



2 The following are the summary minutes of the **Senior Programs Advisory Board** meeting held
4 on Thursday, March 10, 2022, at 9:00 a.m. at the Munson Center, 975 S. Mesquite Street, Las
Cruces, New Mexico.

6 **MEMBERS PRESENT:**

8 Chair Jo Ann Rodriguez-Haught, Frank O'Brien Papen Center Representative
8 Vice Chair Gabriel Montalvo, Munson Center Representative
Secretary Mona Bedale, District 2 Representative
10 Judy Chavarria, Member-at-Large
Dr. Abel L. Chavarria, District 1 Representative
12 Sharlene Wittern, District 3 Representative
Manuel Contreras, District 5 Representative
14 Diane Turo, District 6 Representative
James Mitchell, Sage Café Center Representative

16 **MEMBERS ABSENT**

18 Cheryl Young, Benavidez Center Representative

20 **GUESTS PRESENT:**

22 Sonia Saldana, Senior Programs Administrator
Chris Behrens, Recreation Facility Manager
24 Toni Flores, Recording Secretary

26 I. **CALL TO ORDER:** Chair Jo Ann Rodriguez-Haught, Frank O' Brien Papen Center
Representative, called the Senior Programs' Advisory Board meeting to order at 9:00 a.m. on
Thursday, March 10, 2022, at the Munson Center, 975 S. Mesquite Street, Las Cruces, NM.

28 II. **ROLL CALL:** Roll call was taken, and a quorum was ascertained.

30 III. **PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE:** The Pledge of Allegiance was led by James Mitchell, Sage
32 Café Senior Center Representative.

34 IV. **MOMENT OF SILENCE:** The Board observed a moment of silence.

36 V. **APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA:** Dr. Abel Chavarria, District 1 Representative, moved to
approve the March 10, 2022, Senior Programs Advisory Board Meeting agenda as presented.
38 Motion seconded by James Mitchell, Sage Café Center Representative. Vote: 9 Ayes, 0 Nays.
Motion carried unanimously.

40 VI. **CONFLICT OF INTEREST:** Board members had no conflict of interest with any item of
42 business on the agenda.

44 VII. **INTRODUCTIONS:** Board members were introduced and welcomed.

46 VIII. **PUBLIC COMMENT:** There was no public comment.

48 IX. **ACTION ITEM(S):** Chair Rodriguez-Haught requested a motion for approval of the Board
meeting minutes. Dr. A. Chavarria moved to approve the February 17, 2022 Senior Programs

50 Advisory Board meeting minutes as presented. J. Mitchell seconded the motion. Vote: 9 Ayes,
0 Nays; Motion carried.

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54 **X. DISCUSSION ITEMS - SENIOR PROGRAMS ADMINISTRATOR'S REPORT:** Sonia
56 Saldana, Senior Programs Administrator, reported an increase in the congregate meal program
58 participation to the pre-pandemic levels. She informed the Board in accordance with State
60 requirements, Senior Programs continues to observe social distancing guidelines. Staff are still
required to wear face coverings. Senior Programs' participants are no longer required to wear
face coverings. However, due to the vulnerable population, seniors are strongly encouraged to
wear face coverings in all senior center facilities. As a result of the social distancing requirements,
there are limited programming and activities scheduled at the centers.

62 As recommended by the Board at the February 17, 2022, Board meeting, Chris Behrens,
64 Recreation Facility Manager, is working on scheduling training on topics of interest to the Board
and program participants. The trainings will be scheduled at a time when most people are present
at the centers either before or after lunch. Chair Rodriguez-Haught asked how the drive thru meal
66 program participants will be notified of the trainings. S. Saldana stated staff will distribute flyers
with the Grab N' Go meals. The information will also be included in the Senior Programs'
68 newsletter. It will be up to the participants to determine if they want to attend the in-person
trainings. Staff is also exploring the possibility of conducting the trainings via Zoom for those
70 participants who do not want to attend the in-person trainings. This way people have options and
will not miss out on important information or resources. C. Behrens stated finding qualified
72 instructors to provide computer/technology classes is a challenge. He will be reaching out to
Dona Ana Community College to see if student teachers are available. He distributed a list of
74 free online computer classes. Seniors with basic computer knowledge can participate in these
classes to enhance their skills. Board members suggested contacting the Adult Basic Education
76 Program through the Dona Ana Community College and AARP, which offers a variety of classes
that people can access with an AARP membership. It was also suggested that the TV monitors
78 at each of the centers be utilized to conduct YouTube video trainings. Staff will follow up with
these recommendations.

