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TOWN OF SUFFIELD

REGULAR MEETING MINUTES
SUFFIELD SOCIAL SERVICES COMMISSION
THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 5, 2026 5:00pm - 6:00pm
SUFFIELD COMMUNITY AID - 450 SOUTH STREET, SUFFIELD

COMMISSION MEMBERS PRESENT: Chair Robin Zatony, Mark Blackaby
Sharon Bruno, Laura Eisenhaure

MEMBERS ABSENT: Vice Chair Nathan Prusi, Ann Bauchiero

DEPARTMENT HEADS PRESENT: Bethany Sullivan, Senior Services
Mary Curtin, Suffield Community Aid
Jason Joyce, Suffield Housing Authority

DEPARTMENT HEADS ABSENT: Joanne Moriarty, Youth Services

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1. Chairman Zatony called the meeting to order at 5:00pm. Introductions of all present followed. Chairman Zatony confirmed Commission Members and Department Heads listed above were present.

2. Minutes from the September 11, 2026 meeting were reviewed. There were no corrections or additions. Chairman Zatony called for a motion to accept the minutes. Mark Blackaby motioned to accept the minutes. Sharon Bruno seconded this motion which was approved by all.

3. Public Comment - There were no public comments.

4. Open Discussion about the Social Services Commission - Membership/Attendance

Chair Zatony opened with questions for the Commission Members to consider. What is the purpose of our Commission? Do we continue to meet? There is currently one vacancy on the Commission with four terms expiring this month. Will we be able to fill open positions? Chair Zatony asked for input on what makes our Commission important to the community? Members discussed other Commissions where the public is often in attendance. As examples, they noted the Historic Commission, Planning and Zoning Commission and the Board of Finance. These Commissions directly impact Suffield residents who for instance might attend the Historic Commission regarding renovations to their homes located in the

Historic District or the Planning and Zoning Commission who review applications for new construction or changes to existing properties. It appears there is no motivation for the public to attend our meetings. There is no public input driving what actions or decisions we make. There was discussion on whether the public knows what our Commission does and how we might assist with issues they might have. It appears the public doesn't know our Commission exists. Sharon Bruno asked if our meetings were actually open to the public and she was told yes. Chair Zatony mentioned our Commission has no budget. A question was raised if the Social Services Commission ever had a budget. Chair Zatony responded yes, it was eliminated during Melissa Mack's tenure. She continued commenting that Colin never thought there was a need to restore our budget. In fact, the Board of Selectmen had discussed dissolving the Social Services Commission believing the areas they address could be handled by individual task forces. The Board of Selectmen tabled that discussion to be considered at a later date.

It was noted that currently there is a Task Force working on rides for Seniors. Mark Blackaby asked why we established a Task Force for that. He was told there were no volunteers from the Commission. Bethany Sullivan stated she felt it was valuable to hear what others are doing although this could be accomplished with informal meetings. We may not need a formal commission. Everyone agreed that sharing information was important. Mary Curtin asked who would organize a task force? Chair Zatony responded the First Selectman would oversee them. The discussion continued noting that an informal group could meet without submitting an agenda or providing minutes. A quorum would not be necessary as perhaps only two or three members of the group would need to get together. Bethany Sullivan added informal groups could meet and provide the information to Robin. Sharon Bruno noted that with informal groups or task forces, the First Selectman would have more input regarding decisions that were made. There was consensus that there was value to meetings but perhaps there should be consideration that they be informal.

Discussion moved on to a situation that the Commission wanted addressed, affordable housing and rising costs. Although there has been talk about various sites in town, none have moved forward. Affordable housing is a real problem in Suffield for so many of our residents, yet projects are usually met with opposition. It appears many residents don't think affordable housing is necessary in Suffield. Sharon Bruno suggested an article might be written in the Suffield Observer to address affordable housing issues. Some on the Commission felt that might not be enough. Mary Curtin mentioned her last two reports addressed the many needs in Town. Jason Joyce, Housing Authority, stated there is currently no availability in Senior Housing and there is an extensive waiting list. It is a real problem. Suffield residents need to be made aware how dire the situation is.

