

Scappoose Community and Senior Citizens Center: Summary of Training Sessions and Recommendations

Submitted to:

Scappoose City Manager and Scappoose City Council

Submitted by:

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Training Background

In June 2021, the Oregon Department of Justice issued a final audit report regarding the Scappoose Community and Senior Citizens Center (hereafter referred to as “the Center”).

Amongst the audit findings, the following issues were identified:

- Improper record-keeping of meeting minutes and decisions that impacted the organization
- Conflict of interest concerns regarding the executive director at the time
- Improper financial management and financial record-keeping

In addition to the audit findings, the Center experienced the following events:

- Bingo operations were suspended
- Kitchen operations related to Meals on Wheels were suspended

In the time since the audit report, the Center’s board of directors have taken the following actions:

- Terminated the executive director’s employment
- Hired an accountant to sort through financial records
- Renovated key areas of the Center, including the kitchen
- Appointed a Senior Advocate
- Resumed operation of the Salt & Pepper Cafe in the Center kitchen

To further support the current board of directors, the Scappoose City Manager hired the Center for Public Service (CPS) to equip board members, staff, and volunteers with the knowledge, skills, and abilities to address compliance issues related to the fiduciary responsibilities and legal governance of the Center. Furthermore, there was a goal to support the organization in developing operational policies with the aim of building internal capacity. Diane Odeh met with the board as a whole to discuss needs and goals related to the training. She also conducted interviews with key people who have institutional knowledge of the Center.

Training Summary

Upon assessing the organization’s needs and goals, a series of training sessions were developed and conducted. The following are descriptions of the training sessions.

Training 1: Board Governance Best Practices

The first training was an overview of the roles and responsibilities of board members who serve for a nonprofit organization based in Oregon. Key topics included reviewing relevant mandates within the Oregon Revised Statutes Chapter 65; including financial management, recordkeeping, and general legal governance of the organization. Participants were also given training related to developing standard operating procedures that can help the Center run more efficiently and effectively.

Training 2: Corrective Measures/Process Monitoring

The second training was designed to address key areas outlined in the DOJ report. Participants were “quizzed” on topics related to recordkeeping and financial management. Attention was placed on ensuring that members were aware and understanding of their legally mandated responsibilities such as bylaws management, meeting records management, and financial recordkeeping. Participants then engaged in an activity where they started to create new standard operating procedures related to board meeting materials preparation, Center transportation services, and Center administrative management.

Training 3: Volunteer Engagement

Board members explicitly requested training on volunteer engagement. This training focused more broadly on partner engagement; including managing funders/donors, general membership, and Center volunteers. Methods of how to communicate regularly with partners were offered, including the use of annual reporting and budget projecting. Board members were also given information on how to engage volunteers including how to advertise opportunities, potential sources of new volunteers, and how to sustain volunteers through showing appreciation. Each member set a goal related to volunteer engagement. The session ended with board members creating budget projections for key areas of the Center. This activity was designed to help board members understand the nuances behind financial management of the Center.

Training 4: Goal Setting and Ongoing Evaluation

The final training session started by asking board members to “rate” themselves on a variety of tasks related to the Department of Justice audit report such as financial management and legal governance. They were also asked to rate themselves on how well they think they are advancing the organizational mission. Participants then participated in goal setting exercises related to developing a strategic direction for the Center. Goals members would like to achieve in the next six months include developing a Center budget, implementing a volunteer coordinator, and revising Center bylaws. Guidance on how to monitor goals and establish performance indicators was offered.

Training Observations and Outcomes

The training sessions were delivered with the goal of building capacity within the organization. The following are observations and outcomes from these sessions.

Creating a culture of compliance through clarification of responsibilities

Many board members shared that they were initially unaware of the responsibilities associated with being a nonprofit board member. This is partially due to differences in how other nonprofit organizations board membership functions. Some organizations entail a stewardship model of board governance where organizational staff are responsible for implementing goals while the board of directors remains mostly “hands off” in the daily operations. The Center’s board of directors is currently functioning as an operational board that is primarily responsible

for the majority of the daily tasks required to serve the community. The Center receives administrative support from one .5 FTE staff member. One immediate outcome of the training was the increased knowledge of what is legally mandated of all board members. Further, the training increased understanding of why the board looks different from non-operational boards. This helps build capacity because a shared understanding of expectations can help with recruitment and retention of board members.

When quizzed on topics related to compliance with legal mandates, participants were able to accurately state key dates, such as the due date for filing the organization's annual report (November 15th) and renewing nonprofit registration with the Oregon Secretary of State (the anniversary of the Center). Participants also demonstrated understanding of the requirements related to managing meeting minutes and agendas. Meeting minutes were available for viewing on a Center bulletin board for general membership to view. Additional guidance was given related to tracking votes and disseminating information to general membership.

Enhancing operational practices

Key board members along with the Center staff member have been developing standard operating procedures that have added capacity to the Center. One example is the development of a guide on how to count cash received by Center staff and volunteers. Board members reported that this guide has standardized the way cash is received and counted. The source of the cash is now documented; making it easy to track the sources of revenue. Standard operating procedures related to accounting practices were developed prior to the training. The training functioned to educate all board members of the importance of such documentation to create a shared understanding of operational practices.

There has also been development of standard operating procedures related to kitchen management and administrative management of the Center. These were developed as a result of the training, and continue to be created and refined by staff and board members.

Fostering a sustainable and well-governed organization

The training provided a broad overview of why it is important to maintain proper financial record keeping within the Center. Some board members have a background in financial management and are able to provide their expertise to the Center. As a result of training sessions, members are more aware of the role budgeting plays in ensuring the overall sustainability of the organization. As of December 2023, Center board members are in the process of working with an accountant to develop budget records from previous fiscal years. From there, they will construct budget projections intended to assist with strategic planning as board members consider the long-term viability of the Center. Another stated goal is the need for Center staff and board members to consult with a nonprofit attorney to review and revise the organization's bylaws.

