

COMMISSION ON AGING

Minutes

June 4, 2012

Present: Commission members Helen de Keijzer, Nancy Hammerslough, Terry Hulley, Nina Daniel, Peggy Anderson, Bruce Lorentzen, and Laura Smits. Senior Center Director Wendy Petty, Program Coordinator Pam Wilson, Social Services Director Charlene Chiang-Hillman, Dial-A-Ride driver Gordon Green, and SWCAA liaison Meta Schroeter; Guest: Carl Bernstein, Parks and Recreation.
Helen convened the meeting at 9:20.

May Minutes: approved by consensus as written.

SWCAA Report: Meta gave a report for both the April and May meetings. On April 11th, the advisory council met at Edgehill in Stamford; 21 were in attendance. Pat Knebel reported on grants, and awards were distributed to qualifying towns. John Moses, Chairperson of the advisory council gave a summary of towns' emergency plans for at-risk seniors. Selectman Weinstein has been given the information for Weston if action is warranted. Meta reported that money for expanded senior activities throughout the area towns is in short supply. RSVP will not hold their brunch this year, instead a few groups with the heaviest participation will receive a visit from Terri and all volunteers will receive a gift card to Whole Foods. Norwalk Senior Center will reduce the staff's furlough days from 2 days to 1, pending latest financial reports. On May 5th, Americares provided help to maintain and renovate the facility. In lieu of their request for a full-time custodian, Westport's Senior Center received 2 part-time custodians, to save costs on benefits. Fairfield is continuing its popular "lifelong learners" program, with support from Sacred Heart University. The state is pushing towns to adopt more "aging in place" programs. Darien and Bridgeport offer a lunch and dinner program for seniors. In May, Gretchen James announced the winner of the essay contest "Never Too Old to Play." The winner was Leslie Meyers from Stamford who will read his winning essay at a special lunch on June 7. On June 27th, there will be a Medicare Fraud Training program, Meta will attend. The bill to legalize medical marijuana will be signed into law in early June, and marijuana will be available in selected pharmacies shortly thereafter. Bridgeport continues to expand their community

supper program at St. John's Church, 7 days a week and also provides a free two-day a week literacy class for those seeking citizenship. Easton held a program about wills and estates. Westport has received 3 RFPs for their senior housing project. The First Selectman will make a decision within the month to move the project forward. Norwalk's annual fundraiser held on 5/17 was successful, and included a silent auction. ITN is up to 30 rides a day and continues to grow and is looking for more drivers.

Social Services Report: Charlene reported that for Norfield Church's Giving Fair on June 16, participants will be making meals, doing yard clean-ups and home repairs for seniors. A continuing concern is the growing number of at-risk seniors still living in their homes and not accepting help—Charlene and Weston's EMTs are aware of this difficult situation and are working together when necessary. Charlene was able to work with a few different groups to help seniors with energy assistance for the fall. Helen asked if there was any ongoing financial help from the state on respite care and Charlene responded that money for programs is drying up throughout the state. She also said that, frankly, Weston is not considered a priority town for SWCAA, due to its affluence. Charlene stated that many of the programs are targeted to help lower income areas and areas with more ethnic diversity.

Dial-A-Ride: Gordon reported that trips fluctuate each month, most for medical trips. Charlene asked why trips and mileage are both down, and there was some discussion. It was agreed to postpone the discussion until after Friday's long-range planning meeting.

Senior Center Report: Wendy reported that they are winding down and getting ready for June 30th, Pam's last day before her summer break. There are 60 RSVPs for the volunteer appreciation lunch this Wednesday at Norfield's parish hall, which will include awards and door prizes. Wendy will send an email blast to the attendees; Nina suggested a light-colored background to call attention to the email. The center will be getting additional spaces this summer. Helen suggested we re-think all of our available spaces and how they are utilized. Parking remains a key challenge on the campus. Discussion ensued. Wendy mentioned the idea of a classic car show to raise money for the Center, there may be a conflict with the Historical Society, who also is planning one. A date of 9/23 was chosen for the Center to have its own car show, once details are finalized, publicity will be developed. Wendy already has 3 interested vendors for the event. Helen asked to be sure approvals, insurance issues, and tax deductibility with regard to transactions are finalized before proceeding.

Friends of the Senior Center: Nina invited the commissioners to attend this Thursday's Strawberry Festival, at the center. David Connell from Norfield Church will provide music. Discussion ensued regarding logistics. Nina asked Wendy to draw up a "wish list," Wendy would like the friends to help with costs related to the fall car show, meaning up-front costs such as facility rental, etc. Wish list may be more appropriate for items such as programs. Nina reiterated the need for the Friends to fund-raise, with a possible kick-off in September. It was suggested that the center hold a series of panels, etc. to educate seniors about where they can go for help with living arrangements/housing options.

Long-Range Planning: There will be a long-range planning meeting this Friday (June 8) at 9:00. Helen distributed a proposed agenda. The group asked about the center's goals and outcomes. There was a discussion about the role of the commission in the administration of the center itself. The conversation will continue at the meeting.

Carl Bernstein for Parks and Recreation: Carl stated that Parks and Recreation would like to partner with the Commission and the town to help find more ways for Weston's adult/senior citizens to use the school grounds and facilities for exercise and recreation. This would be supervised with certain times available. Carl also provided the group with information for seniors to receive a discount at a local gym between the hours of 7am-2pm, when it is least busy. Carl also stated that the fitness trail at Bisceglie-Scribner has been restored and is ready to use. Carl asked that a member of the Commission attend Parks and Recreation next meeting on June 11th at 7:45 in the Commission Room.

Terry Hulley announced that she is resigning from the Commission since she has just moved to Redding. Helen acknowledged and thanked Terry for her years of service on the Commission, as well as her many other activities in the town including the League of Women Voters, as well as her leadership of the Weston Senior Activities Center book group and the Newcomers and Weston Women's Club book groups. All agreed and wished Terry the best.

The meeting was adjourned at 11:05.

Respectfully submitted,

Laura Smits