

WEST HARTFORD SENIOR CITIZENS' ADVISORY COMMISSION

Minutes from Meeting on March 21, 2023

Members Present: Rebecca Hajosy, Noreen Bachteler, Beth Rocco, Kevin Ryan, Rosemary Cleary, Kaye Straw (new member)
Staff Present: Rebecca Sears, Kevin Farmer, Robin Clare
Absent: Mary Reilly, Eileen Rau, Anne Massucco, Keren Paquette
Guests: Guest presenters for the meeting – Jill Corrado & Joel Rothman from the West Hartford Housing Authority
Other community guests: Liz Kupper, Theresa Hung, Mary Silverberg, Joe Kolczynski, Sarah Schaefer

The meeting was called to order at 10:05AM

The minutes of the February 2023 meeting were approved as written.

One new member of the Commission was welcomed to their first meeting – Kaye Straw. She joins the 2 members that started last month - Anne Massucco and Eileen Rau – so now all nine positions on the Commission are filled. The group did introductions around the table to welcome Kaye.

Chairs Report

Rebecca discussed the recent Freedom of Information training that is required by the town – the Powerpoint slides from the training will be sent to all members of the Commission for review. The main take-aways for this group are: once the agenda is set, a vote is needed to bring up a topic not on the agenda; emails at any time between multiple members represent a meeting; no hybrid meetings are allowed/nobody can be on the phone; the minutes must be submitted to the Town Clerk within 7 days of the meeting; there should be no discussion on agenda items once the meeting ends.

Noreen followed up on an item from last month's meeting – our meeting's minutes can be sent to the Senior Center email list each month – this was okayed by Asst. Town Clerk Tiana Pelletier. Noreen also told the group that she was asked by the Republican Town Committee to attend their 3/20/2023 meeting to update them on the SCAC and it went well.

West Hartford Social Services

Keren Paquette was not in attendance, no Social Services report.

Seniors Job Bank

Robin Clare, the new Executive Director of the Seniors Job Bank, is still learning about the organization but wanted to make sure everyone knew that the job postings in the job bank can be posted by people of any age or an agency looking to fill a position. The workers to fill the positions, however, must be 50 years and older. Robin is addressing any confusion that the community may have with the SJB. The web address for the job bank is: <https://seniorsjobbankct.org/>

Transportation

Kevin Farmer reported that ITN Central Connecticut is, as always, looking for drivers. Membership fees for ITN are \$40 for one person or \$65 for a family. Ridership since Covid is now 80% for medical purposes, a far higher percentage than before the pandemic.

Senior Centers

Becky Sears reported that the Spring Bulletin has been published and the volume of members is increasing. Eighty people attended the St. Patrick's Day party, Tai Chi is coming soon. Becky has submitted for a budget increase to the town to bring the budget back to its pre-pandemic level or higher. There are 2 open positions on her staff right now. Her staff is comprised of 2 full-time positions and 13 part-time positions, plus lots of volunteers. When asked, she said ideally there would be 2 additional full-time staffers to better serve the town's seniors. There is also some new State of CT money allocated for senior centers and Becky is investigating what West Hartford will be getting. Becky also reported that the Community Renewal Team's five days/week hot lunch program has been resumed with the former manager returning to the ECC site. The program relocated from the basement to the 2nd floor at the ECC building and it has been a positive move. In order to participate in this program, you are advised to call 24 hours in advance to get your name on the list for lunch.

Questions came up about the Senior Centers proposed budget. Becky Sears stated that her budget is not in the Leisure Services budget line item, but in the General Fund line item. Currently the membership fees are \$15 for residents and \$40 for non-residents. The goal, however, is to not have membership fees for residents by 2024 and rather raise the funds through programs.

ECC Advisory Committee for New Community Center

Beth Rocco reported that there is still no information about when the new proposed Elmwood Community Center project will be going to the Town Council for a vote.

Commission Sub-Committee on Charter & Mission Statement

Noreen is still sifting through the feedback received from Attorney Cynthia Lauture, the town's Assistant Corporate Counsel on the changes proposed by this Commission to the SCAC's existing town code and mission statement. Rebecca indicated that if the name of the Commission changes, it may necessitate a decommissioning and re-commissioning of the entire Commission and its members. Members agreed that we should still move forward and Noreen stated that she will schedule a sub-committee meeting for next month. Under the FOIA rules, Noreen will also submit the Sub-Committee's agenda and minutes of their meetings.

Guest Presenters – Jill Corrado, Acting CEO of the West Hartford Housing Authority & Joel Rottman, Trout Brook Realty Advisors

Jill Corrado explained that the West Hartford Housing Authority's programs are administered in accordance with regulations of the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. A five-member Board of Commissioners establishes the policies and mission. The West Hartford Town Council appoints the Board of Commissioners; however, the town provides no money to the West Hartford Housing Authority.

Their mission is to create, preserve, revitalize, and pursue affordable housing and community development opportunities that serve a diverse mix of households including low-income, elderly and disabled individuals. Trout Brook Realty Advisors (TBRA) is a 501(c)(3) non-profit arm and affiliate of the West Hartford Housing Authority that has been responsible for the development and management of mixed income and affordable housing properties in the town. Properties in West Hartford include: Alfred E Plant Elderly Apartments, Elm Grove Apartments, The Goodwin, The Lofts at 616 New Park, The Faxon, and 540 New Park. The West Hartford Housing Authority administers the Housing Choice Voucher Program authorized by HUD (currently issues 565 actual vouchers); manages the DOH Section 8 Housing Choice and Rental Assistance Program Certificates (approx. 2100) as a State of CT sub-contractor; administers the wait lists and does property management for all West Hartford properties.

Since housing for seniors is a growing need and focus of the SCAC, Jill & Joel were asked about the West Hartford Housing Authority and TBRA setting aside and developing more affordable, age-restricted housing opportunities for seniors. They view the main issue is that senior housing has not been a priority of the State of CT and new development options for seniors is not funded the same way it is for mixed affordable housing. They suggested getting our local State legislators involved in this issue.

The meeting adjourned at 12:07PM.

Respectfully submitted,
Ann T. Visgilio, Recording Secretary