



**Town of Sherman**  
**Commission on Aging**  
Monthly Meeting Minutes  
April 17, 2023

Members Present: Lynda Arnold (Chairman), Janet Wey (Vice Chairman).  
Commissioners: Dr. Juan Garcia, Ed Hayes, Rick Hudson, Meredith Kroeger,  
Sheila J. McMahan, Carol Sperling, Suzette Berger (Senior Center), Lynne Gomez  
(Social Services)

Members Absent: Jeanne McRoberts

Also Present: Christine Aruza (Clerk)

The meeting was called to order at 4:01 PM by Chairman Lynda Arnold.

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

**Seconded by:** S. McMahan

**Vote For:** Unanimous

**Senior Center/Social Services Report:**

**Senior Center Report**

S. Berger provided her report in advance of the meeting via email. L. Arnold read her report into the minutes:

Speaker recommendation: Arthur Gottlieb, LCSW, CSA. He offers multiple historical, national, and Connecticut topics or will moderate your current event topic. [agott@optonline.net](mailto:agott@optonline.net)

On April 11th we had a staff meeting and Defensive Driving class run by CIRMA (Connecticut Interlocal Risk Management Agency). It was an opportunity to

review policy and discuss current issues with our senior transportation vehicles. The new senior bus was delivered to Connecticut several months ago and the catalytic converter was stolen before it could be transferred to Sherman. We do not have a delivery date yet.

Monica Garay will be finishing her internship next week. She was very helpful in interviewing all of our drivers and staff to assist in the policy review. She also coordinated a couple of very interesting discussion groups moderated by Sherman resident Pat Endress.

We continue to schedule several intergenerational programs with the school. In May we have Pickleball, a preview of the Art Show and a Band Rehearsal on the calendar.

The Wednesday Lunch program has been consistently attended. The company with the current state bid, CW Solutions LLC, notified us that we are capped at serving 22 clients due to budget issues.

Attorney Lynda Arnold will be hosting a 'Lunch and Learn' on May 11th at 11:00 AM. The topic is, "How to Build an Estate Plan".

A reminder that Tuesday is the program with the "White House Butler" which discusses White House entertainment and services to the First Family over different years. The program is at 3:00 PM and the speakers fee has been sponsored by Sue Moga.

### **Social Services Report**

L. Gomez advised she received a call this week from a town resident. The resident wanted to know statistics with respect to how many residents are in poverty and how many are over 65. Her inquiry was in relation to the matter that is being discussed about the Sherman School. L. Gomez reviewed the statistics provided in the last U.S. Census Bureau (2021). According to census statistics there are 3,545 people in Sherman. Approximately 2,032 are 55 and older and there are almost 1,000 eligible by age for Medicare. She referenced the question often asked, 'Is Sherman an aging population and how much of it is an aging population?' Per L. Gomez the data reinforces that it is an aging population and is more so than many thought.

S. McMahon asked L. Gomez if she knew the statistics for economically disadvantaged residents. She raised the issue that families that rely on food stamps are unable to use them at the local IGA market and therefore must drive to grocery stores in other towns. She wanted to know if that could possibly be resolved. L. Gomez agreed that food stamps should be accepted at the IGA if it is possible for the store to accommodate.

Per L. Gomez, approximately 407 people in Sherman fall below 60% of the state median income level. Thus, they are eligible for energy assistance. That equates to a single person earning less than \$35,000 per year or a family of four earning less than \$55,000 per year, which is 14.5% of households. A large number of those households include single, elderly individuals living on a fixed, social security income. Conversely, 37% of households earn more than \$200,000.

R. Hudson had also provided the commission with a printout of similar data pulled from the non-profit organization AdvanceCT for 2021. He pointed out that for both surveys, more than 50% of the total population in town is 55 and over. He also noted there is a concerning decline in the 30-39 age bracket, which is 4% of the town's population and represents families with children of school age. The age distribution demographics are as follows: 10-19 (14%), 20-29 (10%), and 40-49 (13%) which in his opinion does not bode well economically for the future of the town.

