

WEST HARTFORD SENIOR CITIZENS' ADVISORY COMMISSION

Minutes from Meeting on May 16, 2023

Members Present: Rebecca Hajosy, Noreen Bachteler, Beth Rocco, Kevin Ryan, Rosemary Cleary, Eileen Rau, Anne Massucco
Staff Present: Rebecca Sears, Robin Clare, Kevin Farmer
Absent: Mary Reilly, Kaye Straw, Keren Paquette
Guests: From the Communities: Liz Kupper, Jodi Jackowitz, Jenefa Frederick

The meeting was called to order at 10:06AM by Rebecca Hajosy and around-the-room introductions were done for community members' benefit.

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

Chairs Report

Rebecca reported that there will be no guest speaker at today's meeting. Instead, the group will discuss the information to be included in the SCAC Annual Report to submit to the Town Council to let them know what this Commission accomplished in 2022. The group will also discuss the updates to the Code and Mission Statement for this Commission.

West Hartford Social Services

Keren Paquette not in attendance – no report from Social Services.

Senior Centers

Becky Sears reported that her requested budget to the Town, which included additional part-time staff, was approved and other requested budget items moving forward from the pandemic budget. There are some remaining State of CT's ARPA funds available so Becky is formally requesting the funding for a Senior Center van. The Senior Day Fair on May 10 was a huge success with over 50 reps and 350 attendees. The Summer Senior Bulletin has gone to print and should be available online on May 17. Becky is working with Social Services to try to get some regular hours when a Town Social Worker can be in the Senior Centers to meet with people. The issue is that there is no dedicated space to have these confidential meetings. Upcoming Senior Center events are: June 15 Volunteer Picnic; July 19 Senior Picnic at Town Hall sponsored by the Police Officer's Union; and August 10 Cheers to 90 Plus Years at the Bishops Corner Branch with a buffet lunch and entertainment. The WHSC is planning to start the transition to a no-pay membership model for Town residents later this year and they're working on how to phase that in. Becky is working on a contract with Optum for the Silver Sneakers benefit to be able to be used in the Senior Center gyms to cover the membership fees. There are currently 96 Senior Center fitness members.

Seniors Job Bank

Robin Clare, the new Executive Director of the Seniors Job Bank, reported that the Job Bank's biggest issue right now is the lack of part time business jobs. She feels they need to advertise themselves better and are planning to hire a marketing person to make the job bank more visible in the community. Robin stated that their 4 constituent groups are: Businesses, Homeowners, Workers, and Donors. Robin was excited to report that she and WHSC Director Becky Sears are collaborating on a free program offering called "Working into Retirement" for a Saturday this September.

Transportation

Kevin Farmer reported that ITN is currently running ads to increase their number of volunteer drivers (currently about 20). ITN is also in need of a billing person to assume modernizing their billing process however this will require more funding to add this position. ITN is currently providing about 200 rides per month (mostly medical) and not yet back up to pre-pandemic volume.

ECC Advisory Committee for New Community Center

Beth Rocco reported that the new Elmwood Community Center Feasibility Study still has not gone to the Town Council for their official action – it has been 6 months now since the Study was completed on the 100 Mayflower Street property. A question was asked about potential building cost increases based on the lag time, but Beth stated that the \$66 million building cost includes significant padding for inflation. There was some discussion about the present use of the purchased site and its usefulness in the meantime – new temporary dog park is open on the property and it has been a Town Emergency Management training and distribution site. Beth stated that the Town is looking to develop a disaster relief location in West Hartford to meet Red Cross guidelines and this site could possibly be considered in the future. Beth also reported on the SCAC Surveys conducted at the May 10 Senior Day with those stopping at the SCAC table. 60 Surveys completed (45 residents /15 non-residents) – 43 in favor of Town developing "Age in Place" housing options; 28 for Town-provided transportation between senior centers; and 36 for the building of the New ECC.

Commission Sub-Committee on Charter & Mission Statement

Noreen Bachteler reported that the Sub-Committee met in person on May 5 at the Bishops Corner Branch and Rosemary Cleary participated in the meeting. These proposed changes to the SCAC Town Code and Mission Statement include putting in language that the SCAC serves residents age 60 years or older (currently there is no age timeframe) and for the member's term to be modified from 5 years down to 3 years with a name change to the "Older Adults Advisory Commission". Noreen will email a copy of the proposed changes to the full Commission for their further review and comments so that it can be brought for a vote at the June 20th SCAC Meeting especially as we have had 3 new members since January. If a new name to the SCAC and these proposed changes are recommended and then approved by the Town Council, Noreen understands from her February 17 meeting with SCAC Liaison Helen Rubin-Turco and the Asst. Corporation Counsel that those new changes would require a process whereby the present SCAC would have to be de-commissioned and a re-appointment take place of all current members at staggered terms.

SCAC Annual Report for 2022

Rebecca stated that as Town Commissions are to provide an Annual Report to the Town Council, she is asking that each of our adjunct members (Seniors Job Bank, ITN, WHSC, WH Social Services) put together a brief insert of activities in 2022. Rebecca and Noreen are compiling a list of those speaker presentations and accomplishments for 2022 along with the SCAC's 2023 recommendations and priorities. The Commission overall is working with the following priorities: Age-Friendly Community Initiative adoption; Affordable Housing development for West Hartford seniors ; New ECC passage with an increased dedicated space for seniors; and procurement support for a senior van for WHSC members.

New Business/Public Comment

Discussion on the idea of having a Town Older Adults' Ombudsman position or a similar resource that can help seniors in West Hartford navigate Town services and be a representative/voice for the Town's older adults' population.

The next SCAC meeting on June 20: State Senator Derek Slap will be the Guest Speaker to present on 2023 CT Legislative Acts Affecting Seniors.

The meeting was adjourned at 12:03PM.

Respectfully submitted,
Ann T. Visgilio, Recording Secretary