

DARIEN HUMAN SERVICES SPECIAL MEETING

Minutes

November 21, 2014

Present: Olive Hauser, Debra Hertz, Holly Hawes, Nancy Herling, Rachael Martin, Lisa Stout, Jennifer Geddes, Polly Lowman, Inta Adams, Ali Ramsteck, Beverly Kelsey. Invited guest Carrie Bernier.

Minutes: The minutes of the meeting of October 10, 2014 were approved as presented.

Agenda Items Covered:

- **Carrie Bernier, CEO of The Community Fund of Darien:** Carrie was invited to the HSC meeting to explore mutual mission goals and program development collaboration possibilities. Discussion took place around ways we can work together to better educate the community as to services available to those in need and ways to reduce the stigma of accepting help. The possibility of jointly doing a needs assessment survey was discussed.
- **Medicare Part D update:** Annual enrollment in Medicare Part D ends December 7, 2014. Ali and Inta have been spending time in the office at the Senior Center assisting clients in reviewing their options. Along with making sure the plans they chose met all their needs, some saved a good deal of money, the highest amounts were \$3,000 and \$1,000 a year.
- **Holiday Programs:** Both Thanksgiving and Christmas holiday programs are on track. Numbers of clients benefiting from these programs are expected to be higher than last year. A number of community organizations have already committed to sponsor trees, a movie fundraiser, and gift card and family support.
- **Energy Assistance Update, CL& P rate increase:** A usage rate increase of 6% announced by CL&P will have a big impact on HSC clients. Monthly distribution rates are also expected to rise. Heights residents are already experiencing high electric bills (the sole source of heating in the complex). Staff are encouraging all residents to go a monthly budget plan to spread their payments out over 12 months as well as coming in and applying for Energy Assistance.

Last year some of our CL&P clients were placed on a low budget plan by NEON when they did not qualify for that service. Consequently, when their energy assistance applications were taken again this year they received a notice of a much higher monthly budget plan, from CL&P. Staff worked with both CL&P and the very upset clients. Some budgets were lowered a bit but the rates could not be lowered to last year's level. We now have full access to the CL&P online portal, will be doing the low budget applications ourselves and will not have that problem again.

- **Commission on Aging Update:** Jennifer Geddes reported that a number of seniors experienced voting issues on Election Day, ranging from confusion on the ballot, and voting district location issues. Ray Slavin, a Commission on Aging member will be talking to the Registrars of Voters about these issues.

Respectfully submitted:

Beverly Kelsey