

# WEST HARTFORD SENIOR CITIZENS' ADVISORY COMMISSION

## MINUTES

January 18, 2022

Members Present: Rebecca Hajosy, Noreen Bachteler, Mary Reilly, Ellen Phillips (via phone)  
Absent: Rosemary Cleary, Linda Hanson, Robert Kennedy  
Staff Present: Rebecca Sears, Helen Rubino-Turco  
Guests: Ruth Kurien

Chair Rebecca Hajosy called the meeting to order at 10:06AM at Bishops Corner Senior Center, 15 Starkel Road, West Hartford

The Minutes from the December 21, 2021 Meeting were approved.

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

Deputy Chair Noreen Bachteler welcomed the guest, Helen Rubino-Turco, Director of Leisure Services and Social Services, for the Town of West Hartford. She reported that West Hartford Emergency Management Deputy Director, Robert McCue has been confirmed as the Guest Speaker for the February 15, 2022 Meeting. She further indicated that contact was made with Nadia Khan of the Town Clerk's Office to have the location of the WHSCAC Meetings posted on the Town Calendar. Chair Hajosy reported that the donations collected from the group at the last meeting will be used to send a plant to thank former WHSCAC Chair Amy Silverman for her over 2 decades of dedicated volunteer service to the Commission.

### ***Discussion with Helen Rubino-Turco, Director of Leisure Services and Social Services: Review of the West Hartford Town Code on the WHSCAC & the Mission Statement and Update on the planning for the New Elmwood Community Center at 100 Mayflower Street, West Hartford***

Copies of the existing Town of West Hartford Code establishing the Senior Citizens Advisory Board were made available to the attendees. The Code as found in Chapter 5, Article VIII, Secs. 5-32 through 5-39 was adopted 9/12/1972. Director Rubino-Turco indicated the Town Code was/is written broadly to be flexible and in a way to not be quickly outdated. She stated that the Mission Statement should be reflective on how the code is being implemented and can be more fluid. She advised that the Mission Statement can be refined as needed to indicate the more specific activities of the Commission. She did not find any modifications to this particular code since 1972 and concurred with the group that the situation and needs for seniors have changed over the past 50 years. She explained the process for any proposed code change would first need to be sent to the Town Council's Human & Community Services Committee. Upon their approval, it would then be placed on the Town Council's Meeting Calendar. Deputy Chair Bachteler began with proposing updating some of the terminology in the existing code as the use of "elderly and retired persons" carried more of a negative and limited connotation especially since many seniors continue to be employed and not retired from the workforce. Discussion followed as to suggesting alternative terminology that was more current and inclusive for seniors. WHSC Director Sears stated that the term "older adults" is now popularly and professionally used in the field. Chair Hajosy indicated that there were 6 references in the existing code where the use of "senior citizens" and "elderly and retired persons" were stipulated. She made a motion to replace that language with "older adults". Commission Member Ellen Phillips asked how the "older adults" term was being defined and that the current age standard for senior citizens was age 65. Deputy Chair Bachteler stated that The Older Americans Act uses age 60. WHSC Director Sears stated their membership is 55 and over. The motion did not proceed and it was decided to have this discussion continued at the next meeting to allow further research by Commission members to see if there was a more recent WHSCAC Mission Statement as was suggested by Member Phillips and whether there should be an age reference in any new proposed code change. It also was discussed with Helen that the newly appointed Chair and Deputy Chair will work on a 2021 WHSCAC Annual Report for the Town Council to be submitted with any code proposal.

An update on the planning for the New Elmwood Community Center at 100 Mayflower Street, West Hartford was then given by Director Rubino-Turco at the request of the WHSCAC. She stated that the Town received twelve RFP's for a Feasibility and Programmatic Study on the property and will be conducting interviews on five of the selections. Community Outreach is a component of the RFP. Targeted outreach will be done to certain stakeholders including the Elmwood Business Association, WHSCAC, Parks & Recreation Advisory Board, Advisory Commission for Persons with Disabilities, Library Board, Pedestrian & Bicycle Commission, Clean Energy Commission, WH Mayor's Youth Council and Teen Center. The Town Council is proposing to form a New Elmwood Community Center Advisory Committee with eleven members, including a representative from each of the targeted stakeholders and 2 spots for residents at-large. The function of this advisory committee will be to bring in information from the members as well as disseminate information back to the respective stakeholders. Helen stated there would be no closure of the present ECC and ESC until the new site is ready. She gave an estimated project completion date of four to five years.

