

WESTON COUNCIL ON AGING
COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS COMMITTEE
Minutes – June 6, 2023

The meeting was called to order on Zoo at 10:05 am.

Present: Paul Foley, Kristen Frady, Vida Goldstein, Joan Ingersoll, John McCahan, Susan Pauker, Shirley Small-Rougeau, Dianne Sullivan, Susan Wagner, Teresa Young.

Absent: Peter Mitsakos, Prather Palmer.

Guests: Chris Kjellson, LICSW and Joyce McSweeney, M.Ed., LSW

1. John read the following statement:

Under current state law public bodies may continue holding hybrid and fully remote meetings, without a quorum of the public body physically present, as long as adequate, alternative access is provided. Information about how to join a hybrid or fully remote hearing will be included in the required Open Meeting Law posting. Fully remote and hybrid meetings have been reauthorized through March 31, 2025.

2. The minutes of April 25, 2023 were approved as written.

3. There were no residents' comments.

4. Old Business

4.a. Depression in Older Adults and Maintenance of Independence: Control Issues between Aging parents and their Adult Children. The two COA social workers, Chris Kjellson and Joyce McSweeney, were introduced. Chris described the social workers efforts to reduce isolation by engaging older residents in activities and their approach to suspected depression through referral mechanisms to appropriate professional care. She noted that the COA is not a clinical facility providing direct treatment. John and Vida expressed concern for those not using the COA and wondered how we might expand out reach. Susan Wagner felt that depression is often not discussed openly and wondered if we should program a presentation and discussion similar to those that we have produced on other common medical issues. Vida recalled the work of the COA nurse, Theresa Levinson, some years ago who contacted everyone over 80 in town. In response to a question from Vida, Joyce and Chris described the activities of the social workers that included advice on housing, applications for a variety of benefits, identification of a variety of resources, joint discussions with health care providers, meetings with adult children, consultations with protective services and engagement with transportation issues. In respect to outreach, Shirley cited Joyce's positive presence in person at the Brook School apartments. Joan wondered about creating an informative program on recognition of the signs of depression and Kristen agreed that such a program would be feasible. Vida raised a concern about the protection of privacy of residents who might tune in to such a program because of personal concerns, but Joan opined that program content and attendance could be adequately managed. Susan Pauker suggested that people at risk might be helped by providing them with the information that would enable them to assist the people who are caring for them, e.g. their own adult children. Diane thought that this approach might be discussed with whomever we ask to talk about depression. John suggested that a consensus was forming around a program that

addressed depression in the older adult as a ‘common health issue’ of the elderly. The committee affirmed that loneliness should be approached separately from depression. Vida wondered if the Newton Wellesley Hospital speakers agency might have someone who could talk about depression. Susan Pauker also noted that the Surgeon General recently issued a report on the deleterious effects of loneliness.

The topic of control issues between an older adult and his/her children was introduced by Susan Wagner who illustrated the issue by citing conversations between an adult child and a health care provider in which the parent is referred to in the third person. Paul wondered if the child’s take over of parental prerogative might be an example of ‘unconscious revenge’. Shirley drew the distinction as a difference between an elder who is ‘neglected’ by adult children as compared to the parent who is ‘respected’. John suggested that the problem was primarily one of communication. Susan Wagner thought that a program on more effective communication with one’s parent might be offered for adult children. Vida recalled an agency in Wellesley, the Conversation Project, that addressed precisely these issues and thought that we should again seek their assistance. Susan Wagner proposed that the committee review the website and that we discuss it again at our next meeting. The committee agreed.

4.b. Social Justice Working Group. Shirley reminded the committee that the SJWG is the lead sponsor for the Race Amity Day occurring on Sunday, June 11, at 6:00 pm in the Community Center Great Room.

4.c. Cloud based voice services. As agreed at our last meeting, Vida contacted Lee McCanne, Director of the Weston School Technologies and Libraries, who is very interested in putting together a program on voice activated technological services. He wishes to wait until the school year is completed in a couple of weeks before discussing further. Additionally, Susan Wagner reminded the committee that the Local and Global Discussion Group would be discussing the burgeoning availability of artificial intelligence with Boris Koznisky, Associate Professor of Computational Materials Science at Harvard University on June 9th.

4.d. MIT AgeLab. Paul reviewed the recent meeting of the Board and this committee with Chaiwoo Lee and Lisa D’Ambrosio on May 25th. He noted that, though no specific outcome resulted, the meeting laid the groundwork for an ongoing conversation about an AgeLab – community cooperative partnership. Susan Wagner considered the community a place to possibly try out technological ideas. Paul will continue the discussion with the AgeLab.

4.e. Pet Care. John referred to a recent article that Susan Wagner had sent him from Yankee Golden Retriever Rescue, Inc. entitled “If something happens to you, what happens to me.” He felt the topic is timely and wondered if a short write up in the newsletter might be the best way of communicating useful information. Susan Wagner agreed that the topic remains timely and asked to carry over this topic to the fall. The committee agreed.

4.f. New England Centenarian Study. John tried again to contact Tom Perl through the agency’s public email, but again received no reply. This topic was tabled.

The next meeting is scheduled for 10:00 am on Tuesday September 12, 2023 by Zoom. The meeting was adjourned at 11:00 am.

Submitted by John McCahan