

## COMMISSION ON AGING

### MINUTES

**Monday, October 2, 2017**

**Present:** Commission members Helen de Keijzer, Don Gumaer, Peggy Anderson, Dale Robinson, Richard Wolf, and Bruce Lorentzen; Senior Center Director Wendy Petty; Social Services Director Charlene Chiang-Hillman; WWHD's Monica Wheeler; and guest Woody Bliss.

Meeting convened at 9:20 a.m.

Minutes of the September 5<sup>th</sup> meeting were approved as written.

**SWCAA:** Meta Schroeter was unable to attend and Wendy read her Advisory Council meeting report for her. Of particular importance was SWCAA's continuing focus on senior transportation needs for which additional meetings are planned, including one in January 2018 that will focus on the transportation situation in individual towns within the region.

It was also noted that Westport's Senior Center has gained approval for a four million dollar addition; groundbreaking is planned for February and completion is anticipated by early 2019.

**Dial-a-Ride:** Gordon has not yet returned to work and Roy has continued to fill in as driver. Discussion ensued, including about the need for more long-range transportation planning. Bruce will work with Wendy as well as Town Administrator Jonathan Luiz on this issue.

**Weston Social Services:** Charlene reported that her workload is overwhelming and has been especially challenging with no replacement for the Youth Services Director and with Charlene's assistant Suzanne Friedman out due to a fall. To alleviate the difficult work situation, Allison Lisbon has been hired for 14.5 hours per week. The department is currently focused on signing people up and vetting their applications for fuel and other support programs. Given that Charlene wants Allison to consistently be a presence at the office, it is unclear whether Allison will also be able to continue in her Volunteer Coordinator role and/or will be able to spend even an hour or two at the Senior Center on a weekly basis, as had tentatively been planned at the Commission's Long-range Planning session in June.

Next, Woody brought up Weston's senior tax relief programs and noted that the number of people needing relief has fallen from a few years ago. He is interested in promoting the Freeze program in particular, which is only being used by one household at this time. He commented that a higher income eligibility limit for the Freeze (as compared to the Abatement program) is a plus for residents, though Richard pointed out that the overall financial benefit to the homeowner of the Freeze is very modest in comparison. Woody also noted that, since the monies set aside for tax relief in the Annual Town Budget have not all been needed in recent years, the funds set aside for this purpose could be reduced and that the monies "saved" could be reallocated to the Senior Center. Discussion ensued.

**Weston Senior Activities Center:** Wendy reported that the number of people coming to the Center is continuing to grow and noted that groups are using it as well, which introduces their members to the facility. There was discussion of the value of additional outdoor Center signs and of whether to continue printing the newsletter cover in color; no final decisions were made. Also, in light of the Classic Car Show being cancelled for this year, alternative fundraising ideas were discussed. Bruce, who is President of the Friends, said that he would work with Wendy on this issue.

**Westport Weston Health District:** Monica announced the upcoming Flu Clinics and said that the WWHD will also be offering a lead poisoning prevention program this fall. She and Wendy commented that the Fall Prevention program she offered at the Center had been well received. Helen suggested that it, as well as others that prove similarly popular such as the Alternative Medicine program Monica presented at the Center a few years ago, be offered on a more regular basis—perhaps biannually. Bruce noted that the University of Bridgeport has a Generative Medicine as well as a Naturopathic Program and could be a useful resource for additional presentations.

**Friends of Weston Senior Activities Center:** Bruce said there was nothing new to report but, as noted above, he will be meeting with Wendy to strategize during the coming months.

**Commission Business:**

Regarding soliciting senior input on issues of needs and wants, Dale is interested in learning more about the research surveys done by other Town's and senior centers in our region. They can serve as a resource for developing questions for small groups of Center users (and non-users) and/or a future survey (potentially in collaboration on development of the new Town Plan of Conservation and Development due in 2020). Noting that he is on the Planning and Zoning Commission, which is responsible for the Town Plan (as well as on the Building Committee), Helen asked Richard to tell everyone a little about the idea behind the plan and what the update process might look like. Richard talked about it briefly and commented on the importance of Town leadership in implementing any plan. Discussion ensued along lines similar to those at last month's meeting with comments about the inadequacy of long-range land and facilities planning and about Weston's inadequate focus on supporting all of its citizens—young and old alike. Several people commented on what they see as the very real potential for significant improvement in both of these areas.

Meeting adjourned at 11:03 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,  
Don Gumaer

Approved: November 6, 2017