80
82 S. Saldana reported she is interested in providing Abuse in Later Life training. She stated
providing seniors with information, education and resources for elder abuse will empower them
to speak up. A few years ago, Senior Programs conducted a survey regarding elder abuse. The
84 survey results were shocking because 100 percent of the individuals surveyed stated they had an
incident in their life of either being threatened, someone taking something away from them, being
86 afraid of a family member, and/or being afraid of their spouse. Before the pandemic, that was
one of S. Saldana's goal to bring awareness of elder abuse and to schedule training at each of
88 the centers. Board members were reminded that as representatives of the centers if they are
aware or encounter someone going through a difficult time, please report it to the case managers
90 and they will follow up.

92 Chair Rodriguez-Haught inquired what does Senior Programs do for seniors who reside in the
county and live outside City limits. S. Saldana explained Senior Programs can assist by providing
94 resources. County residents can participate in the City of Las Cruces congregate meals program,
but Senior Programs cannot deliver meals outside of the City limits, because Senior Programs'
96 jurisdiction is within City limits. This applies to all Senior Programs' services. Board members
inquired of the possibility of the county and the City forming a partnership to provide similar

98 services to county residents that live outside City limits. There is a large segment of the elderly
100 population who live in the county, live alone, and need these services. S. Saldana stated
102 although, there are limited resources in the county, Dona Ana County provides the same services
104 to county residents that Senior Programs provides within City limits such as home delivered
meals, Grab N' Go meals, and home care services. Senior Programs is fortunate because the
City supplements Senior Programs' grant funding with general funds which allows for more
flexibility for the delivery of services, within City limits.

106 Board members inquired if there are plans to reopen Sage Café Senior Center and Frank O'Brien
108 Papen Center soon. S Saldana stated there are no plans to reopen the two centers until the
110 social distancing requirements are lifted. It will be difficult to accommodate the number of people
participating in the Grab N' Go meal services and abide by the social distancing guidelines at the
same time because of the limited space at the two centers.

112 S. Saldana provided an update on the Capital Outlay projects. Senior Programs submitted two
114 funding requests for an addition to the southside of Munson Center and an expansion to the back
116 of the Sage Café Senior Center. The new additions at Munson and Sage Café Senior Centers
118 will be used for recreational and special activities. The expansion of these two facilities will help
120 with the wear and tear of the equipment and the floor by eliminating the setup and tear down of
tables and chairs in the dining rooms. J. Chavarria inquired on the status of the central kitchen
project. S. Saldana stated Senior Programs is no longer requesting funding for the central kitchen
project. Currently, the plan is to request funding for the expansion of the three production kitchens.

122 **CHAIR AND BOARD MEMBER UPDATES:** Secretary Mona Bedale, District 2 Representative,
124 reported she recruited two new seniors to attend the congregate meals program. The two
126 individuals enjoyed the meals. They commented nowhere else can you get a meal for \$2.50. M.
Bedale stated seniors are very blessed and fortunate to have this food. There are individuals out
there who are having a hard time getting food.

128 M. Bedale commented on the Valentine's Day card project stating seniors were very grateful when
130 they received the cards from the students. One senior stated she had not received a Valentine's
132 Day card from anyone for a very long time. The Valentine's Day cards were very much
appreciated. It was a wonderful project to partner with the Las Cruces Public Schools. These
kinds of projects need to be encouraged, because it was very touching. She suggested a Pen
Pal project where the seniors send cards to the students.

