



# WESTPORT CONNECTICUT

## THE DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES

TOWN HALL, 110 MYRTLE AVENUE  
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### HUMAN SERVICES COMMISSION MINUTES from TUESDAY, August 10th, 2021 at 9 am

*Pursuant to the Governor's Executive Order No. 7B, there is no physical location for this meeting. It was held electronically.*

#### Attendance:

**Commission members:** Peter Powell, Lee Bollert, Yvonne Senturia, Beth Selby Bass. Absent: Ken Bernard

**Members of the Public:** Bethany G, Harris Falk, Rep. Jonathan Steinberg

**Staff:** Elaine Daignault, Susan Stefenson, Kristen Witt, Liz Atkin, Deirdre Ekholdt

Minutes from April were not distributed, they will be located and sent shortly. (see attached)

Pete Powell announced that he will be stepping down as Chair of the Commission as he will split his time between NYC and Westport. Pete states that he would like to see the Commission serve as a support/asset to DHS in the future, focusing on identifying areas to help. The Commissioners wished him well and thanked him for all of his years of service to the Town of Westport and Homelessness. He will be missed.

**9:05 am No Public Comment on Non-agenda items**

**9:15 am Staff Report**

- **COVID – 19 response continues**
  - **Precautions continue at Town facilities; Emergency Management continues to meet regularly to get local updates and determine the best way to protect the public.**
  - **Food resources continue to be available as needed – Filling in the Blanks for school aged children and WCSA Congregate meal drive thru, gift cards, as needed**
- **Seasonal and Means-tested Programs (Kristen Witt)**
  - **Renter's Rebate is active, ends in Oct. so far, KW has helped 75 households with savings of \$38,000 for qualifying residents.**
  - **CT Energy Assistance Program begins Oct. 1, 2021 – anticipate a larger number of applicants will qualify. Last year we processed about 250 households**
- **Staffing Update – Susan Stefenson announced that she will be retiring from her position with the Town to pursue a new opportunity in Weston Public Schools.**
  - **Elaine thanked Susan for her 11+ years of service and acknowledged that her role in facilitating recent audits and coordinating the dept's finances was instrumental in DHS's success**
- **Facility Update**



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- **WCSA and Toquet are open with limited, by registration capacity. Have re-instituted mandated masking regardless of vaccination status. Everyone must sign a waiver to participate.**
- **Other programs and initiatives/ Town-wide events–**
  - **Dpt of Housing Grants are active – assisting the Fairfield County CAN to staff Homelessness Diversionary Services**
  - **Rally to raise awareness of Housing Crisis in Fairfield County – urging the State to consider allocating some of the \$300M funds to Affordable Housing and Homelessness Services**

**9:25 am Review of Town Charter – overview of Section 24 in the Town Charter, describing the role and term expectations of members. Elaine wanted to point out the expectation and the importance of membership as the Town transitions to new leadership in the fall.**

**9:40 am Commission Planning Discussion**

- **Elaine shared some of the top issues that she is concerned about in town including:**
- **Affects of COVID-19 – Senior isolation, youth affects, and recovery/ financial affects**
- **Mental Health Services – access and co-occurring disorders including substance abuse**
- **Transportation – need for more diverse/accessible transportation for all**
- **Affordable Housing – for all ages to down-size, age in place**

**Discussion: Beth asked what top three wish list from DHS:**

**Commissioner engagement by attending and reporting on Town initiatives (P & Z/Affordable Housing, transportation, TEAM Westport, etc) Offering resident perspective and responding to needs collectively. Public Relations – helping DHS to inform residents of available programs and services, marketing, social media**

**9:50 Future Meetings – Stay with 2<sup>nd</sup> Tuesdays. Skip September. Next meeting October 12<sup>th</sup>, 2021**

**10:00 am Adjournment**

**Adjournment (First by Lee Bollert, seconded Beth Bass – All in favor)**