

## COMMISSION ON AGING

### LONG-RANGE PLANNING MEETING MINUTES

June 8, 2012

Present: Commission members Helen de Keijzer, Bruce Lorentzen, Nancy Hammerslough, and Laura Smits, Social Services Director Charlene Chiang-Hillman, Senior Center Director Wendy Petty, SWCAA liaison Meta Schroeter, and (briefly) First Selectman Gayle Weinstein.

The meeting began at 9:30 a.m.

**Opening Remarks/Year in Review:** There was consensus on an alternative text of the draft of a Commission mission statement. Helen reviewed the personnel changes that have taken place at the Senior Center in the past year and how we were able to maintain services throughout thanks to the hard work of Wendy and Pam. Christina Hillman was also a big help during the summer, by organizing the newsletter. Helen summarized some of the most significant accomplishments of the year and noted that establishment of the Friends of the Weston Senior Activities Center in November, the refurbishment of the Center's current facilities, and the promise of additional space for activities and programs in the fall represent realization of some of the Commission's major long-range planning goals. Nancy also brought up the improved relationship with the schools due to a supportive Superintendent, Colleen Palmer.

**Town-wide Facilities Planning:** Gayle Weinstein gave an update from the town Facilities Committee, which consists of Hal Shupack, Glenn Major, and Joe Fitzpatrick. For the next fiscal year, the Center will definitely have use of additional space in South House, which will become available during the summer. Longer-term town-wide and schools facilities planning is ongoing.

Wendy will put together a budget for the Center's new space for Tom Landry, the Town Administrator. There was a discussion concerning getting some volunteer gardeners to help with landscaping outside the Center. Helen mentioned the importance of coordinating this kind of activity with Hurlbutt Principal Genovese. Charlene suggested that we put together an inter-generational group. Wendy will make some inquiries.

The lack of adequate Center parking and what a hurdle it is to expansion of Center programming was discussed. Temporary solutions such as volunteers picking people up from other town parking areas will be explored.

**Center Staffing:** Discussion ensued about the difficulty of staffing during even the existing Center hours while both planning programs and attending trips. And it was reiterated that one of the continuing goals of the Commission and the staff is for the Center to be open longer hours, five days a week. Therefore, the need to build a budget proposal anticipating future needs for staff hour and facilities expansion for fiscal year 2012-2013 was raised and will be worked on in the next few months.

**Transportation Issues:** Bruce noted that our current Dial-a-Ride van may need replacing in a couple of years and also raised the issue that once we have greater participation we may need a another new van. He will formalize the trending of ridership over the summer. (As of now there is not enough demand to warrant a second van.) The group asked Charlene if Weston would be eligible for state grants for the purpose. Charlene responded that the last time she investigated the grants available, Weston was not eligible. However, she will continue to pursue all grants and other avenues that may lead to increased funds.

Discussion ensued about the use of Dial-A-Ride vs. other options. Charlene reported that Social Services has a list of drivers. It was also noted that ITNCoastalCT (Independent Transportation Network), a new regional nonprofit that offers moderate-cost transportation 24/7 to senior members, is now available. (The organization is seeking more volunteer drivers from Weston.)

On senior trip transport options, Meta mentioned that field trips at other Senior Centers sometimes use “Getaway Tours,” a private company as an alternative for day trips. The possibility of new trips through Parks and Recreation was also discussed.

**Programming:** Wendy mentioned that she was having difficulty maintaining enough people to justify one of the two yoga classes. Mahjong, Bridge and Tai Chi will be coming back. Exercise and art classes are well subscribed and people will continue to pay for these types of programs. Discussion ensued about the difficulty of getting the word out about programs since not everyone receives The Weston Forum. Wendy and Charlene wondered if there was some way we could work out something with the Forum whereby senior households can get the Forum at a reduced rate or free of charge. Charlene will investigate this possibility. There was a newsletter vs. newspaper discussion about which one was more effective. Wendy said that she will have a Senior Center website soon. Helen suggested the Center continue to strengthen its “wellness” programming, perhaps in conjunction with the Westport/Weston Health District or other area agency. Wendy and/or Helen will explore ways to reduce the cost of future CPR trainings, if possible, with the Weston EMS.

Wendy and Pam are developing an annual Center calendar.

**Fund-Raising Activities:** Helen applauded Wendy’s organizing of the Center’s first “re-gifting sale” which raised \$600. The sale will be expanded next year. Wendy shared information about plans for a major Classic Cars fundraising event for September 23<sup>rd</sup>. (Needed approvals have been received from the town and schools; and funds raised will pass through the Friends organization in order to facilitate tax free donation status for contributions.)

Wendy also confirmed that “The Greens” is underwriting the next issue of the newsletter, which will be acknowledged in a “sponsorship box”. We discussed the importance of keeping the newsletter commercial-free.

The Morehouse Elderly Assistance Fund was discussed and it was agreed that the Fund should be used judiciously and, in general, should be used for things that benefit Weston's senior community as a whole. Most recently, it's been used for "portable" assets such as new Center furniture.

It was noted that the Weston Women's League gives the Center a donation every year. Helen spoke of the possibility of approaching Kiwanis since it has made donations in the past, but she commented that this year it had already given a grant to the Friends, which will be very helpful to the Center.

**Publicity/Raising Awareness and New Ideas:** There was a discussion on ways to increase participation. Suggestions included adding "Columns" to the newsletter, a link on the town website, and flyers placed in strategic locations around town. Helen asked for ideas on how best to assess senior needs and Meta suggested including a one page survey in the next newsletter mailed to seniors to gauge interest in programs as well as any senior housing opportunities. She offered to develop and tabulate the survey for us, and to send the Commission a draft for review.

Respectfully submitted,

Laura Smits