

WEST HARTFORD SENIOR CITIZENS ADVISORY COMMISSION

Minutes from Meeting on December 19, 2023

Members Present: Noreen Bachteler, Rosemary Cleary, Eileen Rau, Mary Reilly,
Kevin Ryan, Mary Silverberg
Staff & Others Present: Rebecca Sears, Keren Paquette, Monique Dixon, Kevin Farmer,
Lisa Mahoney
Absent: Anne Massucco, Beth Rocco, Kaye Straw, Ann Visgilio (Recording Secretary)
Guests: From the Community: Joe Kolczynski, Kathleen Crawford
Presenter: Mark Garilli, West Hartford Fellowship Housing

The meeting was called to order at 10:05AM by Co-Chair Noreen Bachteler.

The minutes of the November 21, 2023 meeting were discussed. A change was requested by Kevin Ryan (for Beth Rocco) under the New ECC Advisory Committee report to reflect that the main comment by Beth Rocco was she was disappointed that the feasibility advisory committee was not contacted by the Town about the interviews starting for the six architectural firms chosen. The members present voted to approve the minutes with this addition.

Chairs Report

-Noreen reported that she had requested and received an email update on 12/12/2023 from Helen Rubino-Turco on the status of developments with the New ECC and this information will be presented later in the meeting by Rory Cleary who is the alternate to the New ECC Advisory Committee.

-Noreen reported that she had submitted the draft of the proposed revised SCAC Code to Helen Rubino-Turco on 12/12/2023 and was advised by Helen that she will be taking this draft to the Town Manager and keep SCAC Co-Chair posted on the next steps.

-Noreen reported that she was in contact with Asst. Clerk Tiana Pelletier and advised of the following Town Council appointments made on 12/18/2023:

*Rory Cleary was re-appointed for another 5 year SCAC term expiring on 12/31/2028.

*Mary Silverberg was newly appointed for the remainder of the SCAC term vacated by Rebecca Hajosy which will expire on 12/31/2025.

Noreen indicated that the SCAC is now at a full 9 member composition and thanked both Rory and Mary for their willingness to serve on the SCAC. Mary introduced herself to the Commission and that she has attended many SCAC meetings over the recent years as well as having previously served on the Town's Persons with Disabilities Commission.

-Noreen stated she followed up again on 12/19/2023 with the Executive Assistant for CT Attorney General Tong and is waiting to hear back from him on a 2024 presentation on senior scams. She also stated that Co-Chair Eileen Rau has connected with the State of CT Banking Department for a presentation on financial fraud/scams for the March 19, 2024 SCAC meeting.

West Hartford Social Services

Keren Paquette reported on the 2023 Renter's Rebate Program. A total of 610 applications were received and 25 disallowed. For the 585 applications, a total amount of \$325,452.22 was paid out from State funds. 384 of the recipients were over age 65 and 201 were under 65 or disabled. The holiday programs were busy and the food pantry continues to support an increased number of households. There is a yearly application/certification process for residents to use the food pantry 1x/month and proof of ID and income are required. Curbside food distribution (non-perishable) takes place in front of West Hartford Town Hall 3x/week. Community block grant funds and donated money can be used to purchase perishable items. In addition, the mobile CT Foodshare truck does food distribution 2 to 4 x /month (including perishable items) at designated West Hartford locations and no ID is needed. Emergency food requests can be made

to the Food Pantry/Volunteers Coordinator. On another matter, Keren shared that the CT State Unit on Aging announced that they are writing the next State Plan on Aging for 2024-2027 and will be scheduling listening sessions throughout CT to get community participation on areas of interest or concern for the older adults and their caregivers in our state. There will also be draft goals for the State Plan presented and a Community Survey disseminated. Kevin Ryan asked if the SCAC could be involved in the questionnaire process. Co-Chair Bachteler suggested maybe the SCAC and/or WHSC could volunteer to be a space for a listening session. Keren will be in contact with these comments to Claire Cote of the CT State Unit of Agency and keep the SCAC posted.

Senior Centers

Becky Sears reported that she is working on the budgets for the Senior Centers and has submitted the purchase order for the new 18-passenger van (will be a gas-powered vehicle.) They received a donation of three new treadmills for the Bishops Corner Fitness Center. The Silver Sneakers Program application is being worked on by Town staff and will only be for the Senior Centers Fitness Centers when approved. The New Year's Eve Celebration is being held on Friday, December 29th from 2-3:30pm at the Bishops Corner Senior Center.

