

TOWN of WEST HARTFORD
SENIOR CITIZENS ADVISORY COMMISSION
Regular Meeting
March 17, 2026

Bishops Corner Senior Center, 15 Starkel Road, West Hartford, CT 06117

Members Present: Rosemary Cleary, Patricia Kiely, Kevin Ryan, Mary Silverberg, Kaye Straw, Joe Viola
Staff Present: Rebecca Sears, Keren Paquette, Monique Dixon, Evelyn Mantilla, Robin Clare, Adrienne Billings-Smith
Absent: Noreen Bachteler, Mary Reilly, Beth Rocco
Guests: Joe Kolczynski, Gail Crockett

The meeting was called to order at 10:09AM by WHSC Director Rebecca Sears.
The meeting minutes from the January 20, 2026 meeting were approved as written.

Chair's Report

No Chair's report as Noreen Bachteler was absent from this meeting.

West Hartford Social Services

Keren Paquette reported that energy assistance applications continue to be taken by the Town through May 29. "Generation Power CT" (formerly called Operation Fuel) applications are done for the season. The Town's Renters Rebate program will relaunch on April 1, 2026 for applications and continue taking them until Sept. 30. There will be in-person appointments and everyone who applied last year will receive a 2026 application in the mail.

Social Services launched a new six-week session of "Circle of Friends" this week. This is a support and activities group for seniors meant to deal with isolation and build connections for seniors.

"Steps to Safety", a new fire safety and fall prevention program has launched (brochure passed around room). This program is run jointly by West Hartford Social Services, the Fire Department, and the West Hartford-Bloomfield Health District. Home Assessments are free and there are no income guidelines to participate. There is also grant money to purchase things to make people's homes safer.

West Hartford Property Tax Relief programs started on February 1 and will end on May 15. There are several programs available to help reduce property tax amounts and some residents could qualify for more than one program at a time.

April 25 is the next National Drug Take Back Day. This one is a drive-through at the West Hartford Town Hall Parking Lot from 10:00AM to 2:00PM.

Seniors Job Bank

Robin Clare reported that the Seniors Job Bank is now at 900 jobs and 1500 job seekers.

They will be hosting "Next Chapter Success", three days of networking and best practices sessions focusing on getting a job in today's job market. There will be nine separate workshops that focus on resume writing, digital skills and workplace readiness. They will be held at the Avon, Bloomfield and West Hartford libraries.

Transportation

Evelyn Mantilla from ITN Central Connecticut reported that they exceeded their 2025 goals for year-end fund raising. This Spring, they have a donor that will match fundraising dollar for dollar up to \$10,000.

Senior Centers

Rebecca Sears reported to the group that the Senior Centers Bulletin will now be published three times a year rather than quarterly. The January through April bulletin is published.

A reminder that Senior Day is May 13, 2026 at the Elmwood Senior Center. This Commission will have a table at Senior Day, in a smaller space than last year so ideally needing one volunteer at the table at a time. Rebecca would however like members to help handing out the surveys to attendees at the fair.

There is a new Spring Banner Campaign in town and all residents are invited to submit photos showing examples of "Aging and Growing Well in West Hartford". The AARP Age-Friendly Community process is underway and is updated in a separate section of these minutes.

Sub-Committees' Updates

Programs Subcommittee: The subcommittee met on March 6 at 11:00AM at the Bishops Corner Library small conference room with Noreen Bachteler, Rory Cleary, Joe Viola and Becky Sears in attendance. It was decided that the March 17th SCAC meeting will have an Age-Friendly Community update from Becky Sears. For the April 21st SCAC Meeting, Becky will reach out to Leah Farrell, WH Library Programs, Publicity and Outreach Librarian for a presentation on library programs and services for seniors. There is no SCAC meeting in May as SCAC members will be volunteering at the SCAC table at the May 13 Senior Day at the Elmwood Senior Center. For the June 16th SCAC meeting, Rory Cleary has been in contact with Senator Slap's office and he will be presenting a 2026 Legislative Wrap-Up. Other ideas for the rest of the year included possible presentations on the issues involving electronic health records; eye health; and the benefits & risks of AI for seniors.

Older Adults Housing: Kevin Ryan has been trying to visit "The Elle at North Main", the new apartments under construction at the former synagogue, but hasn't been able to schedule a visit. Kevin has recently been given housing data from the Coalition of Community Associations and he will study to report on the findings at a future SCAC meeting. The new Brook Street (off Newington Road) 56-unit condominium complex has been approved by the Town Council to move forward. The developer has agreed to design some ground floor units with sensitivity to older adults' needs. Kevin reported that there is some activity underway at the state level for studying the needs of older adults housing.

AARP Age-Friendly Community Update

Rebecca Sears reported that the Town of West Hartford will be receiving the AARP Certificate showing that the town has been approved to be in-process to become an Age-Friendly Community. A presentation ceremony with AARP representative, Town officials, AFC committee members, and seniors will be held in May (date and location TBD). As part of the AFC process, the committee is meeting with different groups in town. The first meeting was at The McAuley to meet with adults living independently there. The overall feeling was that the residents feel isolated from what's going on in the town - the Senior Centers, Libraries, and Social Services programs, etc. After this meeting, some adjustments were made to the survey questions. There will be more of these types of meetings with other community groups over the year. The survey opens on May 1. There will be a banner put up in May announcing the survey and there will be a survey table at Celebrate West Hartford (June 6-7) - volunteers are needed to man the table. The plan for the survey rollout is to focus on the population ages 50 to 74.

The next Commission meeting will take place on April 21, 2026.
The meeting was adjourned at 11:14AM.

Respectfully submitted,
Ann T. Visgilio, Recording Secretary