

COMMISSION ON AGING
MINUTES
JULY 20, 2022 V.2.2

Attending: Steven Katz, Presiding; Kip Burgweger; James Dougherty; Anne Marie Hynes; Amy Jurkowitz; Heidi Nolte; Ellen Wolfson

Staff: Lori Contadino; Laurette Helmrich

Attending by
Conference

Call: James Dougherty; Ann Marie Hynes; Ellen Wolfson

Call To

Order: The meeting was called to order by Steven Katz at approximately 8:30 a.m. The meeting was held in person and by conference call.

Minutes: Minutes of the June 15, 2022 meeting were distributed prior to the meeting. A motion to approve the minutes as distributed was made, seconded and approved unanimously.

Reports:

Department of Human Services: Ellen Wolfson reported that the Department of Human Services met on June 21 and elected as officers Patty Roberts as Chair, Winston Robinson as Vice Chair and Debbie Appelbaum as Secretary. The DHS makes summer camps available for disadvantaged children and adults. A large number of students as well as twenty-six senior residents will be attending summer camp. The program is under budget. The funding for the Senior Computer Center will include some American Rescue Plan moneys. The DHS held a logo contest among high school students, and there were two winners. Each received a \$125 prize.

The DHS held its most recent meeting on July 19. At that meeting, the DHS approved its new logo. The DHS is five percent under budget. The DHS is working with youth. The Town will receive payments for 18 years as a part of the opioid settlement, and DHS will be utilizing those funds.

Nathaniel Witherell: Ellen Wolfson reported that The Friends of Nathaniel Witherell has a new head – Mary Vinton. Witherell is experiencing a nursing shortage. It is using funds received from the State to increase the salaries of the staff.

Southwestern CT Agency on Aging: Anne Marie Hynes reported that SWCAA completed its grant allocation program. It had capped its donations at \$50,000 and found that

most grant applications were for \$50,000. River House and Family Services in Greenwich received grants. SWCAA is having employment concerns. It has a staffing shortage. The SWCAA meetings have added a very nice feature. For the last three months, at each meeting a staff member will tell her or his experiences working with clients.

Friends of the Greenwich Senior Center: Anne Marie Hynes reported that there was nothing to report. There followed an extensive discussion on the need for the Friends to revitalize its board members and their responsibilities. Steve Katz observed that the board needs to be staffed with active working members committed to the Friends's mission. At present, it seems as though most current members have faded away after Patricia Burns's departure. In order to have an active Senior Center, it is essential that the Friends board be active. The Friends board needs two types of members – workers and donors. Amy Jurkowitz recommended appointing board members who are involved in longevity. Ellen Wolfson asked whether the board should now have a paid position who would focus on fund raising, but others thought that at this point the members need to be dedicated to the Friends.

Senior Center Administrator: Laurette Helmrich reported that there is some good news and some bad news. She started with the bad news. The elevator has been out of service for two weeks. The part that needs to be replaced – a brake solenoid - is no longer being made. The elevator technician is searching elevator bone yards for a replacement part but has not yet found the part. If the part cannot be found, the elevator will need to be replaced which will require cutting a hole in the roof of the Senior Center building. Steve Katz asked why is this not an emergency appropriation. The elevator is scheduled to be replaced in a couple of years, and the Town's capital plan calls for investment in a new elevator. Trying to use the current elevator is dangerous. One person got trapped in the elevator and had to be rescued by the fire department using a crow bar to pry open the door. Without the elevator, the building is not in compliance with the ADA, The outside ramp is closed so the disabled people who enter on the ground floor have no way to get to the main floor. Since the elevator will be replaced in a couple of years, why not do it now. Lori Contadino will set up a meeting with the First Selectman Fred Camillo to discuss moving up the replacement date and seeking an emergency appropriation.

Laurette Helmrich then reported the good news. We have instituted the use of online lunch order forms. Additionally, we now have credit card compliance usable by the Friends of the Greenwich Senior Center and by the Commission on Aging. Charges made by the Commission are paid by the Town from the Commission's account. The Commission has two funds involved – the lunch fund and the Share the Fare fund. The money from those funds goes into the Town's annual fund, and the Commission is credited with those amounts. The

Friends have an account that receives money from activities it supports such as art classes. We have a debit card that is attached to the Friends's account and is used to purchase art supplies and similar items. We now can accept donations made by credit card such as gifts made on Fairfield County Giving Day.

