

Westport Center for Senior Activities
Policy & Planning Board Minutes
Monday, October 3, 2011

Present: Howard Maynard, Roger Curtis, Susan Pfister, Martha Aasen, John Weiss, Annette Kirban, Sue Lebrija, Shelly Lipsett, Estelle Kesselman, Phyllis Groner, Bob McGrath.

Excused: Stephen Colodny, Jack Klinge.

Guest: Tara Lansdale.

The minutes of September 12, 2011 were approved (Weiss/Kirban).

Announcement:

S. Pfister introduced Tara Lansdale, the newly appointed Program Specialist. Tara brings forth enthusiasm and recreational experience. The board wished her well.

Update on Friends of the Westport Center for Senior Activities:

S. Pfister reviewed the upcoming activities of events planned by the Friends' program committee. Thelma Gordon continues to run her successful Friday afternoon movie series; Jeff Mayer will be doing his ever popular Civil War lecture on the 14th at 1:15 p.m.; Dick Leonard is running two Short Stories series; a program sub-committee is busy putting together a talent show scheduled for Sunday afternoon, April 22; there will be a SuperBowl party at the Center on February 5; the first Indoor Musical performance is scheduled for November 20. The Friends will be putting out a newsletter in the near future and there will be an envelope included for donations. Funds continue to be of concern in this tight economy.

Update on ITNCoastal CT:

ITN has moved to Fairfield and all is good. The space is right off the Post Road, in downtown Fairfield. The demand for rides continues and there is a need for more volunteer drivers. The board is trying hard to get representation on the board from all communities served. The director will be attending an ITN retreat the week of October 17, 2011. There is talk of hiring a part-time driver to help meet the demand for rides. The board seems very excited with the growth of this program. Nancy is scheduled to do an informational session at the Center on October 19th at 10:00 a.m. You are all invited.

Update on LINKS:

Marjolijn Wisenbeek, the new Executive Director is in the process of meeting individually with each board member to get a vision and a feel for where they see LINKS heading. There will be a push to market the service via brochures, press releases and meetings with potential groups of members. Rates will be set at the next board meeting. A discussion followed regarding the Center's home maintenance directory and S. Pfister was asked to share this resource at the next meeting.

Update on Baron's Proposed Senior Housing Proposal:

A. Winston and J. Weiss reported on the meeting they attended at Town Hall. There is a lot of hard work and effort going into getting the RFP out. There is concern that there will be opposition to the project by some folks who think the Town should sell the land to recoup money to fund the Town's retirement/health pension plans. S. Pfister mentioned that she and a couple of other committee members are planning a visit to Suffield, CT in an effort to continue to gather information, ideas, likes/dislikes, etc. The next committee meeting is scheduled for October 21, 2011 at 9:30 a.m. in Room 201, Town Hall.

Discussion on Hurricane Irene:

Policy & Planning Board members were briefed as to what the Town of Westport did to prepare and to get through the storm. The WCSA served as a shelter for employees and volunteers and Long Lots served as the shelter for the community. Over 74 persons and 16 animals spent the night at the shelter. S. Pfister said there was a steady flow of Town employees at the WCSA coming in for food and rest. Overall, the entire operation received high marks and praise from all involved.

Follow Up on Goals and Objectives for Upcoming Year:

H. Maynard reviewed goals and objectives that were covered last month with board members in preparation for the upcoming year. These included:

- Monitor and attend Baron's South Housing Committee meetings as this project will have an impact on the Center.
- Collaborate and enhance relationship with YMCA, particularly as they look to reach out with fundraising and building efforts. B. McGrath to follow up.
- Explore on-line registration for future enrollment. S. Pfister to work on.
- Explore social networking i.e. Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn. T. Lansdale will follow up with all senior centers in Fairfield County to see if they are on Facebook, and if so, who maintains it. S. Pfister mentioned that the Department of Human Services is thinking about social networking and the Center would either play-off of it or be a link. More research needs to be done in this area.

Board members were encouraged to pick an area of interest and to get involved so that the board is truly a working, active board.

Update on Building Maintenance/Painting:

S. Pfister reported that Public Works put the bid out to have the building re-stained with two coats. The bid was awarded to a company from Mass. and the quality of work alarmed Sue. The building maintenance director was immediately contacted and the crew was dismissed. The owner of the company is supposed to be coming down to meet with Public Works to resolve the concerns. Safety violations and concerns for spraying during operating hours were of great concern to Sue. S. Pfister also asked board members to constantly look at the building when they visit and to let Sue know of any areas of concern or needed repair. S. Pfister reminded board members that it is almost budget time so timing is important.

Feedback on Artwork Donation:

S. Pfister passed around a copy of a piece of artwork that local artist Al Coyote Weiner wanted to donate to the Center. The Westport Arts Advisory Council was contacted and they left the decision up to the Center. After great discussion, the board unanimously voted to not accept this piece of artwork for fear of setting a precedent. The board also thought all artwork donation requests should go through the Town's Arts Advisory Council.

Discussion on Letter to the Editor:

S. Pfister passed out copies of a letter that appeared in the Westport News last week by a gentleman who suggests that the senior center is a "senseless" service. B. Butler knows the author of this letter and it was suggested that she be asked to phone him to discuss his opinion. The board strongly felt that re-butting the letter would only raise attention to the matter. S. Pfister has been contacted by an active participant of the Center who asked for statistics in preparation for a letter he wishes to send off to the papers.

Review Suggestion Box Comments:

Three suggestions were read out loud to the board. S. Pfister will take appropriate action.

The next meeting will take place on Monday, November 7, 2011 at 10:00 a.m.

The meeting was adjourned (Weiss/Kirban).