

**TOWN OF DARIEN  
COMMISSION ON AGING  
REGULAR MEETING  
OCTOBER 18, 2023**

**ATTENDANCE:** Joe Pankowski, Chair; Marcia Cleary, Tom Dempsey, Peter Eder, Susan Kostin, Mary McCarthy, Jim Metzger, Suzanne Okie

**OTHERS:** Beth Paris, Mather Center; 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**

The following corrections were made on the minutes.

Page 1, under **OLD BUSINESS**, paragraph 2, line 1; please change the following from:

"that AARP was very concern that Congress".

To: "that AARP was very concerned that Congress"

Page 2, from paragraph 1, line 1; please change the following:

"is John Larson, one of Darien's five Representatives."

To: "is John Larson, one of Connecticut's five Representatives."

Page 2, paragraph 2, line 1; please change the following from:

" 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."

To: " Mr. Eder said that he would be attending an orientation meeting in Darien with Mr. Jones and Ms. Paris, Ms. Haricolla for Ms. Kelli Lefler, the new State Outreach Community Director for AARP."

Page 2, paragraph 3, line 3; please change the following from:

"They are looking to update their strategic plan."

To: “He noted are looking to update their strategic plan and schedule some public focus groups. “

Page 2, paragraph 4, line 3; please change the following from:

“in the State and he would be on the Housing panel.”

To: “in the State and Darien’s David Geonovese would be on the Housing panel.”

Page 2, paragraph 5, line 1; please change the following from:

“He went on to speak about Gerontology and how it was”

To: “He went on to speak about Gerontology Education and how it was”

Page 2, paragraph 6, line 6; please change the following from:

“include flexible housing, city streets and sidewalks”

To: “include flexible housing, safe city streets and sidewalks”

Page 2, under **NEW BUSINESS**, paragraph 1, line 1; please change the following from:

“Mr. Jones said that the newsletter was being sent out.”

To: “Mr. Jones said that the Out and About newsletter was being sent out.

Page 3, under **NEW BUSINESS**, paragraph 2, line 3; please change the following from:

“sponsoring a 2 part educational program with the Mather Center dealing with chronic brain illness will be a in coordination with The Mather Center.”

To: “sponsoring a 2 part educational program with the Mather Center dealing with chronic brain illness.”

Page 3, under **NEW BUSINESS**, paragraph 4, line 1; please change the following from:

“The At Home in Darien Annual meeting is scheduled for December 6th.”

To: “The At Home in Darien Annual meeting is scheduled for December 6th at the Darien Library.”

Page 3, under **NEW BUSINESS**, paragraph 6, line 1; please change the following from:

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

To: Ms. Okie said that Blight did not have a Blight Board Meeting but two new properties came up. There has been slow forward progress on existing housing.”

**\*\* MR. DEMSEY MOVED THE MINUTES OF THE SEPTEMBER 20, 2023 AS CORRECTED.**

**\*\* MS. CLEARY SECONDED.**

**\*\* THE MOTION PASSED WITH FIVE (5) IN FAVOR (CLEARY, EDER, DEMPSEY, KOSTIN AND OKIE) AND TWO (2) ABSTENTIONS (METZGER AND MCCARTHY).**

### **THE MATHER CENTER REPORT**

Ms. Paris presented her report. (See attached)

### **HUMAN SERVICES**

Mr. Pankowski said Ms. Ramsteck was not able to be present due to a schedule conflict. Both the October and November reports will be presented at the November meeting.

### **OLD BUSINESS**

At Home in Darien - Mr. Jones said that At Home in Darien has a tremendous Board including Mr. Metzger and Ms. Cleary. He announced there were two additional Board members have joined the group and will officially start in 2024.

At Home in Darien has finalized the logistics of the first even Business Networking event to be held at Noroton Yacht Club. This will help establish new relationships with the business community.

Mr. Jones said that he had been interviewed by Mr. Cameron on TV 79 recently as part of an Inside Town Hall event.

The At Home in Darien Annual Meeting will be held on December 6th at Darien Library.

