

WEST HARTFORD SENIOR CITIZENS' ADVISORY COMMISSION

MINUTES

December 15, 2020

Members Present: Noreen Bachteler, Rosemary Cleary, Ray Guenter, Philip Walker
Absent: Linda Hanson, Robert Kennedy, Mary Reilly, Donna Sterling
Staff Present: Keren Paquette, Andrea Ruggiero
Guests: Sheila Diamond, Kevin Farmer,

Chairman Philip Walker called the meeting to order at 10:05 am.

The minutes of the November 17th meeting were approved unanimously.

Chairman's Report

Chairman Phil Walker reflected on his "last" meeting. "It has been a great ride working with such terrific people." He congratulated Gina Marino on receiving the 2020 Outstanding Professional Award given by the Connecticut Recreation & Parks Association.

Rosemary Cleary and Ray Guenter reported for the Nominating Committee that no member wished to step up as chairman. Phil will contact Essie Labrot to discuss what happens next.

Kate Farrar, D. 20th House District

Ray Guenter introduced Rep. Farrar who is his and a new member of the legislature. Ms. Farrar asked all present to introduce themselves. She discussed why she ran and how she wishes to advocate for issues she cares about. She spoke about her background in working for nonprofit organizations such as her position as Executive Director of the CT Women's Education and Legal Fund (CWEALF), where she led the passage of Paid Family Medical Leave legislation and important laws to increase family economic security -- including equal pay and raising the minimum wage. She also expanded STEM education and leadership programs for thousands of middle-school girls and college women. Since March she has spent time phoning seniors. With a focus on making sure that health care be affordable and accessible, she is concerned about the economy and inequalities in the town and the state. Currently, she is attending briefing sessions on the vaccine distribution, prescription drug costs and making voting more accessible permanently. She expects that these concerns will be among issues covered in the General Assembly: car vandals and thefts; the economy; services to all people.

West Hartford Social Services

Keren Paquette reported that staff continues to work partially remote and is back on a staggered schedule. They never stopped taking referrals. The Food Pantry is seeing record numbers; it offers curbside pick-up 3 days a week and volunteers are making home deliveries. Dial-A-Ride services continue with protocols in place Energy Assistance is extremely busy. The Renters' Rebate program is ending. The Choices Program continues. She noted that there is concern about how homebound individuals will receive the vaccine, perhaps using the list the Fire and Police Departments maintain.

Senior Centers

No report. It was suggested that Rep. Farrar's name be put on the mailing lists.

Senior Jobs Bank

Sheila Diamond and staff have been working remotely. There was a decline in the spring of job seekers and individuals and businesses needing help but as of November the numbers were back up. Fund raising is going well and they are working on a marketing plan for 2021.

Transportation

Kevin Farmer indicated that there have been challenges; drivers are down by 1/3 and demand is down by 1/2. However, everyone is flexible and optimistic. Donations have increased slightly.

The Calendar for 2021 will be emailed to the Town and the Commission.

It was asked that the Minutes reflect appreciation to Phil Walker and Donna Sterling for their service on the Commission.

The next meeting of the Commission is scheduled for Tuesday, January 19th at 10:00am on WebEx.

The meeting adjourned at 11:14am.

Respectfully submitted,
Amy Lynn Silverman, Recording Secretary