

**TOWN OF DARIEN
COMMISSION ON AGING
REGULAR MEETING
MAY 17, 2023**

ATTENDANCE: Joe Pankowski, Chair; Marcie Cleary, Tom Dempsey, Peter Eder, Gerri Genovese, Susan Kostin, Jim Metzger, Susan Okie, Ray Slavin

OTHERS: Beth Paris, Mather Senior Center; Ali Ramsteck, Human Services
Christopher Jones, At Home in Darien

CALL TO ORDER

Mr. Pankowski called the meeting at 9:04 p.m. A quorum was present.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

• April 19, 2023

**** MR. EDER MOVED THE MINUTES OF THE APRIL 19, 2023 MEETING.**

**** MR. METZGER SECONDED.**

**** THE MOTION TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF THE April 17, 2023 MEETING AS SUBMITTED PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

MATHER CENTER

Ms. Paris then presented her report. (See attached)

HUMAN SERVICES

Ms. Ramsteck presented her report (See attached)

**STEPHEN OLVANY, CHAIR OF THE DARIEN PLANNING AND ZONING
COMMISSION, WILL ADDRESS P&Z ISSUES IMPACTING SENIORS AND THE
CURRENT STATUS OF HIS PEDESTRIAN-FRIENDLY INITIATIVE ON THE WEST
SIDE OF THE DARIEN TRAIN STATION.**

Mr. Pankowski introduced Mr. Olvany to the Commissioners and explained that Mr. Olvany would be giving the Commission an update on Planning and Zoning issues.

Mr. Olvany said that they were trying to get accessory dwellings approved. These units could be for a relative, a care taker or housekeeper. He explained that his major concern was that the units have a “firefighter” window in case the first responders needed access or the occupant needed to evacuate.

One of the key issues was whether a guest cottage, pool house or other accessory building included a hard wired stove/oven unit. Discussion about the details followed.

Mr. Olvany announced that the Great Island purchase by the Town of Darien has closed.

Darien Commons is now open and the new brick sidewalk has been installed. The Palmer's project is now called Heights Crossing.

OLD BUSINESS

Mr. Jones spoke about the upcoming event, Rockin’ Sock Hop with The Elderly Brothers, for At Home In Darien on May 18th.

Mr. Jones said that there was a recent situation where there was some communication between a driver and a resident which resulted in Human Services being contacted to provide assistance.

Mr. Eder then gave his legislative update. He said that the legislature was coming down to the wire and the public hearings have concluded. As of May 5th, there were over 250 plus bills in both the Senate and the House that had not been resolved.

Mr. Eder said that the hospitals are trying to move away from mandated staffing and there is potential for strikes.

SWCAA will hold their Agency summit meeting on September 20th.

The discussion moved to the challenges posed by digital coupons for older residents.

NEW BUSINESS

Ms. Paris displayed a survey she had recently taken regarding ranking how liveable a community is. By developing the relationships with Fairfield University and other colleges, it gives the town access to resources.

Mr. Eder said that the assisted suicide bill did not pass. He pointed out that the issue involves a system of moral judgments which also include abortion, euthanasia, capital punishment and even war time pacifism.

Mr. Pankowski said that the Committee members would consider this for a discussion next month.

Mr. Dempsey said that the wood shop was doing very well and although it was only open one day a week, it was a very busy place.

ADJOURNMENT

**** MR. EDER MOVED TO ADJOURN.**

**** MR. SLAVIN SECONDED.**

**** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

The meeting adjourned at 10:05 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

S. L. Soltes
Telesco Secretarial Services

Commission on Aging Report

Darien Senior Programs at Mather Center

May 17, 2023

Respectfully Submitted: Beth Paris, Director

May is the 60th Anniversary of the Older Americans Act! We have planned enrichment programs and activities to underscore the theme- Aging Unbound. On May 18th we will hold retro entertainment and Luncheon with At Home in Darien. Caitlin Stote has hit the ground running looking at adding more programming opportunities by adding regular classes and more monthly specials. We are also exploring more informal Center uses for socialization and general meet ups. We want to expand the use of My Senior Center to garner statistics and to be ready for a membership renewal process. Non-Resident Membership Fee will go into effect this July. We would like to implement a more formal strategic plan that would include a survey.

Health and Wellness: Waveny LifeCare Network presents-*I Want to Live to Be 100*; Greenwich Woods Rehab and Health Care- *Neurographic Art*; Stamford Health Dr. Narasimhan –*The Best Primary Care Experience*; Mindfulness and Meditation- Monica Keady; WEEKLY: 12 Exercise Classes –New Class Cardio Drumming; Table Tennis; Target Toss.

