suggested aiming for sharing the refreshed Blueprint in the spring.

Committee members supported this expanded focus and extended timeline.

Lara stated that about 60 people participated in surveys and/or discussions around specific Blueprint focus areas in November and December. In addition, over 500 older adults responded to the survey regarding priorities (very similar to the survey conducted in 2018, but with much higher response).

It will take some time to review and analyze the responses, but she shared preliminary results to the question, "If you could add or change one thing that is available for older adults and their families in Whatcom County, what would that be?" The top four most frequently mentioned themes were transportation (65 responses), housing (62), healthcare (54), and social/recreational activities (44).

Next Steps

The next Steering Committee meeting will be in February, based on Doodle poll results.