

DRAFT
TOWN OF DARIEN
COMMISSION ON AGING
REGULAR MEETING
JANUARY 20, 2010

ATTENDANCE: Joseph Pankowski, Chair; Charlie England, Mary McCarthy, Pat Morgan, Tom Valentino, Robin Woods

ABSENT: Jennifer Geddes, Ron Heinbaugh, Amy Squyres

OTHERS: Beth Paris (Senior Center Coordinator), Callie Sullivan (Board of Selectmen Liaison), Olive Hauser (ex-officio/Social Services Director), Debra Hertz, Social Services Commission Chair; Karl Kilduff, Administrative Officer, David Campbell, First Selectman; Jayme Stevenson, Selectman; Maggie Gordon, Reporter, Darien News

CALL TO ORDER

Mr. Pankowski called the Regular Meeting to order at 9:03 a.m.

APPROVAL OF PREVIOUS MONTH'S MINUTES

**** MS. MCCARTHY MOVED TO APPROVE THE DECEMBER MINUTES.**

**** MR. VALENTINO SECONDED.**

**** MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

Mr. Pankowski read a statement from Amy Squyres, who is a member of the Selectmen's Task Force, on the Board of Education (BOE) space. Amy said it would be most appropriate for the Commission to take the position that we agree that the state of the Senior Center should be the driving force in looking at the possibility of moving it to the Town Hall.

SENIOR CENTER REPORT

Ms. Paris said the phones are being installed and the new number is not yet operational. The current number will convert to the facsimile number.

General building maintenance is underway such as cleaning and painting, boiler repairs, re-keying the office for nightly lockup, upgrading appearances of one classroom for multi-purpose use.

Some January highlights are as follows:

4th - Hoot Owls perform

11th - Wellness made easy – tips for better health in 2010

13th - High Tea with entertainment

19th - Calypso band with Pina Colada smoothies

25th - Health lecture on arthritis pain management

27th - Senior senior prom with Darien High School class of 2010

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Works in Progress:

- Membership renewal
- Assisting with Budget
- Interviewing prospective volunteers for office assistance and front desk duties
- Caregiver Education Support Group set to start March 2010
- Gathering information for the Policy Manual

Robin Woods represented Darien at SWCAA meeting on January 13, 2010.

NEW BUSINESS

Mr. Pankowski provided a handout of the Vision Statement for the Commission on Aging that includes goals and objectives.

Mr. Campbell joined the meeting.

Ms. Sullivan said that seniors here in Darien do not have enough affordable housing. Many are moving away to neighboring towns such as New Canaan and Wilton. She provided a handout representing the number of affordable senior housing units in neighboring towns – Greenwich (291), followed by New Canaan (119), Wilton (115), Westport (50), Darien (30), and Weston (1), respectively. She said that people with higher income have more flexibility.

Ms. Sullivan said that there is a list of fifty-six people who want to get into old town homes; twenty-six are from Darien, such as retired police, shop owners, etc. who qualify for affordable housing.

Mr. Campbell said the multi-family housing units here in town are too small. Over the years, there has been little effort in addressing affordable housing.

There are large parcels of land here in town such as the Edgerton property, H & L Chevrolet, Tom Golden land, and others. The owners have not been approached. Mr. Campbell said that we need to be more aggressive with those who own large parcels of land and lots in town.

Ms. Hauser said that seniors want to be near transportation, and near places to walk to. They want smaller living accommodations. For those in need of large units, Atria fulfills that need.

Mr. Valentino mentioned a website, www.walkscore.com that shows nearness and walking distance to shops, parks, churches, etc.

Mr. Valentino said he toured Town Hall. He said he and Ms. Paris likes the BOE space.

Ms. Stevenson said that the priorities are the Senior Center, BOE goes to the library, perhaps, and a pool can be put in at Town Hall.

Mr. Campbell said that in touring the Town Hall building, he noted that there is much available, unused space. He also said there is room for a pool. Ms. Stevenson said that a working kitchen also would be beneficial.

Mr. Campbell said he has spoken at the Senior Men's Club and the New Canaan Senior Men's Club and said that with good space, membership will grow at the Senior Center. In the past twenty years not much has been done. Ms. Sullivan said that we need to keep the seniors here in Darien by way of affordable housing.

Ms. Stevenson and Mr. Campbell noted that having the seniors at Town Hall is a good thing, as social services, the health department, and others are here, and there is the potential for a pool. Ms. Stevenson then said a possible use of 35 Leroy is office space for BOE. Senior affordable housing at 35 Leroy also is an option.

Ms. Sullivan added that the BOE could keep their office at Town Hall but take away all the storage space. There are about twenty employees and about twenty-five offices.

Ms. Paris said that there are major issues all the time at the Center. Mr. Pankowski said there has been a series of patchwork fixes at the Senior Center's current location and believed there is no money in the budget for significant renovations. The building would need its overall appearance greatly improved to be more appealing to newcomers, and to those already spending time at the Center, Ms. Paris said.

- ** MR. PANKOWSKI MOVED TO APPROVE THAT THE COMMISSION ON AGING SUPPORT THE FACILITIES STUDY TASK FORCE MAKING THE SENIOR CENTER ITS TOP FOCUS; AND SECONDLY, AFFORDABLE HOUSING FOR DARIEN SENIORS.**
- ** MS. MORGAN SECONDED.**
- ** MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

Ms. McCarthy said that the February meeting will most definitely be more than one hour and for all to plan on staying beyond the hour. The Commission then decided to cancel the February 17 meeting in favor of a longer, Special Meeting, on February 24.

SOCIAL SERVICES REPORT

Ms. Hauser said some seniors are house poor, and they use the food stamps program. She is seeing a need for help with energy costs. Seniors are trying to pay their bills and at times choose bill paying over food.

ADJOURNMENT

- ** MR. ENGLAND MOVED TO ADJOURN THE MEETING.**
- ** MS. WOODS SECONDED.**
- ** MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

There being no other business, the meeting was adjourned at 10:03 a.m.

Next scheduled meeting is [February 24](#), (new date) at 9:00 a.m., Room 119, Darien Town Hall.

Respectfully submitted,

Anne Hohlweck,
Recording Secretary