

**COMMISSION ON AGING
JUNE 8, 2022
MINUTES
IN PERSON, HERITAGE CENTER**

PRESENT: COA Commissioners: Mary Dale Lancaster, Kathy Brandt (note-taker), Jean Rexford, Sarah Cummings, Garner Lester, Ruth Moran, Hilda Rhodes

Staff: Margherita Pilato, Angelica Fontanez, Kayla Seftner

Members of Public: Doug Renfield-Miller

First Selectperson: Julia Pemberton

Meeting Called to Order: 9:03 am

- 1. May 12, 2022 Minutes approved:** Jean Rexford, Sarah Cummings
- 2. Public Comment:** Attended Meadow Ridge Event with Will Haskell, who explained “Death with Dignity” - lost by one vote this past session. As per Jean Rexford, there has been strong opposition from religious groups, hospice and some physicians. It will come up again. A lot was done on the budget front for seniors. Some low-income social security recipients will not be taxed on SS income. Also, pensions will not be taxed but it does not apply to 401 Ks. Also discussed pollution. More \$ for Husky and low-income health care. Organization called “Third Act” to get Senior citizens politically engaged. Senior citizens registering senior high school students (“Senior to Senior”) to register to vote. Writing an article on this idea. Discussion ensued regarding other programs at Meadow Ridge, and coordinating with them on reciprocal programming ideas.
- 3. Social Services Report:** Angelica Fontanez- See monthly report. 5 visits to food pantry all month. Busy fuel assistance. Many (5) referrals to United Way for financial assistance. Van is still pending. Our van is on its last legs. 46 rides this past month. Two interns start this fall. One from Quinnipiac (MSW) three days a week, one from WestConn. Use the Trust and Agency account for senior community lunches permissible, per Julia. Discussion of T & A account followed. Heating & electricity assistance has come from that fund this year, a big increase in need related to COVID. See data sheet from CT Statistics regarding Redding people in need. Clearly a need in our community, but few use the food pantry. Budget is under control. Senior programs budget may run over this year. Computer room? Still has computers in it. Trying to get rid of them. Will work with Jean to get rid of stuff.

4. Program Coordinator's Report: Margherita Pilato: Budget is where it should be. Yoga Nidra may be cancelled due to low participation. Yoga For the Rest of Us will pause for the summer. Current Events looking for new participants. Discussion ensued regarding expansion of programs in general and participants for different areas. Discussion of collaborative relationship with MTL ensued. Garner Lester said Vermont towns have a ZOOM room where participants can go to ZOOM meetings, with family or whatever; we could do that too. Jean Rexford: we should have an app for Heritage programs, similar to the Pickleball groups, that updates continually, so everyone knows who is coming to a program etc. Meditation programs will pause for now. Tag sale went well. Opera was a good program. Ruth would like to document all the new ideas people offer. Having a larger room will help allow classes to socialize after class. We need to have a more welcoming spot. Discussion ensued.

5. Chair's Report: Mary Dale Lancaster: ARPA vote will be June 23, then it goes to the selectman, then goes to the public in July. The process for ARPA is controlled, projects are grouped together. Population is aging. Fairfield County senior population is expected to increase by 30% in the next ten years. FOIA Request: food pantry change arose through Social Services whose research showed neighboring towns moving to gift cards, followed by CT State data comparing those residents in need vs. small food pantry use. COA offered to help get the word out. COA in no way was the driver of this change. COA does not dictate to Social Services – it acts as a conduit to relay concerns and offers its assistance at the request of Redding Social Services. There are 2600 people over 60 in this town and many seniors need food assistance. The driver of this change is the dignity and needs of the Reddingites who require help, full stop. Goals for next year: programming, communication, use of larger space (we hope) and governance.

6. First Selectpersons Report: Julia Pemberton. Brief discussion re: ARPA vote – timing and public meeting. Brief discussion re: FOIA. Thanked chair for leadership.

7. Communications and Food Pantry and Architecture: COMMUNICATIONS: Peggy Zamore absent. Over the summer we hope to get the names of seniors from tax assessor's office so we can communicate with more seniors. FOOD PANTRY ANNOUNCEMENT: At the request and in consultation with Redding Social Services, food pantry announcements were created. Angelica will send longer document to Sentinel: flyer, when done, will be distributed to Hello Redding and elsewhere. Donations discussed. We want to encourage local participation, not discourage monetary donations. Much thanks to great job Sarah Cummings did on helping Angelica with getting the word out about this matter. ARCHITECTURE: Ruth Moran: retractable wall up for ARPA vote on June 23.

9. Old Business: Still need new alternates. We might want to consider regular program participants, next door neighbors. George may be well enough to come back on. We lost 5 people over last year + due to illness, spousal illness, and moves.

10. **New Business:** None discussed.

Meeting Adjourned: 10:30
Minutes taken by Kathleen Brandt

NEXT MEETING: JULY 13 AT 9 AM