Member Ellen Phillips inquired if there was any additional information on the latest sale of the former UConn West Hartford campus property and Helen indicated she had no information at this time on the plans/usage for the property.

### ***Transportation for Seniors***

Ruth Kurien gave the report for ITN-Central CT. She reported that the majority of current rides are being done for medical and hair care appointments with less for social-related outings at this time due to the spread of the omicron variant. On a positive side, ITN has seen an uptick in volunteers and donations.

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

Sheila Diamond and Gail Crockett absent. No report available. Chair Hajosy noted the Senior Jobs Bank has a new email address. It is [info@seniorsjobbankct.org](mailto:info@seniorsjobbankct.org)

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

Keren Paquette absent. No report available.

### ***West Hartford Senior Centers***

Becky Sears, Director of West Hartford Senior Centers, reported the hire of a new part-time clerk for the Elmwood Senior Center. Mask requirement remains at both senior centers and they continue to offer in-person as well as virtual programs. Have seen some dip with in-person programs with the surge of the omicron variant and thus have postponed those larger events. The Senior Ball that was scheduled at Town Hall for January 27<sup>th</sup> is now set for the Spring. Activities where people can wear a mask like table-tennis, pickle ball and line-dancing are well-attended at both centers. Becky continues to be working on the Senior Safety program which will be televised on WHCI. She and ECC Program Coordinator Lisa Hanse are currently working on the Spring Senior Bulletin and moving up the timeframe for an earlier publication and distribution. The Senior Bulletin is published seasonally/ quarterly. They are looking to offer programs later at 4:00PM /5:00PM to draw in working seniors. West Hartford has approximately 16,900 residents over 55 (1/4 of the Town's total population). Most recently, Becky has been working with a CCSU Gerontology Graduate Student on bringing the Aging Mastery Program (AMP) to the West Hartford Senior Centers. The AMP is approved by the National Council on Aging and is a 10 week series of incentive-based health and wellness classes for people age 55 and over. Topics focus on improving and supporting physical, mental and financial health for older adults including healthy weight loss and mindfulness practices. She cited the MindUP program developed by the Goldie Hawn Foundation that works with schoolchildren. Becky is excited about the AMP opportunity and her goal would be for the Senior Centers to serve as a Resource Center for the Town's older adults.

### ***New Business***

Chair Hajosy led discussion on whether the Commission wanted to continue to hold meetings in-person or return to virtual meetings for the foreseeable future given the surge of the omicron variant. If yes, the meetings will need to be held virtually for at least a 2/3 month period per the Town Clerk. A vote taken approved a return to virtual meetings for February 15<sup>th</sup> and March 15<sup>th</sup>. Deputy Chair Bachteler will be in contact with Nadia Khan at the Town Clerk's Office to advise her of the change to virtual meetings and request her assistance in making the necessary arrangements. Noreen will also notify the February 15<sup>th</sup> Guest Speaker (Robert McCue/Deputy Director/WH Emergency Management) of the change and confirm his ability to do so. He will be highlighting the CERT – the new Community Emergency Response Team. Noreen will work with WHSC Director Sears on using Constant Contact in publicizing the February 15<sup>th</sup> meeting and posting flyers at the Town's libraries. With Amy Silverman's departure from the WHSCAC, the Commission has two vacancies and a goal for 2022 is to have a full nine member Commission in order to best carry out its duties and responsibilities. Any interested residents are to send a letter of interest to West Hartford Town Clerk Essie Labrot at 50 S. Main Street, #313, West Hartford, CT 06107.

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

Being Prepared with West Hartford Emergency Management Deputy Director Robert McCue – February 15, 2022 (confirmed)

CT Elder Justice Hotline - March 15, 2022 (pending confirmation)

Affordable Housing Options and New Accessory Dwelling Units Ordinance in West Hartford - April 19, 2022 (pending confirmation)

The meeting adjourned at 11:55AM.

Next meeting is scheduled for February 15, 2022 and will be held VIRTUALLY.

Respectfully submitted,  
Noreen A. Bachteler, Deputy Chair for Ann T. Visgilio, Recording Secretary