

WEST HARTFORD SENIOR CITIZENS ADVISORY COMMISSION

Minutes from Meeting on November 21, 2023

Members Present: Noreen Bachteler, Beth Rocco, Kevin Ryan, Mary Reilly, Eileen Rau, Anne Massucco, Rosemary Cleary
Staff Present: Rebecca Sears, Keren Paquette, Monique Dixon, Kevin Farmer
Absent: Kaye Straw, Robin Clare
Guests: From the Community: Rebecca Hajosy, Krstyna L.
Presenter: Dorian Long, CT DSS

The meeting was called to order at 10:05AM by Noreen Bachteler.
The minutes of the October 17, 2023 meeting were approved as written.

Chairs Report

-Noreen reported that the CT DPH slides from the 10/17/2023 SCAC Meeting were emailed to all members in advance of today's meeting.

-Noreen was in recent contact with the Asst. Town Clerk, Tiana Pelletier, and she advised that a person has been vetted to serve on the SCAC and the appointment is expected to be heard at the December Town Council Meeting. In addition, Rosemary Cleary's SCAC term is expiring at the end of the year and Noreen was in contact with her. Rosemary notified Ms. Pelletier on 10/30/2023 that she is interested in serving for a 2nd five year term and her reappointment will require Town Council action. Per Ms. Pelletier, the 2024/25 calendar of SCAC meetings needs to be submitted to the Town Clerk's office no later than 1/15/2024 and the proposed meeting dates will be discussed at the next SCAC meeting.

-Noreen stated that an official vote to have SCAC member Eileen Rau serve as Co-Chair is needed and will be done under New Business of today's meeting.

-Noreen is following up on having CT Attorney General Tong present on "Senior Scams" at the December 19th meeting and is waiting to hear back from his Executive Assistant.

-Noreen brought up the survey/questionnaire that the SCAC and other residents received from the Town's Social Services Department to assist in their strategic planning about needs and services in West Hartford. Noreen reported that Asst. Director Liz Buczynski has offered to share and present the compiled and analyzed data once the process is concluded at a SCAC meeting in Spring 2024. As SCAC Co-Chair, Noreen reported that she was interviewed by their consultant, Debra Pittorie Forand, and Noreen explained the role of the SCAC in serving the Town's older adult community, the SCAC's relationship particularly with both the Senior Centers and Social Services Department, and the SCAC's support of increased transportation and affordable housing options for older adults in West Hartford.

-Noreen reported that she had received a response from West Hartford Assistant Corporation Counsel Cynthia Lauture on the matter raised by SCAC member Beth Rocco at the 10/17/2023 meeting as to whether the SCAC was permitted to vote on an issue via email polling if there was an urgent matter that needed attention before the next regularly scheduled meeting. Noreen advised that the Assistant Corporate Counsel clearly stated that the SCAC should not be conducting votes on matters via email. Per Attorney Lauture, the SCAC is a commission of a public agency (the Town of West Hartford) and as such must comply with the Freedom of Information Act. FOIA requires notice and public participation by members of the public for all public meetings. Beth asked if a Special Meeting of the SCAC would be possible in an urgent type of situation and Noreen will check into how much public notice there needs to be to do so.

-The Commission followed with some discussion if there is a way for communication and information sharing with other Senior Advisory Commissions in the area to learn what issues they are working on. Becky Sears stated she is part of a statewide network of CT Senior Centers and that the North Central Area Agency on Aging services West Hartford older adults. Discussion needs more follow-up by SCAC.

West Hartford Social Services

Keren Paquette reported that the Renter's Rebate Program's deadline has passed. It will resume in April. The question was asked about how many people and more specifically, how many seniors used and benefitted from it. Keren will get back to the Commission with those numbers.

The Energy Assistance Program administered by CRT is in full swing. West Hartford has a CRT rep in their office to help process the applications. Rebecca Hajosy asked Keren about the "Cash for Oil" website. Keren wasn't aware of this program but will look into it.

Keren reported that there was a Thanksgiving gift card program and there will be a December holiday children's program as well. The SCAC can contact Keren directly if we know of any seniors who may benefit from a holiday donation. West Hartford Social Services has hired a part-time Prevention Social Worker using some of the opioid settlement money.

Senior Centers

Becky Sears reported that the request for funding for a new Senior Centers 18-passenger van (with wheelchair lift and driver) has been approved by the Town Council at \$170K with the decision pending about whether purchasing a gas, electric or hybrid vehicle.

The Winter Senior Centers Bulletin is complete but the hard copies have not yet been delivered. Jewish Family Services is offering an in-person support group to help people process what's happening around the Israel-Hamas war. The licensed JFS counselor will be at the BCSC on multiple dates in December. Becky stated this will not be a political discussion. There will also be a new Pet Therapy Program launching soon at both of the Senior Centers. December 7th will be the annual Hanukkah party.

Transportation

Kevin Farmer reported that ITN Central CT's Annual Appeal starts next week where they get 2/3 of their yearly revenue with the other 1/3 coming from riders' fees. Kevin also reported that he will be stepping down in Spring 2024 as ITN Central CT's Executive Director after ten years.

Guest Presenter – Dorian Long, MSW, CT DSS Director of Social Work Services

Dorian introduced herself with having over 25 years in State of CT service and passed out copies of a handout which cited the different services for older adults in CT and contact information for those programs run and/or funded by the State of Connecticut. These included:

Senior Centers, Elderly Nutrition Programs, Adult Day Care Centers, CT Respite Care Program (for caregivers of those with Alzheimer's or related disorders), Renters Rebate, Veterans Supports, SNAP food assistance, Community First Choice (home care services), CT Home Care Program for Elders (CHCPE), Protective Services for the Elderly (PSE). The handout also included a lists of reporting resources with phone numbers and websites of additional resources.

ECC Advisory Committee for New Elmwood Community Center

Beth Rocco reported no official update. She stated that she happened to see the West Hartford Town Manager and was told that the RFQ for architectural services for the new ECC/Senior Center was done. (public information.) Co-Chair Noreen Bachteler stated she will contact SCAC Town Liaison Helen Rubino-Turco for an update prior to the next meeting.

Seniors Job Bank - No report as Robin Clare was not in attendance.

New Business/Public Comment

Noreen asked for a motion to vote on Eileen Rau to serve as SCAC Co-Chair and unanimously approved.

The next meeting will be held on Tuesday December 19, 2023.

The meeting was adjourned at 12:05PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Ann T. Visgilio, Recording Secretary