

COMMISSION ON AGING  
October Meeting  
10/1/08

MINUTES

Commission members present included Ernie Albin, Peggy Anderson, Helen de Keijzer, Terry Hulley, and Lois Miller. Also present were Weston Social Services Director Charlene Chaing-Hillman and Senior Center Director Jennifer Ruddy.

Chairman Lois Miller requested someone to take minutes for the meeting since Commission secretary Helene Weatherill has moved. Helen de Keijzer volunteered and Lois called the meeting to order at 9:25 a.m. Minutes of the previous meeting were approved unanimously without change.

Sharon Shattuck at Town Hall has sent board and commission chairs information about new State legislation requiring timely posting of any votes taken at meetings (within 48 hours) as well as draft meeting minutes (within seven days), etc.. Commission members had several questions about the new law which takes effect on October 1<sup>st</sup> and Lois will get clarification about the new requirements.

Charlene Chaing-Hillman began her report with news of the 'Aging with Grace' program which took place on September 27 between 9:30 a.m. – 3:00 p.m. at the Christ & Holy Trinity Church in Westport. The event was organized by the Westport/Weston Health District (WWHD) and the parish nurse. Charlene showed Commissioners a sample folder of materials she distributed at the event.

The Domestic Violence Task Force which meets on the first Friday of each month at 9:00 a.m. in the Weston Town Hall Meeting Room is placing new emphasis on non-physical forms of abuse (i.e., psychological and financial).

Charlene also reported on an Independent Transportation Network (ITN) program which was founded in Maine by Kathy Freund and is being considered in communities across the country. The program is designed as a 24 hour/day, 7 days/week service staffed by both volunteers and paid personnel. It offers a flexible approach to meeting transportation needs with both fees and a system of donations - of volunteer time and/or a vehicle - in exchange for credits toward service.

The newly formed Coastal United Way is interested in creating an ITN in our area and the idea is being actively explored by representatives of Westport, Wilton, Norwalk, Fairfield, and Weston.

Charlene encouraged Commissioners to attend various upcoming meetings. On October 9 at 3:30 p.m. at the Westport Senior Center there will be a meeting of the new LINKS program (previously called 'Home Westport/Weston' by volunteer coordinator Bunny

Thompson). On October 17 the DVCC is holding a forum on domestic violence from 7:00 – 9:00 p.m. at the Lyon Plain firehouse. Then, on October 20 from 5:00 – 7:00 p.m. an Aging Successfully program will be held at the Westport Senior Center at which ITN will be discussed, and on October 21 also at the Center there will be a working meeting on ITN from 9:30 -11:00 a.m.

Charlene next announced that the Kiwanis philanthropy committee has donated \$750 to the Weston Senior Center and \$5,000 to the Social Services Fund for families in need.

She also announced that selectmen have given permission to use Town property located at the Norfield firehouse/Town Hall complex for a new building for the Food Pantry. The Pantry has been told that as of October 31 it will no longer be able to use space at the Norfield Church grounds.

The new building will cost about \$12,000 and - with ongoing volunteer fundraising and labor - there is hope that it can be ready by early November. The Town will pay for building maintenance and utility costs. The Pantry will continue to be stocked and food freshness overseen by volunteer coordinators Betsy Peyreigne and Teri Gaberman.

Since renovation of the Norfield Church parish hall kitchen began, the senior lunches have been held at the Lyons Plain firehouse. Numbers of seniors attending is somewhat lower than typical at the Norfield lunches, but the space has been working satisfactorily.

The economic downturn is having significant impact on the community and Charlene reported that her case load, especially involving families, has increased. She is doing more community outreach and fundraising, and Suzanne Friedman is stepping up to do more case in-take interviews.

Charlene also announced that on November 18<sup>th</sup> from 6:00 – 8:00 p.m., Weston Social Services will be co-sponsoring a suicide awareness program at Hall Brook with Westport Human Services, Hall Brook and the WWHD.

Next, Senior Center Director Jenn Ruddy began her report.

The wii tournament at Monroe's Senior Center was a big success and was fun for all. Seniors from Weston, Bethel, Newtown, and Monroe participated.

The watercolor painting class and Terry Hulley's book group are both ongoing and participants are enthusiastic. And, the Eagle Scout who volunteered to help seniors develop their computer skills worked well with everyone and the program was a success.

Other announcements included that annual trip planning is on track. The WWHD is again offering flu shots. And Jenn said she has not yet spoken to the DVCC task force but will try to soon. She also noted with appreciation that the Center has received a \$750 donation from Newcomers and Neighbors in addition to the contribution made by Kiwanis mentioned earlier by Charlene.

Jenn also reported on Weston's senior lunches. While the temporary location at the firehouse was OK, she commented that the fire department wants tables and chairs cleared each week and that it's difficult for Krista and her to take care of this alone. Efforts to get help are ongoing.

Since the Norfield parish hall space is so well suited to the lunches, everyone hopes that renovations will be completed sometime in November which, unfortunately, may be impossible. (Note that the Commission briefly discussed the desirability of having a Weston community center in the future). Jenn also expressed concern that it is becoming more difficult to find volunteers to provide the lunches and that we all need to be thinking about this issue going forward.

Jenn will speak with Nancy McCormick about the status of plans for a Friends of the Weston Senior Center. Everyone is hoping that such a group can become a vital Center partner and provide much needed consistent support.

Jenn was unable to go to the SWCAA meeting this month. It's very difficult for her to attend because the meetings are held regularly on Wednesdays which is the day of Weston's senior lunches. The Commission noted that SWCAA meetings are important and commented that it would be very helpful if we can find someone else to attend.

Jenn will speak with some of the newly retired seniors who have begun to visit the Center and who've expressed interest in becoming more involved.

It was noted that our Dial-a-Ride driver Gordon is going to be away briefly and that we still have no regular back-up driver. A solution to this problem is being actively worked on. It was noted that Gordon's reports on ridership, in 2007 and through the summer of '08, reflect impressive gains.

Helen de Keijzer reported on progress in creating a Weston Directory of Senior Activities and Services. She requested a brainstorming session with Charlene and Commission volunteers to make some decisions about what to include, how large to make the Directory, etc. A meeting was set for Tuesday October 28 at 9:30 a.m. at the Center.

On another matter, Terry Hulley has agreed to attend the new Cemetery Committee meetings as a Commission observer.

Ernie Albin requested clarification on who would be missing future meetings. Lois will miss the February, March, and perhaps the April meeting but her duties as chairman will be handled by Sandy O'Brien during those months. Peggy will miss the December meeting. (Note that a new Commissioner may be in place by November).

The meeting was adjourned at 11:55 a.m.

Respectfully submitted by Helen de Keijzer.

