

COMMISSION ON AGING
Wednesday, November 15, 2023
Town Hall
Room 119, 9:00 a.m.

AGENDA

1. Call to Order
2. Discussion of October Minutes
3. Mather Center Report
4. Human Services Report
5. Discussion of best means to promote seniors' use and enjoyment of Ziegler property as plans are drawn up for the future park
6. Peter Eder will discuss his report at a recent SWCAA Advisory Council Meeting (see attached)
7. Old Business
8. New Business
9. Adjournment

Next scheduled meeting is on Wednesday, December 20, Room 119, Town Hall at 9:00 a.m.

Advisory Council Member: ... Peter F. Eder

Town: Darien

Reporting Month: November, 2023

New Initiatives:

- The Commission on Aging is continuing to explore the walkability structure of town, as more in-town housing is being constructed. And there is a greater need to find pedestrian crossings on state roads and increased focus on safe streets.
- AARP in person CarFit course was conducted at the Darien Library, and AARP Driver Safety has returned to The Mather Center for seniors.
- The Mather Center for seniors, through its director Beth Paris, is expanding programs as enrolment has substantially increased. More events are being focused on Alzheimer's and dementia caregivers given increasing demands.
- The Blight Review Board has a member of the Commission on Aging on its board, to be alert to any older adult issues arising in this area. Two-year terms and ongoing.
- SWCAA Medicare choices support reviews are underway, through town human resources staff and Mather Center.

Ongoing Issues:

- The need to replenish the pool of volunteer drivers for in, and surrounding, town free transportation. This is also true of need for energizing volunteers throughout the institutions in town.
- Use of half price taxi vouchers for when drivers and vehicles are not available, to ensure weeklong transportation options.
- At Home In Darien held its annual luncheon in October and approximately 120 folks attended. The Annual meeting is scheduled for December 6th and the keynote speaker will be At Home In Darien member Terrie Wood, the Darien / Norwalk Connecticut House representative from 2009 to 2023.
- Increasing availability of tech help for older adults at the Mather Center, at the Darien Library and in homes through At Home In Darien as older adults

realize they need to use and rely on electronic devices. This is becoming more critical as telemedicine options are increasing.

- Preparing for VITA tax aide operations at the Darien Library, starting in late January 2024. (In 2023, the Darien Library was the site most used by AARP and VITA tax filers in the state.)
- Continuing to focus on grappling with issues of loneliness, that have become heightened by the continuing presence of COVID the past two plus years.

Community News:

- Getting all organizations in town more aware and more innovative in providing programs and services geared to older adult's participation. (Town research has shown that older adults want greater participation in ongoing community activities.) Successful examples are preview performances of middle school and high school music and arts scheduled events.
- There are increasing collaborations between the Mather Center for seniors, At Home In Darien, Darien Human Resources and the Darien Library to support older adult needs and issues.
- In the past 18 months Darien has undergone a major transformation of the downtown district, the majority of which has been the development of retail over residential spaces configuration. The major developers have been reporting the very real development of naturally occurring retirement communities (NORC). As such, social programs intended to build new interactions are being reframed by these developers.

Issues affecting Older Adults:

- Barriers to accessory housing and policies impacting older adults wanting to downsize or cohabitate while remaining in town.
- Making a higher than average income community realize that there are 6% of residents living below the poverty line, (and while this is a much lower share when compared to many other towns in the state), there still is a need to focus on how greater equity can really be established.