Commission on Aging

Town of Weston, Connecticut

Minutes: Monday, February 1, 2021 at 930AM

Present: Commission members Bruce Lorentzen, Richard Wolf, Francine Goldstein, Alison McElhone, Terry Castellano, Don Gumaer ; SWCAA liaison and Senior Center Director Wendy Petty; Weston Social Services Director Allison Lisbon; Friends of Weston Senior Center representative Diane Herzinger

Note: This meeting was held via Google Meet Video Call due to Coronavirus pandemic

The meeting convened at 9:35 AM.

The minutes of the last meeting (January 2021) were approved.

Bruce started by giving an update on the meeting with the Weston Economic Vitality Committee. Many issues relevant to Seniors in Weston were highlighted. Seniors are underserved. The Senior Center is not ideal. Isolation is a major concern. Wendy noted that the vibrant nature of our seniors was also emphasized. Allison spoke up about how the seniors in our town contribute positively. The perception that all seniors are disabled and in need of services is wrong.

Richard stressed that we need to continue to press the Board of Selectmen, as taxpayers and members of this Commission, that they need to support seniors, senior programs and senior facilities. Francine suggested starting a petition. Seniors make up close to 25% of the town’s population, pay taxes and don’t have kids in school. Richard and Bruce suggested a referendum. If we suggested to collect 10% of taxes, it would create a public stir – get people talking about the issues. Without the newspaper, there is no great way to raise the issue.

Regarding the closing of Peter’s Market, Fran heard another tenant will be coming soon. Allison helped clean out the store for the food pantry and noted all the shelves and deli remained. Bruce asked if Roy would be taking people for groceries. No. It is still too high risk. Allison stated not many seniors depended on Peter’s for groceries anyway, as it was too expensive.

Regarding the COVID vaccine, Wendy reported the Senior Center had its first vaccine clinic last week. 200 doses were given. Weston EMS, PD and congressmen were there. Actually, the wifi was not working well and the clinic almost didn’t happen as the Health Dep’t could not access their records. Thankfully, the problem was fixed and the wifi will now be updated. The plan is to schedule more vaccine clinics but the vaccine shortage has made that difficult.

Fran reported that CT was moving away from VAMS. Towns would run the clinics. Allison asked if there was a plan to vaccinate home-bound patients. Wendy said the Dep’t of Health was working on that. Fran said in California they were giving a 3rd dose of the vaccine, to cover new strains.

Regarding the Senior Center reopening, Wendy reported that none of the Senior Centers are talking about opening up. Hopefully this will be possible in the fall.

Richard reported that the handicap bathroom sink was installed, and the grant was approved for another bathroom sink. Both the Senior Center and Social Services budget requests had been submitted.

Allison stated it appears as if the abatement program changes will happen.

Regarding Dial-a-ride, Jonathon found a grant that would cover 80% of the cost of an electric vehicle. Richard asked what the time frame was for purchasing a new vehicle. Hyundai has 2 moderately priced electric SUVs coming out. Of course, the van would be kept for certain occasions.

Diana gave the Friends update. Friends will pay for the summer lunches. The fund is doing well. Bruce stated the return was 9.9% last year. Richard pointed out that every year we talk to the town manager about needs at the Senior Center we are told to ask the Friends. Richard asked about restrictions – what can the Friends pay for? Friends funds support things like activities, food, items like furniture. The funds should not cover updates to the Senior Center structure. Wendy pointed out the the Friends spend a great deal of time and effort fundraising.

Roy states that Wendy has worked very hard helping people get signed up for the vaccine.

Allison asked if we would proceed with the referendum? Richard would be looking into this.

The meeting adjourned at 1035AM.

Respectfully submitted,

Alison McElhone