



2 The following are the summary minutes of the **Senior Programs Advisory Board** meeting held
4 on Thursday, May 12, 2022, at 9:00 a.m. at Eastside Community Center, 310 N. Tornillo 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
10 Secretary Mona Bedale, District 2 Representative
10 Judy Chavarria, Member-at-Large
12 Dr. Abel L. Chavarria, District 1 Representative
12 Sharlene Wittern, District 3 Representative
14 Belinda Soto, Henry Benavidez Recreation Center
14 James Mitchell, Sage Café Center Representative

16 **MEMBERS ABSENT:**

18 Yolanda Knodle, District 4 Representative
18 Manuel Contreras, District 5 Representative
20 Diane Turo, District 6 Representative
20 David Hernandez, Eastside Center Representative

22 **GUESTS PRESENT:**

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

28 **I. CALL TO ORDER:** Chair Jo Ann Rodriguez-Haught, Frank O' Brien Papen Center
30 Representative, called the Senior Programs' Advisory Board meeting to order at 9:00 a.m. on
Thursday, May 12, 2022, at the Eastside Community Center, 310 N. Tornillo Street, Las Cruces,
NM.

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

34 **III. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE:** The Pledge of Allegiance was led by Dr. Abel Chavarria,
36 District 1 Representative.

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

40 **V. APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA:** Dr. A. Chavarria moved to approve the May 12, 2022,
42 Senior Programs Advisory Board Meeting agenda as presented. Motion seconded by James
Mitchell, Sage Café Center Representative. Vote: 8 Ayes, 0 Nays. Motion carried unanimously.

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

46 **VII. INTRODUCTIONS:** Belinda Soto, newly appointed Henry Benavidez Center
48 Representative, was introduced and welcomed. B. Soto stated she was born in El Paso, TX, and
grew up in Mesquite, NM. She attended Gadsden High School and retired from the beauty salon
business after 40 years. She is looking for a way to give back to the community.

52 It was also announced Yolanda Knodle was recently appointed to serve on the Senior Programs
Advisory Board as the District 4 Representative.

54 S. Saldana announced Manuel Contreras, District 5 Representative, was absent due to an
unforeseen circumstance that occurred at his place of employment. Mr. Contreras has requested
56 that the Board consider allowing him to join the meetings virtually via Zoom or by phone.
Sometimes M. Contreras is unable to attend Board meetings due to unforeseen circumstances
58 that arise at his work, the hospital.

60 **VIII. PUBLIC COMMENT:** Vice Chair G. Montalvo inquired what facility is being built by the Las
Cruces Regional Aquatic Center. Chris Behrens, Recreation Facility Manager, announced an
62 Olympic-size indoor swimming pool is being built adjacent to the Las Cruces Regional Aquatic
Center. The independent facility will have a 50-meter pool with eight lanes. The pool is projected
64 to be completed by late December 2022 or early January 2023.

66 **IX. ACTION ITEM(S):** Vice Chair Montalvo moved to approve the April 14, 2022, Senior
Programs Advisory Board meeting minutes as presented. Sharlene Wittern, District 3
68 Representative, seconded the motion. Vote: 8 Ayes, 0 Nays; Motion carried unanimously.

70 **X. DISCUSSION ITEMS - SENIOR PROGRAMS ADMINISTRATOR'S REPORT:** Sonia
Saldana, Senior Programs Administrator, asked for feedback regarding the Senior Programs
72 Code of Conduct review, Las Cruces Police Department (LCPD) CARES Program and home
safety training conducted during the April 2022 Board meeting. She inquired if Board members
74 were interested in continuing with the trainings. Board members stated they enjoyed the training
and felt the training was very beneficial. Judy Chavarria, Member-at-Large, stated that although
76 she was not present at the April Board meeting, she read the minutes and found the trainings to
be very informative. It was recommended that these trainings also be held at the centers for the
78 participants. S. Saldana stated the LCPD CARES program presenter has been scheduled to
conduct monthly trainings at the senior centers. S. Wittern stated she attended the CARES
80 program training at Munson Center at 2:00 p.m. There were only two people in attendance. S.
Saldana stated Senior Programs' staff promote the programs, activities, and services in the Senior
82 Programs' monthly newsletter, Senior Programs' website, and post signs. Announcements are
placed on the dining room tables to remind participants of upcoming events. Unfortunately, many
84 people do not read the signs or the newsletter. Board members recommended serving snacks at
the presentations/trainings to attract participants. J. Chavarria added the Mother's Day ice cream
86 social event held at the Centers after lunch was very well attended. After further discussion, S.
Saldana recommended scheduling training on Elder Abuse, Adult Protective Services, mental
88 health, identity theft, and fraud. S. Saldana stated the more training that Board members have,
the better representatives they can be for the center participants.

90 S. Wittern inquired on the status of the Senior Programs' Grandparents Raising Grandchildren
92 Program. S. Saldana reported the program participants were meeting virtually during the COVID-
19 pandemic. Recently, the program resumed in-person meetings. The program is well attended
94 and has been growing. She reported the in-person meetings were previously being held at the
Benavidez Center but have been temporarily relocated to Munson Center. J. Chavarria reported
96 she has received positive feedback about the program. S. Saldana will share the commendation
with the program staff.
98

100 J. Mitchell, Sage Café Senior Center Representative, suggested advocating to the State
102 Legislators for additional funding for more staff for the New Mexico Aging and Disability Resource
104 Center. He stated when he called to make an Adult Protective Services report he was on hold for
approximately 20 minutes. He stated more people are needed to help answer the phone calls
and to conduct investigations. People get frustrated and do not follow through with the phone call
to Adult Protective Services because of the wait time.