### **Ongoing Business:**

#### **Discuss Town Vote for Westchester Modular Rendering & Progress**

L. Arnold asked if the approval to pursue renderings of the proposed new senior center with Westchester Modular was status quo or if it had been rescinded. According to R. Hudson the town voted their approval of the expenditure for the Board of Selectman (BOS) to spend for the rendering. The BOS subsequently determined during a special meeting session that it was not worthwhile to specifically proceed with Westchester Modular producing the rendering.

Commissioners then discussed that concerns were raised by some residents that if the renderings were made by Westchester Modular it could give the false impression that they were given preference for the senior center project. C. Sperling added that D. Lowe received negative feedback about Westchester Modular from a few residents. E. Hayes concurred and said the decision was made based on feedback and the perception of potential favoritism.

The work group held a meeting and elected to go back to the five architectural firms that put in bids for the project to invite them back in for an interview. The selected firm would then create the rendering. The budgeted amount for the rendering is still allocated in the town budget.

R. Hudson indicated that at the last work group meeting it was determined they had completed their original project mission. The work group will now move to a formal building committee status with more individuals from the community brought on board. Work group members have been invited to join the formal committee if they wish.

E. Hayes shared that after the recent mass at Holy Trinity they received information from Fr. Wolfe that the church has received permission from the bishop to move forward with its renovation plans. Holy Trinity is located next to the town property which is where the proposed new senior center would be located. E. Hayes indicated that Westchester Modular was selected to do the project. He passed around a rendering produced by Westchester Modular for the church rebuild. He then advised that Westchester Modular during their design process assessed the access road, traffic flows and lines of sight. If the senior center is approved by the town, then it will utilize some of the same access road. He stressed that it is time sensitive for the architectural firm for the senior center project to be selected given the status of the church renovation project.

J. Wey is concerned about the impact of the Sherman School on tax rates in town and how that will impact the proposed senior center. Per C. Spelling the advantage for the senior center project is that the town does not have to borrow money to fund the project and thus it will not negatively affect the tax rate.

### **Discuss Potential Paid Speakers**

S. McMahon asked who the audience would be for paid speaker programs. L. Arnold indicated it would be the town's seniors specifically but could be open to the broader public based on the topic. C. Sperling tried to get more information about bringing in Paul Colburn from the New Fairfield senior center. However, she was unable to reach anyone and has not received a reply yet to her voicemail. She went on his website to ascertain fees but they are not available. She will continue to try and obtain the necessary information.

J. Wey said she spoke to S. Berger and she advised the commission should let her know as soon as possible dates for proposed speakers. S. Berger had provided a calendar for May and June that will soon go to the printer. Space is already limited

and they also strive not to compete with other events occurring in town. L. Arnold will reach out to Arthur Gottlieb to check his availability and fees.

L. Arnold asked if the commission had decided to move forward or pass on the suggestion to host the film, “Coming of Age in Aging America”. The commission decided not to proceed.

### **Art Show Update**

J. Wey shared that S. Berger will put the Art Show in the May/June newsletter and the July/August newsletter. They will receive a ¼ page ad space for the promotion plus a special insert. L. Arnold asked how the commission wished to reach out to artists. J. Wey said she will divide up the list and assign outreach to individual commission members in June.

### **New Business:**

E. Hayes said the Sherman Veteran’s Association has decided that they wish to do something to thank the town for the support they have received. They wish to plant a tree on the lawn in front of the Sherman Playhouse as a gift to the residents of the town. There was a tree there roughly 25 years ago that was illuminated during the holidays. It had been planted as a tribute to honor Mr. Braislin after his passing. The veteran’s wish to illuminate the tree during a seasonal, non-religious celebration once a year to bring residents together. They are raising the concept with each town organization to receive input and support. They have received positive feedback from each organization approached to date.

### **Comments by Commissioner:**

L. Arnold formally welcomed Meredith Kroeger as a new commissioner on behalf of the Commission on Aging.

### **Adjournment:**

S. McMahon moved to adjourn the meeting at 5:21 p.m.

J. Wey seconded the motion.

Vote for: Unanimous.

Respectfully submitted by Christine Aruza  
Next meeting: May 15, 2023 @ 4:00PM at Mallory Town Hall