

WEST HARTFORD SENIOR CITIZENS' ADVISORY COMMISSION

Minutes from Meeting on June 18, 2024

Members Present: Noreen Bachteler, Kevin Ryan, Mary Reilly, Eileen Rau, Kaye Straw, Beth Rocco, Mary Silverberg, Rosemary Cleary, Patricia Kiely
Staff Present: Kevin Farmer, Evelyn Mantilla, Robin Clare, Monique Dixon, Rebecca Sears
Absent: Keren Paquette
Guests: Matt Larkin, Jenefa Fredericks, Kay Nash, Joe Kolczynski
Sheryl Dougherty of North Central Area Agency on Aging

The meeting was called to order at 10:01AM by Co-Chair Noreen Bachteler. The meeting minutes from the May 21, 2024 meeting were approved as written.

Chairs Report

Noreen reported that this Commission will wait to have a legislative session update until this fall. The scheduled June 13 West Hartford Legislative Wrap-Up at Town Hall was postponed and a new date is TBD. Noreen passed out an updated roster received from the West Hartford Asst. Town Clerk with the names and term dates of the current nine Commission members. Noreen encouraged all Commission members to attend the June 25 SCAC-sponsored program on "Housing Issues As We Age" Round Table to be held from 1:00PM – 3:00PM at the Bishops Corner Senior Center. There is also the yearly Volunteer Appreciation Luncheon being put on by the West Hartford Senior Centers scheduled for June 27 with sponsorship from Brookdale-Chatfield and all Commission members are invited. Noreen introduced Trish Kiely, the Commission's newest member, to talk about her background in banking and for 20 years at the Jewish Family Services Home Care Program, and as an LGBTQ+ senior advocate.

West Hartford Social Services

Keren Paquette was absent and Monique Dixon reported for Social Services this month. Monique reported that until the end of the current fiscal year, 6/30/24, the Dial-a-Ride program is limiting rides to two per week for budgetary reasons. Applications are now being accepted for the program for the new fiscal year that begins on July 1. There will be a fee increase from \$50 to \$65 this year. The Renters Rebate program is still accepting applications through Sept 30, and no extensions will be given this year. The Seniors Farmers Market Nutrition Program will be starting up again and weekly locations will be at the Arapahoe/LaSalle Road corner site and Town Hall parking lot.

Seniors Job Bank

Robin Clare reported that the Job Bank has a full Board of Directors for the first time in years, and now has 860 job seekers registered, a large increase from when she started one year ago. The Job Bank will be expanding to include volunteer opportunities. They have recently received an ARPA grant from the Town of West Hartford for an online job training program with the Senior Centers for the fall. They are still participating in the Travelers Birdies for Charity fundraising taking place later this week.

Transportation

Kevin Farmer from ITN Central Connecticut reported that this is his last SCAC meeting and he presented Evelyn Mantilla as their new Executive Director. Evelyn introduced herself and said she was in the CT Legislature for 10 years representing Hartford and will focus on ITN's budget and growth in her new role. Kevin will be continuing as a volunteer driver for the organization.

Senior Centers

Becky Sears reported that the Volunteer Appreciation Luncheon celebration event on June 27 will be at Brookdale- Chatfield at 1 Chatfield Drive in West Hartford. June 25 will be the first of the Gazebo Concert Series for the summer, these are free concerts being held at the Elmwood Community Center site. The Annual Seniors Picnic is July 11 at Town Hall (inside) where West Hartford Police cook the food. The \$15 fee for Town residents to join the Senior Centers will be waived starting on July 1, 2024 and remain at \$40 for non-residents. Becky talked about a new focus on diversity when developing programming and recruiting teachers for their programs.

SCAC Senior Housing Forums

Kevin Ryan reported on statistics and survey results gained from the April 16 Senior Housing Panel that was given in the room that day: 92% of attendees responded; overwhelmingly the majority of attendees want to stay residing in West Hartford, but the #1 concern is financial and #2 want to be close to family and friends. Kevin expressed that this group of seniors, that is 27% of the population in West Hartford, is challenging to get in touch with consistently and there's not much data out there about this group even though they represent a large portion of the Town's population.

The June 25 Round Table event will have 3 topics/ tables that attendees will be rotated through and receive a presentation by an expert in the field: Eldercare Attorney for legal-related issues, Home Modification construction expert, and a Senior Social Connections expert. Mark Garilli, CEO, of West Hartford Fellowship Housing will be the moderator for the program. Kevin Ryan and Beth Rocco have put this event together and they were recently interviewed by the West Hartford News. Co-Chair Eileen Rau has been helping with getting the information out to the local media.

New Business/Public Comment

Members proposed ideas for future speakers/presentations including a representative from the Veterans Administration regarding veteran benefits and Deb Polun from the West Hartford Town Council who chairs the Human & Community Services Committee. Other ideas suggested were programs on the latest hearing aid technology and the functional medicine model.

Guest Presenter – Sheryl Dougherty from North Central Area Agency on Aging (NCAA ACT.org)

Sheryl talked about their new ASSIST program – Assisting Socially Isolated Seniors to Thrive. This is a program developed with American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funding and she stated it is a temporary program (only through 9/30/24). With a \$50K budget, they can provide additional services or devices to persons 60+ who have at least 2 ADL issues (Activities of Daily Living) and with no family support. ASSIST can grant items and services to use such as tablets, air conditioners, stair lifts, bus passes – with a limit of \$1500 per case. Sheryl passed out a handout on the ASSIST program and persons interested can contact her at SDougherty@ncaaact.org for more information and/ or to complete and application.

This Commission will not hold meetings in July and August. The next scheduled meeting will be Tuesday, September 17, 2024, at the Bishops Corner Senior Center.

The meeting was adjourned at 11:57AM.

Respectfully submitted,
Ann T. Visgilio, Recording Secretary