Commission on Aging

Town of Weston, Connecticut

Minutes: Monday, November 2, 2020 at 930AM

Present: Commission members Bruce Lorentzen, Helen de Keijzer, Richard Wolf, Francine Goldstein, Alison McElhone, Terry Castellano; SWCAA liaison and Senior Center Director Wendy Petty; Social Services Director Allison Lisbon; Diana Herzinger from Friends of the Weston Senior Center, was also present

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

The meeting convened at 9:32AM.

The minutes of the last meeting (October 2020) were approved.

Alison gave update on Weston Public School’s reopening. K-5 have returned to school full day, Monday thru Friday. WMS has moved to full day in hybrid mode. WHS will be moving to full day in hybrid mode, as well. There have been more cases affecting each of the schools. However, these were not related to activities within the schools. Administration has done a great job at contact tracing and quarantining close contacts, and at communicating this to parents in each of the schools. Allison reported there is a dashboard on the school website where one can look at COVID numbers.

Wendy gave the Senior Center update. The flu shot clinic will be this coming Thursday. It was canceled last week due to bad weather. The clinic will be at Norfield Church from 130-4PM. As for the reopening, the entryway is being finished. Temporary handrails are up. COVID numbers are up, however. Wendy had a conversation with Jonathon, Joe Micelli, Chris Spaulding. Decision was to move forward with small group activities using precautions: questionnaire, temperature check, masks, etc. The Center will only accept Weston residents, at first. Helen mentioned Chris Spaulding (in an interview with Ted Craft) mentioned Weston was in a “comfortable pocket.” Limiting the reopening to Weston residents is reasonable.

 Allison reported that, though seniors are not socializing as before, they are getting out more. There is a desire to connect with others. Isolation and loneliness is still a concern for some seniors. Wendy said the regular routine and socialization provided by Senior Center activities was keeping a lot of people going, especially those with dementia. These people have really declined since the pandemic started.

Helen asked if the newsletter mailing was helpful. Wendy said the mailing was helpful in that it reminded people that the Senior Center is still here for them. Several people requested to be on the email list after the mailing. People are interested in reading the newsletter. They are considering putting out another newsletter in the spring.

At present, the Senior center staff are helping people with medicare enrollment, over the phone or by Zoom. We do have the availability to do this in person, if needed.

Bruce asked what programs will the Senior Center be opening with? Wendy replied that the art classes will remain on zoom due to cost. Actually, the art and exercise classes are doing very well on the Zoom platform. Perhaps movies or card games might be good activities to open with.

The weekly drive-thru lunch program has ended. A Thanksgiving event is planned. Helen asked if a brown bag lunch program, held in the gym over winter, might be feasible? Wendy reported that the café is set up for social distancing, although with the intention of using it for a group/meeting (as opposed to a meal).

Regarding Dial-a-Ride, Wendy reported Roy continues to take seniors to medical appointments. He is also still helping with food delivery and bank runs. Both buses are in good shape. The wheelchair lift

Richard gave the facilities update. The sink in the handicap bathroom should be installed this week, and handrails will also be installed. As for the main entrance, the automatic door openers work, but if you don’t press the button the doors are very difficult to open. Needs adjustment. The Town put mulch in front of the ramp, as well as some bushes.

Margaret Wartonburg donated her watercolor paintings to the Senior Center.These have been hung up. A silent auction of the paintings will be held in December, raising funds for Friends of the Weston Senior Center. This will be done online. Allison stated there are programs for nonprofets to assist with this.

Allison gave the Social Services update. The office is working on helping people apply for emergency assistance through the state. They are also busy arranging Thanksgiving meals for seniors and families in need, supplied by Calises. They are also planning on coordinating holiday giving through wish lists on Amazon. WPS won’t be collecting items this year.

Social Services caseload remains about stable. There are still people awaiting eviction due to foreclosure. Social Services is assisting them with rent/mortgage through care grants. They are also assisting with fuel through grants or donations from the Weston Warm Up Fund. People who were part of the state’s emergency program last year received a 250$ credit from Eversource. People who are low income may be eligible for a program where they don’t lose power if they can’t pay (though they still have to pay eventually).

Richard asked if the Town changed the program for abatement. Allison said not as of yet. The Town is still planning on it but will need to give adequate notice before it can go into effect. Helen asked about energy audits. Is that subsidized as it was previously? Bruce said the audit is free, but the recommended work is not. Fran said you can do it online. Helen asked if anyone hears about programs to reduce living costs to let us know. Allison advised on not to use space heaters as they use a tremendous amount of energy.

Helen asked if it was time for another fundraiser. Allison said she is collecting donations for the holidays.

The meeting adjourned at 10:26AM.

Respectfully submitted,

Alison McElhone