

**COMMISSION ON THE AGING
4 Brush Hill Road
New Fairfield, CT 06812**

MINUTES

Area Wide Summit

May 9, 2009

A Summit of the Area Commissions on the Aging was held on Saturday May 9, 2009 at the New Fairfield Senior Sunshine Center. Maureen Salerno called the meeting to order at 10:00am. Secretary, Laurie Busse, took the minutes

1. Introductions:

New Fairfield: Maureen Salerno, Chairman, Janet Loya, and Jeannette Sweeney

Danbury: Charlotte Barrows

Sherman: Jeanette Perlman and Peter Cohen, Co-Chairs

Brookfield: Dottie Miles, Chair and Betsy McIlvaine

Bethel: Lucille Walsh

Ridgefield: Christine Robertson, Chair, Mary Morrissoe, Alice Kenny Lucas, Marion Freer, Mary Anne O'Grady, and Kathy Brennan

Redding: Rosalind Kopfstein

2. Update from Each Commission

a. Current Topic or Project:

Ridgefield discussed their provider service booklet. They received a \$5,000 (five thousand dollar) grant from the Lear Foundation. The Commission distributed the booklet throughout the Town. The problem with the booklet is that the seniors don't read it thoroughly and often skip over the disclaimer. Ridgefield also has a "Gold Card". Area merchants will give a discount to any senior showing this card. This program is sponsored by Supportive Initiative Forum (SPIF), which has 75 local merchants.

In Ridgefield the only resource in Town that is open 24/7 is the VNA. They are instilling a Quality Living in Ridgefield and Redding (QLRR). Ridgefield has a lot of resources, but no co-coordinator, central phone number or central person to call about all of their resources. They are in the process of hiring a coordinator and possibly have a 211 number. Fifty one percent (51%) of those age 75 and older have an income of less than \$50,000.00 (fifty thousand dollars) a year.

Brookfield has a Service Provider Directory and discussed although it took a while, they were able to secure a grant.

New Fairfield discussed they received a \$1,500.00 (one thousand five hundred dollar) grant for their Provider Resource booklet, but have had a difficult time in getting providers to join. Thanks to some volunteers at the Senior Center the booklet is finally getting off the ground. The booklet will be in large print and have a disclaimer.

Bethel would like to start a directory.

Sherman would like to start a guide and discussed there are many home based businesses in Sherman and there is a community wide effort to make sure all businesses are included. Sherman also did a survey which showed seniors want to age in place. As a result they are holding a symposium directed to the sandwich generation. It will be held on Friday October 16, 2009 from 6:30 to 9:00pm.

Danbury: has another booklet in progress. This one will be uploaded onto their website and it will include local restaurants and merchants who are willing to give a discount to seniors. The merchants will decide the discount and will be required to display a sign in their window to such effect and it is up to them to require ID from the senior. Discussion followed, Ridgefield tried this, but it did not work out so that is why they are using the Gold Card.

Redding: has 2,000 to 3,000 senior citizens out of a population of 24,000. They use age 65 as the guideline for senior citizen.

3. Areas of Common Interest:

a. Housing:

The Commissions discussed regardless of where they live, the majority of seniors want to age in place and as of July 1, 2009 the State will establish a Department on Aging.

Housing seems to be the largest area of common interest. The Housatonic Valley Council of Elected Officials (HVCEO) has a report on housing on their website <http://hvceo.org/> HVCEO meets in the Brookfield Town Hall.

The Connecticut COA has a survey on their website www.cga.ct.gov/coa This survey discussed the Danbury area is lacking needed services. Discussion followed there are services, but perhaps better coordination of the services are needed.

New Fairfield discussed the efforts Tom Dube and the Lutheran Church are putting forward to build senior housing in New Fairfield. They have the money to purchase land, however they have many obstacles to overcome before they can find a parcel of land to purchase. Many of the property owners don't want to sell land to them. Many years ago New Fairfield did not have multi family housing for seniors. Jeannette Sweeney's efforts on the Planning Commission helped to create multi family housing. Further discussion focused on Catholic Charities and the Dunham Property.

Ridgefield has 12 new units going into Ballard Green. In addition Ballard Green is being renovated with new roofs and bathrooms. Ridgefield is very lucky to have

Representative John Frye in their Town. The recipients of the COMPACE Program are also in jeopardy as the State plans to change their income guidelines from just including income to including income and assets. This is going to affect 80% of the COMPACE recipients. Representative John Frye will be at their next meeting.

New units are being constructed in Brooks Quarry in Brookfield. Discussion followed Brookfield and Ridgefield have the advantage of a Housing Authority.

Sherman has a Senior Housing Committee which is an extension of the Sherman COA. The Senior Housing Committee was appointed by the 1st Selectman and they now have a core committee understanding the needs of senior housing.

George Town was a proposed Senior Housing Development in Redding. It is now gone because the Town gave money for busses instead of money to the infrastructure of George Town.

The old Danbury Police Department will more than likely be used for senior housing. They have a developer but they do not have the money and are actively seeking grants. The Danbury Mayor sees a need for low income senior housing, but does not see a need for moderate income senior housing, and the need very much exists.

Discussion followed people can't seem to establish the difference between low income housing and senior housing. They are afraid of outsiders and "those" people will come into their town to live. Brooks Temple in New Milford is an excellent resource.

4. Brain Storming

Discussion focused on the quality of life for seniors, they are vibrant, living, focused people. A good way for everyone to keep in touch is via the websites.

New Fairfield has been holding Community Forums to increase awareness and has been very supportive of the Lutheran Church's efforts to find a parcel of land large enough to support Senior Housing. The Senior Center had graduate students do an internship for an outreach program.

Sherman is holding a symposium geared toward the sandwich generation. The population in Sherman is 4,000 with 964 of them as seniors. Sherman does not have the Sweet Hart bus. They have a new bus and grants helped to pay for this. The bus is just under the size that would require a driver with a CDL license. The font size on road signs can be enlarged. Jeannette Perlman is working with the Public Works Dept. to have the street signs replaced with larger font.

In Ridgefield SPIF sponsored an event at the high school where senior citizens spent a good portion of the day following around high school seniors. Transportation was provided. Ridgefield had to cut back on the Sweet Hart bus.

In Brookfield the Park and Rec pamphlet will contain a senior section. Brookfield discussed how they almost lost the Sweet Hart bus.

Bethel has a Town owned van that is handicapped accessible with a paid driver. The van was paid for by grants. The bus is not large enough to require a driver with a CDL license.

Danbury has 2 busses. They have a hard time finding drivers because of the limited hours. The city does not have the money to pay full time drivers. The trick is to keep the size of the bus small so you don't need to pay CDL drivers.

In closing Ridgefield stated they would like to host a Summit in September or October.

Maureen Salerno adjourned the meeting at 1:03pm.