

WEST HARTFORD SENIOR CITIZENS' ADVISORY COMMISSION

Minutes from Meeting on April 15, 2025

Members Present: Noreen Bachteler, Rosemary Cleary, Trish Kiely, Eileen Rau, Mary Reilly, Beth Rocco, Kevin Ryan, Mary Silverberg, Kaye Straw

Staff Present: Rebecca Sears, Keren Paquette, Monique Dixon, Evelyn Mantilla, Alexandra McFadden (USJ Intern)

Absent: Robin Clare

Guests: Mayor Shari Cantor, Ed Pawlak, Parker Sorenson, WHPD Officer Stephanie Hannigan, WHPD Officer Jack Sanford

The meeting was called to order at 10:00AM by Co-Chair Noreen Bachteler.
The meeting minutes from the March 18, 2025 meeting were approved as written.

Chairs Report

Noreen explained that today's Commission meeting will have condensed reports due to the presentation on Pedestrian & Road Safety for Older Adults starting at 10:30AM. She reported that this Commission will have a table at the May 14th Senior Day at the Elmwood Senior Center and she will be emailing a sign-up schedule to Commission members for staffing the table from 9:00AM to 12:30PM. Per WHSC Director Becky Sears, extra parking will be available at the Dollar Tree back parking lot on South Quaker Lane and they will be using the WHSC van to shuttle vendors from the parking lot at Beachland Park. Senator Derek Slap is co-sponsoring and will be attending the Senior Day event.

The next Commission meeting on May 20 will have a presentation on Age-Friendly Communities including representatives from three towns in Connecticut who have undergone the process for this certification – Cheshire, Glastonbury and Groton. They will share their experiences as West Hartford embarks on this certification. WHSC Director Becky Sears has been coordinating this presentation with Social Services and Adrienne Billings-Smith along with SCAC Member Kevin Ryan.

Social Services

Keren Paquette reported that residents can still apply for energy assistance until the end of May. Applications for the Renters Rebate Program will start soon and applications will be automatically sent out to past participants. The consulting agency that has been hired to study West Hartford's ADA compliance is up and running and the first step is to roll out a survey which should come out within the next week. Saturday, April 26 is National Drug Takeback Day. It will run 10am-2pm at Town Hall.

Seniors Job Bank

No report from the Seniors Job Bank as Robin Clare was absent.

Transportation

Evelyn Mantilla reported that ITN Central Connecticut, found at www.itncentralct.org has launched its digital campaign to recruit much-needed new drivers for the organization. To be a rider, you pay a \$40 yearly membership fee, then \$5.00 per ride + \$1.50 per mile for door-to-door service.

Senior Centers

Becky Sears reported that the Town of West Hartford was recently recognized by the Connecticut Age Well Collaborative with a Wellspring Award. The Wellspring Awards celebrate municipalities that are proactively addressing the needs of their aging population.

Becky reported that there will be two in-person ADA Community Conversations open to the public on May 19 at Town Hall and May 20 at the Elmwood Community Center to discuss ADA accessibility experiences and issues at West Hartford's various town facilities.

The Senior Center events have been going well. There are some remaining tickets for sale for the Red Sox vs. Yankees baseball game on September 14 at Fenway Park.

Subcommittee Reports

No reports this month

New Business

The next meeting will take place on May 20, 2025.

Pedestrian and Road Safety for Older Adults Presentation – 10:30AM – 12:00PM

SCAC Co-Chair introduced the Presenters:

- Ed Pawlak, Chair of West Hartford Pedestrian and Bicycle Commission
- Parker Sorenson, Civil Engineer II, West Hartford Engineering Division
- Officer Stephanie Hannigan and Officer Jack Sanford – WHPD Traffic Division

Ed Pawlak opened the presentation and discussed the “road safety crisis” that is being addressed by the Vision Zero initiative in West Hartford for pedestrians, bicyclists and drivers. Ed served on the Vision Zero Task Force and has been the Chair of the Pedestrian & Bicycle Commission since 2022 which meets on the 2nd Monday of the month at 7:00PM at Town Hall. He stated that past road systems in this country were not designed with safety as the priority and that older adults using or near the roads are particularly vulnerable due to age-related declines in physical and cognitive abilities. Ed reviewed the “Vision Zero Safe Driver” Pledge and provided several safety tips to the audience of about 40 people when walking and using crosswalks including wearing reflective vests or armbands as well as using reflective leashes with dogs. Pre-dawn and post-dawn hours are the most dangerous times for pedestrians and West Hartford tragically recorded eight pedestrian fatalities between 2018 to 2024. The Town Engineering Division has been addressing the rise in road crashes and **Parker Sorenson** highlighted some of the Vision Zero projects they are working on with safer road designs using curb bumpouts, rectangular rapid flashing beacons (RRFB) and raised and signalized crosswalks. In February 2024, West Hartford became the first municipality in CT to adopt a Vision Zero Action Plan. **WHPD Officers Stephanie Hannigan and Jack Sanford** discussed their work in the Traffic Division and are responsible for the enforcement of motor vehicle laws and the timely response and investigation of traffic crashes in West Hartford. They are two of the six WHPD officers who have received advanced training as an ‘accident reconstructionist’ to investigate serious and fatal collisions and make use of various technologies (i.e drones) to assist in their work. They also are involved with outreach and education efforts in the community including a yearly program with Hall and Conard High School students. They stated there is a Town Ordinance that prohibits bicycles from using the sidewalks only in West Hartford Center however you can contact them if there are safety issues at other neighborhood locations. Their unit monitors high speed violation areas and the public can contact the Traffic Division directly with a concern over a particular traffic problem. The panelists took several questions from the audience and copies of the Vision Zero Pledge were made available for attendees to sign and receive a Vision Zero car magnet and reflective armband. **The full presentation can be found at <https://whci.online/tours/senior-citizens-advisory-commission/> WTNH** (Channel 8) was also present in the room recording the event for a story on their evening news.

Meeting adjourned at 12:00PM

Respectfully submitted,
Ann T. Visgilio, Recording Secretary