At this time, Chair Zatony suggested the Commission move forward discussing which current members would be interested in continuing, how often the Commission should meet in 2027 and what would be the best time to schedule meetings. Chairman Zatony stated it was important to have a quorum at meetings. Nate Prusi, Sharon Bruno and Mark Blackaby,

whose terms would expire this year, had indicated there interest in continuing to serve. Chairman Zatony distributed a calendar asking the Commission Members for input on dates, availability and starting time for the upcoming meetings. It was decided the Commission would meet quarterly on Thursdays at 1:00 pm.beginning with January 7, 2027. Chairman Zatony called for a motion. Sharon Bruno motioned the Social Services Commission would meet quarterly in 2027 on Thursdays at 1:00 pm. beginning Thursday January 7, 2027, April 1, 2027, September 2, 2027 and November 4, 2027. Her motion was seconded by Laura Eisenhaure and passed unanimously.

5. Updates

Jason Joyce - Suffield Housing Authority

The Housing Authority food pantry has been low but recently we have received much needed assistance. Our residents will be getting baskets for Thanksgiving and Christmas from Suffield Community Aid.

Mary Curtin - Suffield Community Aid

Generation Power opens December 1, 2026 thru December 14, 2026 with $500 reimbursement for power.
We've had many energy assistance applications, unfortunately less oil companies are participating this year.
Holiday baskets now total 49 seniors and 49 families. We may need more sponsors soon.
Food pantry visits continue to be around 50 which is an increase from our usual 30 count.
There is strategic planning scheduled for this weekend.
Our annual report is finished and will be going on our website.
Our Annual Appeal should arrive at homes the week before Thanksgiving.
The InterAct Club staffed a table on election day and raised $1,000.00 for the food pantry.
Sacred Heart Church had a special drive for coats.

Bethany Sullivan - Senior Center

It has been very busy at the Senior Center. Our lunches on Wednesdays and Thursdays have averaged between 50 and 60 participants. We recently started pizza lunches on Monday, 3 slices of pizza and chips. It has been well received. Bethany gave Laura Bourjeious, kitchen manager and chef, a thank you for doing a fantastic job of preparing great meals while keeping costs down,

Joanne Moriarty - Suffield Youth Services

Joanne was not able to attend today's meeting but sent in a written report which noted the following:

Continuing our partnership with ACES High Robotics. The Team will offer STEM Programming at the Youth Center.

October - Machine Making
November/December - Circuit Building

The Suffield Sidekicks, Teens Helping Seniors Program, is very active right now as seniors are seeking help with fall raking and yard work. All jobs are being filled.

Home Alone Safety Workshop for Kids is Saturday, November 21, 2026. The program is very popular and it filled very quickly. We will offer it again in the spring as the facilitator is expecting a baby over the winter.

School bus transportation is now available for SMS students attending programs at the Youth Center, Attendance has increased significantly as a result of these changes and the ability for youth to attend without pre-registration.

The Suffield Family Connections November and December Newsletter is ready to be posted. The newsletter is distributed electronically to students in the school district. Paper copies are made available in local childcare facilities and it is posted on social media. Thanks to Ann Bauchiero for her continued collaboration on this project.

Reminder: All Suffield Youth Services programs are posted on the Youth Services Facebook page and registration is through SuffieldRec.com.

6. Old Business

Chair Zatony reported Suffield Alight is scheduled for December 12, 2026. Two groups have been scheduled to perform, the Cetto Chamber Singers and Suffield Academy with a Chamber, Jazz and Rock Group. Tables and chairs will be set up in the church sanctuary for this community event. The Cetto Singers concert will be live streamed by Suffield By The River for their residents. This is a free event but donations to the Senior Center Kitchen would be appreciated. Bethany Sullivan asked Chair Zatony to send her the information on this event so she can distribute it via email.

7. Adjournment

Chair Zatony stated the next meeting was scheduled for Thursday, January 7, 2027 at 1:00 pm at the SCA Conference Room, 450 South Street (Zoom option available). Sharon Bruno motioned to adjourn the meeting which was seconded by Laura Eisenhaure and unanimously passed. Chair Zatony adjourned the meeting at 6:06pm.

Respectfully Submitted
Karen Ohurley, Recording Secretary