

WEST HARTFORD SENIOR CITIZENS' ADVISORY COMMISSION

Minutes from Meeting on February 18, 2025

Members Present: Noreen Bachteler, Rosemary Cleary, Patricia Kiely, Mary Reilly, Beth Rocco, Kevin Ryan, Mary Silverberg, Kaye Straw
Staff Present: Rebecca Sears, Keren Paquette, Monique Dixon, Robin Clare
Absent: Eileen Rau
Guests: Alexandra McFadden (USJ Intern), Joe Kolczynski, Jay Jaffe, William Nardi, Helga Nardi, Wendy Feer, Doug Feer, Robert Feer, Marva Jones

The meeting was called to order at 10:06AM by SCAC Co-Chair Noreen Bachteler.

The meeting minutes from the January 21, 2025 meeting were approved as written. This first meeting of the year was dedicated to planning for the 2025 monthly agenda program/speaker presentations.

Chairs Report

SCAC Co-Chair Noreen Bachteler reported that today's meeting will start with the monthly updates by the regular contributors and will be followed at 11:00AM with a presentation from Keren Paquette, LCSW, and Monique Dixon, LMSW, of the West Hartford Social Services Department. She stated that the March 18th meeting will include a presentation by Adrienne Billings-Smith, the Town's Equity Coordinator, and the April meeting is looking at a presentation on Pedestrian and Road Safety for Older Adults and she will be reaching out to involve the Town's Pedestrian & Bicycle Commission Chair . Noreen reported that there is no update on the recommended changes to the proposed SCAC Code and that matter remains pending with the Town's Corporation Counsel Office.

For 2025, Noreen reviewed the SCAC Sub-Committees that were discussed at the January 21st Meeting to support the SCAC's mission. Noreen and Rory Cleary will continue on the Revised SCAC Code; Mary Reilly and Rory Cleary will assist Noreen on Programs; Patricia Kiely will join Eileen Rau on the Communications; and Beth Rocco and Kevin Ryan will continue with the Older Adults Housing. Beth Rocco reported that as a private citizen she attended the February 11th public hearing on the former UConn property regarding the west side at 1800 Asylum Avenue and the proposed development(not yet Town Council approved) will include apartments, townhouses, assisted living, grocery store, spa and restaurant. Beth stated that she pressed about the need for senior apartments but the idea didn't seem to get much traction. Kevin Ryan stated that the proposed new development by Vessel Technologies on the closed Hughes Nursing Home property at 29 Highland Street will mostly have small 1 bedroom units with bathtubs and none with walk-in showers and not appearing as conducive to senior living.

Seniors Job Bank

Robin Clare reported that the Seniors Job Bank recently attained 1000 job seekers and currently has 500 jobs listed. The group is looking for new board members. Their website is seniorsjobbankct.org. Robin's collaboration with WHSC Director Rebecca Sears "Seniors Rule... Age Like a Warrior", a health and wellness podcast, is going well and is done live the 2nd Thursday of the month. The podcast is available on various podcast platforms (i.e. Spotify, Amazon) and the WHSC Facebook page will post a link.

Senior Centers

Becky Sears reported that the Senior Centers Spring Bulletin was posted online last week and the hard copies should be available at the end of this week or early next week. The Bulletin is also mailed to those members over 90 years old. Upcoming events include: St. Patrick's Day Luncheon (almost full); UConn Basketball Game (1 ticket remaining); Elizabeth Park; Foodie Friends; New Britain Museum of American Art; Tulips Flower Farm in Granby; Red Sox/Yankees Game at Fenway Park on September 14th.

Becky reported that the new Senior Center bus has stopped doing Center to Center transportation as it wasn't being well utilized. A question was asked about the bus having dedicated wheelchair spaces and Becky stated there are 2 spots. It was suggested that notation be made in the bulletin and she will do so. Becky reported that she has been meeting with Social Services on the steps for West Hartford to become designated as an AARP "Age-Friendly Community". Kevin Ryan was asked and accepted to be the SCAC's representative in this process as he has done a lot of research on this global and national initiative. The Office of the Town Manager will be directing the process since it crosses over into many departments of town government. Next month's SCAC speaker, Adrienne Billings-Smith, will be talking about this process and was recently appointed by the town to the CT Age Well Collaborative. Becky updated the group on the architect's floor plans for the new Elmwood Community/Senior Center/Library project and confirmed that the Senior Center will be on the first floor including a fitness center dedicated to seniors. There will also be 2 or 3 indoor pickleball courts, a large gym with a track above it, and an outdoor space for concerts/events. Becky showed the new SCAC suggestion box (1 of 2) and signage that she had made and it will be put out at both senior centers.

Transportation

Evelyn Mantilla reported that ITN Central Connecticut's top priority right now is to get more volunteer drivers. They had a successful year-end fundraising campaign and will be launching an 8 week social media/ digital advertising campaign to recruit new drivers with remaining ARPA funds. A question was asked if they have considered recruiting student drivers from University of Saint Joseph or the University of Hartford. Evelyn appreciated this idea and will look into it.

11:00AM - Town Social Services Presentation

Keren Paquette, LCSW, and Monique Dixon, LMSW, presented a detailed power point on the Town Social Services available to residents and how they work. They had various hand-outs available for attendees and copies of their Newsletter (also posted on their Facebook page). Their services and social work staff are assigned by 3 age groups: children under age 17; adults age 17-59; and seniors age 60 and older. They provide assessments, case management, referrals and advocacy on a variety of need/hardship situations (financial, physical, psychosocial) on an individual basis. Appointments are done in their office at 50 South Main Street, Rm, 306, West Hartford, Telephone# (860) 561-7560. Home visits can also be made. Keren is the appointed "Municipal Agent" with the CT Dept. of Aging and Disability Services. Keren stated 62 languages spoken in West Hartford. Services available are in the following categories:

1. Transportation Program. They manage the Dial-A-Ride/Medical Access programs
2. Renters Rebate Program
3. Energy Assistance: CEAT, Operation Fuel, LIWAP, Eversource, CNG, MDC
4. Housing Programs re: Evictions/Foreclosures support and Relocation assistance
5. Senior & Veterans Services
6. Social Worker Police Liaison
7. Hartford Community Court SW Liaison
8. Youth Services Bureau / Juvenile Review Board
9. West Hartford Prevention Partnership
10. Community Partnerships:
 - a. Food Resources: Town Food Pantry, Mobile FoodShare, St. James Episcopal Church Commodity Supplemental Food Program, Seniors Farmers Market
 - b. Hillcrest Area Neighborhood Outreach Center (HANOC)
 - c. Town Volunteer Services
 - d. Community Development Block Grant (CDBG)
 - e. Housing Rehabilitation Program
 - f. ADA Coordinator for town facilities
 - g. Town That Cares Fund

New Business/Public Comment

The next meeting will take place on March 18, 2025

The meeting was adjourned at 12:00PM

Respectfully submitted, Ann T. Visgilio, Recording Secretary