

COMMISSION ON AGING AND DISABLED
SPECIAL MEETING
JUNE 3, 2020
ZOOM MEETING – 1:00 PM

RECEIVED FOR RECORD
IN NEWINGTON, CT

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Town Clerk

MEMBERS PRESENT

Karen Brecher
Maureen Lynch
Kathy Sobieski
Mary Udice
Sandy Nafis
Terri Lapenta-Duffek

MEMBERS ABSENT

Chylene Pender

STAFF

Dianne Stone
Jaime Trevethan
Gail Whitney

TOWN COUNCIL LIAISONS

David Nagel

TOWN COUNCIL LIAISONS ABSENT

Carol Anest

ALSO PRESENT

Gail Budrejko

I. CALL TO ORDER

Karen Brecher called the Commission on Aging and Disabled via Zoom meeting to order at 1:05 PM.

II. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

III. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Gail Budrejko stated that this is the last meeting until September and she wanted to attend to personally to express her appreciation and gratitude on how the Senior and Disabled Center has been managing the quarantine issues. She commented to Dianne that she and her staff should be so proud of the way they are recognizing the needs of members physically, socially, and emotionally with all the creative ways they are addressing these needs. The weekly outreach phone calls, food delivery, activities, computer assistance for both people who are computer savvy and computer illiterate, all are offering comfort and inclusion, and Gail is very impressed by all of this.

Dave Nagel stated that he echoed Gail's comments on behalf of the Town Council and personally. The weekly phone calls are very informative, and the services that the Center has offered are tremendous for the Town residents. He reported that the Town Council has set the budget for the year and the request for replacing the windows at the Center was approved. The Town's mill rate is 39.28 which is a reduction of .17 or in terms of percentage .44%. Although this is a slight reduction, services remain and the Town Council has been able to take care of the needs of the Town without having to raise taxes or increase the mill rate.

IV. APPROVAL OF MINUTES OF MARCH 4, 2020

The Commissioners approved the minutes from March 4, 2020.

V. STAFF REPORT

Dianne reported that the last few months have been interesting. She had a conversation on March 10th with Charles Brown who is the Director of the Central Connecticut Health District. He indicated that signs should be placed around the building about social distancing and washing hands. On March 13th reality set in and although the hardest decision to make, it was the right thing to do to close the Center. A couple of years ago the Center revisited their mission statement which states: The mission of the Newington Senior and Disabled Center is to improve the wellbeing of older adults and adults with disabilities in the Town of Newington. Staff has gone back to that mission statement over and over again and are having daily staff meetings on how to improve the wellbeing. Dianne thanked Gail Budrejko for her comments.

Dianne explained that the congregate meal is very important at the Center socially and nutritionally. The Center wanted to make sure that those who participate in the congregate meal and Meals On Wheels continue with this service and make sure that security is not an issue. CRT provided a grab-and-go meal option, and Meals On Wheels remained the same. CRT provided a frozen meal, as well as a dairy product and fruit snack all as a grab-and-go option. This takes place on a daily basis and people come to the Center and pick up the meal. Dial-A-Ride personnel are now assisting Meals-On-Wheels and delivering food to approximately 60-65 people each week. Every Wednesday volunteers are getting boxes of frozen food, sorting food, and packing this food for this home delivery. Additionally, Dial-A-Ride drivers have been assisting Newington's Food Pantry with delivering food. At this time Dial-A-Ride drivers are only providing rides for critical needs. The Food Pantry recognizes that people who are 65 or older, and/or have serious health needs cannot go to the grocery store, so a volunteer grocery shopping program began. Maureen Lynch participates in this volunteer program. However, because volunteers cannot be properly screened, and this was discussed with the Police Chief, a system was created where a grocery store order is called into the Center, a volunteer receives the list and a gift card, the groceries are brought back to the Center, and the Dial-A-Ride drivers deliver the groceries. This has worked out very well and to date 54 people were served in May and \$4,691 was spent. The Center is fronting the money and people are paying the Center back with \$3,884 received to date. It was easier to handle this situation this way instead of asking people to pay the money up front. One concern is that as people return to work, the volunteer pool will decrease, so volunteers are being recruited to handle grocery shopping. The Center has a volunteer cadre of people over age 65 which is the population that is supposed to stay home, so grocery shopping volunteers are not being recruited from that cadre.

Dianne reported that while the building has been closed, a lot of work has been done by the Town's Facilities Department, and the cleaning company. Floors were cleaned and lights were upgraded. The windows need to be replaced because they were leaking. The parking lot will be under construction soon with resurfacing, new lighting, and installation of sidewalks in front of the handicapped spaces to be in ADA compliance. This was a Town effort between Highway, Facilities, Parks and Grounds, Engineering, Building, and the Senior and Disabled Center who all collaborated on what was the best way to update the parking lot.

The Annual Volunteer Dinner was already in the budget for this year and the Center felt it was important to still hold this event, and volunteers had already committed to participate in this event. The Center worked with Italian Gourmet and 72 meals were delivered to arrive at 5:00 PM and this event was shown live on NCTV. A lot of positive feedback was received, and it was nice to be able to do something that is normally done, even though this wasn't normal circumstances.

In terms of outreach, it has been difficult not providing transportation to a lot of people, and so many are socially isolated. Telephone outreach calls are taking place and when going through the list of people at the Center, these calls explain that if the Center can help in any way to please let someone know. The weekly Friday robocall is a way to let people know that the Center is still there for them. These robocalls come from a Massachusetts phone number, but the Center paid a little extra so the calls look like they are coming in from the Center's phone number. Dianne stated that she is looking into a new program with a motion picture television fund to make daily phone calls, and she hopes to adopt that. Virtual programs using Zoom are just wrapping up like the Aging Mastery Program. The Center is one of two sites in Connecticut that are able to do this Aging Mastery Program virtually, and Dianne thinks one of two in the country, and it has worked out very well. The biggest challenge in virtual programs is getting people to participate because a lot of people don't have the technology. There is a statewide effort to get the technology and training into people's hands, even for telemedicine.

