

**TOWN OF DARIEN  
COMMISSION ON AGING  
REGULAR MEETING  
SEPTEMBER 20, 2023**

**ATTENDANCE:** Joe Pankowski, Chair; Marcie Cleary, Tom Demsey, Peter Eder, Suzanne Okie, Susan Kostin

**OTHERS:** Ali Ramsteck, Human Services; Chris Jones, At Home in Darien

**CALL TO ORDER**

Mr. Pankowski called the meeting to order at 9:03 a.m. A quorum was present.

**MINUTES**

• July 19, 2023

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

**\*\* THERE WAS A SECOND.**

**\*\* THE MOTION TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF THE JULY 19, 2023 MEETING PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

**SENIOR CENTER REPORT AT MATHER CENTER**

Mr. Pankowski said that Ms. Paris was not able to attend the meeting. Her August and September reports are attached.

**HUMAN SERVICES**

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

A discussion followed about the Fuel Bank. Ms. Ramsteck said that New Canaan had lost the privilege some time ago and now Darien applicants will have to go to Stamford for assistance. It seems that the program wants the smaller towns to apply in the larger cities.

**OLD BUSINESS**

Mr. Pankowski said that he was hoping to have Steve Olvany back to update the Commission on the Walking Plan in October.

Mr. Eder said that AARP was very concern that Congress would have a major impact on Social Security. He mentioned an AARP Zoom meeting on the 21st that would address some of the

long term issues. One of the panelist is John Larson, one of Darien's five Representatives in Congress. This is to begin the conversation.

Mr. Eder said that he would be attending a meeting in Darien with Mr. Jones and Ms. Paris and Ms. Kelli Lefler, the new State Community Director for AARP.

Darien Library held their Annual meeting recently. Mr. Eder held up a copy of the Annual Report and noted that it was the busiest library in the State last year. He read off some of the statistics. They are looking to update their strategic plan. Discussion followed.

Mr. Eder announced that the Aging in Connecticut Summit is scheduled for October 30th. He said that this was the first time that they had schedule a meeting for all five aging areas in the State and he would be on the Housing panel.

He went on to speak about Gerontology and how it was an area that was not necessarily of interest to young people. Even Yale has vacancies in their program.

Mr. Eder then displayed a New York Times article titled "Can America Age Gracefully?" which is focused on how the country should prepare for the big demographic shift. He said that this would be important for the Commission on Aging, for the Human Services Department and At Home in Darien. Some of issues include flexible housing, city streets and sidewalks and technology for older people. He noted that in 2020, the percentage of older people was 17% but now in Darien, it's almost 20%. They are projecting that by 2034, there will be more Americans past retirement age than there are children. By 2053, more than 40% of the Federal budget will be allocated to programs for seniors – primarily Social Security and Medicare. There are 322 million Americans and 42 million Americans are providing support for those who are 50 years of age or older.

Mr. Pankowski suggested downloading "BARD", which allows the user to feed questions to it and the program will provide information on that subject. He cautioned people that there were still issues with the program. However for seniors, it will provide information from the entire Internet when the user simply asks a question. Mr. Pankowski said that he was excited in terms of how the new technologies such as BARD and self-driving vehicles would benefit seniors.

Mr. Eder said that in 2026, our country will be 250 years old and the various towns in Connecticut are starting to plan events for that celebrations.

### **NEW BUSINESS**

Mr. Jones said that the newsletter was being sent out. The feature article is on Ms. Ramsteck and her Department.

There are a number of events coming up including the Third Annual Sip and Shop at J. McLaughlin in downtown Sale in Darien. 15% of all those sales go to At Home in Darien. People can shop in advance of the date and simply notify the cashier that they were supporting At Home in Darien.

On Wednesday, October 11th and again on October 18th, At Home in Darien will be co-sponsoring a 2 part educational program with the Mather Center dealing with chronic brain illness will be a in coordination with The Mather Center.

On October 26<sup>th</sup>, At Home in Darien will hold the annual fall lunch for all Darien seniors at the DCA. Guest speaker is author Jennifer Sukalo, who will discuss her book "Claim Your Swagger".

