

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

MINUTES

Meeting

May 24, 2011

A regular meeting of the Commission on the Aging was held on Tuesday May 24, 2011 at the New Fairfield Senior Center. Maureen Salerno called the meeting to order at 7:00pm. Secretary, Laurie Busse, took the minutes.

Present: Maureen Salerno, Chair, Kathy Hull, Jeannette Sweeney, Bob Alberetti, and Katy Johannssen.

Absent: Cindy LaCour, Vice Chair, Janet Loya and Roberta Ilardo

Guest: Rev. Dr. Patricia Nicholas, Congregation Church of New Fairfield
Donna Hanft and Stephanie Shaughnessy of St. Edwards Social Concerns Ministry

Elevation of Alternates:

Jeannette Sweeney was elevated to full voting status.

CORRESPONDENCE/ANNOUNCEMENTS:

OLD BUSINESS

1. Discussion with the Area Clergy on the Needs of New Fairfield Seniors:

Present were Rev. Dr. Patricia Nicholas of the Congregational Church of New Fairfield, (CCNF), Donna Hanft and Stephanie Shaughnessy of the Social Concerns Ministry of St. Edwards Church. The discussion focused on how do the churches know who needs help and how do they go about helping them. Dr. Rev. Pat Nicholas stated CCNF is a small church and she usually hears from one of the members if someone is in need. They have a Compassionate Connections Ministry with lists of drivers, those who will cook a meal, and help with household repairs. Since FISH was dissolved St. Edward's Church has a hard time finding drivers who will take the elderly to places such as the doctors or stores. Many times the elderly do not want help. Often there are times when Rev. Pat will hear about someone is in a crisis mode, such as in the hospital and she will either call them or go visit them and they will tell her they are fine, they don't need anything. Donna Hanft and Stephanie Shaughnessy discussed they have "Friendly Visitors" and "Telecare". Telecare works by having someone call an elderly person once or twice a month just to check in and say hi and socialize with them for a little bit. Friendly Visitors for St.

Edwards must go through a 2 hour training course entitled Safe Environment Trainings. The Friendly Visitors is getting to be more and more difficult because agencies can't afford the background checks required for those people volunteering to be a friendly visitor. Katy Johannssen discussed the Ridgefield VNA would like to start a regional program where clients could get a certain number of rides and there would be friendly visitors offered to those who were not clients. Katy Johannssen discussed a national program that is currently going on in larger cities across the United States. Currently in White Plains, NY there is a program going on that if for example Katy drove "X" number of hours, then her mother in Chicago would receive "X" number of rides. The Ridgefield VNA is watching this program closely as they would like to bring it to this area. Other programs discussed included a program in Wilton where elderly residents pay \$325 a year and are allotted 2 rides per week. The Sweet Hart bus stops running at 4pm on Saturdays and does not run at all on Sundays. Many times the patrons will have to be picked up long before their appointment and often wait an hour or more after their appointment to get a ride back. The Sweet Hart bus has asked for an increase in their budget to provide better service however the budget for the new fiscal year shows their budget will remain the same. Addressing transportation needs can be very difficult.

The COA discussed their survey regarding elders wanting to age in place meaning they want to stay in their homes for as long as they can. Home repair and upkeep can also be difficult. St. Edwards has two groups; they have Rebel Cares and Caring Kids. Both of these groups will go out and do minor repairs or upkeep on members homes. The CCFNF has the Compassionate Connections Ministries which has a group of volunteer handymen who are willing to go out and help around people's homes. While some of the larger projects such as fixing stairs may not be an issue, sometimes it is difficult to get people out to do the small things like fixing door knobs or changing light bulbs. Further discussion focused on housing. There is a program in Washington that purchases houses in disrepair and the town will fix them up and then sell the home at a reduced rate to someone who is in financial need and keep the property. Many elderly folks are looking to rent rather than purchase affordable housing. The Lutheran Church was on a mission to construct affordable housing, however, they've been having quite a difficult time because if they could find the required 5 acres of land, then they cannot find someone to sell it to them. One person actually threatened to sue them if they developed affordable housing. Last month the COA met with the Planning Commission and discussed the Dunham Ponds developer had gone bankrupt and Union Savings Bank currently owns it. The bank created a wholly owned subsidiary called Somers Development to finish the work. Discussion followed contacting Union Savings Bank.

2. Reply to the Planning Commission:

Last month the COA met with the Chairman of the Planning Commission regarding updating the Plan of Conservation and Development. The COA is charged with bringing the needs of the elders to their attention. The Commission will write a letter to the Planning Commission and include transportation and housing as needs for the elderly.

MINUTES:

Maureen Salerno tabled the April 26, 2011 Minutes.

NEW BUSINESS

1. Senior Center Report

The Senior Center Report was tabled.

PUBLIC COMMENT:

ADJOURN:

Maureen Salerno adjourn the meeting at 8:15pm.