134 Chair Rodriguez-Haught commented the Frank O'Brien Papen Center participants missed the
136 candy distributed during special events. She praised Linda Miramontes and Isaiah Prieto, Office
138 Assistants, at the Frank O'Brien Papen Center. She stated they are wonderful employees that
take the time to greet and converse with the participants. They are very much appreciated by the
center participants.

140 Dr. Abel Chavarria reported the food has significantly improved at the Eastside Center.
142 Participation has increased and more seniors are seen socializing. He commented the turkey
144 meal was exceptionally good. The turkey was juicy and not dry. Staff did a great job preparing
the meal.

146 J. Chavarria, Member-at-Large, commented the beans served during lunch at the Eastside Center
148 were undercooked. The pinto beans should be soft, not crunchy. She recommended pre-soaking
the beans which will reduce the cooking time and suggested adding salt to the beans during the
cooking process. Chair Rodriguez-Haught disagreed because not everyone salts their food.

150 J. Chavarria reported the southside Benavidez Center directional sign located on Alameda Street
152 is not visible as you are traveling north on Alameda. The sign on the north side of Alameda Street
is visible, bright, and stands out. A work order will be placed with the Streets Department to
replace the sign on the southside of Alameda Street.

154 J. Chavarria reported the pianos at Munson and Eastside Centers need to be tuned. The lock on
156 the piano at Munson Center is broken and needs to be repaired or replaced. S. Saldana stated
she has received several complaints from the participants about the piano. Many participants
158 have asked that we not allow people to play the piano during lunch, while others have requested
music during lunch. C. Behrens stated a work order has been placed to tune the pianos. He will
160 follow up with the broken lock on the piano. J. Chavarria inquired if a lock can be installed on the
piano at the Eastside Center. There have been occasions when the piano has not been played
162 properly. C. Behrens stated the piano will be tuned and any minor repairs will be made by the
vendor at that time. S. Saldana stated any volunteer interested in playing the piano must first
164 schedule a date and time with C. Behrens because piano playing is now considered an activity.
The scheduled activity will be advertised ahead of time so that anyone interested in hearing music
166 may do so and anyone that does not want to hear music can either come before or after the
scheduled activity to have lunch.

168 Board members inquired if the increase in food prices will have an impact on the congregate meal
170 program suggested donation. S. Saldana stated no changes are expected at this time to the
congregate meal program's suggested donation of \$2.50, even though, there has been an
172 increase in food costs.

174 Manny Contreras apologized to the Board for his excessive absences. He stated he works for
Mountain View Medical Center and has been working 12-hour shifts, six days a week since the
176 onset of the pandemic. Now that things have slowed down at the hospital, he expects to attend
Board meetings on a regular basis. He is available to help as needed and looks forward to making
178 his tenure on the Board as successful as possible.

180 James Mitchell reported electric vehicle charging stations have been installed at the Sage Café
Senior Center. He has not seen anyone use the charging stations. C. Behrens stated the
182 installation of the charging stations has been completed and stations are now ready to be used
by the public. The charging stations are not free. A supercharger was also installed at the Plaza
184 de Las Cruces.

186 Diane Turo inquired if there is the possibility of Senior Programs offering free or at a minimal
charge income tax assistance to low-income seniors. S. Saldana stated in the past Senior
188 Programs offered free income tax assistance for low-income seniors. The program moved to
Community Action Agency where they were able to assist the public. Senior Programs has been
190 unable to find volunteer groups that are available to provide this type of assistance at the centers.
She will follow up with this request for next year. J. Chavarria recommended providing very basic
192 tax preparation assistance.

194 Chair Rodriguez-Haught announced the next Board meeting will be held on April 14, 2022 at 9:00
196 a.m. at the Henry Benavidez Recreation Center, 1045 McClure Road, Las Cruces, NM.


198 **XI. ADJOURNMENT:** Dr. A. Chavarria moved to adjourn the Board meeting at 10:29 a.m. J.
198 Chavarria seconded the motion. Vote: 9 Ayes, 0 Nays. Motion carried unanimously.

200 Submitted,

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Mona Bedale, Secretary



Toni Flores, Recording Secretary