

WEST HARTFORD SENIOR CITIZENS' ADVISORY COMMISSION

MINUTES

May18, 2021

Members Present: Noreen Bachteler, Rebecca Hajosy, Robert Kennedy, Ellen Phillips, Amy Silverman,
Absent: Rosemary Cleary, Linda Hanson, Mary Reilly
Staff Present: Gina Marino, Keren Paquette,
Guests: Gail Crockett, Sheila Diamond, Pamela Hilborn, Marie Grillo, Adrienne Billings-Smith

Chairperson Amy Lynn Silverman called the meeting to order at 10:05AM.

No quorum at start of meeting so April Minutes were not able to be approved at this point in the meeting.

Chairperson's Report

Chairperson Amy Lynn Silverman reported that there is a vacancy on the Commission, and it is a Republican slot. Please refer any potential candidates to Amy for discussion and review. Amy then introduced today's guest – Adrienne Billings-Smith. Adrienne is newly appointed to the West Hartford Civilian Police Review Board, the founder and president of Concerned Parents of Color of West Hartford, and past co-chair of the West Hartford Human Rights Commission.

Adrienne Billings-Smith Guest Report

As a board member of both the West Hartford Human Rights Commission and Concerned Parents of Color of West Hartford, Adrienne laid out plans for the town's Juneteenth Celebration. Juneteenth this year will be a two-day celebration – Saturday June 19 and Sunday June 20. June 19 will be celebrated with a Town Picnic with live music at Town Hall, student performers, and keynote speaker Lorna Thomas-Farquharson from the Board of Education and her daughter who heads Students Against Racism at Sedgwick Middle School. The new town MLK Mural at Blueback Square will be unveiled as part of the Juneteenth Celebration. Townspeople can help the artist on 5/22 with painting pieces of the mural. Sunday June 20 will be celebrated with a service at First Church and an official renaming of the Goodman Green to "Unity Green" by Mayor Shari Cantor. June is also Pride month and there will be several Pride celebrations in town including a film festival and a Pride Festival at Blueback Square. Adrienne talked briefly about her appointment to the new Civilian Police Review Board which kicks off in July. The CPRB will be responsible for reviewing the internal investigation of all complaints received by the Police Department and for providing the Town Council with annual policy recommendations.

West Hartford Social Services

Keren Paquette reported that the Social Services staff are now back in the office full time, but the public still needs an appointment to enter the building. The two open Social Worker positions have been filled and will start in June. With the new state police legislation recently passed, the town is investigating adding a social worker position to work directly with the Police Department. The Town Hall Food Pantry continues curbside only. The pantry is expecting to be able to get their volunteers back in the building soon with special approval. Dial-A-Ride program sent out applications for the July 2021 to July 2022 year. Energy Assistance Program application deadline extended into June due to the pandemic. The Renters Rebate Program has now received 400 applications. Eviction moratorium state program will end on June 30th. To combat this, UNITE CT's funding for rental assistance continues online but the mobile application van with computers on board will be coming to West Hartford three times in June.

Seniors Job Bank

Sheila Diamond reported that the Seniors Job Bank, which helps residents over age 50 find part time work, is back up to pre-pandemic levels of activity this spring, their typical busy season. There are a lot of driver requests and companion requests and as in the rest of the state, they are feeling the squeeze on open jobs that cannot be filled. The Hartford Foundation for Public Giving has chosen the Seniors Job Bank for

a new program that helps organizations develop streams of revenue. More to come on this. The job bank has entered its fundraising season and there is a \$10,000 challenge grant from the Dornan Foundation.

Transportation

Kevin Farmer was not present at the meeting, so Amy Silverman relayed the following on his behalf: We continue to experience increases in our ride volumes, and we are adding returning and new volunteer drivers. Ride volumes are at 60% of pre-pandemic levels and our volunteer base is now two thirds of that in 2019. People are feeling better about getting out.

Quorum is now been reached so April 2021 meeting minutes were approved at this point in the meeting.

Senior Centers

Gina Marino reported that the town vaccine hotline is still up and running though the call volume is way down. The library staff is handling the calls on their own again without help from the Senior Centers. Both Senior Fitness Centers are up and running as of May 3rd for in-person workouts four people at a time for 45 minutes each with an appointment. The Senior Centers used money from the CARES act to rent tents to hold pop-up outdoor events in April into early May. Now, many in-person programs have started: Spanish classes, Knitting, Table Tennis, Outdoor Pickle Ball, etc. The Community Renewal Team will continue the grab-n-go meals through the summer. Elmwood Senior Center will only be open Tuesdays and Thursdays in the summer due to the amount of summer camp programs for children that are based in the building. A survey was sent to seniors about in-person vs. virtual programs. Based on the varied responses, the summer programs will be a mix of in-person and virtual, with a push toward outdoor sports programs. All summer programs will be listed in the Summer Bulletin which is going to print this week and will be distributed in hard copy and electronically. The open Rec Specialist position is down to the final 3 candidates who will be interviewed this week and hopefully start in mid-June. Gina asked about how long they need to be taking visitors' temperatures as they enter the building, and that they are planning to continue with mask wearing into the foreseeable future. Upcoming programs that Gina highlighted: "Cheers to 90+ Years", "Russia-Myths Mysteries & Spying", Take-and-Create art projects (3 more for the summer), and a Paint Party. Gina also listed some Fall in-person activities that she's hoping to start up again post-pandemic: Dancing, Mahjong, other card groups, and weekly movies. Amy Silverman asked if she could access some hard copies of the Summer Bulletin to put in the buildings in her condo complex to drive interest. Gina said yes and they should be available by the first of June.

New Business

No new business

Agenda for Future Meetings

Amy Silverman asked Gina Marino if this group can use the West Hartford Senior Center building for the June meeting and hold it in-person and she responded yes. The June meeting will have guest Derek Slap, West Hartford's State Senator. There will be no meetings in July or August.

Suggested topics for future meetings: Computer and credit card safety (invite someone from AARP?); Fire Department presentation; End of Life Planning; state identification cards for seniors who no longer drive – having to go to DMV in person and what is a Care Card? (perhaps a question for Derek Slap); explanation of recent news about some members of West Hartford's Republican Party leaving the party to start a new political party.

The meeting adjourned at 11:07AM.

Respectfully submitted,
Ann T. Visgilio, Recording Secretary