



**Town of Sherman**  
**Commission on Aging**  
Monthly Meeting Minutes  
Monday, November 21, 2022

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

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

Clerk: Christine Aruza

The meeting was called to order at 4:00 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 Report:**

No report submitted this month.

**Ongoing Business:**

**Discuss Additional/New Senior Center Programs**

L. Arnold started the meeting reminding everyone that at the last meeting the commission agreed each commissioner would bring five ideas for new

activities/services that the senior center could undertake to entice broader senior participation. She then asked each commissioner to provide their ideas one-by-one with group discussion to come at the end.

J. Wey – shared she had spoken with several seniors at the center. They indicated to her that their number one request was for more trips. They requested more outdoor activities (e.g., picnics at the beach, easy hikes, visiting local gardens). They also want more technology help. While they do have someone coming in once a month now, they still need more informational sessions. They would also like to see more talks/lectures like the Nautilus discussion which was well attended. They also want more communication with our state senators and representatives about upcoming legislation, especially legislation that directly affects seniors. They would also like to partner with other senior centers to conduct activities that they can't do at theirs due to limited space. Lastly, the VNA (Visiting Nurses Association) no longer comes to do blood pressure checks or flu shots and they would like to have a replacement for those services. J. Wey also raised the possibility of conducting a listening session (such as New Fairfield's Commission on Aging does) to hear directly from the seniors themselves about what they would like.

J. Garcia – expressed the need to expand the association with the school and its students and likewise do more with school clubs. He would also like to see an expansion of social services especially in the areas of financial help and estate planning. He also suggested expanding and formalizing the type of clubs the senior center offers to include activities such as fishing, chess, and the like.

S. McMahon – also reiterated the need to speak to state legislators.

J. McRoberts – Echoed the desire for more trips. She highlighted the Wadsworth Atheneum Museum as an option and believes they should explore the variety of free passes offered to seniors for similar venues. She also mentioned the New Britain Museum of American Art as a potential trip that could include a boxed lunch. She also shared that there are special events offered at other libraries that they could attend. Other trip options could include Hyde Park or Innes Gardens.

R. Hudson – agreed with the ideas raised by the other commissioners and stated he would like to see more veterans' events similar to the one he and A. Von Plachecki attended recently at the school where they were received graciously by the students and community. He would also like further emphasis put on creating more opportunities for cross-generational interaction.

C. Sperling – listed a hiking group as her first choice, that would be fairly challenging, as an addition beyond walking around the track. She would also like to see more trips (e.g., fall foliage train trip with lunch at a destination restaurant or the New Britain museum). Her third item was gardening including speakers and trips to gardens (e.g., NY Botanical Gardens) as well as conducting a project or two. A couple of seniors she spoke to would like to see a Zumba class specifically for seniors and regular yoga in addition to chair yoga. Her last item included artist talks/demonstrations. She inquired if it would be possible to involve the Scouts in hiking programs. J. Garcia will check with his spouse who is a part of the organization.

A. Von Plachecki – approached his list as if the building is not a limitation. His suggestions included: a tethered balloon ride (annual signature event for Sherman seniors); bi-monthly ballroom or line dancing; model railroading project (indoor and outdoor w/ a garden project); poetry reading group; coffee/donuts hour for men that might be isolated; bring in a local politician; talks conducted by veterans to school students or talks about other topics (e.g., professional disciplines – law, medicine, insurance) or reading to the students.

E. Hayes – L. Arnold read the list of ideas sent in by E. Hayes. His ideas were geared to attract younger seniors (50+ as defined by AARP) but not be exclusive to that age group. His recommendations included re-establishing bus trips to more distant events (e.g., the Bronx Zoo, Botanical Gardens, Yankees games, Hartford Convention Center, historical sites). He offered that if the Sherman bus has capacity limitations perhaps more than one visit per year could be organized per venue. He also highlighted that these locations have cafeteria services or perhaps senior could bring their own provisions instead of the senior center making these available and/or charging a modest, additional fee to offset meal, fuel and driver costs. He also suggested establishing in-house activities such as poker nights or movie nights and if center personnel are required to be there at night for supervision perhaps offer an opportunity for volunteers to assist in their place. His last idea centered on senior center members providing service to other organizations such as one that already exists (e.g., heart pillows for open heart surgery patients) and working with other town organizations or the veteran's organization.

L. Arnold – solicited feedback from her peer group about what programming they would find of interest. Her list comprised the following desired offerings: art/dance/music lessons; cooking classes that could also teach how to throw a party

and other related topics; informational ‘lunch and learns’ or evening programming (with service industries invited in to discuss financial planning, estate planning, technology, insurance, etc.); recreational activities and fitness classes (e.g., Pilates, yoga, pickle ball); a hiking club with various levels; current events sessions; trivia night; and a knitting or craft circle geared for women. She also echoed group sentiment about bringing the school administration in to discuss and brainstorm the implementation of coordinated programming.

L. Arnold next asked the group to think about next steps once they coalesce around core ideas. The consensus was to present the ideas to S. Berger to evaluate within the context of budget and resources. J. McRoberts offered to explore the logistics/costs associated with her list of ideas. Per J. Wey she discussed trips with S. Berger. They discussed museum trips during the winter as there are no sunk costs associated with cancellation due to inclement weather. R. Hudson stressed ensuring the compiled list is put into a usable format to be given to S. Berger so she can evaluate and then solicit additional funding/create a larger budget for 2023-2024. It should also demonstrate the broader appeal with and needs of younger seniors – which should go towards demonstrating the justification of building a new center based on demand. L. Arnold will reach out to S. Berger to determine the best manner in which to do that.

There is a group concern that additional programs are constrained by the limited size of the building. J. Wey advised similar programs to those discussed were offered in the past and fell away or did not occur due to space constraints, which also precludes running concurrent activities. This historical perspective should be included in discussions about which comes first – the space or the programming. Per R. Hudson they should openly promote and solicit other groups to utilize the senior center after hours to demonstrate more versatility/usability. Per J. McRoberts some groups outside of town occasionally use the center and are appreciative of having the location for use.

A. Von Plachecki talked about soliciting leaders from the community to take up and lead the various proposed activities to help supplement what S. Berger/L. Gomez can practically implement. J. McRoberts suggested ensuring it is time limited (no longer than 6 weeks) in the beginning to alleviate resource limitations. J. Wey shared that Synergy Home Care sponsors programs as well but they are typically only held at larger senior centers. Sherman seniors can attend many of these programs but it is a matter of knowing about them in advance to accommodate transportation logistics for example. R. Hudson suggested additional

promotional efforts specific to larger programs could be advertised in the town paper beyond the standard list routinely published.

L. Arnold will reach out to S. Berger, L. Gomez and the school administration and will report back at the January meeting.

**New Business:**

**2023 Calendar for COA Meetings**

Commissioners reviewed the proposed 2023 calendar dates for monthly meetings.

**Motion made by:** R. Hudson moved to approve the proposed 2023 meeting calendar

**Seconded by:** J. McRoberts

**Vote For:** Unanimous

**Additional New Business**

A. Von Plachecki announced he will resign from the commission effective at the first of the year due to personal, health reasons. L. Arnold thanked him for his contributions to the commission over the years with the group echoing the same. J. Wey expressed the commission would like to interview potential candidates in advance for any commissioner openings.

**Adjournment:**

J. McRoberts moved to adjourn the meeting at 5:01 p.m.

R. Hudson seconded the motion.

Vote for: Unanimous.

Respectfully submitted by Christine Aruza  
Next meeting: January 23, 4:00PM at Mallory Town Hall