

Westport Commission on People with Disabilities
Minutes of Meeting
Thursday October 15th, 2020 - 9:00am-10:00am
(No meeting held September 2020)
ZOOM MEETING MINUTES

Attendance: Jim Ross - Chair, Marina Derman, Stacie Curran, Doug Rivkin, Diane Johnson, Tom Holleman, Absent: Joe Anastasi. Present from Human Services: Elaine Daignault, Michelle Bottone - (reviewed remote instructions)
Guests/Audience Who choose to identify: Jane Tarsy, Sal Liccione, Deirdre Ekholdt - (people need not identify themselves on the line.)

9:05 - Call to Order

Review of August Minutes - Jim Ross: Tom H 1st, Marina - 2nd - All on Favor

Human Services update- Elaine D:

Waiting to hear from State of CT on Cares Act Housing grant applied for - extra \$ for rent, etc., during pandemic times.

On Sept 24th - Text Amendment being worked on, submitted to P& Z commission was withdrawn for further revisions/modifications. New sub-committee being created; maybe can be expanded to include private sector, not only Town owned property. We can reach out to Rick Redness. and Mary Young to see about obtaining updates.

Homes for Hope: At full capacity, needed to limit number of beds due to COVID. Coordinated Access Network - prioritized based on need.

Transportation- Future concerns - Transportation (doesn't fall under Human Services) Two volunteers, Marty Fox & Pasty Sellew have been managing the Westport Transit for a long time and are resigning. Concerns: Cuts to afford transportation, availability of transportation, COVID, etc.

Our CPD may want to stay focused on this

Sal: RTM/Transit Committee (no longer active committee) - whomever the new Transit director is has to come before RTM transit.

Wheels 2U - New program - get \$ from State & Fed - challenges to make changes, need public hearings (when asked about expanding the service to appointments, or shopping - gets tricky to change)

Sal: We pay Norwalk transit, trying to get this pushed back to First Selectman & Bd of Finance, for monies, and to build bus depots, but they don't want to fund it now.

for 2021 - Town pays approx. \$300,000

Jim R: It's more like a million paid, in matching funds, grants, etc. Blessing we can piggyback on Norwalk Transit. Additionally, If we can't even pay our transit directors, how are we going to pay for bus depots?

Voting:

All polling sites are handicapped-accessible, or get your absentee ballots. Disability Rights CT has lots of info/right around voting; all info is on our FB site and will be emailed

Jim - watch that people are not standing in Handicap parking spots.

Patty Strauss, Town Clerk, is retiring.

Michelle B - Energy Assistance - busy time of year, cannot make house calls now, sending outreach letters, press releases, mailing to prior clients.

Introduction: Dierdre Ekholdt - New social worker, from Town of Westport, just started few weeks ago - welcome.

Food Distribution:

Lots of programs going on for those who may be food insecure, distributions at the Senior Center, when Chartwells went on furlough, Grocery Connection got involved, and Vazzys, bag of groceries \$35.00, many programs, Nicole Straight involved - Human Services is doing as much they can for providing people with food they need.

Remarkable Theater:

Was a giant gamble at beginning of season, Marina Derman & Doug Tirola went for it, Town approved four screenings at the beginning, and here we are at our 50th screening this summer with two weeks to go (closing the season Oct 31st).

Robust roster of volunteers, 20 Individuals with disabilities are on that roster and receiving a minimum wage stipend for their work, RT is in talks with the Town to come back next year - Town wanting RT to start in March/April, why wait? RT has partnered with many groups who lost all of their fundraising due to COVID. We have tried to say YES to all, schools, library, Playhouse, temples, Rotaries to name a few. The long-term vision is to open a bricks & mortar, Art House cinema, in downtown Westport. The theater world is forever changed by this pandemic, and we could be the first-post-pandemic theater built, more windows, doors, ventilation, bathrooms reimaged, many things can be thought out vs. trying to reconfigure.

Funding: Hope is to break even this season, maybe make a little \$ by the end of this season.

Stacie - Special shout out to Douglas Tirola & Marina D. for being all of this, others of us on the Board were there to help, but they are the two deserving credit.

Jim R: Credit to Sharuna Mahesh - who did so much of the behind the scenes and internet work and volunteering great time.

Sal: Really appreciates the RT theater and wants to also credit Johnathan Steinberg with his work.

Employment:

SELN - State Employment Leadership Network)

It was a family forum - 20 families and DDS on call - we need to think about doing more here, Look at our business community - create Customized Employment - we could help develop this.

Stacie: I have a meeting Monday, with Mike Rizzo, of Westport Public Schools to talk about Transition and some of these great ideas. Jim & Stacie C to connect over the weekend, prior to Monday meeting.

10:08am - Meeting Adjourned - Jim/Diane