

WEST HARTFORD SENIOR CITIZENS' ADVISORY COMMISSION

Minutes from Meeting on October 21, 2025

Members Present: Noreen Bachteler, Patricia Kiely, Mary Reilly, Beth Rocco, Kevin Ryan, Kaye Straw
Staff Present: Robin Clare, Evelyn Mantilla, Keren Paquette, Rebecca Sears
Absent: Rosemary Cleary, Mary Silverberg

Guests: Guest Speaker – Sara Mitchell, Medicare Educator, Hartford HealthCare
Public Attendees: Rita Barnes, Helene Moran, Maria Rosa, Roseann Muro, Roberta Echelson, Wayne Leghorn and several other guests who came at 11:00AM for the Medicare presentation.

The meeting was called to order at 10:00AM by SCAC Chair Noreen Bachteler.

The meeting minutes from the September 16, 2025 meeting approved as written.

Chair's Report

Noreen Bachteler reported that today's presenter, Sara Mitchell, Hartford HealthCare's Medicare Educator will start her presentation at 11:00AM and welcomed all present to stay for the regular reports preceding the Medicare presentation. Noreen advised that she met on October 7 with the SCAC's Administrative Town Liaison, Helen Rubino-Turco, and the Town's Assistant Corporation Counsel, Cynthia Lauture, to discuss the status of the proposed changes to the SCAC Code as has been earlier recommended by the Commission. The recommended changes are to alter the Commission members' terms from 5 years to 3 years and to update some of the Code's language that refers to senior citizens. Noreen was pleased to announce that the changes were brought favorably before the Human and Community Services Subcommittee Meeting on October 20 by Helen Rubino-Turco and will now be placed on the calendar at a November Town Council Meeting. Once this action is taken, then the matter will be set for a Public Hearing no later than 30 days from the Town Council Meeting. Noreen also stated that she contacted the Town Planner Todd Dumais on October 20 for an update on the senior housing survey to be rolled out in consultation with Dr. Don Poland whose presentation to the SCAC on September 16 can be found on WHCI. Noreen will continue to follow-up with the Town Planner.

West Hartford Social Services

Keren reported that the quarterly Social Services newsletter is out and she had copies available in the room. Energy Assistance application process is in full swing for this winter. There are no in-person appointments available due to CRT budget cuts, but applications can be made online or via paper to scan and email, or to send regular mail. The Renters Rebate Program ended Sept. 30 for the year. The program will resume in April of 2026. Keren reported that the West Hartford Senior Centers have a Medicare Choices Counselor available for people during the open enrollment period which runs October 15 through December 7. A person can contact the WHSC to make a CHOICES virtual appointment. There will also be two Medicare enrollment events in Hartford – on October 29 and November 26 – run by North Central Area Agency on Aging. The Social Services with the Fire Department recently ran two well-attended Steps to Safety/ Fire and Falls Prevention Programs at the Senior Centers and is hoping to offer more next year including at the Town's senior housing sites.

Seniors Job Bank

Robin Clare reported having 1300 mature workers looking for work and the goal is to have 800 job listings. A current jobs focus is to “Get Your House Ready for Winter”. SJB staff are planning to go around to local businesses to list job postings for the holidays. They are excited to have 6 new members on the Seniors Job Bank Board and have recently started their Fall Fundraising campaign.

Transportation

Evelyn Mantilla from ITN Central Connecticut reported that they continue to recruit volunteer drivers for their program. The fees to join the program are \$40 for an individual and \$65 for a couple. Each one-way ride costs \$3.00 plus \$1.50 per mile. They give door-to-door service and assistance. ITN recently got an award from the Hartford Foundation for Public Giving. They also have funding from Regeneron that allows them to offer free rides for anyone going to a vision appointment. Their area covers north to Avon and south to Middletown. A difference between the ITN service and the Town’s Dial-a-Ride program is that the latter only provides rides during the weekdays and has a smaller geographic limit to its rides.

Senior Centers

Becky Sears reported that the October 7 Entertainment Showcase (25th Annual) was very successful with 33 entertainers performing. This is a major fundraiser for the WHSC. This Thursday, October 23, is the Italian Fest at the Elmwood Senior Center where the West Hartford firefighters do the cooking and the seniors judge the best sauce. The Senior Center’s lunch program has successfully launched with a 3-days-a-week schedule. Tuesdays and Thursday’s lunches are provided at the Elmwood Senior Center by Rising Star Café of A.I. Prince Technical HS and Wednesday lunch at the Bishops Corner Senior Center by Effie’s Place restaurant. There is a \$5.00 non-refundable fee for members and you need to make a reservation by the prior Friday. The maximum capacity is 30 lunches on those days.

Becky reported that they have 3 new part-time workers and are now fully staffed. The Senior Centers offer technology training in 30-minute sessions to help seniors with any computer/tablet/cell phone issues they might be having. Upcoming luncheons are planned for Thanksgiving, Hanukkah and Christmas.

Sub-Committees Updates

- Revised SCAC Code - See Chair’s Report-
- Communications - Trish Kiely has agreed to step in as chair.
- SCAC Programs – Noreen Bachteler reported Becky Sears will be doing a Presentation/ Update on the New ECC at the November 18th SCAC Meeting.
- Older Adults Housing - Kevin Ryan and Beth Rocco recently had a meeting with the developer of The Camelot located at 900 Farmington Ave, West Hartford to gather information on that housing project which is now fully occupied. Both attended a free public meeting hosted by CRCOG on October 16 which drew about 200 attendees about the future of homes, affordability and expanding choice in the Capitol Region. Kevin is also planning to attend the CT Affordable Housing Conference on October 23.

Presentation: Sara Mitchell , Medicare Educator, Hartford HealthCare Integrated Care Partners presented “Medicare’s Annual Enrollment Period: Why Shop?” Ms. Mitchell presented a powerpoint on the 2025 Annual Enrollment Period (AEP) 10/15/2025-12/7/2025 and had a handout for attendees. In September, all plans are required to notify their enrollees of the upcoming changes to their plans (including drug formularies) for the new year and she stressed the importance to compare the various plans. For 2026, the standard monthly Medicare Part B Premium will be \$202.90. She also discussed eligibility and benefits of the Medicare Savings Programs which can cover the Medicare Part B Premium. Ms. Mitchell’s presentation was informative and she took many questions from the group. For questions or individual consultation, contact her at ICPMedicareEducator@hhchealth.org. or (860)972-9030.

The next meeting will take place on November 18, 2025. The meeting was adjourned at 12:06PM. Respectfully submitted, Ann T. Visgilio, Recording Secretary