Educational & Academic: Tech Help-Mary Beth Mason Darien Library; Bee yonder Virtual Travel- Springtime in Belgium; Women's History with David Plaue; Baby Boomer and the Denial of Aging-Art Gottlieb, LCSW; Stories From the Attic-Vintage Hollywood-Greg Antwerp; The 200th Anniversary of the Monroe Doctrine-Historian Mark Albertson; Monthly DSP Book Club-Meet Me at the Museum; WEEKLY: Italian Conversation and Culture-Joe Tarzia; Intermediate Spanish-Luz Rincon; Creative Writing Group

Creative Pursuits: Garden Club of Darien Pleasure Through Plants; Crafting with Multi Media Artist Rene Soto; Weekly: Acrylic Painting-Nobu Miki; Watercolor with Elizabeth Linehan; Oil Painting-Althea Ericsson; Stain Glass Instruction- Lou Benedetto; Knitting and Crocheting Circle; Wood Shop Donation Program-Tuesdays/Wednesdays

Entertainments & FUN: BINGO-Mondays; Cribbage Tuesdays; Mahjong Thursdays and Fridays; Friday Brain Teasers and Twisters with Beth; Spring At Home in Darien Collaboration Rocking Sock Hop with the Elderly Brothers

Services: Waveny Life Care Network Health and Blood Pressure Screening 1st Tuesday 3rd Thursday of the Month; Ask a Social Worker Tuesdays; Monthly Caregiver Educational Support Group; Information and Referral as needed/requested

Program Days: 22

Family Inquiries: 17

Caregiver Information & Referral: 12

Human Services Referral: 8

At Home in Darien: 6

Ongoing Work this Month:

Orientation/Training Program Specialist

Monthly Newsletter/Weekly Constant Contact

Organization of Sock Hop-Coordination At Home of Volunteers

Volunteer Coverage Office and Café for Lunch

Office Reorganization

Program Planning with Ct Chapter of the Alzheimer's Association

Staff Performance Evaluations

Program and Services Planning Summer Fair

New Program Opportunities

Meeting with NCC Student through Jim Cameron virtual Tour of the Center

Meetings: Department Head 5/9 At Home and HS 5/9 Senior Center Director 5/10 CCA 5/11
Senior Program Staff Weekly.

Commission on Aging
Human Services Report
May 17th, 2023

- **Renter's Rebate**

Darien Human Services began accepting applications for the 2023 CT Renter's Rebate Program on May 16. Eligibility requirements are:

1. Must be 65 years of age as of December 31, 2022 or disabled and collecting Social Security Disability payments.
2. One year or more residency in Connecticut.
3. Income must not exceed \$40,300 for a single person or \$49,100 for a married couple.
4. Disabled persons under age 65 must show proof of Social Security disability.
5. If you filed a 2022 income tax return, a copy is required.
6. Proof of income must include:
 - Social Security (Form 1099)
 - Pensions
 - Interest on bank accounts
 - Dividends
 - Wages

We will also need proof of rent and utilities for all 12 months or the months you were renting in 2022. A printout from the utility company and receipt of rent payment from your landlord and canceled checks are all acceptable.

Renters Rebate application deadline is September 7, 2023. Please call us at 203 656 7328 for questions or to make an appointment. The department is open Monday through Thursday from 8:00am to 5:15pm.

- **MENTAL HEALTH FIRST AID**

The Town of Darien is offering another chance to attend the Mental Health First Aid 8-hour interactive certification course. This course is designed to give members of the public key skills to help someone who is developing a mental health problem or experiencing a mental health crisis. Like CPR training helps a non-medical professional assist an individual following a heart attack, Mental Health First Aid training helps an individual who doesn't have clinical training assist someone experiencing a mental health crisis. Dates are **Tuesday, May 23rd & Thursday, May 25th 2023, both days from 8:30am-1:00pm**, at EMS Post 53. Please register by emailing Ali Ramsteck at aramsteck@darienct.gov. This program is being funded by ARPA funds.

- We currently have 1 new Protective Services for the Elderly case. We work closely with the social workers from the state assigned to each case. These cases are often very time consuming and require collaboration with various resources and agencies.
- **Low Income Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP)**
We are still accepting applications for clients that heat with electric, gas or propane through May 24th, 2023. . This program helps supplement energy costs for financially struggling residents. Income limits apply. The 2022-2023 income limit for a single person household is \$39,761, for a family of 4 people it is \$76,465. There will be no asset limit again this year, which makes many more people, particularly seniors, eligible. Last season a total of 71 households received grants totaling \$51,812.45. So far this season we have submitted 76 applications and we anticipate more in the next month. Please call Darien Human Services 203-656-7328 to make an appointment.
- The Medical Loan closet continues to be a great resource for Darien residents for short term loans of wheelchairs, knee scooters, walkers, crutches and canes. A refundable deposit of \$50 (check payable to "Town of Darien") is required for wheelchairs, transport chairs and walkers with a seat. Thirty six households used the loan closet this past quarter versus twenty six the previous quarter. The feedback from residents is positive and they appreciate this convenient resource.

- The staff of Darien Human Services maintains an *Emergency Call List* with the names of vulnerable seniors and individuals with disabilities to contact prior to and after a storm or town wide emergency. We called the list this Monday in anticipation of Tuesday's storm. We now have close to 100 residents on our list. We are requesting that any individual who is vulnerable, or has medical conditions that might make them vulnerable during an emergency, notify Darien Human Services (203-656-7328) so their name can be added to our list.

Respectfully submitted,

Ali Ramsteck, LCSW, Director