

Town of Somers

Meeting of Advisory Committee for Seniors

February 14 2017

Present: Dori Bynack, Eileen Fedorowich, Phyllis Gwilliam, Ailene Henry, Deanna Schuetz, Joan Sizer

Absent: Pat Bachetti, Elaine Bemont, Tim Welch

The meeting was called to order at 1:30 pm by chairman Deanna Schuetz.

Minutes of last meeting: Deanna wished to amend the statement that she has a concern about a private club meeting in a town building. Rather the concern is that the club should act in accordance with its own by-laws and that the right information is given to the club members.

Eileen moved and Joan seconded that the minutes be approved as amended.

Committee Updates:

a. Chairman's Report:

I. **Budget:** There is no significant change in the next year's budget. Increases in cost are attributed to staff salaries, increased hours of bus drivers and increased cost of producing the newsletter.

II. **Upcoming Senior Center Trips/Events/Programs:** Deanna distributed a list of February and March events and trips. Complete list is available on request. Technology classes will begin on Feb. 17. Two students from the high school will work one on one with seniors.

Bus trips with our local bus will begin again in March. We have three buses – 2016, 2013 and 2006. The 2006 bus which has not been in service for a while will be used as needed. Deanna is applying for a state grant to replace the 2006 bus.

Deanna, Todd Rolland and the Town of Somers CFO recently toured the Ellington Senior Center to help envision what a future Somers Senior Center space might look like.

An email from committee member Tim Welch asked a question about the strategic planning initiative discussed at the Selectmen's Jan 3rd meeting. This initiative includes several projects including a senior center and focused on potential programs that may require bonding.

Deanna asked committee opinion on a program proposed by a Berkshire Hathaway real estate person. Decision was made not to have this program at the Senior Center.

b. **Meals on Wheels:** Program is going well. Before a storm clients have been contacted to be sure they have adequate food in case deliveries can't be made. Drivers with 4 wheel drive vehicles are available. A long-term goal is to provide the MOWs clients with non-perishable food items that could be used in case delivery is not possible. Karen Hocking from Somers CERT will assist with this. Ailene reported that the carry bags are getting worn and may soon need to be replaced.

c. **Senior Support:** Pat is in touch with 15 people and will continue to be in touch with them.

d. **Senior Club:** Dory reported 165 paid members. The revised by-laws were approved by the board and will available for members at the Feb. 22 meeting. A vote on the by-laws will be held in March. A letter went out to all members listing the goals of the club and benefits that are available to members. We discussed the concern about limiting club events to members only. Some suggestions were to include phone numbers on the sign-up sheets so non-members

signing up could be contacted by phone before the event. A suggestion was to provide each member with one or two guest passes per year allowing members to bring an occasional friend. Another suggestion was to give a first meal free to people planning to join the club. We again talked about the advisability of the club having its own newsletter. At present, there is a concern about club events being listed in the senior center newsletter. We decided at our last meeting to designate club sponsored events by an asterisk but only continue the asterisk designation for three months. We talked about having club members provide an email address to inform them of events at lower cost than a mailing.

e. Publicity: No report.

f. Woodcrest: There is a concern about lack of communication between Woodcrest staff and Town of Somers Human Services staff and a concern about whether Woodcrest residents are receiving the services that they need.

Old Business: none

New Business:

- I. Emergency Registry: There was a question about whether our town has an emergency registry that would address the needs of the most vulnerable members of our community in times of disaster. As far as Deanna knows we do not. There are many questions about this. What does it mean to be on a registry? How would it be maintained? What is the liability to the town? Are there state requirements? Deanna will ask the Somers CERT and the fire department if they have info on this. She will also ask neighboring towns if they have this type of program and, if so, how it operates.
- II. Congregate/Home Delivered Meal program: There have been two articles in local newspapers recently saying that congregate meal programs and meals on wheels programs serviced by CRT in several CT towns have been cut back because federal funding has not kept up with demand. At this time this does not apply to Somers because our program is independent of CRT and government funding. Our program is paid for by the recipients of the meals plus some supplementation from a MOWs fund that is funded by donations. Deanna stated that about 90% of the clients receive a partial subsidy from the MOWs fund. The program does not receive town funds but town personnel manage the billing and the volunteer schedule. Tim, in his email, stated that he felt that the town should withdraw our application to CRT. There was discussion about this with no decision. This will be revisited next month. Eileen asked if a volunteer could help with the billing.
- III. Deanna has been approached about starting an Alzheimers support group or a care givers support group. We discussed having an educational presentation about depression in seniors.

Moved by Eileen and seconded by Joan our meeting was adjourned at 3:30 p.m.

Respectfully submitted
Ailene Henry secretary

Minutes not official until approved at subsequent meeting.

