



Town of Sherman
Commission on Aging
Monthly Meeting Minutes
February 27, 2023

Members Present: Lynda Lee Arnold (Chairman), Janet Wey (Vice Chairman).
Commissioners: Rick Hudson, Jeanne McRoberts, Carol Sperling, Suzette Berger
(Senior Center)

Members Absent: Dr. Juan Garcia, Ed Hayes, Sheila McMahon, Lynne Gomez
(Social Services)

Also Present: Christine Aruza (Clerk), Meredith Kroeger (Commissioner
Nominee)

The meeting was called to order at 4:02 PM by Chairman L. Arnold.

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

Seconded by: J. McRoberts

Vote For: Unanimous

Senior Center/Social Services Report:

Social Services Report

L. Arnold read into the minutes the Social Services report provided by L. Gomez
prior to the meeting:

- 1) Last month saw the opening of our new Sherman Food Pantry. We have filled the shelves in the Social Services Office with non-perishable food

items and hygiene products. It is the only known active food pantry in Sherman.

- 2) During Open Enrollment (Medicare) Social Services served more than 70 residents with Medicare planning and advising. L. Gomez is a certified CHOICES counselor. Susie Marker, assistant, will be receiving training with CHOICES this month.
- 3) Energy Assistance and Operation Fuel applications are still being taken for direct payments to oil companies for eligible Sherman residents. We have processed more than 50 applications this winter for a total average of \$1200 in oil payments per application.
- 4) L. Gomez received training this month in QPR suicide prevention training.
- 5) Advocating for the town's "Elder Orphans" continues to be a priority for our office. An Elder Orphan is a senior or senior couple who has no family or reliable friends. We work with Adult Protective Services to create a plan and gather resources.

Senior Center Report

Per S. Berger the winter has been a period of transition with the focus shifting into wellness programs and enrichment after the holidays. Attendees of the holiday party felt it was the best party to date. Yesterday, they spoke to the board of selectman (BOS) about the 2023/2024 budget. S. Berger advised that they have an increase of 23% YoY in terms of people and are officially back to pre-pandemic levels. In 2017 they saw 176 individuals and now they have 170 through this fiscal year and anticipate the number will increase throughout the year. This time last year they had 138 individuals.

In addition, she advised in 2018 those individuals came in to the center and participated in 2,400 programs. An individual that comes in for a luncheon event and then attends the art show is considered one individual and two events/programs. For this fiscal year already, they have conducted 4,400 programs with the same staff and one room. She stressed they are unable to conduct more than one program at a time due to the space constraints. They also need a sufficient cushion of time between programs because of the parking lot as well as congestion with the restrooms. Last month the lines extended through the hallway which blocked access to the building.

S. Berger shared that she asked for an initial increase of three hours of transportation per week and an increase in certain activities. She recommended reducing the visiting nurse association's (VNA) fund and putting it into an open activities fund so she has more flexibility. There were challenges with the VNA scheduling and the VNA not being able to provide needed services such as blood pressure (BP) checks and flu shots. She may also explore hiring a local nurse to provide the BP check once a month. R. Hudson inquired if our EMTs could assist with that particular service as a supplement. S. Berger advised she would reach out to the volunteer EMTs and other groups in town to see if they can help. M. Kroeger asked if they could use the Housatonic Valley Health. Discussion then centered on getting a physical or occupational therapist to come every two or three months to assist seniors in that capacity.

Per S. Berger they have a new intern, Monica Gray, from Western Connecticut State University (Westconn). S. Berger handed out flyers describing the new programs that M. Gray is organizing. These are, "Politics with Pat Endress" and "Intergenerational Programs with the Sherman School". The program with Pat Endress has two different topical discussion groups. The intergenerational programs with the Sherman School are divided into four categories: pickleball introduction; drum circle and mini-water cooler; open rehearsal with the school band; and music/yoga. She indicated the school is enthusiastically working them on these programs. S. Berger encouraged the commissioners to sign-up and to share information about the programs with their friends.

Lastly, S. Berger is reviewing their transportation program to ensure the policy is consistent as they have new clients and several part-time drivers. She has also contacted the insurance company who will come in and deliver a defensive driving course. She also advised that the vehicles are old and need maintenance. J. Wey inquired about the van. Per S. Berger they did a grant and were approved for a 9-passenger all-wheel drive (AWD) van but have not received it yet due to supply chain delays caused by the pandemic.

J. McRoberts requested that S. Berger annotate the stats and details of her report as it is important for the public's evaluation of a new center.

