

WEST HARTFORD SENIOR CITIZENS' ADVISORY COMMISSION

MINUTES

September 15, 2020

Members Present: Noreen Bachteler, Ray Guenter, Robert Kennedy, Ellen Phillips, Philip Walker
Absent: Rosemary Cleary, Linda Hanson, Mary Reilly, Donna Sterling
Town: Town Manager Matt Hart
Staff Present: Gina Marino, Keren Paquette, Helen Rubino-Turco
Guests: Sheila Diamond, Kevin Farmer, Pamela Hilborn, Mary Silverberg

Chairman Philip Walker called the meeting to order at 10:0 am.

The minutes of the February 18th meeting were approved unanimously.

Town Manager Matt Hart

Matt Hart spoke about the COVID19 pandemic and the town's support of the Governor's Executive Orders. The Town's incident command system was in place from mid-March and met once a month or as needed. It included special tasks forces with the Recovery Coordinator; the Emergency Medical Director, and covered Municipal Operations Recovery, and the Community Support Team. All trying to be realistic about timelines. The West Hartford/Bloomfield Health District has now established flu clinics and will provide the Covid vaccine when it is available. Contact tracing has been going on since late February.

There are some silver linings: the support of outdoor dining and support of retail; and the vast majority of administrative services are now provided online or by phone.

In responding to a question about masks and social distancing, he said the number one complaint is about people not wearing masks in the Center or Blue Back Square

Helen Rubino-Turco

Ms. Rubino-Turco is the Director of Leisure and Social Services. She spoke about the closure/opening of facilities, and the additional oversight of parks during the summer. Gina Marino who is now overseeing both senior centers monitors the recommendations from the state. There is ongoing collaboration between the Fire Department and Social Services for the vulnerable and compromised population.

Dial-A-Ride is still operating but there are no shared rides. Rides are restricted to doctor appointments and grocery shopping.

Gina Marino

Both senior centers have switched to virtual programming. All members have been called to see how they are doing. There are 2 emails a week which feature all the programs which are now free. All instructors have volunteered. Hard copies of the bulletin are available. Because technology is an ongoing issue, the centers are working with a business to secure used computers for those who do not have computers. WeHa AT Your Service has been helping. There have been a few outdoor activities.

Kathleen Faroni retired. There has not been a decision about when to open the centers.

West Hartford Social Services

Keren Paquette reported that staff is working remotely and will be back on a staggered schedule. They never stopped taking referrals. The Food Pantry and Volunteer Services changed to curbside for pick ups and deliveries. The Medical Escort program is on hold. The Greater Hartford Transit program has waived fees. Energy Assistance has begun with virtual, phone or mail appointments. Renters' Rebate ends September 30th. The Choices Program is virtual or by phone. CRT meals are pick up through the end of the year.

Transportation

Kevin Farmer noted that service was suspended March 30th but began again June 6 under CDC protocols. Demand for rides is down to about half and only one quarter of the drivers are willing to drive. There is a continued need to recruit new volunteers. A grant from the Fisher Foundation has enabled the hiring of a part-time employee, Ms. Lowenstein. ITNCentral did receive some funding from the Small Business Administration. There will be a Zoom interactive on Oct. 13 on “When Mom and Dad can no longer drive.”

Seniors Job Bank

Sheila Diamond said they never closed their doors and have been working remotely. The number of requests is down, but there is still outside work going on. Drivers have been available for critical appointments. Some attorneys are conducting a pro bono review of the practices and forms. There has been an uptick in jobs for business.

The next meeting of the Commission is scheduled for Tuesday, October 20th at 10:00am on WebEx.

The meeting adjourned at 11:11am.

Respectfully submitted,
Amy Lynn Silverman, Recording Secretary