

COMMISSION ON AGING

Minutes

December 5, 2016

Present: Commission members Helen de Keijzer, Don Gumaer, Peggy Anderson, Joy Peshkin, Bruce Lorentzen, Allison Lisbon, and Margarita Garces-Shapiro; Social Services Director Charlene Chiang-Hillman; Senior Center Director Wendy Petty; and Dial-a-Ride driver Gordon Green, and SWCAA liaison Meta Schroeter.

Meeting convened at 9:23 a.m.

Minutes: October 4th and November 7th minutes were approved by consensus.

Dial-A-Ride/Transportation: Gordon distributed his regular monthly update and noted how pleased he is with the new Dial-a-Ride van and excursion bus.

SWCAA: Meta presented her report of the November SWCAA meeting, which was held in Wilton's newly renovated Community Center. Wilton's new congregate housing complex is now fully rented. Many Centers are reaching out to people who have family members with mental health problems. Grants have been cut and more volunteers are being sought; fundraising needs and approaches were also reviewed. Discounts and free services for seniors appeared in Westport's Minuteman newspaper.

Senior Tax Relief Programs review: Margarita reported that she has met and worked with Weston's tax collector and has requested an up-to-date description of the programs, which Wendy will include in the January/February Center Newsletter. Margarita reiterated the importance of getting detailed historical data on each of Weston's senior tax relief programs. Discussion ensued and the Commission drafted a recommendation to the Board of Selectmen about establishing an annual report: "The Commission on Aging is recommending to the Board of Selectman that there be a clear and concise report developed by the Town Administrator to report on the senior tax relief programs going back a minimum of 5 years. This report should include the numbers of families that are on each program per year." The text of the recommendation will be discussed and finalized at our January meeting.

Weston Social Services:

Charlene reported on her department's work, including matching individuals in need with available energy assistance programs, planning for the distribution of the annual Christmas/Holiday gift baskets, and more. Allison, who has continued to volunteer as a volunteer coordinator reported that she has successfully connected 10 seniors to individuals and families who have begun helping them with various home maintenance needs. As mentioned at previous meetings, Charlene is hoping to add a Volunteer Coordinator position in the upcoming Department budget. Charlene also noted that the position of Youth Services Director has still not been filled.

Weston Senior Activities Center: Wendy reported that the Re-gifting Holiday Sale brought in \$1000 and that a special jewelry sale, made possible by a donation from Cynthia Williams, brought in an additional \$1400.

Wendy reported that there has been a thirty percent increase in the numbers of Center participants during the past year. She also reported on the recent senior center directors' meeting she attended and noted that Weston's senior center still has shorter hours and less staff coverage than others in our region. After considerable discussion about the upcoming budget process and Wendy's interest in increasing Center hours of operation as well as staffing hours, the Commission unanimously endorsed requesting the expansion of operations to five days/week 9:00 a.m. – 3:00 p.m. and the addition of more staffing hours for both Wendy and Carla, noting that Carla's additional time will require benefits as well. Bruce raised his concern about the potential need for additional back up Dial-a-Ride driving support. Helen and Bruce will meet with Wendy to discuss the Senior Services budget for the upcoming fiscal year in greater detail before it is submitted. It was again briefly discussed that, at least periodically (perhaps at senior lunches) having a social worker's presence at the Center to help everyone be aware of and feel invited to learn more about programs and services was a good idea.

Friends of the Weston Senior Activities Center: Bruce once again said that he's seeking to expand the Board and requested recommendations.

WWHD Report: Monica was unable to make the meeting.

Commission Business: Regarding Commissioners with terms ending December 31, Helen said that she had been reappointed to another two year term by the Board of Selectmen and that Bruce would likely be reappointed later in the month. However, Margarita said that for personal reasons she has decided not to seek reappointment. Helen thanked Margarita for her service on the Commission, including for her recent work on the senior tax relief programs. Discussion ensued about the Commission meeting schedule for 2017; the next meeting will be on Monday, January 9th (since schools will be closed on the 2nd.)

Meeting adjourned at 11:10 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Don Gumaer

Approved: 1-9-17