

**WEST HARTFORD SENIOR CITIZENS ADVISORY COMMISSION
MEETING MINUTES – FEBRUARY 20, 2024
BISHOPS CORNER SENIOR CENTER**

Members Present: Noreen Bachteler, Rosemary Cleary, Eileen Rau, Beth Rocco, Mary Reilly,
Kevin Ryan, Mary Silverberg, Kaye Straw
Staff Present: Rebecca Sears, Kevin Farmer, Monique Dixon
Absent: Anne Massucco, Ann Visgilio (Recording Secretary), and Robin Clare (NM)

Elder Justice Forum Presentation by CT Attorney General William Tong

The meeting was called to order at 10:00AM by SCAC Co-Chair Noreen Bachteler following a welcome by WHSC Director Rebecca Sears. Chair Bachteler introduced CT Attorney General William Tong. Notably, AG Tong resided his early years with his family in West Hartford. AG Tong is the 25th Attorney General to serve CT since the office was established in 1897. He took office on 1/09/2019 as the first Asian American elected at the statewide level in CT and previously served for 12 years in the CT General Assembly. AG Tong introduced staff present from the AG's Office, Catherine Blinder from the Dept. of Consumer Protection, Kelli Lefler of AARP CT and Michelle Puzzo of UR Community Cares. WH Deputy Mayor Ben Wenograd was also in attendance. AG Tong cited the main reason that older adults are targeted by scammers is that they have money and other financial assets. He stated that everyone is vulnerable and needs to be aware of the various scams in order to protect themselves. He highlighted the various types of scams including the Grandparent scam, Romance scam, Tax Payer and Utilities scams, Tech Repair scam, and Rental Overpayment scam. No local, state or federal entity will ask you to send gift cards for payment of overdue bills. Social media usage on the internet has made one's personal information more public to scammers and one should not give out ss#, banking info and other personal info over the phone. He cautioned the audience not to "play with scammers" as you could be setting yourself up for a possible AI generated voice imprint. AG Tong discussed the topic of Elder Abuse, both physical abuse and financial fraud. Unfortunately, both are significantly under-reported by older adults to the authorities and it totals near 36 billion yearly loss to older adults. AG Tong took several questions from the audience of almost 70 attendees. AG Tong provided contact information and brochures on the Elder Justice Hotline staffed out of the AG's Office where a person can report abuse, financial fraud or being scammed and be connected with the appropriate agency to file a complaint and be linked with resources. The telephone # for the Elder Justice Hotline is (860) 808-5555 and one can make an online complaint at portal.ct.gov/ag/elderhotline (*this information is also listed in the WHSC Bulletin)

*A complete viewing of AG Tong's presentation can be found on the West Hartford Community Interactive website at <https://whci.online>.

Following the conclusion of AG Tong's presentation, the meeting was re-convened by Co-Chair Bachteler at 11:25AM. The minutes of the January 30, 2024 Special Meeting were reviewed by the Commission members and approved as written.

With consensus, the remainder of the meeting's agenda was also recorded on <https://whci.online>.

Chair's Report

Noreen reported that she had spoken with Helen Rubino-Turco, Director of WH Leisure & Social Services, on February 9th and that she will be coming to the March 19th SCAC meeting to update the Commission on the status of the SCAC's draft of proposed revisions to the SCAC Code and also on some senior-related budget issues coming before the Town Council. Noreen also reported that she recently attended the FOIA Training conducted virtually by the Office of Corporation Counsel and Town Clerk and will forward the powerpoint slides to all SCAC members.

WH Social Services Report

SW Monique Dixson gave the report for Keren Paquette, Program Manager, in her absence. Keren had attended the CT Unit on Aging “Community Conversation” held at the Rocky Hill Senior Center on February 7th and reported that the current housing crisis, mental health and long-term care needs of older adults were among the concerns heard from those attending. There are 3 more of these in-person sessions across the state and a virtual session on March 11th. Applications for tax relief programs or freezes for qualified older adults can be found on the WH Assessment Department website. CRT is taking applications for energy assistance in their Town Hall office or can be done by phone, mail or online. Per Beth Rocco’s inquiry, Monique stated that this CRT office can take applications for those not residing in West Hartford. Additional monies for energy assistance were recently approved by the State. The Town’s Food Pantry is down one part-time employee and curbside assistance continues. They will report on their strategic planning surveys to the SCAC when the process is completed.

