



Town of Sherman
Commission on Aging
Monthly Meeting Minutes
Monday, September 19, 2022

Members Present: Lynda Lee Arnold (Chairman), Janet Wey (Vice Chairman).
Commissioners: Dr. Juan Garcia, Ed Hayes, Rick Hudson, Sheila McMahon,
Jeanne McRoberts, Art Von Plachecki, Carol Sperling

Members Absent: Suzette Berger (Senior Center), Lynne Gomez (Social Services)

Also Present: Don Lowe

Clerk: Christine Aruza

The meeting was called to order at 4:03 PM by Chairman L. Arnold.

Motion made by: R. Hudson moved to approve the minutes

Seconded by: A. Von Plachecki

Vote For: Unanimous

Senior Center/Social Services

No report this month.

Ongoing Business:

Work Group Update:

D. Lowe provided an update on the work group committee's progress. He shared he has been in touch with Karen Cardillo who is the chair of the work group. They discussed the best time to conduct the next meeting and decided it probably will be

in the first couple of weeks of October (perhaps the 12th). There has been one work group meeting since the last Commission on Aging (COA) meeting. The work group discussed the field trip to Colonial Park and potentially moving toward this location for the new senior center. L. Arnold inquired as to the reasoning behind the shift to Colonial Park vis-à-vis Volunteer Field or the Schneckenburger house. Per D. Lowe people liked the location of the Schneckenburger house in town and in keeping close by to other buildings but were not in favor of utilizing the house itself. Colonial Park was raised as an alternative and is therefore being explored.

J. McRoberts asked if a decision had been made to select Colonial Park. E. Hayes emphasized that no decision was made. That would be under the purview of the COA and the Board of Selectman. L. Arnold asked if plans had been drawn up for that location. Per R. Hudson there is a top-line sketch (not a rendering) that has been created by Ray Kelly for the purposes of merely assessing if it is possible to put the proposed senior center at that location. Discussion, at the suggestion of J. Wey, then turned to improved communications between the various groups involved and how to ameliorate it moving forward.

D. Lowe continued the update advising that the work group is seriously looking at Colonial Park. They are also discussing the general need for expanding the set of adult programming through Parks and Recreation and how to assess the need for more adult activities. There are two classes scheduled for October. One is a political discussion group led by Kent Lawson and the other is a three-week seminar on taxes. The plan is to host the classes at the Senior Center so attendees can see the positives of the building as well as the inadequacies.

J. Wey asked about where in Colonial Park the center would be located. Per D. Lowe it would be a bit to the east. The senior center would not impede on the community gardens and would not need to be relocated. There is one small, practice soccer field that would be affected. However, there is a brand, new soccer field at Veteran's Field; there are two small soccer fields and one large soccer field at Volunteer Park; and there is the large soccer field that is already at Colonial Park. R. Hudson indicated that the gardens would be slightly re-shaped but would result in a larger amount of dedicated square footage. D. Lowe added that the

gardens would also be improved with formal fencing, pathways between individual plots and on-site water.

E. Hayes shared that he was particularly pleased that during the last Colonial Park site evaluation, the zoning enforcement officer (Ronald Cooper) joined. He was tremendously helpful and positive about the possibilities of this site being suitable. The zoning enforcement officer evaluated the setbacks and traffic ingress/egress and does not envision anything coming up that would prevent them from moving ahead. Per E. Hayes it would still have to go through normal Planning and Zoning and Inland Wetlands commission planning procedures.

A. Von Plachecki inquired if during the construction planning for the new senior center an offer should be made to co-locate Parks and Recreation offices there with the additional opportunity for them to use the space during the evening for some of their activities. J. Wey indicated the commission would get a more positive response from the town if it was a dual-purpose building. J. McRoberts liked the idea of having Park and Rec incorporated as a multi-use building and suggested a vote in favor of proceeding with Colonial Park as a potential site.

Motion made by: A. Von Plachecki that the commission approve the possibility of utilizing Colonial Park as a site.

