

Human Services Commission Meeting of Tuesday, June 13, 2017

**Commissioners:** Ken Bernhard, Lee Bollert, Claudia Copeland, Bob Galan,  
Richard Sallick, Yvonne Senturia

**Excused:** Pete Powell

**Staff:** Susan Pfister, Elaine Daignault, Kristen Witt, Susan Stefenson, Patty Haberstroh

**Guest:** Jeff Wieser

**Minutes:** The minutes of May 9, 2017 were approved.

**New Business:**

Strategic Planning 2017-2018 – How can the HSC assist and advise the Human Services Department in the future.

Discussion concerned ongoing issues of housing, transportation, mental health services and addiction, and current trend of opioid derived drug abuse. Elaine communicated concerns regarding decreasing support for essential services (housing, transportation options, income standards to qualify for food stamps and other state/federal programs) and noted that requests for financial help and advice are increasing with more complexity than in the past. Emergency and social service groups (police, fire department, and health district staff are encountering more health issues including mental health, blight and hoarding.

Identification of trends we are seeing and speakers who could elucidate them can frame discussion for the next meeting.

**Jeff Wieser** drew attention to the fact that Planning and Zoning is currently updating the Plan of Conservation and Development (POCD) and that affordable housing goals established in 2007 have been removed.

Ken makes a motion and Dick seconds to write P and Z affirming support for a directive to include affordable housing goals in the 2017 plan. This passed unanimously.

Notification of relevant upcoming P and Z meetings was requested as was the inviting of members from the affordable housing committee to one of our meetings.

**Transportation Update:**

Westport Transit District continues to operate as it has Door-to-Door service for elderly and the disabled through Norwalk Transit (NT). An RFP was sent out this past year to assess other options but NT remains the best option for now. Cost per ride has increased and satisfaction rates are mixed.

Transportation laws mandate that the transit district provide equal access to service which requires that they receive requests at least 24 hours in advance. There are reports of problems with wait times and lack of arm in arm service when needed.. There was discussion of pros and cons of ITN and other available services locally and regionally.

**Old Business:**

CSA Enhancement received unanimous approval at the Board of Finance Meeting and is progressing through final steps coordinating with other boards and commissions . On July 11 it will be presented to the RTM subcommittee and on July 12 to the Board of Selectmen to authorize release of funds. A March 2018 ground breaking is anticipated.

The Commission for Senior Services will honor the work of Friends of WCSA and of Judith Guthman at their annual meeting on July 21. HSC members will be invited to attend.

The idea of a joint meeting of the four Human Services Commissions (HSC, CSS, CPD, WYC) was discussed briefly. The goal is to provide opportunities for the commissions to share their objectives, get to know one another and decrease staff and guest speaker time. Continued discussion on this is warranted.

Patty Haberstroh reported that 109 kids from 70 families so far have received scholarships to sleep away camp. The funding comes from a variety of resources including generous scholarships from providers like Parks and Rec and the YMCA, from private donations from residents, PTA and businesses and from grants. This year DHS was able to utilize some of the remaining United Way "Legacy" Fund which was earmarked for Westport families after the sale of their building in Westport. These funds are used for full time working families in need of consistent care for their children in order to maintain employment. The United Way ALICE project outlines the reason for focusing on this demographic. These funds will be depleted by FY 18-19.

For Ceremonies and Celebrations 18 graduating seniors received \$200 gift cards and 16 students completing middle school received \$100 gift cards.

Respectfully submitted,  
Dick Sallick