The At Home in Darien Annual meeting is scheduled for December 6th. They are open to suggestions for a guest speaker. Mr. Jones said that they are in the process of bringing on two new potential Board Members.

Leaf Raking will be available once all the leaves have fallen. There will also be snow shoveling for public sidewalks available later in the season.

Ms. Okie said that the Blight Commission did not have a Blight but two new properties came up. There has been slow forward progress.

### ADJOURNMEMNT

- \*\* MS. KOSTIN MOVED TO ADJOURN.
- \*\* MS. CLEARY SECONDED.
- \*\* THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

The meeting adjourned at 9:34 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

S. L. Soltes  
Telesco Secretarial Services

Commission on Aging Report  
Darien Senior Programs at Mather Center  
August 2023  
Respectfully Submitted: Beth Paris, Director

As some regular instructors took the month off but we supplemented with increase programming. The Center closed the week of August 21<sup>st</sup> -25<sup>th</sup> for extensive cleaning and maintenance. We are planning for a busy fall kicking off with National Senior Center Month is September. Staff remained very busy throughout the month!!! Caitlin Stote is putting together a promotional video for all 14 senior centers to participate in for September! Met with Chris Hamilton from My Senior Center to explore further use of the software.

**Health and Wellness:** Waveny Life Network Christine Burns RN presents- What are Telomeres; Norwalk Hospital Presentation On Fall Prevention; Movement and Meditation for Embodied Resilience-Monica Keady; 10 Weekly Exercise Classes; Table Tennis Wednesdays-Monday and Thursday DMA

**Educational & Academic:** Art Gottlieb , LCSW 2 Presentations- Sandwich Generation Historical Perspectives of 1960's:Beeyonder Virtua; {program,-Hungarian Jewel; Judge Ostendorf Probate, Wills & Trusts: Computer Classes and Individual Appointment-Mary Beth Mason Darien Library; Historian Mark Albertson-70<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Ceasefire Korea : DSP Monthly Book Club-Harlem Shuffle

**Creative Pursuits:** All Weekly Art Teachers vacation for August; Rene Soto Multi-Media Artist; Dream Catcher Craft with Wilton Meadows Weekly; Knitting and Crocheting Circle; Woodshop Donation Program

**Entertainment and FUN:** Here's 'Rosie Reminisce with Geri Genovese- Music and Movies of World War II with Jim Clark; Movie and a Treat – *It Started in Naples*; **WEEKLY:** Monday BINGO FUN; Tuesdays Corn Hole & Cribbage; Wednesdays Table Tennis; Thursday Mahjong  
**Services:** Woven Life Care Blood Pressure and Health Screening 1x this month; DHS Ask a Social Worker Tuesdays: Monthly Caregiver Education Group; Information and Referral as needed/requested

**Program Days:** 18 (Closed August 21<sup>st</sup>-25<sup>th</sup>)

**Family Inquiries:** 10

**Caregiver Information and Referral:** 11

**Human Services Referral:** 8

**At Home in Darien:** 5

### **Ongoing Work**

Monthly Newsletter/Weekly Constant Contact  
Program Specialist Daily Planning/Updates Meetings  
My Senior Center Chris Hamilton Meeting  
Instructor Policy signed  
Membership Renewal Ongoing  
Volunteer Assignments Daily  
New Vendor for Chef's Vacations and Absences  
National Senior Center Month Collaboration  
Greenwich COA Strategic Planning Committee

**Meetings** Senior Center Directors 8/3, Department Head 8/8 8/15 SWCAA & Senior Center  
Directors, 8/9 Greenwich COA Strategic Planning Committee, 8/10 My Senior Center Owner

## **Commission on Aging Report**

Darien Senior Programs at Mather Center

September 20, 2023

Respectfully Submitted: Beth Paris, Director

September is National Senior Center Month- Theme is Discover yours...Senior Center. We have an information board posted in the Mather Center Lobby and several special entertainment programs to celebrate. All vacationing instructors are back from August break and we have several new classes being offered. The membership renewal drive is going well with Residents and Non-Resident members. Facebook presence is starting to pick up. Members are coming forward with program ideas which is great! Our goal of getting the newsletter out at least 2 weeks before the upcoming month is being met. Also the weekly constant contact is being opened at a higher rate. We have an exciting Fall/Winter planned!

