

September 6, 2024

Commission for Senior Services

Regular Meeting Minutes, August 19, 2024

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

Staff: Holly Betts, Elaine Daignault, Wendy Petty, Kristen Witt

Guest: Harris Falk

Commission Co-Chair Claudia Coplen called the meeting to order at 10:00 am, and the minutes from the June 17th meeting were approved. There were no public comments on non-agenda items.

- Wendy Petty, Senior Center Director, reported that the Center had hired Stacie Curran as an additional part-time employee to help out at the desk, which is busier than ever. Jason has left for a new position, and we have hired Joe Anastasi as our new program specialist, he starts September 16th. There are 468 new members so far this fiscal year. The outdoor renovation is complete. Then there will be a celebration of the outdoor garden on September 17th, which will be named in honor of Joe and Irma Schacter.

Wendy added that the Tech Hub has been very successful this summer, with two students twice a week helping seniors with technical issues. It will continue during the fall on Thursday afternoons from 1 – 4:30 pm. September is National Senior Center Month, and the emphasis will be on empowering connections.

- Elaine Daignault, Human Services Director, spoke of kicking off the back-to-school program, through which 88 needy families and 125 children received gift certificates and school supplies. She reported that this year there would be a focus on emergency management and preparedness, led by the Fire Department. Chief Nick Marsan will speak about this at the Center on August 19, and on August 20 there will be a signup for the new Community Contacts initiative, in which all seniors and others are encouraged to register. It will provide useful emergency information about households that will enable extra support to be given if help is needed. In

the next month or two there will be a special focus on preparedness, with a cadre of professionals forming a community support and counseling team.

- Kristen Witt, LCSW Municipal Agent for Seniors/Senior Social Worker, reported that there would be more information next month about the renters' rebate and energy assistance programs. Doris Levinson observed that Eversource is now charging all customers for a fund that will help the company with people who can't pay their bills. It was advised that she contact Jonathan Steinberg about this. Sarah Adair asked if Westport helps people wishing to install solar energy panels. Kristen said that the state energy assistance program is best for people with "deliverable" energy such as oil or propane, but it also includes some basic and crisis benefits for all.
- Holly Betts said the Stand By Me Optimism Walk for Parkinson's disease will be held at Sherwood Island on September 21, and the Reality Check Walk for Alzheimer's will be on October 27 at Calf Pasture Beach. Registration for the next session of classes will begin on Tuesday, September 3 for Westport residents and on Monday, September 9 for nonresidents. There are 94 classes, 7 of which are hybrid and 8 are Zoom only. On October 16, the Senior Center will be hosting a Club 203 evening event for Halloween, with bingo and sandwiches. There will be an art reception on September 10 from 2 – 4 pm hosted by Wendy Kleros, art curator of rooms 1 and 2. Holly added that Wendy Kleros is doing a great job in this new position.

Holly added that the Oktoberfest luncheon will be on October 4 and a Hispanic heritage luncheon will be on October 18. The upcoming holiday lunches are: Veterans Day, November 8; Thanksgiving, November 26; Chanukah, December 13; and Christmas, December 20. Each lunch will have only one seating, accommodating 80 people. Clearly, reservations well in advance are advised.

Commissioner reports:

- Doris Levinson, Parks and Recreation, reported on the successful Soundview Summer Stroll, which was held on July 28 from 11 am – 5 pm. Some 3,000 people attended this street festival. The street was closed to traffic and included food and music. The event was a gift of the Compo Beach Improvement Association, Parks and Recreation, and the Westport Police Department.

- Sarah Adair, Tree Board, has requested permission to install tree-identification signs in various Parks, including Winslow, Grace K. Salmon, and the Lillian Wadsworth Atheneum. She added that another sapling giveaway will be held on Saturday, October 5 behind Town Hall, including pumpkins and face-painting.
- 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 September 16, 2024.

Respectfully submitted, Merle Spiegel