

COMMISSION ON AGING

MINUTES

Monday, November 6, 2017

Present: Commission members Helen de Keijzer, Don Gumaer, Peggy Anderson, Dale Robinson, Allison Lisbon, and Richard Wolf; Senior Center Director Wendy Petty and Assistant Program Coordinator Linda Gilmore; Social Services Director Charlene Chiang-Hillman; and WWHD's Monica Wheeler.

Meeting convened at 9:20 a.m.

Minutes of the October meeting were approved as written.

SWCAA: Meta Schroeter was unable to attend and Wendy read her report. The Advisory Committee's Annual Meeting, held in Bridgeport, was attended by more than 200 people and honored Pat Knebel who is retiring after serving the agency for over 20 years. The meeting also focused on the recent CT State Budget and the consequences of very large cuts to services affecting seniors. Special attention was given to cutbacks on funding for the Medicare Savings Plan (with eligibility income to be cut in half over time) and in cuts to transportation services.

Weston Senior Center: Wendy, reporting on Dial-a-Ride, said that Gordon has officially retired and that the Center had hosted a party for him. She noted that everyone at the well-attended gathering warmly thanked Gordon for his years of attentive, kind service to Weston's seniors and presented him with a gift. Roy Marsh continues serving as interim driver and may officially assume the position in the future; however, the job must be publicly noticed. Discussion ensued about flexible senior transportation options, including the hope of continuing the network of community volunteers established by Allison. In addition, the potential value of seniors utilizing smart phones to access Uber rides was raised though it was noted that some—especially older seniors—don't own or are not comfortable using smart phones. Strategies for addressing this issue were briefly mentioned.

Wendy reported that Center participation was continuing to expand and spoke about ongoing and new programs as well as a recent trip to the New York Botanical Garden/Chihuly exhibit.

Helen, as she has previously, commented on the potential for a collaborative Lifelong Learning program and noted the role it might play in creating an inclusive vision for the 'Weston Way' by enhancing what Weston offers to the community as a whole beyond its outstanding schools. (Wendy, who is interested in developing the program, passed around the Fairfield Senior Center's Lifelong Learning brochure of classes.) Additional conversation addressed fundraising in light of no longer hosting the Classic Car Show; Wendy commented that smaller fundraisers should be considered as a way of maintaining the balance of funds still held by the Friends, while simultaneously supporting ongoing program needs.

The Annual Town Budget process was discussed next and the need to have a full-time Center and Center Director was again strongly endorsed by everyone. Helen raised the issue of the Town/Schools Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) regarding Center facilities and parking allocation at Hurlbutt, which will expire in June of 2019, and said that the need for Center stability makes this issue especially important. Wendy and others expressed appreciation for our existing Center facility (though Wendy mentioned that a kitchen would be a welcomed addition). It was noted that, given increasing participation in Center activities, parking needs may increase before need for more programming space. Richard commented that a study of the school's facility needs and enrollment expectations is currently underway and is due soon. He also suggested that Wendy and Commissioners visit area Centers to evaluate their facilities, amenities, etc. to inform our thoughts on long-range facility needs, including potential enhancements to the Center if it remains in its current location for the foreseeable future. Wendy, Richard, and Helen will come up with a schedule and will forward it to all Commissioners.

WWHD Report: Monica gave a brief report about this year's flu clinics and her work for the Health District. Discussion ensued; Helen thanked Monica for the valuable programs she has offered at the Center as well as her constructive input at Commission meetings.

Weston Social Services: Charlene reported that her workload is heavy and that it has been crucial to have Allison Lisbon's help. Charlene also mentioned that the software that the Department has is inadequate and that so far she has not gotten funding to replace it. Helen asked if she had consulted with the Town/Schools Digital Learning & Innovation Director as well as area towns to find a 'best' solution and urged her to follow-up. It was noted that new software could save both time and, in the long run, money due to increased flexibility and ease of use. Following further discussion, it was also clear that, thus far, Allison does not have time to be at the Center on a weekly basis or to continue as a volunteer coordinator as actively as she had before starting her new position.

Friends of Weston Senior Activities Center: Bruce was absent and there was no report.

Commission Business:

Helen checked with the Commissioners whose terms are up next month; they all want to continue to serve and have taken the steps needed to seek reappointed by the Board of Selectmen, expected soon. Finally, the new Town Plan of Conservation and Development, due in 2020, was discussed and Richard, who is on the P&Z Commission and will be closely involved in developing the new Town Plan, spoke briefly about the importance of input from Town Boards and Commissions. Discussion ensued.

Meeting adjourned at 10:40 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Don Gumaer