

DRAFT
TOWN OF DARIEN
COMMISSION ON AGING
REGULAR MEETING
APRIL 20, 2011

ATTENDANCE: Joseph Pankowski, Chair; Jennifer Geddes, Vice Chair; Ron Heinbaugh, Mary McCarthy, Pat Morgan, Amy Squyres, Tom Valentino, Robin Woods, Charlie England

OTHERS: Beth Paris, Senior Center Coordinator; Olive Hauser, Director of Social Services; Jayme Stevenson, Selectmen's Liaison to the COA, David Campbell, First Selectman

CALL TO ORDER

Mr. Pankowski called to order the regular meeting at 9:00 a.m.

APPROVAL OF MARCH MINUTES

- ** **MS. GEDDES MOVED TO APPROVE THE MARCH MINUTES.**
- ** **MR. ENGLAND SECONDED.**
- ** **MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

SOCIAL SERVICES REPORT

Ms. Hauser said that as of April 1, SNAP, the food stamps program, recalculated everyone's food stamp allotment and it was a downward modification. For utilities, less aid is available. This change was abrupt, she reported. Further reductions are expected in the food stamps program.

The Household Closet has been a success. Once monthly, a resident can pick up supplies. She mentioned that *Person-to-Person* provides food on an emergency basis.

The need continues for home heating oil assistance, and especially since the price has escalated and is hovering around \$4 per gallon.

She spoke about the 12 or so frail residents that live in unsanitary conditions. One or two are in crisis and refuse support. State legislation makes getting a conservator harder. Getting the medical diagnosis from a doctor, and his or her willingness to appear is critical, otherwise it holds up the process and complicates the conservator's role. The probate conservator's duties are to 'do all' i.e., pay bills, make medical decisions, etc.

In order to avoid the nightmares of a conservatorship, Mr. Pankowski said that seniors could assign assets to a Revocable Living Trust. Hiring an attorney for a conservatorship proceeding can be very expensive, he said.

Ms. Paris joined the meeting at 9:17 a.m.

DRAFT LETTER FOR SENIORS' TAX RELIEF

Mr. England commented that this may not be the right time for a letter regarding State funding. Tax relief is better in Florida which is why many flee Connecticut and relocate to a state such as Florida, he said. People who have financial means can leave Darien at their own will, reported Ms. Squyres. People sell large homes, downsize, and live off their profit, added Ms. Hauser.

Mr. Valentino worked on a draft over the past month and presented the letter for review. The Board reviewed, critiqued, and made the following suggestive changes. In paragraph 1, line 1, Delete: *Soon the state representatives*, replace with: *Despite these difficult economic times, the general assembly ...* Paragraph 5, delete *the foremost cause*, replace with: *one of the leading causes*

Mr. Pankowski said that he will further tweak the letter. Ms. Livvy Floren and Ms. Toni Boucher who Mr. Valentino said proposed this legislation, will be sent a copy of this letter along with State Senator Bob Duff and others.

- ** MS. MORGAN MOVED TO APPROVE THE AGREED TO CHANGES TO THE DRAFT LETTER PREPARED BY MR. VALENTINO. MR. PANKOWSKI WILL MAKE DISCRETIONARY CHANGES AND FORWARD IT TO THE BOARD FOR FINAL APPROVAL.**
- ** MR. HEINBAUGH SECONDED.**
- ** MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

SENIOR CENTER REPORT

Ms. Paris gave her report as follows:

She reported that the Alzheimer's program is beginning this evening. Twenty-five have signed up. She mentioned that there is an excellent manual on the subject that will be given out as a gift.

She invited the Board members to the Volunteer's party next Wednesday, April 27. There are 35 volunteers and approximately 17 are unpaid.

She reported that there are 439 residents who have registered for the Senior Center. There are 162 non-residents who have signed up. Mr. Pankowski asked that she keep a count of non-members who use the Center during the month of May. Ms. Paris said that Aging in Place comes to the Center every other month and those members will be at the Center in May for a program.

