

# WEST HARTFORD SENIOR CITIZENS' ADVISORY COMMISSION

## MINUTES

March 16, 2021

Members Present: Amy Silverman, Rebecca Hajosy, Robert Kennedy, Rosemary Cleary, Ellen Phillips  
Absent: Linda Hanson, Mary Reilly, Noreen Bachteler,  
Staff Present: Helen Rubino-Turco, Gina Marino, Keren Paquette, Jennifer Evans  
Guests: Kevin Farmer, Gail Crockett, Beth Rocco, Shayline Cruz (intern)

Chairperson Amy Lynn Silverman called the meeting to order at 10:03AM

The minutes of the January 15, 2020 meeting were approved unanimously. The February meeting was not held.

### ***Chairperson's Report***

New Chairperson Amy Lynn Silverman thanked the group for the vote of confidence in naming her to the position. She replaced former Chairman Phil Walker and thanked him for his service. Amy also welcomed new member Rebecca Hajosy and the new Volunteer Recording Secretary Ann Visgilio. There is a vacancy because Ray Guenter resigned his seat. Amy asked the members to think about candidates.

### ***West Hartford/Bloomfield Health District Report***

Aimee Krauss, Director of the Health District, was unable to make the meeting. Helen Rubino-Turco gave the update in Aimee's place. After April 5, the town government will start transitioning to in person meetings and Town Hall will gradually start opening for in-person appointments. All Covid protocols will continue. Vaccine update: 55 and older are eligible for vaccines starting Friday March 19 and on April 5, all other age groups will be eligible. This is earlier than the original timeline. 75% of West Hartford school employees have been vaccinated and the rest will be on Friday March 19. The new West Hartford Vaccine Support Phone Line, staffed by Library staff, has received 740 calls so far. Number is 860-561-6998. Many of these calls are referred to Social Services or the Health District. The ARCH Program, which began on Feb 10, is vaccinating homebound residents every Wednesday, 10 per day. The Health District is working to set up an online system for this program. More Johnson & Johnson vaccine should arrive on March 29.

### ***Human & Leisure Services / Capital Improvements***

Director Helen Rubino-Turco presented this update: West Hartford Senior Centers are working on a plan for re-opening following recent senior center reopening guidelines from the Governor. Tents are being ordered for each facility for outdoor activities. Fitness Centers will start opening by appointment only. There are 2 open senior center clerk positions. Cornerstone Aquatics Center, which has been open, will now start accepting new members. The town is putting together a new Sustainability Advisory Group with 20 town residents with diverse voices. Town Clerk Essie Labrot is taking the applications. Recent Capital Improvements: Whiting Lane Park – tennis courts and soccer field renovations are complete; Eisenhower Park completed replacement of stand-alone restrooms that are ADA compliant; in progress is pond restoration of McGovern Pond in Spice Bush Swamp – 1300 cubic yards of material dredged from pond and now improvements around pond are in process; upcoming project on house entrance at Westmoor Park – ramp & front stairs; Wolcott Park multi-year improvements starting on western parking lot, lighting infrastructure, and community gardens upgrade; Kennedy Park improvements will be next. The town is looking to acquire property in Elmwood to consolidate services and amenities.

### ***West Hartford Social Services***

Keren Paquette reported they are staggering their staff in and out of the office and have 2 open positions – 1 full time and 1 part time. Their team now has an intern, Shayline Cruz, from ECSU. The Food Pantry continues to see large volume distributed and fortunately there is a great steady group of volunteers. Dial-A-Ride, Energy Assistance Program, Renters Rebate Program, and Choices Program all active and continuing. Social Services is helping identify people for the homebound vaccination program. UNITE CT is a new program with state money for rent and utilities payment help.

### ***Seniors Job Bank***

Sheila Diamond was not at the meeting today, but Gail Crockett from the Job Bank Board reported that the Job Bank is looking for new board members; they have received several recent grants. Despite the pandemic, they continue to receive requests from seniors looking for work. The group is doing outreach to Simsbury, Avon, and Granby.

### ***Transportation***

Kevin Farmer said that many of the drivers and riders are now fully vaccinated. The service is being used to bring people to their vaccination appointments. There is a need for additional drivers. The group depends on revenue from individuals in the community and the rates they charge are substantially less than Uber, Lyft & taxis. They are currently seeking partnerships with houses of worship.

### ***Senior Centers***

Gina reported they have started a membership drive – join online, by mail, or by phone. There is a wait list for income tax appointments. All Spring classes are virtual, attendance has been great so far, and instructors are now starting to get paid again. Looking at some in-person classes for the summer – line dancing, fishing, golf, lawn bowling, etc. Pickle Ball has become so popular, players want dedicated time at the courts in town. Looking into grants for building more courts. There will be 3 outdoor spring events: April 22 Earth Day based at Beachland Park; Concert series at Hamilton Heights starting May 5; and Cheers to 90 Years! with box lunch and outdoor entertainment at ECC. “Take & Create” projects have averaged 50 people per project, sponsored by Bouvier Insurance. Elmwood Senior Center Rec Specialist position will be posted soon. The two Senior Center offices are being reorganized as one integrated office.

### ***Agenda for Future Meetings***

Amy invited Mayor Cantor and Town Manager Matt Hart to join our next meeting on April 20 and they have accepted. They will do a budget presentation. The budget will be emailed in advance of this meeting so questions can be organized. Other ideas for future guests & topics: Aimee Krauss from Health District to give update on vaccination progress; Senator Derek Slap for an update on age discrimination bill; update on mansion tax; update on West Hartford Fellowship Housing renovations; update on UConn property.

The meeting adjourned at 11:09AM.

Respectfully submitted,  
Ann T. Visgilio, Recording Secretary