

SENIOR ADVISOR BOARD

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 26, 2025

11:00 AM

The Waverly Senior Center
7 Waverly Avenue, Portland, CT 06480

PRESENT : Elaine Cote, Rosalani Ferguson, Pamela Willcox-Dapkus

MEMBERS ABSENT : Janel Colonghi and Gail Landry

STAFF PRESENT : Sarah Elliott Caratsios Senior Service Administrator

PUBLIC : N/A

1. Chairwoman Cote called the meeting to order at 11:16 AM, in the multipurpose room at the Senior Center.

2. Minutes from the January 29, 2025 Special Meeting were reviewed and accepted.

3. Old Business:

3a. The Neighborhood Connect Program: This program was implemented and the results were fantastic. This program offers a social piece to residents who may be confined to home, it also is a way of checking on our residents and finding out if he/she is in need of anything.

3b. The Program Bring Me Back Home: This is a program that will help expedite searches/locating any of our loved ones who have gone missing. This program will work with the Portland PD, and starts off with obtaining photos of our seniors along with important information regarding the residents interests, their families, and popular spots he/she may like to visit. This program, which was started by the CT State Police, will be an asset for our community. We are waiting on an official start date to implement this vital program.

3c. The New Gap Program : This program is funded by the Alzheimer's Association, and will be managed by Director Sarah Elliot-Carasios. This program, which is not yet implemented involves working with individuals that have a diagnosis of Early Onset of Alzheimer's Disease. This program will allow Seniors to participate in various activities including crafts and field trips. This program is funded by the Alzheimer's Association and will allow residents to be involved in activities/community.

3d. Raising Awareness, Continued efforts to continually raise awareness surrounding our seniors and their needs is ongoing.

Along with offering programs, activities, and meals, Sarah Elliot -Carasios places an article in the Rivers East separate from the Portland Page to draw attention to what activities/groups, or needs that our seniors may have. Sarah has received a lot of responses and memberships at the Senior Center are continually growing.

3e. Better Age Software, This program has not yet been implemented. This program will bring our Portland High School students and our seniors together. The program entails a high school student working with a senior resident by setting up a tablet for the senior to enter data on what a senior may need as they go through the aging process. This program will collect the data and provide vital information on what it is seniors are in need of.

4. New Business

4a. Uniforms for Drivers: Sarah Elliot-Carasios brought the idea of having our drivers wear uniforms. This suggestion was well received. Uniforms will not only allow the drivers to look professional, but passengers will feel more at ease, recognize the drivers by name and provide a form of safety to them.

4b. AARP Grant: Sarah Elliot-Carasios announced she applied for a grant through AARP, the value of this grant is for \$25,000.00. If awarded this money would be used for Transportation purposes

4c. Recognition Grant : Sarah Elliot-Carasios also stated she applied for a Recognition Grant. Though this particular grant offers no monetary value, just receiving "Recognition" will allow the Senior Center to apply to more grants in the future.

4d. Senior Center Protocol: Due to a recent incident, it was suggested the Sr Center have a guideline for what is acceptable behavior and/or how one conducts themselves while attending any function at the center.

The guidelines will be provided to the "Host" the person responsible for their group and it will be the Host's responsibility to inform the attendees of the guidelines.

It was also suggested to post the guidelines throughout the building and when any new member joins the center a copy of the guidelines will be provided to them.

It must be known that Unruly, Inappropriate behavior will not be tolerated. The Sr. Center is known as a place of friendship, community building, respect and support and is open to all.

5. Comments : During a Town hearing on Tuesday, March 25, 2025 it was noted the town has a contract with Dial a Ride. The fee the town is paying for this service is roughly \$32,000.00 a year.

The feedback from residents who have utilized this program has been quite negative. Complaints from residents range from, the schedule has many limitations, residents not feeling safe, wait times ranging in hours for a pick up, to an actual resident was forgotten about and was left to find a ride home.

Due to what appears as poor/lack of record keeping (no past statistics prior to 2024), it is difficult to see if there is an increase/decrease in the utilization of this service.

Suggestions to start collecting weekly reports from Dial a Ride will help the town officials to determine if the \$32,000.00 a year contract is worth continuing or to renegotiate the contract for a better price if the service is not being fully utilized.

If the program (Dial a Ride) is not being utilized fully, then perhaps there is another service/idea to look into that will benefit our residents

6. Adjourned Meeting 12:50 PM

Respectfully Submitted,

Pamela Wilcox-Daphus