



Town of Sherman
Commission on Aging
Monthly Meeting Minutes
Monday, October 17, 2022

Members Present: Lynda Lee Arnold (Chairman), Janet Wey (Vice Chairman).
Commissioners: Dr. Juan Garcia, Ed Hayes, Rick Hudson, Sheila McMahan,
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 4:00 PM by Chairman L. Arnold.

Motion made by: J. McRoberts moved to approve the minutes

Seconded by: A. Von Plachecki

Vote For: Unanimous

Senior Center/Social Services

Per L. Arnold an email was sent by S. Berger with an attachment that provided a list of upcoming programming. J. Wey advised that this included new, adult programs offered by Parks & Recreation. These programs are being offered for the full community and will be held at the senior center. A. Von Plachecki stated there would be a speaker who built the U.S.S. Nautilus under this new program and there was information also about the Thanksgiving luncheon. J. Wey is pleased to see the luncheon return.

Ongoing Business:

L. Arnold opened this portion of the meeting to alert the commission that the senior center Work Group update will no longer be a standard agenda item covered in the monthly meeting. D. Lowe clarified that the role of the Work Group is to gather information on the project, which is designed to specifically provide the Board of Selectman (BOS) with data that can support their decision-making process. The findings provided by the Work Group include inputs from the commission (e.g., needs) but also additional information such as architectural firm assessments that are beyond the scope and mission of the commission. It is the responsibility of the BOS to make decisions based on those findings and present plans to the public for their consideration. Significant updates on the progress made by the Work Group are discussed at BOS meetings and are available to everyone in the published BOS meeting minutes. D. Lowe also emphasized that individual commissioners are always welcome to call him directly for an update.

Discuss Additional/New Senior Center Programs

This portion of the agenda was discussed in conjunction with the agenda item, 'Future Direction of the COA'. Please see below.

New Business:

Senior Housing Land Referendum

A. Von Plachecki raised the topic of the upcoming November 10th vote on the senior housing land referendum and what if any position the commission should take. Commissioners provided their individual perspectives on this matter. The group agreed as a whole that the commission does not have a position on the referendum.

Future Direction of the COA

Open discussion on the future direction and focus of the Commission on Aging amongst commission members. A. Von Plachecki spoke about the function of the

commission in helping educate the public about the importance of the senior center and the support it provides seniors. He views that as central to its role in addition to raising public awareness about the need for a new building that can continue to provide essential and/or expanded services and programs. R. Hudson concurred with him, underscoring the role of the commission to operate in parallel with S. Berger to help identify program needs and promote them once available. C. Sperling also emphasized that it was her understanding that the commission was recently tasked with focusing on programs. S. McMahon suggested the commission host an open house – as New Fairfield does – early in the year to solicit input from seniors in town.

E. Hayes would like to see one of the goals of the commission to assist the senior center in developing programs that are more appealing for younger seniors. He would also like to bring back programs such as short excursion trips to New York City or Hartford (e.g., botanical gardens, the Zoo, Yankee Stadium, etc.). J. Wey shared that the bus that is used was obtained via a grant which lasts for seven years. There are certain restrictions on its usage – it is not permissible to drive it out-of-state. However, when the grant expires and ownership of the bus transfers to the town – this restriction would be lifted. R. Hudson offered that if there is higher demand (and thus higher attendance) of the programs then other transportation would be required regardless due to the small number of passengers that can be accommodated on the existing bus.

Discussion then turned to who has the responsibility to take ownership of specific programs (the Commission on Aging or Parks & Recreation for example) and how to make these determinations moving forward. In addition, who has the ‘identity’ for being the primary source and/or location for that specific program so residents know to whom to turn for participation, involvement, or volunteerism.

L. Arnold suggested that commissioners brainstorm ideas for new programs and bring five per person to the next meeting for group discussion. The commission could then provide a list of programs for both seniors and younger seniors to S. Berger to explore. She suggested brainstorming not only with people in town but

also with people from other, neighboring senior centers to pool ideas. J. Wey raised the concern that not all could be covered under the existing budget. L. Arnold agreed and ventured that some programs may then need to be fee-based in addition to the customary, complimentary programs. R. Hudson said perhaps with expanded programs it would provide a basis to apply for additional grants to underwrite some costs. S. McMahon raised the idea of sponsorships to potentially assist with funding.

Additional New Business

J. Wey expressed the hope everyone would sign up for the Thanksgiving luncheon (November 16th). The Sherman School students, after a three-year COVID-19 hiatus, will once again perform music and sing at the event. It will be hosted at the school's cafeteria.

A. Von Plachecki requested that the commission revisit having the school administration come in to discuss development of shared programs with the seniors. L. Arnold to take this action item and invite the new administration to come to a future meeting. J. McRoberts added it could be another way in which to create programs that appeal to younger seniors.

Adjournment:

J. McRoberts moved to adjourn the meeting at 5:02 p.m.

S. McMahon seconded the motion.

Vote for: Unanimous.

Respectfully submitted by Christine Aruza
Next meeting: Monday, November 21, 2022, 4:00PM at Mallory Town Hall