Dianne doesn't know when the Center will reopen because ultimately it depends on what the Connecticut Central Health District and the Town decides to do. She is working with people throughout the state discussing reopening. The Center has always been on the leading edge of things, and she hopes that continues.

The Central Connecticut Health District worked with the garden volunteers on safety and that has worked out tremendously. The entire garden is planted and being well maintained with upgrades to the irrigation system thanks to the Facilities Department. The first harvest was done today and pictures of this can be found on Facebook. More postings are taking place on Facebook, along with doing Facebook live.

Dianne stated that the Center is working very hard on reaching people and sticking to the mission statement of: The mission of the Newington Senior and Disabled Center is to improve the wellbeing of older adults and adults with disabilities in the Town of Newington. She stated that the Center has been very fortunate with Town support being creative and doing the things that need to be done. She commented that she could not be more proud to be an employee in the Town of Newington, and that the Center's staff has gone above and beyond and are all committed to their jobs. She went on to say that the absolute credit of all that is being done belongs to the people who work for the Senior and Disabled Center.

Karen commented that all that the Center has been doing has been great, and she has been watching Facebook live, and Zoom programs.

VI. OLD BUSINESS

A. Purchase Requests

Dianne stated that there are no immediate purchase requests, however as the summer progresses and they are evolving, there may be some technology issues to provide assistance to people in the community. She will keep the Commissioners informed if there are any requests.

VII. NEW BUSINESS

A. Membership Renewal Fees

Dianne reported that Annual Membership begins July 1, 2020 through June 30, 2021. At this time the membership renewal forms are sent out to people, along with a form to update any information, and to participate in a survey. This document will still be sent out, however since the Center has been closed since March, the 2020-2021 dues will be waived. A voluntary donation will still be requested. In the past

voluntary donations almost equal the amount of the membership dues which are in the range of \$7,000-\$9,000; a resident pays \$5.00 and a non-resident pays \$10.00. Dianne feels that waiving the membership

fees may not cause a loss of revenue because people will still make donations, and she wanted to know what the Commissioners felt about this. Karen responded that she thinks this is a good idea because although people can't come into the building, we would like to keep them as a member, and she will make a donation along with her membership fee. Maureen also stated this was a good idea, and that she will make a donation along with her \$5.00 membership fee. Sandy, Mary, Terri all agreed that this was a good idea. **MOTION: Sandy Nafis made a motion that the Senior and Disabled Center waive the membership fee for the period of July 1, 2020 through June 30, 2021, Mary Udice seconded the motion, all were in favor, and the motion passed with a 6-0 vote.**

IX. AGENDA FOR SEPTEMBER MEETING

Karen asked if the standard agenda should be kept as is. Dianne commented that she cannot imagine thinking past June at this point. Karen stated that we will keep the agenda as is and if anything comes up it can be added.

X. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Gail Budrejko asked if the anticipated income received from the coffee and gift shops will affect the budget. She commented that when crafting the membership letter to hopefully increase donations, maybe this should be mentioned. Dianne stated that is an excellent point; the coffee shop doesn't bring in as much as the gift shop, but absolutely this should be acknowledged in the membership renewal letter. Karen stated that members will return for \$5.00 per person, and Dianne stated that add that to everything that we are doing and still not reaching a lot of people, so if we lose the ability to reach out to people because they have to pay the \$5.00 then it is not worth it. She knows that people who are staying home are suffering from social isolation which is a health impact because they have lower activity. There are people who come for lunch every day, and go home, but they are getting up to walk to the Dial-A-Ride bus, walking around the Center – if these people are not doing this then there is a higher risk of falling, and advancement of frailty. It is much more important for us to maintain members, do membership outreach, and bring in more information then to collect a \$5.00 membership fee. Dianne commented that she has seen through this pandemic a lot of heroes and we encourage everybody to be a hero by contacting an older adult and spending time by encouraging them to walk. A life can be saved with contacting neighbors and encouraging everyone to engage with older adults and people in the community.

Dave seconded Gail's comments about waiving fees and explaining that in a letter. The Commission is concerned about people and what they provide, which are appreciated by all. He reiterated Maureen's comments that people may donate more because of all that the Center has been doing.

Kathy asked about the AARP fitness area. She wondered if it was installed and being used. Dianne stated that the great news is that it is installed at Clem Lemire and it looks beautiful, however it is closed at this time and cannot be used. There was supposed to be a grand opening in June which has now been rescheduled for August, but that is up in the air. Mary asked if an announcement will be made when there is an official opening, and Dianne stated that the Commissioners will receive a formal invitation. Parks and Recreation are handling this event. AARP, for their 60th Anniversary, committed to placing one of these fitness areas in each state and Newington lucked out getting this. Dianne did a TV program with AARP and talked about this. A grant was also received from AARP CT for installation of accessible game tables. Dianne will share the link for this program with the Commissioners.

Dianne also commented that the garden received a \$350 grant from the Master Garden Program. This will be used for operating costs such as plants, soil, and equipment. Karen stated that she has seen the garden on Facebook and it is amazing. Dianne responded that it shouldn't be called a garden, but a farm!

XI. ADJOURNMENT

MOTION: Mary Udice made a motion to adjourn, Kathy Sobieski seconded the motion, all were in favor, and the motion passed with at 6-0 vote at 1:50 PM.

The next meeting of the Commission on Aging and Disabled is Wednesday, September 2, 2020 at 6:00 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,

Gail Whitney, Commission Clerk