

July 21, 2024

**Commission for Senior Services**

**Regular Meeting Minutes, June 17, 2024**

**Attendance:** Sarah Adair, Teri Klein, Diana (Wendy) Kleros, Doris Levinson, Merle Spiegel

**Staff:** Holly Betts, Wendy Petty, Kristen Witt

**Absent:** Claudia Coplen, Elaine Daignault

**Guest:** Sal Liccione (RTM), Harris Falk, Doug Rifkin

Commission Co-Chair Diana (Wendy) Kleros called the meeting to order at 10:00 am, and the minutes from the April 15<sup>th</sup> meeting were approved. Sal Liccione, RTM and member of the Health and Human Services Committee, observed that there would be a need to increase the Human Services budget going forward. Wendy Kleros, Claudia Coplen, and Teri Klein mentioned that they had attended the first of two Stigma of Mental Health Conferences, led by Art Gottlieb. There were no public comments on non-agenda items.

- Wendy Petty, Senior Center Director, reported that registration for the summer semester was up by 20 percent over last summer. There are 96 total classes – 93 in house, 3 Zoom only, and 11 hybrid. She added that Jenny Townsend is moving this summer and her last day at the senior center was on June 14<sup>th</sup>. Diana Andrew's has been hired as the Customer Relations Specialist, a full-time position. The new Center website has been well received, and outdoor landscaping now complete with an outdoor classroom, pollinator garden, benches, and a walkway. A ribbon cutting ceremony will be scheduled this summer. The first summer barbecue was on June 14, and the second will be on August 1.
- Holly Betts said that several high school students had signed up to provide the Center with technical assistance. The Tech Hub has been set up in one of the conference rooms on Wednesday mornings and Thursday afternoons. This will include special sessions on several Thursdays and walk-in assistance during both days. Special meals will be provided each month, including an ice cream truck on July 19, a lobster bake in August, and a Hispanic meal on September 18. More than 10,300 meals were

served in the cafe this year, and reservations are highly recommended at least two days in advance.

- Kristen Witt, LCSW Municipal Agent for Seniors/Senior Social Worker, reported that the 2023-24 Energy Assistance program was completed with 271 households participating. The state awarded a total of \$122,760 to the heating vendors. Additional funding of \$15,429 was provided by the Westport Warm-Up-Fund, which includes some participants who might not have qualified under the state program.

Kristen added that the Town of Westport together with Homes with Hope and the Westport Housing Authority was awarded the prestigious Community Champions Award from The Connecticut Coalition To End Homelessness' state leadership for its work to end homelessness. The award recognizes teams of leaders, providers, or frontline staff who have significantly improved the delivery of housing and services, thus enhancing the lives of those experiencing Homelessness.

The Gillespie Center is temporarily closed for renovation. Hot meals are being dropped off to Linxweiler residents. The food pantry has been temporarily moved to 1655 Post Road East's community building.

#### Commissioner reports:

- Wendy Kleros reported that she had been named art curator of Art Rooms 1 and 2, a new position. Holly is still responsible for the display cases. There was discussion of a possible Senior Center table at the Downtown Merchants event and the Staples Craft Fair.
- Doris Levinson, Parks and Recreation, reported on plans to redesign and renovate the Compo Beach playground, supported by the Rotary Club and Young Woman's League. The upgrade will make the playground more accessible for disabled children. It will be safer, provide more shade, and enable more children to play at once. There will also be a music activities area and a fake ice cream truck for imaginary play. Also, two sculptures have now been installed at Pasacreta and Stroffolino Parks. They will be on loan for five years, and the artists will speak at local schools. Sunrise Yoga will be offered from 6:00 – 7:00 am at Compo Beach for participants 17 years and over, at a cost of \$125 for the summer. An optional half-hour of meditation will be available immediately afterward.

- Sarah Adair, Tree Board, reported that an excellent Staples intern had created brochures to educate people about trees, and developed a program to evaluate the value of specific trees. The Tree Board has requested permission to install tree-identification signs in various Parks, including Winslow, Grace K. Salmon, and the Lillian Wadsworth Atheneum. They propose to begin with 20 common trees. She mentioned that piling mulch around the base of a tree, which is commonly done in landscaping, is harmful to the tree – as is covering areas of the tree with designs such as knitted bands.
- There were no separate Transportation or Human Services Commission updates.

The meeting was adjourned at 11:00 am. The next meeting will be held on August 19, 2024.

Respectfully submitted, Merle Spiegel