



Town of Sherman
Commission on Aging
Monthly Meeting Minutes
March 20, 2023

Members Present: Janet Wey (Vice Chairman). Commissioners: Dr. Juan Garcia, Ed Hayes, Rick Hudson, Jeanne McRoberts, Sheila McMahon, Carol Sperling, Lynne Gomez (Social Services)

Members Absent: Lynda Arnold, Suzette Berger (Senior Center)

Also Present: Christine Aruza (Clerk), Don Lowe (First Selectman), Meredith Kroeger (Commissioner Nominee)

The meeting was called to order at 4:00 PM by Vice Chairman Janet Wey.

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. Gomez informed the commission that beginning on May 1st, elderly clients on fixed incomes can receive a shutoff notice and have their electricity service cut off if they have an overdue balance. This was not occurring during the past three years of the pandemic. Social services will alert all of their energy clients via email. The only manner in which to prevent a shutoff is to get on a payment plan.

Additionally, this was not the case in the past for clients considered hardship cases based on low income or medical need. Medical need is now the only hardship case

for which they will not cut service as those individuals rely on medical equipment (e.g., CPAP, etc.).

Per L. Gomez, Sussanne Marker in the Social Services office is almost completely trained as a CHOICES representative. CHOICES counselors provide Medicare facts. They will also do a brief presentation to the union members at Town Hall to explain the transition during retirement to Medicare.

L. Gomez advised they are continuing to work with ‘elder orphans’ in town. She referenced an article which has 10 bullet points on how to support elder orphans in need. The article provides guidance, for example, on how to assist those who do not have a will or advanced directive with creating them. L. Gomez also stressed there is still a significant need for suitable housing in Sherman for the elderly on fixed, low incomes. She will send a copy of the elder orphan checklist from the article to the commissioners.

She also mentioned that Habitat for Humanity – through its “Brush with Kindness” program – will perform a spring, outdoor clean-up for income-eligible seniors/veterans for free in April and May. Social Services has the application for interested participants.

L. Gomez also shared the food pantry is up and running. They are receiving additional funds from the Salvation Army. It is income-based for seniors over 65 and families with children. The amount provided is one free bag per month.

Senior Center Report

No report this month.

Ongoing Business:

Discuss Work Committee & Results of March 15, 2023 Town Meeting

While most of the commission had been in attendance at the March 15th town meeting, R. Hudson provided an official update for the record. He thought the meeting went well, had a lot of valuable information and several good questions were asked to aid the voting public in understanding the presented request. S. McMahan concurred that D. Lowe and J. Bruzinski managed the Q&A session well to address concerns. The town resolved at the meeting to approve a request for \$9000 from the capital non-recurring to fund building and site plan renderings for a

proposed new Senior Center. The renderings will be done by Westchester Modular. Per D. Lowe the last meeting of the workshop group will be on March 29th. Following that meeting, the group will transition into a formal building committee with official notice, warnings, and recorded minutes. Kris Fazzino (Public Works Supervisor) will also move forward with scraping the proposed site location to determine the substrata.

J. Wey asked D. Lowe if the commissioners should attend the Board of Selectmen (BOS) meeting on March 23rd. Per D. Lowe there will be an extension of the March 15th meeting discussion. He believes the School Building Committee will present their wish to give 6,000 sq. feet from the Sherman School to the town to manage. This is a factor of decreasing school enrollment and the need to therefore reduce physical space in light of meeting state requirements for increased funding. It represents approximately 8% of the current footprint. The School Building Committee will walk through the particulars of the proposed plan at the meeting. He advised the committee will conduct two more public forums that would be good for the commission to attend.

C. Sperling advised she felt uneasy at and after the town meeting as someone called her and shared that there was a suggestion for the Senior Center to be placed in the basement of the school. E. Hayes expressed similar concerns about this proposition. J. Wey and J. McRoberts shared that the commission previously explored co-location of the Senior Center in the school with its administration. However, school parents preferred not to have the seniors located within the same building owing to child safety concerns and this option was not pursued. Per D. Lowe it has been vetted twice before and found to be unsuitable, however, they are keeping an open mind to the option and reiterated it will ultimately go to a town vote.