**Health and Wellness:** *Focus on Foot Health*-Dr Jennifer Tauber; *Rheumatoid Arthritis vs. Osteoarthritis* – Dr. Bret Sohn; *Use it or Lose it-How to Prevent Muscular Atrophy*-Physical Therapist from HSS Kami Saracino and Andrew Shannon; 11 Exercise Classes WEEKLY; Monthly Monica Keady- Movement and Meditation

**Educational & Academic:** Art Gottlieb, LCSW- 2 Presentations: A Senior Survival Guide to Living in the Modern Age and A Photo Remembrance of September 11<sup>th</sup>; Tech Help by Appointment Mary Beth Mason, Edgar Allen Poe Dramatic Performance-rescheduled; Adele Annesi- The Best Stories are Yours-Introduction to Auto fiction; Patty Gabal-Decluttering to Downsize; David Stein- Ways of Listening to Mozart; Classes; Luz Rincon-Spanish, Hendrik Vriesen-French Classes; Monthly DSP Book Club-Mary Jane

**Creative Pursuits:** Crafting with Rene Soto; Mandela Rock Painting-Judy Santamaria from Greenwich Woods; Knitting and Crocheting Circle; Woodshop Donation Program; Beginner 6 week course Acrylic with Joe Fama; Advances Acrylic and Watercolor-Nobu Miki; Water Color Elizabeth Linehan

**Entertainment and FUN:** Karaoke with Leigh Henry; Dino's Back A tribute to the Dean Martin Show; Here's Rosie Reminiscence Group with Geri Genovese; Movie and a Treat The Four Seasons; Monday BINGO; Tuesdays Cribbage and Corn hole ; Wednesday Chess Club and Table Tennis ; Thursday: Mahjong; Friday Brain Teasers and Twisters

**Services:** Waveny Lifecare Network Health Screening and Blood pressures 2x per month; Ask a Social worker DHS Tuesdays; Monthly Caregiver Support Group; Lunch Program 5 days per week.: Information and Referral as needed/requested

**Program Days:** 20 (closed Labor Day)

**Family Inquiries:** 11

**Caregiver Information and Referral:** 12

**Human Services Referral:** 9

**At Home in Darien:** 7

### **Ongoing Work**

Weekly Constant Contact/Monthly Newsletter

Program Specialist Daily Planning/Updates

My Senior Center Initial Training

Membership Renewal Ongoing

Volunteer Assignments Daily

National Senior Center Month Specials

Website Training for Staff  
Winter Program/Activities Scheduling  
Kitchen Compliance and Issues  
New Caterer for Chef's Vacation  
State Liaison Support for Department on Aging

**Meetings:** Weekly Staff; My Senior Center 9/6; Senior Center Director Fairfield County 9/13  
Department Head 9/18; 9/19 COA Meeting

Commission on Aging  
Human Services Report  
September 20, 2023

- **Low Income Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP)**

On September 18, 2023 we began accepting applications for 2023-2024 Energy Assistance Program for residents who heat with oil. Clients that heat with electric, gas or propane will begin on October 16, 2023. This program helps supplement energy costs for financially struggling residents. Income limits apply. The 2023-2024 income limit for a single person household is \$41,553, for a family of 4 people it is \$79,910. There will be no asset limit again this year, which makes many more people, particularly seniors, eligible. Please call Darien Human Services 203-656-7328 to make an appointment to determine if you qualify.

- Renters Rebate application deadline was September 7, 2023. Clients can expect their rebate checks most likely in late October.
- Operation Fuel has reduced the amount of fuel bank sites they offer, they have eliminated Darien and informed us that Darien residents can apply through Community Action Agency of Western Connecticut (CAAWC) in Stamford. Residents can contact CAAWC at (203) 357-0720 to schedule an appointment. Any Darien resident who is frail or homebound can contact Human Services and we can assist in getting the necessary documentation to CAAWC.

- **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 **November 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup>, 2023, both days from 8:30am-1:00pm**, at EMS Post 53. Please register by emailing Ali Ramsteck at [aramsteck@darienct.gov](mailto:aramsteck@darienct.gov). This program is being funded by ARPA funds.

- 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. 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