

**COMMISSION ON AGING AND DISABLED
REGULAR MEETING
DECEMBER 7, 2016**

MEMBERS PRESENT

Karen Brecher
Maureen Lynch
Urania Nicholson
Greg Stelmak
Jerilyn Nagel
Roberta Byron Kolej

MEMBERS ABSENT

Therese Nadeau
Patricia Hanbury

STAFF

Dianne Stone
Eleanor Eichner
Gail Whitney

TOWN COUNCIL LIAISON

David Nagel

TOWN COUNCIL LIAISON ABSENT

Carol Anest

GUESTS

William DeMaio
Karen Futoma
Jim Late

I. CALL TO ORDER

Karen Brecher called the meeting to order at 6:07PM.

II. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

III. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

David Nagel commented that he will be substituting for Mayor Zartarian at his weekly office hours while the Mayor recuperates from surgery.

Karen asked the Commission if they would change the agenda in order to hear from William DeMaio and Karen Futoma regarding the ADA. **MOTION: Maureen Lynch made a motion to change the agenda for the ADA discussion, Roberta Byron Kolej seconded the motion, all were in favor, and the motion passed unanimously with a 6-0 vote.**

VII. OLD BUSINESS

D. ADA Discussion

Karen Futoma introduced herself as the Director of Human Services, and the ADA Coordinator for the Town of Newington. She inherited that position in 2012 and stated that she knew nothing about the mandated role for municipalities with regard to ADA. She credits Dianne, who had more background, and told Karen to go get some training and to look at the ADA rules and regulations. Karen stated that there are a lot of legal issues, and found that in her training sessions the famous quote is “it depends.” Karen attended many conferences and workshops, and had Carol LaBrecque attend as well. They have both completed coursework to be Connecticut certified and nationally certified. Karen explained that in terms of ramps, or bars in bathrooms, or toilet heights, these are issues that can be researched and dealt with. In terms of programs that are held throughout the Town, this is something that she would make sure comply to ADA requirements, and would consult with Bill, Dianne, and Carol if there are any specific issues. She spoke of specific issues such as a sidewalk, or access to a health and wellness facility where the double doors are not automatic, handicap parking spots. If a health or wellness facility does not have an automatic door, then an employee should go to the door and meet the person to assist them into the facility. If a Town employee is struggling with a specific accommodation, then she will review reasonable accommodations for that employee. Another area is effective communication, for example, if a deaf person is attending a program and needs an interpreter, or a visually impaired person needs special equipment. There is a grievance procedure if someone finds that they are not being accommodated for, however Karen stated in all her years she knows of no grievance being filed.

Bill DeMaio stated that the ADA is a federal law and the largest most effective civil rights act to ever be signed. President Bush signed it in 1996 and gives people equal access; it is not just for people with disabilities in any one category. He said this was bipartisan legislation 26 years ago, and we have come a long way since then for the 25% of the general population who have a disability of some kind. He commented that the Commission on Aging and Disabled and the Senior and Disabled Center has done tremendous work at the Center with ramping, bathroom facilities, FM system for hearing impaired individuals, the Porte Cochere and handicap parking, and access to the facility. He stated that knowledge is power and when you have the knowledge as the Commission does and has the ability to advocate for people such as senior citizens and any mobility issues, or mental disability that all falls under the ADA. There are 700 programs in Newington that makes sure that any child is able to take part in a program, and find a way to make it work and adapt to the child and the program so that it includes everyone. Playgrounds are now built to be handicap accessible with no barriers and 20% of the physical features have to be at ground level. He indicated that the Department of Justice can come and shut down anything in a heartbeat if a complaint has been filed and no response or action has taken place to remedy the situation to adapt to the ADA requirements. He said technology today is amazing and there are multiple ways to communicate with language, computer screens, video recordings, iPhones. He spoke about a concert held in July which honored four women who made it possible to have a handicapped accessible playground built 15 years ago; and programs for children showing puppets in a wheelchair, or blind, or with multiple sclerosis in order to explain to children what it is like to have a disability. Bill stated that Churchill Park is not in compliance with their locker rooms, access to the pool, the playground, and the bathrooms.

There was a question as to whether Newington is in the process of a self-evaluation now, and Karen responded that it was done when Ken Friedenbergh was the Director of Human Services and the ADA Coordinator, but another one will be done soon. Dianne commented that preventive maintenance should be done by doing your own self-evaluation and get ahead of any issues. David Nagel stated that there are projects that have been done and have ongoing phases to make things handicapped accessible throughout Town. The Town Hall Renovation Committee is also aware of adhering to the ADA requirements for any of that particular project. Dianne commented that the Senior and Disabled Center building meets ADA requirements except for the garden area and that is being addressed. Karen Brecher indicated that she is curious as to what other towns are doing; Bill responded that Groton, Middletown, Danbury, New Britain, and Ridgefield all are accomplished and aggressive with ADA requirements.

