

**COMMISSION ON AGING
MINUTES
JANUARY 20, 2021**

Attending: Patricia Burns, Presiding; Carol Burns; Kip Burgweger; James Dougherty; Ann Marie Hynes; Steven Katz; Ellen Wolfson
Staff: Lori Contadino; Laurette Helmrich.
Guest: Demetria Nelson, Commissioner Greenwich Department of Human Services

Call To Order: The meeting was called to order at 8:35 a.m. The meeting was held by Zoom.

Minutes: Minutes of the November, 2020 meeting were distributed prior to the meeting. A typo was noted in line 3 of the SWCAA Report - the word “singing” should be “using”. With that correction a Motion was made to approve the minutes. The Motion was seconded and carried by unanimous vote.

Guest: Demetria Nelson was introduced as Commissioner Greenwich Department of Human Services. After providing details on her background and experience, she gave an update on operations at the department. She noted an increase in rental assistance requests due to covid. The department is coordinating with other agencies and non-profits to meet the needs of residents. She noted various programs run by the department such as the Youth Conservation Program, the Campership Program and the BANC After School Program. The great working relationship and coordination with the Commission through Lori was noted.

Chair’s Report: P. Burns noted that she will not continue as Chair of the Commission when her term expires this year. Kip Burgweger and Ellen Wolfson have agreed to serve as the nominating committee. They will present a slate of Officers in February to be voted on at the April meeting.

Dept. Of Human Services: A. M. Hynes attended the most recent meeting. The annual budget was reviewed. A steep increase in clients was noted in the April, May, June, 2020 period. A new employee was introduced with his background and experience reviewed.

Nathaniel Witherell: E. Wolfson had no report but noted that the Board will meet next week.

SWCAA: A.M. Hynes reported that that there have been no recent meetings. But that there was a Medicare counseling wrap up meeting in December.

Friends of The Senior Center: P. Burns reported that for various reasons several Board members have resigned but that there are four new Board members with more being recruited. The Board will meet in February.

Senior Center: L. Helmrich reported.

Teddy's Ready Drive Thru

" Next drive through lunch will be Friday January 29, 2021

" Will take place in the rear of the building

299 to You

" The next packet is scheduled to go out in March 2021

Video Intercom/Surveillance

" Has been fully installed

Friends Fund Drive

" A successful mail in fund drive has taken place with many responses continuing to be received

Commission
Directors
Report:

MEDICARE D OPEN ENROLLMENT

The Commission on Aging Health Insurance Counseling Team successfully assisted over 300 residents virtually during the annual Medicare D Open Enrollment period. A new empowered group of older residents reviewed and discussed plan options with counselors but chose to self-enroll. The online tools we created tremendously assisted with scheduling and reporting, and are tools that will remain long after the pandemic.

COVID-19 Vaccine

On January 14th State of CT residents 75 and older became eligible to receive COVID-19 vaccine under Phase 1b of Governor Lamont's vaccination rollout plan.

Enrollment in the CT Vaccine Administration Management System (VAMS) is proving quite challenging for older adults. Not only is it a confusing multi-state process, but individuals must possess a unique email address in order to complete online registration. Over 150 calls have been received by the Commission on Aging. Frustration and anxiety among older adults is very high. A telephone number has been provided for residents that have no access to technology or who have language and other challenges - but many older adults report long wait times and arranging for "call backs" that never come. As of today, Greenwich clinics are not yet available for scheduling in the VAMS system. Yale New Haven Health System launched a streamlined process for registering eligible individuals for vaccine in their clinics. Brunswick School Sampson Fieldhouse and 500 West Putnam Avenue clinics will be administered by the YNHHS. A clinic administered by Family Centers at Eastern Greenwich Civic Center and another administered by the Greenwich Health Department at Town Hall will be available for scheduling at a future date through the VAMS system.

Messaging seems to be highly variable at this time. All Commission on Aging and Senior Center staff have fielding phone inquiries and have been assisting with information and scheduling. Several of our Health Insurance Counselors have also been trained to assist residents. We are in close communication with the First Selectman, the Director of the Greenwich Department of Health, the Yale New Haven Health Team, Family Centers and professionals throughout the region. A special Senior Providers Network Meeting will be held today, immediately

following the Commission on Aging Board meeting. Dr. Stephanie Paulmeno will be providing information about the COVID-19 vaccine, exploring issues of vaccine hesitancy, necessary education of minority elders and the Governor's vaccine rollout. All are welcome to attend.

AGE FRIENDLY GREENWICH:

Both Lori and Steve Katz are quite pleased with the professional and polished draft New Leaf Design has presented of the Age Friendly Action Plan. Final steps include a few minor revisions and the inclusion of photos through the document. They will be reviewing the status of all Year 1 Action Plan items and will be submitting a status report to Bill Armbruster at AARP. Additionally a meeting of the full Advisory Board will be scheduled for late February and Task Group meetings will resume immediately following so Year 2 Action Plan strategy can be developed.

Senior Tax

Relief: K. Burgweger reported that there was no report.

Transportation:

C. Burns reported that there was no report.

Next Meeting: The next meeting of the Commission will be at 8:30 on February 17, 2021

Adjournment: The meeting was adjourned by unanimous motion at 9:45 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

James B. Dougherty
Secretary