

DRAFT

COMMISSION ON AGING MINUTES

December 7, 2015

Present: Commission members Helen de Keijzer, Don Gumaer, Laura Smits, Peg Anderson, and Bruce Lorentzen. Margarita Shapiro joined via conference call. Senior Center Director Wendy Petty; Program Coordinator Pam Wilson; Weston Social Services Director Charlene Chiang Hillman; SWCAA liaison Meta Schroeter; Gordon Greene, Dial-A-Ride, Monica Wheeler, Westport/Weston Health District. Guests: Dale Robinson, Joy Peshkin, Harvey Bellin.

Meeting convened at 9:40.

Minutes: November minutes approved by consensus.

SWCAA: Meta reported that November's meeting was held in the Bridgeport headquarters. Officers were elected for the upcoming year. There will be a legislative meeting at the Norwalk Senior Center tomorrow, December 8th. Centers are reporting that scamming the senior population is rampant via telephone and mail. The head of the CHOICES program reported that the basic cost of Medicare Part B will be increasing for new Medicare enrollees. Medicare Part D will not have an increase due to the fact that there isn't a COLA this year. The enrollment deadline for Medicare is today. Meta stated that the government's website for Medicare is very helpful and most issues can be resolved there. The group is trying to gather tax relief information from all towns to compare programs. Community Reports: During November, there were many veteran and Thanksgiving celebrations/dinners. New Canaan has suggested using "yellow dots" on senior vehicles, indicating that there is medical information about the driver in the glove compartment. Monica also suggested that people carry their medical information on their person. Meta stated that the government's plan to enforce overtime for health care workers severely impacts the 24-hour care economy. For example, to accommodate this law, seniors may be required to hire multiple people for a 24-hour shift, increasing costs to agencies and patients. The Greenwich center is running a brain health program that is excellent, but for Greenwich residents only. Helen suggested we try to find out the source and see if it is available for use by other towns.

Dial-A-Ride: Gordon distributed his report for the past month and stated that he continues to be busy. Van replacement monies will be sought in the upcoming town budget request.

Social Services: Charlene reported that 110 people were supported on Thanksgiving and that her department is entering the busy holiday season. Charlene has suggested to those who inquire about adopting a family that they instead donate to the Social Services fund due to confidentiality and the town's size. There are now 5 people using the Meals on Wheels program. Betsy Pereigny has turned over the Food Pantry to two new volunteers, who are starting to work out protocol, staffing hours etc. Charlene is beginning to assist qualifying clients with fuel assistance for the upcoming winter season. Helen also mentioned that the Warm-Up fund letter

has been sent out to town residents. Charlene tries to help clients who need assistance but do not qualify for other state programs but need help to stay in Weston. Discussion ensued. She recalled that in 2010 there were 135-140 families in need, and that number is now down to 75. Much of her time is spent with seniors who want to maintain their independence in Weston, but are unable to accept that they require help, very frustrating. Harvey asked if there was any coordination between Social Services and the Neighborhood Captains program. Charlene responded that the Neighborhood Captains program is for town-wide emergencies only and not for day-to-day crises.

Excursion Bus: Wendy, Bruce, Helen and Woody attended the Board of Selectmen meeting on Monday to discuss the excursion bus and funding. The Selectmen have accepted a \$40,000 gift from the Friends, voted to use \$20,000 from the town's vehicle sinking fund, and are awaiting a recommendation by the Commission to appropriate an additional \$20,000. Bruce made a motion that the Commission: "Recommend that the Board of Selectmen allocate \$20,000 from the Morehouse Elderly Assistance Fund for the purchase of an excursion bus for the Weston Senior Center." Motion was seconded by Peg. There was discussion before the vote and Helen stated that the bus was a good and appropriate use of the Fund's money but suggested that we be especially careful with Fund expenditures going forward since it was intended to help meet a wide range of seniors' needs and is the only resource over which the Commission has some direct control. Motion carried unanimously. There is a Board of Finance meeting on Thursday night and Bruce will attend on the Commission's behalf in case there are questions.

Website development and other projects: Wendy stated that they are working on the website and hope to make it a reality soon. Signage: Helen is working on this and hopes to have it approved and ready by the spring. Helen has also been in touch with the Beautification Committee, which will address landscaping the Senior Center entrance in the spring as well. Monica will check with the Sanitarian and get back to Wendy about planned events and details of keeping food safe at the Center.

Activities: Pam reported that the Center will be visiting the Wadsworth Athenaeum in Hartford to view the Festival of Trees. In April, the Center will focus on all things French with movies, food and language classes. Italy and other countries to follow based on its success. Pam also plans more intellectual programs such as lectures and classes. Coastal Orthopedics will come to talk about the ins and out of hip and knee replacements. Wendy, Helen, and Bruce are meeting Wednesday to put the budget together.

Friends: Bruce reported that they are working on funding the bus right now.

Commission Business: Peggy and Don have been re-appointed for another term. Harvey Bellin will start in January to replace Laura who is stepping down at the end of the month. Helen thanked Laura for her service.

Tax Abatement: Helen has communicated with Woody, Nina, and Margarita about the tax relief programs review, which will be put back on the agenda whenever they are ready. Margarita offered to work on a summary of material once it becomes available.

The Commission meeting schedule for 2016 is as follows:

January 4th

February 1st

March 7th

April 4th

May 2nd

June 6th

No meeting in July or August

September 6th (Tuesday)

October 4th (Tuesday)

November 7th

December 5th

The group decided to start at 9:30 a.m. beginning in January, rather than 9:15.

Meeting adjourned at 10:35.

Respectfully submitted,

Laura Smits