Mr. Eder reminded Mr. Jones said that there had been an event the previous day at the Darien Library. Mr. Jones said he had been contacted by an organization that was focused on in home health services to participate on an aging in place panel held at the Darien Library. One of the local doctors spoke about the concierge service. There was also a representative from Selleck's

Woods and Sterling Care, who sponsored the event. There were about 50 individuals in attendance.

One of the questions that Mr. Jones was asked during the question and answer period was from a former Darien resident that had moved out of town and were wondering if they could continue to receive services. He explained that the program was funding through private donations and there were also fleet utilization issues to consider. Discussion followed.

Mr. Jones also said that he had spoken with a resident of Redding who heads up the Redding Commission on Aging. She wished to have Mr. Jones go to Redding to speak about At Home in Darien program and the services they are able to provide.

Mr. Pankowski said that it would good to note those who are on similar panels who have strong programs so that the individual could be invited to present to the Commission on Aging.

Mr. Pankowski said that he had checked back with Mr. Olvany about the walkability issues. Mr. Pankowski said that right now the town's focus is on the new park. He pointed out that the seniors should think about what amenities they would like to see at the new park, such as paved paths. He said that the Commissioners should think about this for the November meeting.

Mr. Eder said that Ms. Kelli Lefler, of AARP, had spent a major portion of a recent day at Human Resources and the Mather Center before visiting the Darien Library. He felt that Ms. Lefler had a much better understanding about the needs of the Darien community.

AARP will not be offering the Tax Service at Darien Library next year. It is determined by geography. AARP's requirements may be a bit too stringent for a number of legal reasons. AARP will be offering the program in Stamford and Greenwich. VITA, Volunteer Income Tax Assistance, will be offering their tax program at the Darien Library. Additional information will be forthcoming.

There will be a new AARP program for training in Social Security programs around the State. Some of the sessions will be held in the local area.

AARP has just releases a document on Vital Choices which focused on Liveable Community Issues specific to Connecticut. The topics covered include health care, retirement, fraud, caregiving and prescription drugs among others.

November 1st will be the first of the Darien Library focus groups. He encouraged the Commissioners and the TV 79 viewers to give their input for their programs.

The State Long Term Advisory Council held a meeting on September 28th. One item discussed was the lack of pro bono lawyers for seniors. Mr. Pankowski said that there was a great need for pro bono cases across the spectrum. For the seniors, there are issues such as conservatorships,

and commitments. As the economic challenges increase, the attorneys also feel the crunch. Mr. Eder pointed out that as people live longer, the issues become more complicated. Mr. Pankowski agreed and said that Medicaid was a complicated issue also.

The State will increase the rebates for Meals on Wheels.

It was stated that Ms. Claire Cote, the Senior Center Coordinator, had said that there were 35 Senior Centers who have received ARPA grant funding. A three year State plan is being developed.

The Aging in Connecticut Summit scheduled for October 30th has 400 registrations. David Genovese will be one of the presenters.

AARP will be starting a program in Hartford focused on Transportation and Safety and another one on grandparents raising grandchildren and a third on housing instability. Previously, it took four to six months to locate housing for those individuals who are being discharged from care institutions. Now it takes up to a year.

November is National Care Giver's month.

### NEW BUSINESS

Ms. Paris said that there is a great need for more volunteers at the Senior Center. The information desk need two people to staff it. There will also be a need for someone man the check in computer and another individual at the welcome desk. Discussion followed.

Mr. Dempsey said that there were concerns about the traffic cones in the back driveway. Mr. Paris said that during the summer camp, there are people who drive too fast back there and there have been several near misses with those using walkers. Mr. Pankowski said that he would check into how to have the traffic cones cut down to allow the walkers move through safely.

### ADJOURNMENT

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

**\*\* MR. METZGER SECONDED.**

**\*\* THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

The meeting adjourned at 9:50 a.m.

