

## Sherman Commission on Aging

April 16, 2012

**Present:** Jeanette Perlman, Lorna Barrett, John Jenner, Peter Cohen, Jill Finch. Beth Trott, director of the senior center. Lynne Gomez, clerk. Steve Roffwarg, chair of the Housing Commission. Kate McConaghy.

**Minutes:** Minutes of the March meeting were approved as read. Motion to approve was made by John Jenner, seconded Lorna.

**Director's Report:** Documentation for the Transportation Grant was required in short time and Beth and Suzette worked long hours to prepare this essential document. Andrea O'Connor used to do this grant preparation. Beth noted that other essential, priority, emergency cases had to be put aside during this time. Discussion ensued on how to handle this grant preparation moving forward. The transportation grant is a very complex, time-consuming grant. Beth explained the various grants the senior center pursues and relies on. Jeanette asked that Beth identify all the grants that are scheduled on an annual basis and then find a volunteer to write the grants. Jeanette also said that many other grants are available which could extend the services of the senior center and social services. Perhaps a volunteer could find the grant opportunities as a research project.

Diana Nunez, the student intern, has developed the emergency management plan. Participants need to sign a release allowing information to be put on file. Diana's last day is May 1 and she is finalizing the plan. Beth praised Diana's work both with clients and management. She will graduate with her bachelor's degree in Social Work. The senior center also lost its Fordham graduate student, for personal reasons. Beth has put in for a West Conn and a Fordham student for next year. Beth's role as supervisor of this program is extensive and time-consuming. It requires much documentation. It takes 1.5 hours of supervision per week for the Fordham student and 45 minutes of supervision per week for the West Conn Student. Beth noted that she gives her students the most difficult cases so they can learn. So it is both a great learning process, clinical setting, and eventually takes some work off Beth's plate.

Beth updated everyone on Medicare and Medicaid in a workshop. Beth noted that it is not a good time for people with housing, financial or health problems. Discussion ensued on the complexities of Medicare. Beth has taken course-work in the program and is our resident expert. Beth is barraged by requests to help understand this complex program. Beth took 6 full days of training. Lorna noted that people in town do not fully comprehend the volume of work that Beth handles on a daily basis related to the needs of Sherman residents. Jeanette noted that the Commission on Aging should become a stronger advocate for the town's social services and senior center. John Jenner noted that the town budget is coming up for a vote shortly and the time is right for advocating for social services.

Beth discussed the proposed budget from Social Services and the Senior Center and how the salaries fare in comparison with other positions. Jeanette emphasized that it is important for the COA to support and advocate for the salaries at the senior center and social services. John and Beth will get together and John will present data to town hall regarding salaries. Following this, the COA could collectively advocate for salaries. Discussion followed on the best way to advocate for the senior center and social services in the face of a growing and overwhelming workload in the current economy.

**COA bylaws:** a vote to table the discussion until the next meeting.

**Update on the March meeting with the Housing Commission:** Steve discussed the upcoming June 9 Housing Forum, sponsored by the Housing Commission and the Commission on Aging. He said the New Fairfield housing forum had about 40 people in attendance. New Fairfield is looking for a site and to establish a trust for senior housing that is affordable. He reported on the very positive presentation. Steve said he proposes to have schematics and photos of options at the June 9 Forum. Steve discussed site control as the first step in getting funding. A referendum will be required because the proposed property in Sherman is town property and Sherman proposes to lease the property from the town. Steve emphasized that the proposed housing would not be a burden to taxpayers. He also emphasized that the look of the housing would be designed to fit into the New England style of Sherman. General discussion of the plans for senior housing that is affordable followed, including the aspect that the project, when operational, would actually generate income for the town. Steve also noted that the property would be improved at no expense to the town.

John Jenner emphasized that the key to getting a good turn out is publicity for the June 9 forum. Articles in the paper, an ad, a flier, are all necessary. A flier insert in the Citizen News was also discussed.

Jeanette reported that David Berto indicated there is a tremendous amount of money available in the state for senior housing that is affordable. John noted that Sherman is a respected community in financial terms and should be on top of the list. Beth noted that Sherman has one of the largest senior populations in the state. Jill said that means if we build it, Sherman residents will populate it. John suggested that everyone should draft articles and pass them around for input.

As the COA is co-sponsoring the Forum, Jeanette said it is important that everyone possible attend the April 23 meeting of the Housing Commission. Jeanette noted that working with the Housing Commission is strongly supported by COA's stated goals.

**Aging Advocate** Library article for May by John Jenner. Peter Cohen is doing an article on the COA. An upcoming article for the aging advocate will be: How to Prepare for Doctor Appointment.

**Newsletter:** Beth noted that the upcoming newsletter will have a new column on Health issues and a new column on Scams and Frauds.

**Transportation Fund Raising:** John sent a letter to the Friends of the Senior Center requesting cooperative work on raising money for transportation. This topic will be discussed at the next meeting.

**Next meeting:** The joint meeting of the Housing Commission and the COA will be on April 23 at 6 p.m. The next meeting of the Commission on Aging is scheduled for May 21.

**Motion to Adjourn:** A motion to adjourn was made at 10:10.

Submitted:

Lynne Gomez  
Clerk