Partner management

The Center relies on healthy partnerships with general membership and volunteers in order to function. In order to ensure long term sustainability of the organization, attention must be given to managing these partnerships.

General member management

The Center has a fee paying general membership. As such, they are entitled to being involved in key decision-making aspects of the organization. Examples of areas where general membership should be involved include voting on changes to Center bylaws and other decisions that impact the functioning of the organization. Furthermore, general members should be given the opportunity to attend an annual meeting where the Center's financial records for the year should be made available; in addition to notable accomplishments. The Center currently communicates with members via a monthly newsletter. The training sessions underscored the importance of including general membership in decision-making moving forward.

Volunteer management

The Center would not exist without its unpaid volunteers. Currently, most volunteers are also users of the Center. During training, members learned of sources of potential volunteers and how to market opportunities. During the training, board members set the following goals related to volunteer recruitment:

- Establish a connection with the local high school for time-limited tasks (e.g. Center maintenance, labor for special events)
- Recruit neighbors to help with physical labor
- Recruit volunteers to re-establish a fundraising committee
- Establish a connection with Scappoose Boy Scout Troop 294
- Establish relationships with other organizations and businesses

Board members were also asked to develop goals related to volunteer appreciation. Participants in the training had the following ideas:

- Include a list of appreciation in the monthly newsletter
- Host a volunteer appreciation pizza party
- Honor individual volunteers during Wednesday lunches
- Feature articles about volunteers in the monthly newsletter
- Create tokens that show Center affiliation (patches, T-shirts)
- Establish a "volunteer of the month" award
- Give special parking as an appreciation for volunteering
- Offer gift certificates for free lunch at Salt and Pepper cafe, Senior Center shop
- Host an annual award night/dinner for volunteer

Next Steps for the Center

Throughout the training sessions, it was clear that the Center would benefit from setting both short-term and long-term goals. Upon assessment of the Center, the following recommendations are offered to improve operational efficiency and effectiveness.

Short-term recommendations

Short-term goals can have an immediate positive impact on the functioning of an organization. The following recommendations are intended to be considered for completion within six months to a year.

Strategic planning

In the final training session, board members were encouraged to develop short-term goals. In order to fully foster a sustainable organization, it is recommended that the Center engages in a strategic planning process. A strategic plan can provide a clear direction for the Center that can inform decision-making and effective stewardship of the organization. It can also inform how the other recommendations offered to the Center can be achieved.

Bylaws review/revision

It is best practice to regularly review and update organizational bylaws. In its current state, the Center's bylaws are unclear, which can cause confusion for board members. It is recommended that the Center prioritize hiring a lawyer who specializes in nonprofit law to review and revise the bylaws. One suggested resource to do this is the [Center for Nonprofit Law](#) based in Eugene, Oregon.

Finalized budget projections

Center board members have begun to work on budget projections for the Center. Budget projections are necessary to ensuring financial sustainability because they demonstrate what expenses are expected; and thus what revenue is required to maintain payment of those expenses. It is recommended that the Center have a finalized budget projection document for Fiscal Year 2025

Volunteer coordination

A short-term goal set by training participants has to do with establishing a volunteer coordinator. The Center has many services and activities housed within one organization. It would be beneficial to have one individual focused on both recruitment and retention of volunteers. This would add capacity to the organization because it would reduce the amount of people managing volunteers on an ad-hoc basis in addition to giving volunteers a clear source of information and assistance.

Resuming bingo operations

Bingo games within the Center are a large source of revenue for the Center. Beyond revenue, these games provide an opportunity for senior citizens and other community members

to gather and engage in fellowship. It is recommended that resuming bingo operations be a top priority for the Center.

Financial management training

The board of directors' primary legal responsibility has to do with the fiscal stewardship of the Center. Although board members are now aware of these responsibilities, the extent to how well they understand the nuances of budgeting and financial accounting varies. In order to ensure that members are able to read financial statements and make informed decisions, it is recommended that they undergo specific training related to financial management.

Longer-term recommendations

As the Center considers its future, the following long-term recommendations should be considered to ensure longevity and sustainability of the organization.

Hiring executive director

Traditionally, board of directors ensure a nonprofit organization's mission is being fulfilled. Currently, board members are directly responsible for many operational aspects of the Center. This is done on a voluntary, unpaid basis. In order to ensure that the Center can continue to function well, an executive director should be reinstated within the organization. An executive director should possess the skills, knowledge, and abilities necessary to run a nonprofit organization. This will add consistency and capacity to the Center.

Grant management

In consideration of financial sustainability, the Center should place attention on diversifying their revenue by pursuing grant opportunities. There are many grants available for nonprofit organizations, and the Center's mission to serve senior citizens entitles them to many grant opportunities. It would be prudent for the board of directors to engage with individuals who have expertise in grant writing and management.

Conclusion

The board of directors, staff, and volunteers with the Scappoose Community and Senior Citizens Center underwent a series of four training sessions delivered by the Center for Public Service at Portland State University. They were intended to improve the Center's overall governance, financial management, and other operational practices. The training sessions included information related to legal compliance and fiduciary responsibilities, developing standard operating procedures, partner management, and goal setting. The training participants exhibited increased knowledge and understanding of their duties and responsibilities related to the Center. Significant efforts have been made to address key concerns cited in the Oregon Department of Justice audit report. Moving forward, Center staff, members, and the board of directors should pay close attention to developing short- and long-term goals to ensure continued compliance with regulatory requirements and to foster a sustainable organization.