

WEST HARTFORD SENIOR CITIZENS' ADVISORY COMMISSION

MINUTES

May 17, 2022

Members Present: Rebecca Hajosy, Noreen Bachteler, Robert Kennedy, Mary Reilly, Beth Rocco, Linda Hanson
Absent: Rosemary Cleary, Keren Paquette, Gail Crockett,
Staff Present: Rebecca Sears, Kevin Ryan, Kevin Farmer, Linda Guzzo
Guests: Mary Silverberg, Joseph Kolezynski, Sarah Schafer, Larry Kunak, Speaker for the meeting: Sandra Arenas, Special Associate Attorney General for Constituent and Consumer Affairs

Chairperson Rebecca Hajosy called the meeting to order at 10:06AM at the Bishop's Corner Senior Center. Rebecca then threw to Noreen who introduced the speaker – Sandra Arenas, Special Associate Attorney General for Constituent and Consumer Affairs. Laura Stauning, also from the state Attorney General's office, had planned to come but she was sick.

Presentation – “Coalition for Elder Justice in Connecticut and the Elder Justice Hotline”

The Coalition for Elder Justice was established in CT, and every state, in 2013. The Coalition and the Hotline sit as part of the Office of the Attorney General. Various public and private stakeholders, those that deal with senior issues, are part of the coalition. Examples: CT Banking Commission, CT Probate Courts, CT Dept of Consumer Protection, AARP, Hartford HealthCare, Choices (Medicare), CT Bar Association. The Coalition's activities include: an annual symposium, a monthly newsletter, educational programs, and manning the Elder Justice Hotline.

The Elder Justice Hotline number is 860-888-5555. Elder justice issues can range from age-based discrimination in the workplace to scams and frauds, elder abuse, neglect, and exploitation. There is a staffed phone line and an online portal for complaints. The Attorney General's office collaborates with community partners and other state agencies to address issues brought to them on the hotline and from the website. They will refer the issue to the correct state or local agency or sometimes contact that agency on your behalf.

Chairperson's Report

The minutes of the April meeting were approved as submitted. Rebecca introduced Linda Guzzo, joining the meeting for the first time as the new Executive Director of the Seniors Job Bank. Rebecca reported that our Commission had a booth at the recent Senior Day at Elmwood Community Center on May 11 staffed by Noreen and Beth. It was a great event and Beth will report out later in this meeting on the feedback they got from Seniors. Question was asked if we could get a permanent table sign made for future events that this commission participates in – is there a budget? Rebecca will investigate.

West Hartford Social Services

Keren Paquette could not attend the meeting due to illness. It was reported that the MDC has started a water bill assistance program for those in need. This group should help get the word out.

Seniors Job Bank

Linda Guzzo, the new Executive Director of the Seniors Job Bank, introduced herself to the group and the group all introduced themselves around the room to Linda. Linda spent 30+ years in higher education and has a PhD in Organizational Development. The Job Bank is looking to streamline their newly relaunched website and is looking for user feedback. They are looking to target the 50+ age group who might want to work part time or per diem.

Transportation

Kevin Farmer from ITN Central Connecticut reported that they relooked the low-income rider program (4 free rides per week) and will now offer it to all 15 towns that they serve, not just to West Hartford. The company is now offering their volunteer drivers: new driver ID's, 40 cents per mile, N95 masks and identifying window clings. Kevin asked if we could have a Seniors-focused table at Celebrate West Hartford this year combining info on multiple senior providers? Since the event is in June, it's too late for this year but Rebecca will look into it to see when the tables are reserved – probably January for next June's event. Beth Rocco, who is a retired Opthamologist, is volunteering to contact other local opthamologists that ITN drives clients to, to reach out for donations to the fund-raising campaign for ITN. She knows most of the area doctors personally and would be happy to write a personal letter.

Senior Centers

Becky Sears reported that the May 11th Senior Day was a huge success with 225 attendees and volunteers counted. The next Senior Bulletin has gone to press and should be mailed around May 26. Apart from the dances, the Centers are moving ahead with activities mostly in person. The dances, however, will not restart until the Covid rate goes under 5%. The Senior Picnic is moving forward for July 14 at Town Hall. The West Hartford police officers do the cooking and wait on the seniors. No Housing Fair is planned for this year – decided to wait until next year. The Gazebo Summer Series will be back for this summer. Becky is still trying to get a West Hartford Community Access television show off the ground on seniors' safety.

ECC Advisory Committee

Beth Rocco reported that the committee hasn't yet had its first meeting so there is nothing to report. Becky Sears and some others in the room said they heard a final architect group was chosen for the new Community Center, but Beth was unaware of this. Thus, there is concern that this process hasn't been very transparent.

Beth reported the following ideas/feedback that she and Noreen received at the Commission table at the Senior Day: A dedicated Senior Bus, return to "good" day trips, more health and aging programs, more craft programs, more bingo, a pool table, live theatre, more exercise programs, can we vote at our Senior Centers?, armchairs/not folding chairs at ECC, dog park, AARP car fit program, new fence on Trout Brook Drive.

New Business

Noreen Bachteler reported that this Commission's subcommittee on Mission Statement, Charter, and Rules will be meeting on May 24, not May 12 as previously planned.

Kevin Ryan is looking to become a formal member of the Commission, filling one of the 2 open spots.

Agenda for Future Meetings

Our next meeting on June 21 will have Kate Farrar, State Rep, giving us a legislative update. She will come at 11:00am so we will do our other meeting business first.

The meeting adjourned at 12:06PM.

Respectfully submitted,
Ann T. Visgilio, Recording Secretary