

# WEST HARTFORD SENIOR CITIZENS' ADVISORY COMMISSION

## MINUTES

March 15, 2022

Members Present: Rebecca Hajosy, Noreen Bachteler, Robert Kennedy, Rosemary Cleary, Beth Rocco  
Members Absent: Linda Hanson, Mary Reilly, Sheila Diamond  
Staff Present: Keren Paquette, Rebecca Sears, Kevin Farmer, Gail Crockett  
Guests: Todd Dumais, West Hartford Town Planner  
Others: Mary Lou (Public)

Chairperson Rebecca Hajosy called the meeting to order at 10:04AM. The meeting was held virtually but is recorded and available on West Hartford Community television and on the town website for 45 days. Since there was no quorum at last month's meeting, the January minutes were approved at this meeting. February's notes, which cannot be considered "minutes" due to no quorum, were also approved as is.

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

Rebecca Hajosy reported that Beth Rocco has officially joined the Commission and was sworn in at Town Hall last week. Beth is a retired ophthalmologist and has been a volunteer for 5 years at the Bishops Corner Senior Center. There are still 2 seats available on the Commission and Rebecca Sears has a WHSC intern who shown interest in one of them. The April meeting will be back to the in-person format and take place at the Bishops Corner Senior Center.

### ***Presentation – Todd Dumais, West Hartford Town Planner discussing Accessory Dwelling Units (ADU's)***

ADU's are a secondary residence sharing a lot with the primary residence – also can be known as Granny Flats, Guest Houses, or In-Law Suites. An ADU must have a kitchen and a bathroom, at least 400 square feet but no more than 800 square feet or no more than 30% of the size of the main dwelling and must be subordinate to the main dwelling. They are not permitted in basements unless the basement has above ground windows and a door to access. They must have one parking space allocated. In January 2021, West Hartford passed a new ordinance that sets new standards and encourages ADUs to be permitted. This is a trend around the country. The main benefits of ADUs being approved are encouraging diverse housing options, creating more affordable housing units, allows aging in place, encourages multi-generational housing, can offset extremely tight rental markets. Since the new ordinance started, six applications have been received by the town and all 6 have been approved. Five of these six were created for aging parents to come live with their grown children.

Questions from Commission members: Are there any town or state tax incentives or building incentives? Todd is not aware of any but will investigate. Todd said that Town Planning & Zoning will be doing a town-wide survey soon regarding affordable housing in West Hartford, including ADUs. This Commission asked to have the results of this survey.

With so many new apartment buildings popping up all over town, the question was asked of Todd if any number or percent of these units must be deemed as "affordable housing / income restricted"? Todd answered that no, there are no mandates, but they are finding that most are doing this anyway.

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

Keren Paquette reported that the West Hartford Prevention Partnership, the action arm of the W.H. Prevention Coalition, is still looking for ideas on how to spend their funding money. They are looking at

training programs for lay people to get involved in suicide prevention, Narcan training for drug overdoses, and ideas for mental health awareness activities for National Drug Takeback Day in September. The town food pantry numbers are high and are expected to get higher with rising food prices. Households served by the pantry in January, for example, were up 28%. Energy Assistance programs still accepting applications for the winter season. Rental costs in town are very high and still rising and with the very low inventory, helping clients with housing is exceptionally difficult right now.

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

Gail Crockett reported that Sheila Diamond will be leaving the Seniors Job Bank at the end of April, so they are now recruiting for a replacement Director. Twenty people have applied, and they will be starting interviews soon.

The Job Bank will be launching a new database system which is currently being tested.

The Job Bank is currently doing outreach to neighboring cities and towns so they know the Job Bank exists and can refer clients.

### ***Transportation***

Kevin Farmer reported that their numbers are still down for all services. No other updates.

### ***Senior Centers***

Becky Sears reported that the Spring 2022 Programming Bulletin is out, 2 weeks earlier than the last quarter. The mask mandate has been lifted in Senior Centers and they're seeing an increase in participation in programs across the board.

This Thursday at 5:00pm is the St. Patrick's Day dinner and there will be the Spring Fling in April.

May 11 is set for "Senior Day" which will have vendors and senior services providers set up at tables from 9:30AM-12PM.

The new West Hartford YOUiversity launches in April which is a four-week program in the evenings for the over 50 still-working set.

The Senior Centers have hired someone into their last open position – the team is now complete.

There was a welcome back volunteer orientation at the beginning of March and the plan is for volunteers to be starting again soon.

There is a concern with the FoodShare mobile sites and the food they bring to the Community Center.

Becky thinks the lines are getting longer and the food amounts are getting smaller. She is concerned and will be working with their FoodShare rep.

Becky and her intern Kevin Ryan will be starting a focus groups project to find out who isn't using the town's senior programs and why.

### ***New Business***

Last month, the Acting Town Manager asked this Commission to recommend someone (and an alternate) to sit on the New Elmwood Community Center Advisory Committee as the Town starts early planning.

Beth Rocco, now that she's an official member of the Commission has expressed interest. Anyone else interested in being the main person or the alternate? Rosemary Cleary would like to be the alternate. The Commission voted on these 2 appointments, and both were approved. Also, Rebecca Sears as the Senior Centers Director is already on this committee. Once the new Committee starts its monthly meetings, Beth will give a report to this group every month.

Deputy Chair Noreen Bachteler is looking to put together a subgroup to continue looking at the SCAC town code and mission statement and asked if anyone would like to work on this review with her to be completed by the end of 2022. Becky Sears and Gail Crockett volunteered to assist and Noreen will be in contact with them to set up a meeting for next month.

***Agenda for Future Meetings***

For the April 19 meeting, there will be a Medicare specialist coming to discuss the IRMAA issue and the new Medicare Advantage plans. Reminder that this meeting will be held in person at the Bishops Corner Senior Center.

For the May 17 meeting, Noreen Bachteler has invited the Co-Chair of the CT Coalition for Elder Justice, Atty. Lara Stauning, coming to present on the new state "Elder Justice Hotline". Noreen will be reaching out to WHSC Director Becky Sears and Keren Paquette of WH Social Services to do publicity.

For the June meeting, ideas suggested - CT legislative session report or a town staff person on the West Hartford final budget report.

The meeting adjourned at 11:49AM.

Respectfully submitted,  
Ann T. Visgilio, Recording Secretary