

Commission for Senior Services

Regular Meeting Minutes, December 18, 2023

Attendance: Sarah Adair, Claudia Coplen, Teri Klein, Diana (Wendy) Kleros, Merle Spiegel

Staff: Elaine Daignault, Wendy Petty, Kristen Witt

Absent: Doris Levinson, Holly Betts

Commission Co-Chair Wendy Kleros called the meeting to order at 10:05 am, and the minutes from the November 20th meeting were approved with one minor correction. There were no public comments on non-agenda items. Wendy Petty, Senior Center Director, said there had been a great turnout for the Chris Coogan event the day before, with 150 in attendance.

- Elaine Daignault, Director of Human Services, thanked the Senior Services Commission members for being so high functioning. There are several candidates for the open slot on the Commission, which Second Selectwoman Andrea Moore will be filling. The holiday giving programs have been going well. Westport Women's Club donations paid for catered meals for New Year's dinner, provided to all who receive meals at home. Many contributors have been generous in this difficult year.

The Human Services budget is expected to be essentially flat, Elaine added, with the exception of contractually required increases. Bids are out for the \$1.2 million renovation of Gillespie Center. The \$70,000 construction of Homes with Hope's Susie's House is expected to break ground in March or April of this year. She explained that larger donations need to be approved by the Board of Finance, and even larger ones require full RTM approval.

The presentation to the Board of Education about a survey of drug and alcohol use and perceptions among middle and high school students, to be conducted in cooperation with the Prevention Partnership, met with some serious concerns. Worries were expressed about anonymity and cyber safety, and many parents didn't feel the questions themselves were appropriate for young audiences. Apparently, Westport has a particularly high percentage of alcohol and drug use among teens. The survey discussion is tabled for now.

- Wendy Petty reported on the development of the new Senior Center logo and website, along with plans for outdoor enhancements and the new vehicle. Jenny Townsend will now become a full-time employee, which will be a great help to the Center. More than 500 new members signed up during 2023. Classes are at 80% capacity, a 20% increase since 2022.
- Kristen Witt, LCSW Municipal Agent for Seniors/Senior Social Worker, reported that the Energy Assistance program is ongoing, with funding not going as far as it used to. She noted that the Commission needed to set out its dates for 2024 meetings, which are published on the town website. It was agreed that Commission Board meetings in 2024 would be held as follows:

February 12	August 19
March 18	September 16
April 15	October 21
May 20	November 18
June 17	December 16

There will be no meetings in January and July 2024, and in January 2025.

Commissioner reports:

- Claudia Coplen, Housing, met with the Youth Commission about the idea of building a miniature golf course in Westport as a cross-Commission project to increase intergenerational experiences. Representatives of the Disabilities and Human Services Commissions attended as well. The town would provide the land and receive profits from the project. Parks & Recreation would maintain the course, and funding would be solicited through donations. The next step is to create a revised and updated business plan (this project was initially considered some years ago in a different form). Details at this time are limited, and Senior Services is supporting the project in concept.
- There were no other Commissioner reports.

The meeting was adjourned at 11:05 am. The next meeting will be held on February 12, 2024.