Discuss Potential Paid Speakers

J. Wey stated that just before the COVID shut down the commission was going to host a screening of the film “Coming of Age in Aging America” at the JCC. She checked and the Sherman Library still has a copy of the film which will not cost the commission to use. She suggested that the commission could offer refreshments at the event. Discussion then ensued about the film’s current relevancy. The commission left open the decision to move forward with the program at this time. C. Sperling shared that one of the best programs she attended was a presentation about Connecticut black bears held at the New Fairfield senior center. The presentation was conducted by Paul Colburn. Mr. Colburn also holds discussions about: the bobcat; mountain lion; coyotes; white tail deer; wildlife in

Connecticut and its changing landscape; and a natural history of CT dating back to 1650. C. Sperling will contact the New Fairfield senior center or John Foley (Naturalist and Preserve Steward) at Great Hollow to ascertain costs. J. Wey noted it as a potential program to discuss next month that would have a broad appeal. M. Kroeger additionally suggested contacting the Audubon Center to come in and speak about the changing bird population, which was also recorded as a potential program to explore.

J. Wey proposed inviting our elected state officials to come and speak about topics important to seniors. E. Hayes stressed that it should be promoted as an event for seniors specifically on a particular topic as opposed to a town-wide, open-discussion. D. Lowe recommended to offer it as a forum, not a town meeting to keep it topically focused. Discussion followed on how to keep the event apolitical.

R. Hudson provided an update on his action item to contact Sherman's elected state officials, Stephen Harding and Patrick Callahan, to request they keep the commission informed of relevant, upcoming legislative activity. He advised Patrick Callahan agreed to act as a conduit on issues occurring in Hartford that could impact seniors in Sherman. R. Hudson has not reached Stephen Harding yet, but will continue his efforts to connect with the representative.

Art Show Update

J. Wey reminded the commission that it agreed to hold the 2023 Art Show from July 28 – September 6th. She spoke with Suzette Berger (Senior Center) who agreed to provide space in the next bulletin to advertise the show. J. Wey will create the write-up and give to S. Berger. Per J. Wey the next action will be to divvy up and assign tasks at the next meeting as well as contact artists to invite.

New Business:

Purchasing Crossing Sign in Front of Senior Center & Other Expenditures

J. Wey stated the commission agreed to purchase a new crossing sign in front of the senior center. She believes the last sign was approximately \$250 and it lasted three years. The replacement of the sign is a high priority due to safety risks. Public Works will order the sign once instructed by the commission.

R. Hudson made a motion that the Commission on Aging will cover the cost of a new crossing sign in front of the senior center up to a maximum of \$400.

Seconded by S. McMahon.

Vote For: Unanimous

COA E-Mail

R. Hudson agreed take to up the task of monitoring the commission's email. He will distribute as necessary to the group. J. Wey anticipates that the amount of email will increase during the period of the Art Show.

Additional New Business

The commission made the decision to update its contact information list. C. Aruza will take this action item. J. Wey shared that M. Kroeger will be appointed to the commission at the next BOS meeting. She also provided an update on the term periods of existing commission members. The following commissioners have terms that will expire January 2024: Dr. J. Garcia, R. Hudson, S. McMahon, and J. McRoberts. The following commissioners have terms that will expire January 2025: L. Arnold, E. Hayes, and C. Sperling. M. Kroeger will fill the remainder of Art Von Plachecki's term until January 2025.

Adjournment:

R. Hudson moved to adjourn the meeting at 5:04 p.m.

S. McMahon seconded the motion.

Vote for: Unanimous.

Respectfully submitted by Christine Aruza

Next meeting: April 17, 2023 @ 4:00PM at Mallory Town Hall