Transportation

Kevin Farmer reported that ITN Central CT's Annual Appeal has started and SCAC members may be seeing their email blast. Most of ITN's outreach for funding is by letter. They are doing advertising for more volunteer drivers. Kevin stated the non-profit membership organization operates with volunteer drivers 7 days a week, 24 hours a day, in 15 towns in Central CT for seniors 60 years & older and visually challenged adults. The pick-up charge is \$3 and mileage fee is \$1.50 per mile. There is a program for low-income riders. All rides for eye care appointments are free via funding from Regeneron Pharmaceuticals.

ECC Advisory Committee for New Elmwood Community Center

Rory Cleary (SCAC Alternate to the above committee) read the email received from Helen Rubino-Turco dated 11/21/2023 where she provided an update to the committee on the new ECC/Library project. Helen's email stated that the Town had posted an RFP for design of the new center in September and eleven architecture firms submitted proposals. Per the email, the Town's internal staff committee invited six of the firms to make formal presentations and interviews were to take place in early December. Co-Chair Bachteler gave a more recent update that per Helen Rubino-Turco's email to her on 12/12/2023, six firms were interviewed with three companies being asked to submit formal bids by a response deadline later that month.

Seniors Job Bank

Lisa Mahoney attended for Robin Clare and is working as a marketing and communications consultant for the Senior Jobs Bank. She reported that the SJB is growing and they currently have approx. 700 job seekers over 50 years old in their newly automated matching system. They serve 24 towns in the Greater Hartford area and have been partnering with many of the local Chambers of Commerce. They now have an additional part-time worker to help process applicants/ interviews and are doing a monthly newsletter.

Guest Presenter- Mark Garilli, Executive Director, West Hartford Fellowship Housing

Mark Garilli introduced himself and discussed his 25 plus years of combined experience in construction management and the senior living industries in CT including his work at Tower One/Tower East, a large independent and assisted living affordable urban housing community in New Haven and with Masonicare. Since 2019 with Construction Solutions Group, he has been providing executive level consulting and support for West Hartford Fellowship Housing and will be assuming their CEO position in January 2024. Mr. Garilli will be overseeing the \$100 million project planned for the redevelopment and expansion of WHFH which is designed to take place in four phases. As a non-profit organization, WHFC started with

100 affordable rental units in 1970 for seniors (62+) and disabled adults on the Starkel Road property owned by the Town of West Hartford and now has a total of 213 units over 24 buildings which are largely outdated. Overall, the four phases will result in the demolition of 23 buildings and the creation of six new buildings which will both modernize and increase the number of units as well as addressing non-ADA compliance and accessibility issues. After several years of planning by the WHFH Board, funding from State and Federal authorities and private investment monies were secured to begin the project and the WH Town Council approved a new ground lease with WHFH in early 2023 for a period not to exceed 99 years. WHFH will remain a Special Development District designated for low-income housing for seniors and young disabled adults. The WHFH has 20 project-based vouchers. Mr. Garilli shared statistics that currently 94% of the WHFH residents are over age 60; racial make-up is 50% White, 20% Black, 15% Hispanic and 5% Asian; 60% have monthly incomes of less than \$1350 and 20% with monthly incomes of less than \$800. Current rents start at \$700 for a 1 bedroom unit and \$650 for a studio. Phase 1 has begun and expected to be completed by May 2025. The goal of the WHFC project is to increase the number of affordable units from 213 to over 300 when the project is fully completed! Mr. Garilli answered questions from attendees on vouchers and how residents can access help from their on-site Resident Service Coordinators for home health care and other support referrals when needed. He stated that he would be interested in working with the SCAC on organizing and participating on a panel to look at the various senior housing trends and options for West Hartford older adults. Co-Chair Bachteler thanked Mr. Garilli for his presentation and that they would follow-up with him in the new year.

Public Comment

Kathleen Crawford thanked Mr. Garilli for his presentation and all the information provided.

New Business

Co-Chair Noreen Bachteler discussed that the 2024/25 calendar of SCAC meetings needs to be submitted to the Town Clerk's office no later than mid-January 2024. She will send out the list of the proposed meeting dates with the agenda for discussion and voting action at the January 16, 2024 meeting. At this point, Co-Chair Eileen Rau has arranged for Kathleen Titsworth, CT Dept. of Banking Outreach Coordinator to speak at the March 19, 2024 meeting. The SCAC Co-Chairs will provide those details to Becky Sears to be highlighted in the next Senior Bulletin.

The next meeting will be held on Tuesday, January 16, 2024.

The meeting was adjourned at 12:00PM.

Respectfully submitted,
Noreen Bachteler, Co-Chair