Ongoing Business:

Discuss Additional/New Senior Center Programs

L. Arnold kicked off the discussion reiterating that the commission has come up with several ideas for new programs, however, the execution of programs will be determined by space, staffing and budget. S. Berger shared that per the group's request for more programs with in-town students she also conducted an intergenerational program with a homeschool group in town. Per J. Wey the children brought refreshments, did painting and bought prizes with their own money for bingo.

M. Kroeger (7 Rising Sun Trail) shared that several years ago seniors did similar interactive programs with the school that no longer exist. Per S. Berger, in the past, the school conducted a 'Homework Club' program with younger children and their 'grandparent' mentor. However, it was replaced with a program pairing younger children with high-school age students. L. Arnold will invite the school principal (Dr. Mary Fernand) to a future commission meeting to discuss additional programs.

New Business:

2023/2024 Budget as Presented

R. Hudson presented the Commission on Aging (COA) budget request for the new fiscal year. Per L. Arnold the next step is to allocate initiatives to the budget once it is approved and utilize what remains from the current fiscal year budget. J. McRoberts raised the question about the difference between the COA budget and the Senior Center budget. Per S. Berger the COA funds are to be used for programs to benefit all seniors of Sherman, not just those that attend the Senior Center. Likewise, the Senior Center budget is allocated to support seniors that specifically utilize the center. She suggested ideas such as hiring a speaker. C. Sperling advised that they should target younger seniors that do not attend the Senior Center to which S. Berger concurred that the COA should broaden its audience. Per J. McRoberts it can be a challenge as the library, JCC and Parks & Recreation all offer programs so it can be difficult for scheduling and to make sure it is appealing. L. Arnold asked the commissioners to research potential speakers and topics and bring to the next meeting. She will check with Liz LaVia (Business Manager) to ascertain what budget restrictions may exist with respect to following the COA's mission.

Sponsoring the Senior Art Show (End of Summer)

Per J. Wey one of the programs the COA has been asked to do again is the Senior Art Show. The COA recruits the artists and hosts the reception. The show is held at

the Sherman Library and has attracted many seniors in the past. The commission decided to hold the 2023 show July 28-September 6. The COA will coordinate with Linda Hubbard and the show will fall under the 2023/2024 budget.

J. Wey made a motion that the COA sponsor the Senior Art Show at the Sherman Library from July 28th to September 6th.

Seconded by: C. Sperling

Vote For: Unanimous

COA E-Mail

The commission decided to discuss next month who is responsible (moving forward) for monitoring its town email account and assign. Commissioners also discussed the importance of the NIXLE system for alerting seniors to critical information and therefore request that the first selectman re-highlight in his communications how to access and use the system.

Re-Appointment of Janet Wey

J. Wey stated she was re-appointed and sworn in by Carol Havens (Town Clerk). However, she is concerned that there should be other commissioners up for re-appointment. She will speak with C. Havens to verify as L. Arnold received an email from R. Byrnes with the expiration terms of all commissioners and none are presently up for re-appointment.

COA Vacancy

Per the above there is an outstanding question about the expiration of A. Von Plachecki's term as it is a factor in the start date for the vacant position and its term length. J. Wey will ascertain. The commission then requested M. Kroeger to draft a letter to the first selectman (Don Lowe) expressing her interest to initiate the process for her nomination. Final meeting comments addressed the COA's role as an advisory body in light of its stated mission.

Additional New Business

S. Berger mentioned that in the past, one of the representatives would act as a conduit with the state legislature on locally related issues. Someone would then write articles for the local paper every few months explaining issues that are

important for the seniors of Sherman. She recommended revisiting this process. Under one of the new programs, her intern will write letters to the legislators on behalf of the Senior Center members with respect to their needs, however, they would like the commission's help in identifying matters that are important to other town seniors. L. Arnold inquired why the articles had stopped. J. Wey indicated that Richard Smith and Mike Loughlin used to interact with the COA more, yet this stopped when they no longer held office and it was not automatically transferred to new representatives. R. Hudson stated he receives electronic communications regularly from the newly elected officials and will take on the responsibility to transmit issues related to seniors to the commission.

Adjournment:

J. McRoberts moved to adjourn the meeting at 5:10 p.m.

R. Hudson seconded the motion.

Vote for: Unanimous.

Respectfully submitted by Christine Aruza
Next meeting: March 20, 2023 @ 4:00PM at Mallory Town Hall