106 S. Saldana reported a security alarm system is being installed at Munson Center due to a series
108 of break-ins that occurred over a weekend. A few items were reported missing to the LCPD such
110 as computers, laptops, and web cameras. There was a few broken doors and windows. The
112 broken exterior windows have been replaced with a metal-type material that is very secure. In
114 the meantime, until the security alarm system installation is completed and activated, security
116 guard services will be used during the night and on the weekends to ensure these types of
118 incidents do not reoccur. In addition, S. Saldana informed the Board Senior Programs is exploring
the possibility of partnering with the LCPD to allow police officers access to the building for a
break as needed, afterhours or on weekends. This will give visibility of law enforcement in the
building and will hopefully help deter future break-ins. The LCPD already has access to the
building at the Sage Café. Eastside and Benavidez Recreation Centers will follow. S. Saldana
announced for security purposes, the gates that enclose the fitness area and the City vehicle
parking lot at Munson Center are now being locked at 5:00 p.m.

120 **XI. CHAIR AND BOARD MEMBER UPDATES:** James Mitchell officially announced he will be
122 resigning from the Board as the Sage Café Senior Center Representative. His wife is retiring,
124 and they will be relocating to Denver, CO. He stated serving on the Board has been a great
126 experience. He wishes he would have been more involved but due to the pandemic the Center
has been closed to the public. Board members and staff wished him well with his future
endeavors.

128 J. Chavarria reported the food has improved significantly at the Eastside Center. However, the
130 issue with the undercooked beans has not been resolved. She recommends soaking the beans
132 overnight which will help soften the beans. She commended Alberto Grijalva. A. Grijalva cleans
and sanitizes the tables, chairs, and helps with the trays at the Eastside Center. He is very
accommodating, energetic, friendly, and helpful. She has nothing but good things to say about
A. Grijalva.

134 Dr. A. Chavarria reported the meals program attendance has increased at the Eastside Center.
136 It is good to see people interacting with each other during lunch. He asked if condiments can be
138 reinstated for the noon meal such as salad dressing and tartar sauce. This may seem minor, but
for some congregate meal program participants, this is the only meal they have during the day.

140 Secretary Bedale stated she has been utilizing the drive through meal service at the Frank O'Brien
142 Papen Center. Participation continues to increase, and she commended Linda Miramontes,
Office Assistant.

144 Belinda Soto, Benavidez Recreation Center Representative, reported participants have
146 commented the food served is not hot enough and the vegetables are overcooked. She reported
there have been some issues with the volunteer that calls the numbers for Bingo. They just want
the process to be fair. It is frustrating for the people playing the game. The Bingo prizes are

148 another issue. The Bingo participants have requested practical items that can be used such as
bleach, laundry detergent, soap pads, candy, etc., instead of stuffed animals, crafts, or knick
150 knacks. C. Behrens stated they are trying to reach a resolution so that everyone is happy. He
is working to make changes that are needed so that the activity is functioning the way it should
152 be. People at the center continue to inquire about the dances, TV, and coffee. Senior Programs
will resume these activities as soon as all COVID-19 pandemic restrictions are lifted.

154 S. Wittern stated people at Munson Center are complaining the protein (chicken and meats)
served is very bland and tasteless. The vegetables are so overcooked that they turn to mush and
156 cannot be picked up with a fork. The pumpkin bread was fantastic. Basically, S. Wittern asked
if the protein can be seasoned and the vegetables properly cooked, so they do not turn to mush.

158 S. Saldana stated she will bring these issues of concern to the attention of the Nutrition Program.
160 However, there are individuals that have heart conditions, high blood pressure, and diabetes. For
these reasons, the food is sometimes bland. If salt is added to the food, it will only make the
162 situation worse for those individuals with heart issues.


164 Chair Rodriguez-Haught requested chocolate cake, birthday cake, and brownies to be added to
the menus.

166 Secretary Bedale reiterated that people have commented to her that they are so grateful for the
168 meal because this is their only meal that they get during the day. Secretary Bedale stated people
are so fortunate to get this meal even if the beans are undercooked and the vegetables are
170 overcooked. Some people are happy to eat mush for lunch. Senior Programs will never please
all the people, all the time. Secretary Bedale stated there are people who need the services but
172 cannot come to the centers to have a meal. Dr. Chavarria stated if those individuals cannot attend
one of the centers, they can register to see if they qualify for the Meals on Wheels program. For
174 County residents, they can call the County. Chair Rodriguez-Haught stated the County has a
waiting list and has a different menu. A few days ago, S. Saldana received a phone call from a
176 county resident complaining about the way his bean burrito was prepared. She stated Senior
Programs is very fortunate that it has the adequate funding to provide a meal variation to break
178 up the monotony. There are other agencies that only serve a certain type of a meal because that
is all that their budget will allow or there may be other factors involved such as not getting the
180 items or supplies needed, etc. J. Mitchell stated there is another option which is eating at a
restaurant like Golden Corral, but it will be costly. S. Saldana appreciated the fact that Board
182 members are bringing these issues to her attention, and she will follow up with the appropriate
staff to address these issues of concern.

184 The next Board meeting will be held Thursday, June 9, 2022, at Munson Center at 9:00 a.m.

186 **XII. ADJOURNMENT:** Dr. A. Chavarria moved to adjourn the Board meeting at 10:23 a.m.
188 Motion seconded by Secretary Bedale. Vote: 8 Ayes, 0 Nays. Motion carried unanimously.

190 Submitted,

192 
194 Mona Bedale, Secretary


Toni Flores, Recording Secretary