

ASHLAND DAILY TIDINGS

Wisdom

The Ashland Senior Advisory Committee has recently ended its three listening sessions at the Senior Center. The advisory committee appears to be heading toward self-interest goals.

Many committee members provide services at the county or private fee-based levels. Shifting what was done locally to outsiders and/or a technocratic or fee-based method misses the human element, which is especially needed for vulnerable elder seniors.

The most meaningful statement made during the sessions was by Dorothy Parsons. She is an octogenarian who was on the laid-off senior staff. Her role was in part to visit the seniors who had lunch and/or activities at the center to keep in touch with their upcoming needs. She has lived in Ashland for decades and is known throughout the community.

At the listening session she said we must keep in mind the “human element.” The laid-off staff, all from Ashland, held the senior program’s mission to help seniors live independently in their homes in the highest regard. They protected the seniors and ensured that they received the help they required. The center was staffed five days a week. They were also there on their own time, visiting seniors in the hospital to ensure they had the help they needed to come home. The staff were there, on their own time, at seniors’ funerals when the deceased outlived their friends, and family were

nowhere to be seen. The seniors were more than clients to the staff; they were fellow humans on a journey we all share.

And the laid-off staff had more than good intentions; they were professionals. They were highly qualified with years of experience and training in senior social services at the state and local level.

Sue Wilson

Ashland