She reported that there are water leaks, and she continuously sprays to rid the musty odor, especially when there are guests coming for a program.

She is seeking out members who will write a complimentary letter on what they like about the Senior Center.

Please refer to the attached report for additional Senior Center news items.

OLD BUSINESS

Mr. England stated that once again there will be a Father's Day Car Show. New Canaan will be joining Darien in this initiative. He said the pricing will be different this year. The event will be held from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. AIP + Gallivant will be the recipients of monies raised.

Mr. Valentino said that he supports a new Senior Center and has no objection to it being at Town Hall. However, he is against tying the Senior Center relocation with the property at 35 Leroy Avenue (which was to be used for affordable housing under a plan put forth by the previous administration). Mr. Valentino said that the BOE can rent elsewhere rather than relocate to the old library. Mr. Valentino and Mr. Campbell had a short exchange over the question of Mr. Campbell's support for affordable housing in Darien.

Ms. Geddes said that Mr. Valentino's recent letters to the editor against the "Shuffle" made some people believe that his position was the full Commission's position. Mr. Valentino said that the newspaper added his position on the Commission on Aging, and that he did not convey that his position was that of the board.

Members of the Commission said that it should be made known whenever possible that the board supports the "Shuffle", but one member of the Commission is not in full agreement with the rest of the Commission's position. Mr. Pankowski noted that a letter to the editor was expected to be published in the April 28 newspapers to this effect.

NEW BUSINESS

Ms. Woods reported that, as part of the Building Committee, she is going to the Groton Senior Center. This Center was the work of the architect that Darien selected for its new Senior Center. The Building Committee will present to the RTM in June.

ADJOURNMENT

- ** MR. HEINBAUGH MOVED TO ADJOURN THE MEETING.
- ** MS. MORGAN SECONDED.
- ** MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

There being no other business, the meeting was adjourned at 10:00 a.m.

Next scheduled meeting is Wednesday, May 18, 2011, at 9:00 a.m., Room 119, Darien Town Hall.

Respectfully submitted,

Anne Hohlweck,
Recording Secretary

Attachment (Senior Center Report)

Darien Senior Activities Center
Commission on Aging Report
April 20, 2011
Respectfully Submitted: Beth Paris, Coordinator

Renewal of Membership completed in March although we will continue to take new membership throughout the calendar year. Residents: 439 Non Residents 162
The results of the survey are attached to the minutes. Only 100 surveys were returned but we feel confident that some good information was gathered. We are looking into doing a more compressive survey in the future that possibly could be mailed to a wider segment of the population. The architect Tom Acari is now visiting the Center interviewing staff and members regarding building use and programming. There have also been more visits from the general public to see the building.

Ongoing Work in Progress: Developing Fire Plan
Program Planning for summer
Monthly Newsletter/Publicity
Marketing Project w students for Norwalk Community Coll.
Long Distance Caregiver Support*
Meetings & Planning Visits w/Architect
Meeting with Members on architect contact

Building Projects Grease Trap Inspections & Procedure
Closed one restroom permanently
Looking at Woodshop clean up
FD Securities Inspection

April Program Highlights: 1st AARP meeting
4th Blood Pressure
4th Health Talk "Osteoporosis"
5th Blue Notes
6th Flower Arranging w Darien Garden Club
11th History of the Alphabet
18th Advance Directives National Healthcare Decision Day
19th Caregiver Educational Support Group "Validation"
20th AARP Driving Course
20th/27th Alzheimer's 4 Part Caregiver Series 6:30-8:30
25th Veteran's Benefits Discussion
27th Annual Volunteer Luncheon/Entertainment *Sophistication*

Meetings: April 1st w Olive Hauser Social Services; April 13th SWCAA Advisory Board
AIP Coordinator meeting as needed for Center use

Building Issues

Refrigerator gas leak in cooling line
Ceiling leak throughout building during rain storms -7 areas now
One bathroom permanently closed
FD Securities to Repair Call Panel