

COLUMBIA COMMISSION ON AGING

MARCH 25, 2015

MINUTES

Attended: Paula Cahalan, Edith Prague, Cathie Rowe, Millie Ramsey and Maggie Ewald. As Senior Center Director, Bernadette Derring also participated.

Chairperson Cathie Rowe called the meeting to order at 9:05 am.

Minutes: Edith Prague moved to accept minutes of last meeting as read. Millie seconded. Members voted to accept.

Cathie reported that Margaret Smith Hale of Nutmeg Senior Rides would attend the April 22 CCONA meeting. A handout regarding this Program was provided.

Recent Willimantic Chronical newspaper article reported Windham Regional Transportation District experienced a financial shortfall. Auditors cited bus transportation for UCONN graduate students may be reason as UCONN used to subsidize but has not in recent year.

Millie reported that Tom Currier is Columbia representative on WRTD Executive Board.

Discussion moved to recent CCONA Survey results. Cathie thanked Millie and Marjorie Golden- Mossberg for their time in tabulating the results.

Millie noted unusually high response rate as 121 surveys out of slightly over 5,000 mailings were returned on behalf of 134 responders.

Millie also reported that she had not had the time to complete tabulating questions # 4, 8, 9, 10 and 11 but will continue to work on these.

Millie presented a handout of the thorough tabulation by Columbia respondents along with their corresponding age groups as well as questions and topics.

Survey results will be shared with First Selectman Carmen Vance along with Town Planner Paula Strauss (?).

Downsizing existing homes, securing assistance with household maintenance and finding affordable housing appeared to be strong concerns of Residents as they age.

Discussion moved to recent housing and economic development efforts in town.

Columbia Planning and Zoning will be holding Public Hearing on April 13, 2015 regarding proposed revisions. Tom Currier is substitute representative.

Discussion of Columbia's sole existing elderly housing options are Dartmouth Village apartments but may not be conducive for "aging in place".

Original owners were the Tuttle family who sold property a number of years ago to Wildwood Property Management. However, many residents have not been satisfied with lack of support/ services available as they grow older.

For example, management policies require residents shovel snow off their own cars with no assistance. Policies also do not permit residents to utilize Program such as TASK which offers free assistance from local school students (via a Columbia grant) with such activities as interior and exterior maintenance as well as opportunity for socialization and visitation with those individuals experiencing isolation.

Edith concurred that isolation seems to be prevalent concern of older age group based on survey results.

Further discussion of survey results revisited downsizing, whether Ramm property, as currently being developed, may include elderly housing options.

Some members of Planning and Zoning who may be contacted for further information include Chairperson Richard Nassiff Jr, Vera Englert, Ernest Starkel and Tom Currier as an alternate.

There was some discussion of another planning meeting scheduled for the RT 6 Economic Development Corridor.

Discussion of other survey results included:

- Need for a Friendly Visitor Program.
- Opportunities for older age groups to access and learn how to use computers and tablets which might help in alleviating isolation via social networking and real time visitation such as Skyping.
- Need to address multi generational interests/concerns as experienced by wide variation of residents in all age groups 50 years of age and older. Discussion of utilizing senior center more often during evenings when some working individuals, 50 years and older, would be more likely to take advantage of services/programs/activities offered.
- Publicizing available resources including a list of reasonable and affordable handyman contacts who could assist with maintenance concerns such as heavy snow and ice dams this past winter.

Cathie further summarized survey as compiled thus far. She reiterated concerns of:

- isolation
- transportation
- shopping
- property maintenance
- downsizing
- opportunities in Columbia to "age in place"
- access to hospitals (older generation appeared look towards Willimantic for such services which is currently experiencing tremendous changes) for local healthcare supports/services

Cathie recommended members take time to review the survey results as compiled thus far. She further suggested that a public hearing be held at the senior center to present results to interested Town residents. In addition, CCONA may want to consider publicizing resources which are available such as the TASK grant opportunities to use volunteers; the use of telephone Everbridge Communications text and emails; access to Beckish Senior Center's soon to be purchased personal computers (2) as well as an iPad (1).

While May meeting schedule already includes two presenters, discussion followed for future meetings and topics to consider.

Perhaps, State Senator Kathy Osten could speak about other State resources as well as any State grants which may be available.

TASK Coordinator Sherry Rivard might also be invited to give presentation on the AHM Chores Program which is coordinated with Columbia's grant for the TASK program.

Cathie requested Millie email the rest of the survey data tabulation as relates to transportation and any other data once she has opportunity to complete same.

Other transportation resources include: former School Superintendent John Valenti currently overseeing East Conn's transportation program as well as Edith's suggestion of Mike Saunders representing the State Transportation Department.

Some discussion of whether cost of ambulance is covered by Medicare. Maggie will contact Center for Medicare Advocacy. Edith has contact information.

Next meeting is scheduled for May 27.

Cathy adjourned this CCONA meeting at 9:48 am.

Respectively Submitted,

Maggie Ewald

Received: April 9 2015
At 8:33 AM
Attest: Maude McBeth assr
Town Clerk/Assistant Town Clerk TC