Respectfully submitted

S. L. Soltes  
Telesco Secretarial Services

Town of Darien  
Commission on Aging  
Regular Meeting  
October 18, 2023

## **Commission on Aging Report**

Darien Senior Programs at Mather Center

October 18, 2023

Respectfully Submitted: Beth Paris, Director

October highlights healthy brains- Alzheimer's concerns – Medicare Updates, new classes and entertainments. There will be 2 early evening programs through the CT Alzheimer's Association hosting with At Home. The general activity in the Center has increased as well as the lunch program participation. We continue to look for new classes and opportunities. Chef will be on vacation last week of October- Michael Joseph's will cater a limited number of meals.

\*\*Participate in the Ct Healthy Living Collective Survey in order to disrupt negative bias against aging and disabilities- with only a 5 day heads up

**Health and Wellness:** Dr. Nicole Orr, MD, FACC Let's Talk Cardiac Medications; Understand Alzheimer's and Dementia –Carolynn DeRocco VP CT Alzheimer's Association; How to Live a Healthy Brain Lifestyle- Susan DiGregorio M.A. RVNA; When Should I be Concerned-Normal Aging or Dementia- Dr. Evan Drake, Neuropsychologist; Signs of Congestive Heart Failure-Christine Burns RN' Mediation for Stress Management-Monica Keady; WEEKLY 13 exercise classes.

**Educational & Academic:** The Kimono-Interactive the Art Of Japanese Dressing; Art Gottlieb LCSW –JFK's Cuban Missile Crisis; Tech Help by Appointment- Mary Beth Mason Darien Library and Monthly Class; AARP Smart Driving Course- Phil Swan; Ulogy Writing Workshop with Gail Sheffler; Managing Money-Caregivers Guide to Finance- CT Chapter of Alzheimer's Association; Vintage Foods-Recipes from the Attic with Greg Antwerp; Medicare Update Presentation-SWCAA Katie Wheeler; Center for Medicare Advocacy- Attorney Kathleen Holt Associate Director; Fitch Rating Agency that Lowered America's Debt Rating- Historian Mark Albertson; **Weekly-** Writing Class- Italian Culture and Conversation- Spanish Intermediate-French from beginner to intermediate; computer room open daily.

**Creative Pursuits:** Pleasure Through Plants Garden Club of Darien; Mix Media Class with Resen Soto; Craft with Caitlin; Weekly: Oil, Acrylic and Watercolor Instruction; Stain Glass Class; Woodshop Donation Program; Knitting and Crocheting Circle

**Entertainment & Fun:** October Fest with Over Easy; Halloween Parade Luncheon with Magician Tom O'Brien; Movie and Treat- Little Shop of Horror; BINGO Mondays; Cribbage Tuesdays; Chess Cub and Table Tennis Wednesdays; Mahjong Thursdays; Brain Teaser and Twisters Friday

**Services:** Medicare Choices Oliver Smith by Appointment Tuesdays; Ask a Social Worker Tuesdays; Blood Pressure and Health Screening Waventy Lifecare Christin Burns RN 1<sup>st</sup> Tuesday 3<sup>rd</sup> Thursday of the Month; Center for Medicare Advocacy Attorney Kathleen Holt; Q&A with Katie Wheeler from SWCAA Medicare Updates; Caregiver Educational Support Group with Beth; Information and Referral as needed/requested ; Lunch Program


**Program Days:** 21 (closed Columbus Day)

**Family Inquiries:** 19

**Caregiver Information & Referral:** 20

**Human Services Referral:** 10

**At Home in Darien:** 5



**Ongoing Work**

Weekly Constant Contact/Monthly Newsletter

Program Specialist Planning and Updates

Program Research for Spring

Volunteer Assignments

Evening Programming Organization- 2 Caregiver Events

CT Aging Well Collaborative Survey Completion

AARP Driving Class

Staff Needs for Coverage

Budget Work 2024-2025

**Meetings:** Program Specialist Weekly; 10/12 Human Resources; 10/18 COA; 10/18 Fairfield  
County Senior Center Directors; 10/19 SWCAA Annual Meeting;