

## COMMISSION ON AGING MINUTES

### Annual Senior Services and Resources Review and Long-range Planning Meeting

June 1, 2015

**Present:** Commission members Helen de Keijzer, Don Gumaer, Nina Daniel, Laura Smits, Margarita Shapiro and Bruce Lorentzen. Senior Center Director Wendy Petty; Program Coordinator Pam Wilson; Assistant Program Coordinator Carla Jegen; Weston Social Services Director Charlene Chiang Hillman; Weston/Westport Health District Representative Monica Wheeler; SWCAA liaison Meta Schroeter, Dial-A-Ride driver Gordon Green and Weston residents Dale Robinson, Woody Bliss and Lois Miller.

Meeting convened at 9:25.

Helen congratulated Wendy and her husband Jim Petty and reminded everyone that they will be honored as Citizens of the Year along with Nisan Eventoff on Friday, June 5<sup>th</sup> 5:30-7:00 pm in the Town Hall meeting room for all those who would like to attend the ceremony.

**Minutes:** May minutes were approved by consensus with minor changes.

**SWCAA:** Meta did not have a report, but Helen thanked her for her work as our liaison to this important agency, the CHOICES/Medicare counseling she provides, her column in the Center's newsletter, and for everything else that she does to support the Center.

**Dial-A-Ride:** Gordon reported that he has been busy with trips as well as researching new vehicles. The idea of possibly establishing a designated day in the week to take residents to medical appointments in Fairfield was raised since Charlene knows of seniors who use providers there. Gordon said that the problem is the length of time it takes to get to and from Fairfield. Several ideas were suggested. Charlene mentioned that Westport is trying to work with ITN to contract certain trips. Woody and Bruce offered to explore alternatives. Helen read a memo she has drafted to alert Gayle and Tom Landry ahead of time about the expected need for funding of a new Dial-a-Ride van in the 2016-2017 budget cycle; it turned out that monies designated for this purpose had not been put into the town's sinking fund as the Commission had previously thought. Discussion ensued and Commission members supported the idea. Helen asked Gordon to take a look at the Dial-A-Ride brochure that is distributed around town as well as the town website's Dial-a-Ride page and bring them up to date. (She suggested Charlene do the same for the Department of Social Services information and Charlene said that her assistant Suzanne Friedman is working on it.) Bruce described some of the features that they would like for the new van such as greater passenger comfort, usability, etc.

**Social Services:** Charlene reported that things are quiet and that she is finishing up the heating season with the Warm-Up Fund. She is also working with a few residents who neglected to stay on top of their tax relief status. Unfortunately once the deadline is missed, the taxes must be paid in full and they have to re-apply again next year. Helen asked if there was a way to remind people about the deadlines so they do not miss them. Woody mentioned that it may require

enlisting adult children to intervene and Monica suggested that perhaps the tax collector could be given contact info for the family members. Discussion ensued.

**Meals on Wheels:** Charlene said that there is a new surcharge of \$50 per week for delivery of the meals from the provider in Norwalk due to the small number of current participants. If the number goes back to 10 meals a day, which has historically been more typical (we are currently at 4 meals for 3 people) then the surcharge would be removed. Helen has received a request for funding from Johanna Pfund, volunteer coordinator of Meals on Wheels asking that the Commission recommend up to \$1200 from the Morehouse Elderly Assistance Fund (EAF) be authorized by the Board of Selectmen to cover the unfunded cost. Bruce asked if this would be an on-going expense or a one-time charge, and stated that it should be the town's responsibility. The town has agreed to pay half the cost. (Johanna is soliciting donations that may in the end cover the costs so the EAF is a back up in case needed.) It was suggested that we put a box in the newsletter about the program to see if more people who would benefit from the meal service would apply, which Wendy and Pam thought was a possibility. (Recipients must meet financial requirements to receive town subsidy.) Charlene is concerned that because there are so few participants, the town may cancel the program entirely. Helen asked for volunteers to investigate other possible solutions. Nina made a motion that the Commission recommend only \$600 to support the program up until January 2016 with the possibility of renewal through the fiscal year. Bruce seconded. Motion carried.

**Food Pantry:** Charlene stated that no one has been able to contact the person in charge of the Food Pantry and that the pantry itself is practically empty. Last fall, the Police Chief, the First Selectman and the Pantry Director discussed putting in cameras, a grant was applied for and not received, so not much has been done to monitor the situation. This is not specifically a Commission concern but Helen will discuss the issue with the First Selectmen. Currently if people need food, they can come to Charlene and she will give them a Stop and Shop gift card if they meet the financial requirements.

**Tax Relief:** Woody stated that the Weston tax relief programs need to be reviewed, which hasn't happened in several years; a committee should be formed. Nina made a motion that the Commission form a committee to review Weston's Senior Tax Relief programs; the Motion carried. Nina, Margarita and Woody volunteered to serve on the committee.

**Weston Senior Activities Center:** Wendy stated that she would like to have a tangible item as a fund-raising goal for the Classic Car Show in the fall and has selected the cost of a new mid-sized Center activities bus which would run about \$82,000—the plan is to have an actual bus at the show so people can see what it would look like. Pam and Wendy will also have a list of the type of trips the Center has taken and could take, demonstrating the potential of the new bus. Commenting that since the Senior Center will remain at Hurlbutt for at least the next four years and possibly for an additional four, Helen made a motion to ask the town to provide air conditioning to the south facing classrooms as soon as possible. Motion carried. Helen will send a request to the First Selectman, Town Administrator, and others as appropriate.

Communications: There is some concern that the Center does not have a website and that many centers have their newsletters online and do not mail them. Wendy and Pam said they think that

the Center is ready for development of its own website now and that they would maintain it. Nina mentioned that the Friends would be interested in helping to fund the cost of developing one and asked people to forward to her estimates as well as people who could help with this.

**Activities/Programs Update:** Pam would like to include four Elder Care Law programs in the fall. Helen and Pam have been talking about several possible speakers on varied topics such as artificial intelligence, the evolution of technology, the history and performance of opera, etc. and want to experiment with more of this kind of programming beginning in the fall. Wendy mentioned that they have had to cancel some of the educational/wellness programs due to a lack of interest. Pam suggested that having a column in the paper on senior news and information, maybe mixed with humor, could be helpful; everyone endorsed this idea and Laura offered to help. Nina also reminded the group of the low cost of including an insert in the Weston Forum.

**Budget Issues:** Helen noted the resources already discussed for meeting particular needs and asked the Commission to be aware of other funding sources such as grants and donations. Wendy mentioned that it's getting more difficult to get volunteers to donate food and host the senior lunch at Norfield and they have adjusted the schedule to include fewer lunches to accommodate this new reality.

Helen invited anyone who was interested in learning more about the 'Village' approach to aging in place to attend a discussion set for June 4<sup>th</sup> at 2:00 at the Center with Phil Richards of "Stay At Home Wilton". She also mentioned that if anyone was interested in being part of the Selectmen's Strategic Planning Committee they should contact Randi Derene in town hall.

Meeting adjourned at 11:25 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Laura Smits