Karen Brecher asked how the Commission on Aging and Disabled can assist with making sure the Town is in compliance. Dianne responded that the Commission on Aging and Disabled has an advisory responsibility to the Town Council and can communicate concerns, make recommendations, and monitor what is happening in Town. Dianne, Bill, and Karen Futoma are making sure staff is trained as to what ADA is about and what should and shouldn't be done.

IV. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

The November minutes of the Commission on Aging and Disabled were accepted as read.

V. STAFF REPORT

Dianne reported that the 22nd Annual Expo held on Friday, November 4th was a huge success. There were more people in attendance from 10:00 AM to 1:00 PM than ever before. The final revenue figures are not in, but are close to \$4,000.

November programs included: grief in the holidays sponsored by Masonic Care; Dot Revzon, a former Newington employee with the Department of Human Services and a retired clinical care case work, is still working part time per diem and is holding a four week program on losing a loved one; there was a cool holiday party; a program on how to make the most of your medical appointments.

The tables for the cafeteria that were discussed at the October meeting have not been ordered. Dianne and Denise are doing their due diligence on that. The company they were looking at couldn't tell them anywhere around here to check them out, so this project is still being researched. Urania was asked by a Center member if there is clearance for a wheelchair, and Dianne responded there is.

The Center's Trips and Travel Program will have a casino trip to Mohegan on December 14th. With regard to the ADA policy, all trips have to be accessible; Mohegan Sun is notified that they need an accessible bus. The committee continues to meet and is deciding on trips for next year, including a casino trip every other month, and possible trips to the Newport Playhouse, Thimble Islands, Niagara Falls (two or three day trip), Delaney House, Griswold Inn, and Atlantic City (two or three day trip).

Dianne reported that a letter was sent to the Mayor from the Community Renewal Team (CRT). This is a federal elderly nutritional program through the State Department on Aging. Contracts are bid out for this and the Center's contractor is CRT who has been doing this for more than 20

years. Historically they have never put a cap or a limit on how many meals are served throughout their fiscal year of October 1st through September 30th. The fiscal year ended on September 30th and they are basically running out of money so want to put a cap on the Center's congregate meal for 50 people per day. Dianne indicated that they haven't been able to add to that since July, so if anyone calls the Center and asks to be part of the meals-on-wheels program, Eleanor has been referring them to the Elmwood Kitchen or Hartford HealthCare. Dianne found out about this letter only because she heard about other statewide reductions. This letter from CRT should have been sent directly to the Center, and not to the Mayor's office. Due to funding limitations CRT wants to reduce the number of meals from 25,121 to 23,302 for the current program year from October 1st through September 30th, but they want the Center to generate the funding of \$13,440 and commit to this by January 1, 2017 otherwise they will eliminate the meals and close the site for two days per month. Dianne wants to meet with CRT to see what other ideas can be discussed on how to deal with this shortfall. We don't have this money in our budget, and Dianne would like to see this money used in other ways to serve the needs of the people who use the congregate meal and meals-on-wheels. There are six people who get meals-on-wheels on the weekend. Dianne will keep the Commission informed as to how her talks with CRT go, and her research as to other ways to serve the community who uses this service.

A. Door Counters

Dianne reported that the count was 10,520 for 19 days in November, which averages out to 277 per day.

VI. MONTHLY TOWN MANAGER'S REPORT

The Town Manager's report was distributed to the Commissioners.

VII. OLD BUSINESS

A. Self-Assessment

Dianne reported that most of the work has been completed on this, and Strategic Planning. However, some of the process needs to be redone in a few areas. With new Commissioners, there needs to be an update and Dianne asked the Commissioners which committees they would like to serve on. Dianne distributed information on each of the committees.

B. ByLaws/Rules of Procedure Discussion

Dianne distributed the updated ByLaws draft and Rules of Procedure to the Commissioners.

MOTION: Roberta Byron Kolej made a motion to table this discussion until the January meeting, Urania Nicholson seconded the motion, the motion passed 5-1 with Jerilyn Nagel opposing.

C. Strategic Planning

See Self-Assessment

D. ADA Discussion

This was discussed earlier in the evening.

VIII. NEW BUSINESS

There was no New Business.

IX. AGENDA FOR JANUARY MEETING

Add Budget to New Business.

In past years, an ad hoc committee has been appointed to review the budget with Dianne and staff; Greg Stelmak and Karen Brecher will serve on this ad hoc committee.

X. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

There was no Public Participation.

XI. ADJOURNMENT

MOTION: Roberta Byron Kolej made a motion to adjourn, Greg Stelmak seconded the motion, all were in favor, and the motion was unanimously passed with a 6-0 vote at 8:20 P.M.

The next meeting of the Commission on Aging and Disabled is Wednesday, January 4, 2017 at 6:00 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,

Gail Whitney, Commission Clerk