Seniors Job Bank

Due to Robin Clare’s absence, there was no report.

Transportation

Kevin Farmer reported that ITN continues to be in need of volunteer drivers. He spoke at a West Hartford Knights of Columbus meeting on February 15th and is doing so at the Rotary Club on February 25th to promote interest particularly for drivers. They continue to be in this year’s annual appeal drive. Kevin does not have a date yet for his ITN departure and will continue to attend SCAC meetings.

Senior Centers

Becky Sears reported that the Spring Bulletin will be mailed and ready online for registration this Friday, February 23rd. A new part-time clerk has been hired and a retiree has been re-hired as a creative writing instructor. Becky is looking to have older adults share their life stories with the possibility of turning it into a future play. The theme for 2024 Older Americans Month in May is “Powered by Connections”. Pickleball registration starts tomorrow and there will be some overlap between indoor and outdoor sessions. Outdoor pickleball will begin May 1st. The elevator repair work at the Elmwood Senior Center was done and awaiting inspection by the State. The CRT Senior Community Café has continued Monday-Friday during the elevator shutdown. The new Senior Center bus delivery date is expected to be in late Fall 2024.

New ECC Advisory Committee Report

Rory Cleary reported that there has been no announcement yet of a signed contract for architectural services and that Helen Rubino -Turco has advised that she will notify all of the committee once a contract is signed. Beth Rocco commented that the SCAC may want to do some type of outreach with older adults once more updated information is obtained.

New Business

Noreen thanked Co-Chair Rau and members for their help in making today’s forum a success and in increasing awareness and visibility of the SCAC. She reviewed the flier outlining the upcoming 2024 SCAC Meetings and Programs that was made available to those at the Elder Justice Forum as follows:

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| March 19, 2024 | - SCAC Meeting with CT Banking Outreach Coordinator
Kathleen Titsworth - Financial Fraud & Scams |
| March 26, 2024 | -“Medication Safety in Older Adults” with Dr. Sean Jeffery,
Pharm.D., Professor of Pharmacy Practice at UConn School of
Pharmacy. *This event is being co-sponsored with the WH Senior Center. |

April 16, 2024	- SCAC Meeting with Senior Housing Forum
May 15, 2024	- SCAC Information Table at West Hartford Senior Day
May 21, 2024	- SCAC Meeting with Older Americans Month Celebration
June 18, 2024	- SCAC Meeting with 2024 CT Legislative Session Wrap-Up

Noreen noted that the March 26th and May 15th dates are not the scheduled SCAC monthly meetings but all Commission members are encouraged to participate in these programs. Noreen asked Kevin Ryan and Beth Rocco to speak on their ideas for the April 16th Senior Housing Forum targeting housing options and issues for West Hartford's 55+ older adults. Kevin and Beth reported that they had met on February 19th with Mark Garilli, CEO of West Hartford Fellowship Housing. Mr. Garilli has an extensive background in working in senior housing and has offered his assistance in serving on and moderating a panel. Kevin and Beth stated that they are looking to have three panelists present information on industry trends & changes in senior housing, demographics of West Hartford's 55+ residents, and special concerns of middle-income seniors. Beth noted that the SCAC had held previous presentations on low-income, affordable senior housing options. Any other SCAC member interested in helping with the housing forum can contact Beth and there will need to be publicity done. Kevin mentioned that he had spoken with the Windsor Senior Center Director when attending the CT Unit on Aging event there last month and their seniors may be interested in attending. Noreen stated that she will check with the Asst. Clerk on the issue of whether having a SCAC sub-committee is needed to carry out the April 16th Forum.

Public Comment - None for the regular meeting.

The next meeting will be held on Tuesday, March 19, 2024.

The meeting was adjourned at 12:08PM.

Respectfully submitted,
Noreen Bachteler, Co-Chair