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Presenter:
Aubrey Day, Chair, Colorado Springs Commission on Aging

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The City of Colorado Springs Commission on Aging 2019 Budget Recommendations

Presenter:

Aubrey Day, Chair, Colorado Springs Commission on Aging

Summary:

The Commission on Aging, created in April 2017 (Ord. No. 17-37), and appointed in the fall of 2017, is charged with making recommendations to the City Council and Mayor during the annual municipal budget process. The Commission held public input sessions to solicit public comment at Silver Key Senior Services on May 23, 2018, and at City Hall on May 31, 2018. The Commission finalized their budget recommendations at their meeting on June 6, 2018, and respectfully submits five budget recommendations that address the needs of seniors in the community for consideration for the 2019 Municipal Budget.

Feedback from the public has informed the Commission that access to affordable housing is viewed as the most important and critical issue facing seniors in our community. Transit follows with an expressed need for better understanding of where expanded service on evening and weekend routes is needed. Finally, infrastructure needs were expressed with recommendations for Parks, Recreation and Cultural Services to include or upgrade amenities to allow for more enjoyment from seniors, and critical sidewalk infrastructure that needs to be addressed to allow seniors fair and equitable access to vital community facilities and hubs.

Previous Council Action:

N/A

Background:

Housing (statistics provided by the City of Colorado Springs Community Development Division):

The population of El Paso County aged 65+ is projected to grow to 16.5% by 2040. If Colorado Springs' share of 65+ households grows at the same statewide projected rate, senior households will comprise nearly a third of all households in the city by 2040. Nearly a quarter of all senior households rent in Colorado Springs. Currently, the median household income in Colorado Springs is \$60,308, whereas the median household income for Colorado Springs senior households is 15% less, at \$51,000, and more than half of Colorado Springs senior households make less than the senior median income.

The poverty rate for seniors is currently 7%, and their sources of income are limited, with many reliant on a fixed income. In most parts of the City it is common for 10 to 50% of senior homeowners to spend more than 30% of their income on their mortgage and other associated housing costs. The percentage of 62+ households living in subsidized housing hovers around 30%, while the percentage of all households living in subsidized housing is 2.4%. The 2016 median gross rent was \$958 and continues to rise. The increase in housing costs creates an increasing burden on seniors within the City.

Recommendation 1: The Commission on Aging recommends that \$3 million from the general fund be dedicated to safe and affordable rental housing for residents over 62 years of age. This money will complement the federal HOME funds the City receives (\$1.5 million in 2018) and allow for the City to partner with housing non-profits to ensure the creation of multi-family projects through providing more equity into subsidized housing and making the City and its partner non-profits less dependent on state tax credit funding for affordable housing.

Recommendation 2: The Commission on Aging recommends that \$50,000 of general funds be dedicated to a senior and disabled displacement fund administered by Partners in Housing to assist individuals who find themselves in a displacement scenario such as an apartment building changing ownership and/or rent increase.

Transit (ridership information provided by Mountain Metro Transit):

As stated above, the senior population in the City of Colorado Springs is expected to grow over 16% by 2040. With this growth in senior residents come increased transportation needs. In 2017, 11.37% of Metro Mountain Transit ridership survey respondents were seniors, and the 2040 Regional Transportation Plan found that the senior population is dispersed throughout the City. A good transit system can ease isolation, connect seniors to medical care, and make streets safer by providing an alternate method of travel for those who cannot or who are reluctant to drive. The Commission on Aging views transportation as vital to ensuring the quality of life for Colorado Springs seniors.

Recommendation 3: The Commission on Aging recommends that funds be allocated for a comprehensive Mountain Metro Transit senior ridership study, including public input events to better understand the transit needs of seniors in the City and to assist with informed and comprehensive budget recommendations for 2020.

Parks (Park information from the City of Colorado Spring Age Friendly Report):

According to the City's Parks, Recreation and Cultural Services department, Colorado Springs has more than 9,000 acres of parks, 500 acres of trails and an additional 5,000 acres of open space. An estimated 75% of residents live within a ten-minute walk of a park. There is opportunity to further improve our parks by improving the age-friendliness of our outdoor spaces to ensure all ages can enjoy the amenities that have gained the City of Colorado Springs national recognition. The

Commission on Aging supports the City's current activity around Flanagan and Panorama Parks in particular and views these parks as opportunities to increase the age-friendliness of the amenities available in these parks.

Flanagan Park, located on the north side of Fillmore off Prospect Street, is utilized by residents living in the surrounding single-family homes, mobile homes, apartment buildings, and two senior living centers. The senior living centers account for approximately 70 seniors aged 55+ residing less than one-quarter mile from the park who could benefit from the addition of an accessible walking path, lighting and seating. These additions will provide an immediate physical benefit to seniors as well as promote increased opportunities for social engagement with neighbors and the local rugby team that utilize this field for practice and games.

Panorama Park is a large park located in the Southeast, south of the intersection of East Fountain Boulevard and Jet Wing Drive. It currently faces significant accessibility barriers that's make the space completely unusable to the senior population in the area. The RISE Coalition, the Trust for Public Land, CONO, Harrison School District 2 and the City of Colorado Springs have agreed to focus efforts and resources towards this park in the coming years. Uneven surfaces, pot holes, accessibility issues, zero benches within the 13 acres and only one unfinished shade pavilion that currently sits unfurnished provides ample opportunity for improvements to ensure seniors can utilize and enjoy this space in the future.

Recommendation 4: Neighborhood parks are often the area of choice for both exercise and social interaction of seniors. The Commission on Aging recommends that \$150,000 of general funds be dedicated to fund the installation of senior-friendly benches (benches that have arm rests to assist with sitting and standing) paved walking paths and lighting for walking paths with priority given to Flanagan Park, and then Panorama Park. This dedication of funds has the potential to be used in conjunction with Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funds to realize additional community benefits in low to moderate income neighborhoods.

Infrastructure:

The Commission on Aging supports the concept of Complete Streets, which are streets that are designed and operated to enable safe access for all users, including pedestrians, bicyclists, motorists and transit riders of all ages and abilities. Balancing safety and convenience for all users ensures that crossing the street, walking to shops, bicycling for transit and accessing bus stops is a reality for all residents. Currently, the concrete maintenance list has up to 23,000 project needs listed with an average of 1,300 new projects added a year. The Commission on Aging supports the City's policy to address high pedestrian areas such as hospitals, schools and bus stops and individuals with physical challenges who lack adequate access to a sidewalk. The Commission on Aging views sidewalks in good repair as vital for seniors to reach important community hubs, transit stops, and not feel limited in mobility.

Recommendation 5: The Commission on Aging recommends that \$500,000 of general funds be dedicated in addition to Pikes Peak Rural Transportation Authority (PPRTA) funds utilized each year to the Concrete Cost Share Program to increase the number of projects that can be completed in a year.

Next Steps:

Thank you for your consideration of these 2019 Municipal budget recommendations. The Commission on Aging looks forward to hearing how the City Council and Mayor choose to utilize these recommendations in the formation of next year's municipal budget.

Financial Implications:

See recommendations above.

Board/Commission Recommendation:

The City of Colorado Springs Commission on Aging adopted the recommendations at its meeting on June 6, 2018.

Stakeholder Process:

The Commission on Aging conducted two public input sessions; see above for details.

Alternatives:

N/A

Proposed Motion:

N/A

N/A