

1/17/23

Commission for Senior Services**Regular Meeting Minutes, December 19, 2022**

Attendance: Doris Levinson, Diane (Wendy) Kleros, Claudia Coplen, Merle Spiegel, Teri Klein, Sarah Adair

Staff: Sue Pfister, Elaine Daignault, Kristen Witt

Guest: Harris Falk, RTM

Absent: Holly Betts, Bob Fox

Commission Co-Chair Wendy Kleros called the meeting to order, and the minutes from the October 17th meeting were unanimously approved.

Flowers were given to Sue Pfister in appreciation of all her hard work over 36 years. This will be Sue's final meeting before her retirement on December 31.

Public comments: Harris Falk mentioned that a new policy on leaf blowers would be coming up in two weeks, with restrictions on gas blowers.

Staff comments:

Sue Pfister reported that registration for the winter term at the Senior Center was going very well, and some additional fitness classes had been added to meet increased demand. She reminded everyone that all needed to check in when coming to the Senior Center.

She added that last week's Chanukah Luncheon had been extremely successful, and the Holiday Luncheon was coming up on December 22, with two seatings planned. There will also be a New Year's Luncheon on December 28, and the Senior Center will be closed for two four-day weekends during the holidays. During this period, home-delivered meals will be available through December 22 and will restart on December 27, and frozen meals will be provided on December 24.

Kristen Witt reported that the Westport Women's Club donated gift cards that the Department of Human Services distributed to current financially eligible clients of the department.

In addition, the Commission's toy and gift card program was a big success, and donations can be made through the town's website. Human Services helped 600 households during 2022, and energy assistance was provided to 300-350 households. Westport has a particularly robust Human Services presence, and the number of people in need of assistance is increasing. Kristen emphasized the importance of reaching all those in need. Fire and Police departments report households they deem to be at risk to Human Services, with permission of the families.

Detective Erin Shaw comes to the Senior Center monthly to discuss common scams. There was conversation about various mail scams, and it was noted that Social Security and Medicare never call – they only communicate by mail.

Discussion then turned to Sue Pfister's retirement. Elaine Daignault commented on how much Sue had accomplished in 36 years. She emphasized that the town government had always appreciated the needs of seniors. The Senior Center originally opened its building in 2004, and the recent enlargement had contributed to making this an exceptional facility for the town. A December 28th farewell open house is planned to honor Sue.

Elaine added that an offer has gone out for a replacement Director, but they had received no answer yet. She remarked that it was increasingly difficult to hire people at this time.

Beginning January 9, free tax preparation will be available at both the Senior Center and Town Hall, provided by VITA and AARP. Human Services will then start gearing up for summer programs.

Claudia Coplen then reported on town happenings. She attended the affordable housing meeting on November 16, led by Danielle Dobin. Deed restrictions were discussed for town-owned properties. Linxweiler House is not eligible. Susie's House on North Compo Road (formerly Project Return) will be renovated so that each of the six units has its own bathroom and kitchen. Matthew Mandell discussed a proposed Affordable Housing Trust Fund, which would include a fee for buyers of any home sold, a fee on home improvement, and a state rebate on a portion of the conveyance tax.

The meeting then turned to current and potential projects. Plans to develop the property at the intersection of Wilton Road and Kings Highway, behind the car wash, are in the works. The second 8-30g moratorium will go into effect after the final Hiawatha Lane lawsuit is settled. The town is looking for housing proposals for the property on West Parish Road near the Post Road, and ARPA funding is still available for this. Once a developer is found, the Department of

Transportation will transfer the property to the town, and 15 units of family housing would be provided at the site. Claudia mentioned that there was a difference between affordable housing and workforce housing.

There is a move to merge Westport and Norwalk into one Transit District, in order to reach the threshold of 100,000 or more households needed for a Regional District.

Elaine mentioned that two stair lifts are being offered at no cost to those in need. Also, the Wheel It Forward organization will provide medical equipment for donation to those in need.

In view of the two Monday holidays in January and February, it was decided to cancel the January meeting and hold the February meeting on Monday, February 13. The March meeting will be held on March 20, its usual date.

The meeting was adjourned at 11:30 am.