

DRAFT
TOWN OF DARIEN
COMMISSION ON AGING
REGULAR MEETING
JULY 21, 2010

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

ABSENT: Jennifer Geddes, Vice Chair

OTHERS: Beth Paris, Senior Center Coordinator; Olive Hauser, ex-officio/Social Services Director

CALL TO ORDER

Mr. Pankowski called to order the regular meeting at 9:00 a.m.

APPROVAL OF JUNE MINUTES

**** MR. HEINBAUGH MOVED TO APPROVE THE JUNE MINUTES.**
**** MS. MORGAN SECONDED.**
**** MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

SENIOR CENTER REPORT

Ms. Paris reported that the Senior Center has served as a cooling center for those seeking relief from the heat and humidity.

At the Independence Day celebration, sixty-two lunches were served, and attendance was eighty.

Ms. Paris brought a new Senior Center pamphlet that lists information on programs, services, and lunch, that is available to those inquiring about what the Center offers. The pamphlet is a work in progress, she said.

The Japanese program has been a huge success and with good attendance.

The two summer volunteers have been working out well.

The policy manual is being compiled. Ms. Hauser mentioned that from time to time residents ask what our policy or position is, so the completed manual will be a useful tool.

July Highlights

2nd – Independence Day celebration
12th – Arthritis Pain Management Lecture
20th – Japanese Culture Lecture

21st – High Tea Ceremony

26th – Health Lecture – ‘The Hearing World – Our Ears’

Thursdays beginning July 1 through 29th – Computer Power with Sreya

Thursdays beginning July 1 through 29th – Social Service hours with Mary Bernat

Tuesdays beginning July 6 through 27th – Basic Computer skills with Reilly

On July 13, the Center hosted an *Aging in Place* networking session with over fifty service providers in attendance.

Attended the SWCCA Information session on June 25 for Senior Center Directors.

The video on “A Day in the Life of the Senior Center” should be ready in September.

Mr. Pankowski said that there were two Board of Selectmen meetings within the last two weeks. At the first meeting, the proposed options for moving the Senior Center were discussed. Mr. Pankowski believes the Center should relocate to Town Hall rather than at the old library. Synergies are here at Town Hall with Social Services housed in the building, good parking, ease of entry, a gym, and many other amenities.

The second meeting addressed the three major projects in town which are Weed Beach, the new police station, and the new Senior Center. Ms. Squyres noted that the new police station and Weed Beach projects have been approved. The Senior Center has not. \$24,000,000.00 of bonding will be necessary to complete all three, or can be staggered over time. Ms. Paris said there is a three percent bonding rate presently. Mr. Pankowski said we are AAA bond rated.

Board of Selectmen members perceive the three projects as different priorities. Some board members are still of the belief that there are low turnout numbers at the Senior Center. This thinking needs to change. Mr. Pankowski said that it would be advisable to have a columnist to write articles on the Senior Center. There will be more credence from an outside writer. Mr. England said that Mr. Campbell wants the Senior Center to be a top priority as the need is urgent. However, those on the police commission believe the police station should be first. In going forward with the three projects, there are concerns about increased taxes. Seniors are looking to reduce their expenses.

Mr. Pankowski said the Chief Administrative Officer was able to secure State aid for the Senior Center project. Ms. McCarthy inquired as to how much. He said \$750,000. This will reduce the costs of the double move to the \$2,000,000-\$3,000,000 range. Ms. Squyres said that we should act quickly on the available funds. If the move occurs, the Board of Education will move to the old library.

Mr. Pankowski said that since the Senior Center project has not yet been approved, the move probably would not occur until 2012. Ms. Squyres added that RTM needs to approve this. Ms. Swiatek was a strong advocate for the new Center at the Board of Selectmen’s meeting. She presented data from her quarterly report that noted there are 604 Darien Senior Center members which represent thirty-three percent of Darien’s senior population. Darien’s percentage exceeds those of neighboring towns and villages.

SOCIAL SERVICES REPORT

Ms. Hauser reported that the grant was approved for \$13,000 for taxi vouchers and Senior Center trips. She said that Drivers Unlimited is working out very well. There were 100 single rides last quarter and an increase in rider ship. Two mini-vans are needed, she said.

A social services representative goes to the Senior Center one day a week. When the move takes place, allocation of office space is necessary.

The 2009 Renter's Rebate was used by 28 people in low-income bracket. \$13,000 was given back.

A cooling and heating shelter is necessary. The library is being used. She noted that there are 5-6 condominiums populated by seniors. Last week, 700 homes lost power due to the storm.

Aging in Place will be receiving private funding.

OLD BUSINESS

Mr. England gave a report on the recent Antique Car Show held in June on Father's Day. There were 130 cars and about 2,000 spectators. He said the show is growing and gaining in popularity each year. There were no fees for the cars, and owners. He said that next year the admission fee for spectators will be \$5.00 per person, and children under the age of six will be free.

NEW BUSINESS

Ms. Hauser said the Stamford Advocate reported that on August 1, there will be health insurance through the State with favorable rates for low-income and at-risk people. This is part of the new health care coverage bill recently passed.

ADJOURNMENT

- ** MS. McCARTHY MOVED TO ADJOURN THE MEETING.
- ** MS. SQUYRES SECONDED.
- ** MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

There being no other business, the meeting was adjourned at 10:00 a.m.

Next scheduled meeting is Wednesday, September 15, at 9:00 a.m., Room 119, Darien Town Hall.

Respectfully submitted,

Anne Hohlweck,
Recording Secretary