The Senior Center has been asked to join with the Greenwich Library for some activities. For example, on October 3, the Library is bringing in a dance company for two performances, and the Senior Center has been given tickets for distribution to our seniors who wish to attend.

Laurette reported that the GREATS hosted a lobster bake at Tod's Point. The question who are the GREATS led to this response. The GREATS's activities in the early years led to the creation of the Senior Center. The Greenwich Retired Eating And Tarrying Society (GREATS) used to gather for meals in the Senior Center building which led to the founding of the Senior Center.

On September 22, the Senior Center will be holding a Kansas City Tailgate at Tod's Point from 12:00 noon to 3:00 PM. The Senior Center will be serving pork ribs, pulled pork and brisket. Only a maximum of 150 people can attend. The charge will be \$30 per person, and the cost is \$35 per person. Thanks to the new credit card arrangement, Senior Center members can register online.

There followed a discussion on why charge less than the cost and whether such an event could double as a fundraiser by offering tickets a different levels of cost, such as offering a Big Time Supporter ticket (including a full meal and some other form of recognition) at \$100 and lesser positions such as \$75 and \$50 and just a meal ticket at \$30.

New Commission Member: Heidi Nolte was introduced as our newest Commission member. She gave a brief description of her background and activities. She has worked as one of our Medicare counselors for the past five years. She has an AARP certification as a tax preparation volunteer. She is on the board of At Home In Greenwich. She is a retired senior information technology executive and is an active golfer.

Dining at 299: Lori Contadino reported on this item. The Senior Center met with three qualified vendors regarding operating the dining at the Senior Center. After the meeting, we received only one proposal to take over the dining. The Evaluation Committee members reviewed the proposal, and each scored the proposal differently. We will now be meeting with the one bidder to answer questions and attempt to negotiate charges. If this does not result in a deal, we will send out another Request For Proposal. The Town does not allow its agencies to reach out in advance to potential bidders and vendors.

New Hires: Lori Contadino reported on our new hires. We have hired Monica Sanchez Maz to replace Maria Higbie. She is transferring from the Board of Education. She is trilingual, speaking French, Spanish and English.

Lori also gave us a quick update on Kimberly Judge, our newly appointed Office Assistant. Kim is a whiz at technical skills. She is creating active accounts for Senior Center members that will allow them to charge with their credit cards. Kim has added Senior Center activities to the IT calendar. Putting these activities on the IT calendar resulted in a doubling of Senior Center activities. Recently, the Senior Center calendar had been removed from the program platform, but Kim has restored it allowing Senior Center members to print the calendar for their own use.

Age Friendly Greenwich: Lori Contadino reported on current developments. We have been in contact with the CT Age Well Collaboration. It is working with Age Friendly and Dementia Friendly communities in the State, bringing those communities together. The Collaboration is independent from the State and is funded by Tufts. It focuses on livable communities. Greenwich is a leader in livable communities in Connecticut and is the only one in the southwestern part of the State. The Connecticut chapter of AARP does not have Age Friendly communities as a priority although the national organization does.

Greenwich Suicide Postvention Response Team: Lori Contadino has become a member of the Greenwich Suicide Postvention Response Team. The group works on preventing suicide at different ages. There have been a number of suicides in Greenwich and the surrounding area. Lori may be called upon to help families of older suicides. She is not involved in determining how suicides could have been prevented although warning signs are discussed in her work.

Share the Fare: Lori Contadino reported on this item. The Share the Fare program was closed on June 30. One client had purchased tickets in January and had not used them. The client is seeking a refund although adequate notice of the program closure had been given. The Commission is currently resisting making a refund when the client had opportunity to use the tickets.

Durable Medical Equipment: On September 17 from 9:00 AM to 12:00 Noon, we will be sponsoring a durable medical equipment drive in support of Wheel It Forward, a nonprofit that provides medical equipment such as crutches, canes, scooters, chairs to sit on when taking a shower and all sorts of other equipment to people who find themselves in need. Last year's drive produced two truck loads of useful medical equipment.

MOTION: To adjourn the meeting. Seconded. Carried.

Adjournment: The meeting was adjourned at 9:55 AM.

Respectfully submitted,

Kip Burgweger
Acting Secretary

APPROVED