

**Darien Human Services Commission  
Minutes  
January 12, 2023**

Room 119

Time: 8:30 AM

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Commission Members Attending: Christina Fay, Janet King, Michael LeMoult, Byrne Pozzi

Staff Attending: Ali Ramsteck, Cynthia Hall, Michelle Varrone

Absent: Kate Durocher, Gina Gromelski  
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Acting-Chairman Pozzi opened the meeting at 8:34am.

Review of Minutes of November 10, 2022 meeting

Upon a motion by Michael LeMoult, seconded by Janet King, the minutes were unanimously approved.

Mental Health Task Force & Mental Health First Aid Training Updates

Ali and Paula have their first MHFA Training scheduled on January 31 and February 2, offered to Town Hall staff. Ali anticipates the first offering to the community will be around late March.

*Behavioral Health Programming Sub-Committee:*

Survivors Day on November 19 was a successful event. There were 19 survivors present from all over the state. The plan is to continue to do this yearly.

The QPR Training was rescheduled from December to January 10, 2023. There were 13 people in attendance, including Ali and Cynthia. Ali commented that The Hub hosts this training on a monthly basis. Christina mentioned that DHS staff received similar training at the start of the school year and there is talks to spread this training to middle and elementary school staff.

*Mental Health Needs Assessment Sub-Committee:*

Ali and David Knauf, Director of Health, are working together and collecting proposals from outside agencies to complete the Needs Assessment. David reached out to his colleagues and found that no one in CT has done this before.

#### Current Programs:

- ✓ Filing in the Blanks Updates  
This program is now assisting 22 families in town by providing weekend lunches. In December, each child also received a back pack with the weekend food, book and game.
- ✓ Energy Assistance  
The program is underway. It was recently released that oil customers are able to receive an extra \$430. Again this year, there is no asset limit, which is helpful to seniors.
- ✓ OpFuel  
The program has re-started for the Fall/Winter. The program has received additional funds so the limit has been increased to \$1000 and people can apply twice per year. They have also increased the income limit.
- ✓ Homegoods donations  
There were several donation drives done over the winter months. Helping Hands at The Depot did monthly drives at Palmer's Supermarket in October, November and December. Joe Marzano and the YMCA Basketball Program did a drive in December. The Freshmen Youth Group at Community Fund also did a drive. The department and clients are extremely grateful for the community support and generosity.

#### Recently Completed Programs:

- ✓ Medicare Open-Enrollment Program  
The program ended on December 7. This year, the Mather Center had a SWACCA volunteer one day per week for a few hours. This service was a great help to Ali and Cynthia. The Mather Center will continue to provide this.
- ✓ Thanksgiving Program  
The Department mailed grocery store gift cards to 41 seniors and 40 families. Families were also able to registers to pick up a turkey and sides from Person2Person.
- ✓ Holiday Program  
This year there was a high demand to volunteer/adopt seniors or families so all clients that were thought of were adopted. There were a total of 49 seniors and 47 families adopted. Two high school students volunteered to deliver gifts to homebound seniors.
- ✓ Emergency Call List event 12/22/22  
The department reached out to the Call List prior to the wind/rain/flooding event on December 22. The seniors greatly appreciate the call and concern for them.

**New Business**

Ali reported that she is currently working on her budget for this year. The proposal is flat, unchanged.

Ali mentioned that she has started to utilize ARPA funds for some programs and rental assistance.

Adjourn

There being no further business, upon a motion by Christina Fay, seconded by Michael LeMoult, the meeting was adjourned at 9:14am.

Respectfully submitted,  
*Michelle Varrone*  
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