Seconded by: J. McRoberts

Vote For: Unanimous

J. Wey requested a site location visit for those that had not been part of the prior field trip. The commission agreed to conduct the visit following the end of the meeting. J. McRoberts additionally requested a goal for the next work group meeting to keep things moving. Per E. Hayes he would like to site the building on the property and then put together notes on the drawing that would address anticipated questions that would arise in the public (e.g., town gardens would remain, walking trails would remain, major soccer fields would remain, etc.) and show the parking that would be available. L. Arnold inquired if the work group

would contact Parks and Recreation about co-location. D. Lowe offered to take that action item and bring the information to the next commission meeting.

Motion made by: A. Von Plachecki to request the work group when they reach a point they think as appropriate to notify the COA chair to call a special meeting to inform on their progress.

Seconded by: R. Hudson

Vote For: Unanimous

Discussion on Volunteer Field as Potential Senior Center Site:

This portion of the agenda was cancelled as it was covered already in the course of the meeting.

Additional/New Senior Center Programs

A. Von Plachecki circulated ‘food for thought’ notes for the group to discuss regarding this matter. Per A. Von Plachecki in his opinion there are two groups of seniors in Sherman. The group that is 55-75 years of age and who are still active and the group that is 75+ in age. The latter group is where the senior center has focused and this group is more in need of a different kind of activity than the 55-75 group. He posed the question, “If we want to move to a different area of programming for the more active group – who are we competing with in town?” He highlighted programs offered by the Sherman Library and Jewish Community Center (JCC). He posed the question for the commission to decide where they are headed with the senior center in terms of servicing two different groups with two different needs. In his estimation, obtaining approval for a new senior center would require expanding the constituency the center serves beyond the 75+ group.

He referenced the recent Planning and Zoning (P&Z) Commission survey results and commentary with respect to programs while noting that most of the respondents were Sherman seniors. S. McMahan inquired about the mission of the senior center and if the commission knows if the center’s mission is to serve everyone over 55 years of age. Per S. McMahan she has spoken with S. Berger

previously and she indicated that while that group (younger than 60) had expressed interest in a past survey for more programs designed specifically for them, the programs have not been well attended. The limited attendance she believes was due to the time they are conducted (during the day) while this group is busy working. R. Hudson added that some of the programs offered today that are oriented to the older half of the group have less appeal for the 55-75 age group.

A. Von Plachecki is concerned about the degree of negativity right now regarding the issue of senior housing. He views the community negativity on this issue (in addition to the groundswell for what the school will need) as a challenge to garnering the needed votes from the town to receive funding and to move forward with a new senior center. This would be especially true if the focus is only on the 75+ group. J McRoberts and R. Hudson voiced agreement with J. McRoberts asking how programs could be enriched. A. Von Plachecki wondered if the commission should approach the younger group on their own or form some type of a coalition. He shared that the minutes from the Parks and Recreation Commission meeting show they are moving in a different direction from what they have offered in the past. They want to meet with the JCC to see what they can do collectively and this topic was also discussed at the last Board of Selectman (BOA) meeting. He posited if there was a synergy that the Commission on Aging (COA) could achieve with the JCC to bring back adult education. S. McMahon noted that there are a number of residents from Sherman that utilize the programs of New Fairfield that if offered in Sherman would be attended locally.

R. Hudson shared that one of the things S. Berger has worked on – since the commission has summarized its needs and wish list – were expanded programs for this younger group. He underscored that there has been effort expended in this way and they will continue to be explored and presented going forward. A. Von Plachecki added that perhaps one of the transitions that may have to be made is to charge for these programs.

New Business:

Per. J. Wey the COA has been approached about the upcoming walk hosted by the Alzheimer's Association and providing volunteers. This Saturday, September 24th, is the date. They are looking for help with traffic direction, handing out water/snacks and greeters.

Adjournment:

A. Von Plachecki moved to adjourn the meeting at 5:04 p.m.

R. Hudson seconded the motion.

Vote for: Unanimous.

Respectfully submitted by Christine Aruza

Next meeting: Monday, October 17, 2022, 4:00PM at Mallory Town Hall