

TRUMBULL SENIOR CITIZEN COMMISSION
MINUTES
February 24, 2012

Commission members in attendance: Linda Ciocci, Acting Chairperson; Joan Mehlhorn, Acting Vice Chairperson; Helen Weinstein, Acting Secretary; Connie Cleary; Amy DeZenzo; Fran Hanna; Gary Raytar; Rita Grossi, Alternate and Dorothy Merritt, Alternate.

Commission members not present: Dee Chiota

Non-Commission Members in attendance: Jean Ferreira, Senior Center Director; Patrice Sulik, Department of Health.

Public Attendance: Approximately 25 members of the Trumbull Senior Center.

Meeting called to order: 10:08AM

Public Session: Acting Chairperson L. Ciocci welcomed the large group of citizens in attendance and opened the floor to public comment. Center member Sally Kiman presented a petition signed by almost 200 Senior Center members (subsequently read aloud by acting Secretary H. Weinstein) urging the commissioners to preserve the programs currently offered at no additional charge to the participants. A. DeZenzo questioned the source of and motivation for the petition. S. Kiman explained that fears of program cuts and/or fee requirements were generated from comments made during the February 3, 2012 special session of the Senior Citizens' Commission. Center member Lucille Borowy added that the closing of the Snack Bar, a feature of the Center that was created by former commission chairman Ralph Monaco, specifically was disappointing given its benefit to the seniors community and she urged the commissioners to work together to reinstate it. L. Borowy further stated her opinion that the commissioners should be elected from the pool of active Center members to ensure that they support the Center. Center member Mary Ann Grygorcewicz emphasized that the current town administration enjoyed strong backing from the seniors in the recent election and that this community deserved careful consideration during the budget process to ensure that their needs are met. Rita Grossi, newly-appointed commission alternate, introduced herself to the group and assured all that the best interests of the Center are the focus of the commission. Center member Harold Dale questioned the cost for running the existing programs and whether added fees would cover same, stating his opinion that fees in fact would compel seniors to drop out of programs. C. Cleary expressed concern for the tone of the discussion, adding that she was an active Center member who did not want to see fee requirements nor program cuts and assured all that the majority of the commissioners shared her opinion. S. Kiman reiterated that comments made in the February 3rd meeting compelled the group to express their concerns. A. DeZenzo stated that the fears generated from the previous meeting were unfounded. J. Ferreira interjected that the members were justified in expressing their concerns.

Center member Sylvia Jones stated her opinion that the Commission bi-laws should be amended to prohibit persons working for the Town of Trumbull from serving as commissioners. Further, S. Jones

stated that commissioner candidates should be active Center members to ensure that they share knowledge of and concern for members' needs and desires. F. Hanna countered that, for example, Board of Education members do not have to be teachers to serve in a manner beneficial to that board. Center member Nora Shea stated her agreement that commissioners representing seniors should be seniors. G. Raytar countered that, although not a senior, he enjoyed the opportunity to work to satisfy the needs of the Center community.

J. Ferreira offered praise to the commission for its past support and noted that the commissioners, together with a large and active group of volunteers, were an instrumental component of the Center's success. L. Borowy countered that recent events represent a failure on the part of this commission to act in the best interest of the Center and its members; she compared this commission unfavorably to those in other centers that openly seek advice and counsel from their membership. A. DeZenzo emphasized that the budgetary process is ongoing and that the commissioners were working toward preserving center programs while complying with town-wide budget constraints. J. Mehlhorn confirmed that the commission is working to preserve programming "as is". S. Jones countered that the Snack Bar had been discussed specifically at prior commission meetings and expressed her opinion that the commission seemed intent on controlling the proceeds of the Snack Bar, which she felt was undesirable. J. Ferreira explained that the operation of the Snack Bar required compliance with specific Department of Health regulations and that she is working together with the commission to meet these requirements. Lengthy discussion followed, wherein J. Ferreira explained the budgetary process and how she would seek financial support from the commission's special agency fund if and when a funding gap was identified; therefore, fears of program cuts were premature. She clarified the situation regarding the Snack Bar and confirmed that reinstating this operation was a priority. C. Cleary added that the commissioners and Center members were not adversaries and together would work for the benefit of the Senior Center community.

L. Ciocci requested that a motion be made that all members of the Trumbull Senior Center will not be charged for class participation; lengthy discussion followed. Multiple attendees shared concerns that additional fees would be a detriment to the membership. Examples were given of neighboring centers that formerly had charged additional participation fees and whose membership dwindled until the participation fees were dropped. Many in attendance expressed the opinion that adding fees would work to diminish the Trumbull Senior Center. Per F. Hanna's request, J. Ferreira clarified that the contributions from newsletter sponsorship (earmarked specifically for programming costs), Snack Bar proceeds, membership fees and fund raising are all deposited into a special agency account and not a town account; therefore, all proceeds are used by the commission for the sole benefit of the Senior Center and its membership and could potentially cover any budget gaps. A. DeZenzo added that any decisions regarding the Senior Center would have to wait until an approved budget is established. She emphasized that the commissioners ultimately must abide by the decision of the Board of Finance and would do so keeping the best interest of the seniors in mind; she reiterated that the commissioners do act with the needs of the seniors as a priority. J. Ferreira pointed out that the commissioners could vote to recommend that no programming fees be initiated. H. Weinstein questioned whether such a motion was in fact necessary, as it does not change the status quo since fees have not been added at this point in time.

MOTION by L. Ciocci to vote to recommend that programs offered at the Senior Center remain free of additional charges to all member-participants, seconded by C. Cleary.

VOTE: Motion carried unanimously.

Approval of Minutes:

Amended the Minutes of February 3, 2012 as follows:

Page 4, top paragraph, second sentence, change "...at this time. L. Chiota pledged..." to "...*at this time. L. Ciocci pledged...*".

MOTION by H. Weinstein to approve the minutes as amended, seconded by C. Cleary.

VOTE: Motion carried unanimously.

Election of Officers: L. Ciocci opened the floor for nominations.

Chairperson: C. Cleary nominated L. Ciocci; G. Raytar seconded the nomination.

VOTE: unanimous.

Vice Chairperson: L. Ciocci nominated J. Mehlhorn; G. Raytar seconded the nomination.

VOTE: unanimous.

Secretary: L. Ciocci nominated H. Weinstein; J. Mehlhorn seconded the nomination.

VOTE: unanimous.

Treasurer: After brief discussion it was decided that the position of Treasurer was not necessary and, therefore, was eliminated.

Chairperson's Report: L. Ciocci thanked the commissioners for reelecting her as Chairperson. She informed the commissioners that the three large potted plants, formerly displayed in the courtyard, were disposed of because of bug infestation; therefore, the pending purchase of planters and plant stands was no longer necessary.

Secretary Report: H. Weinstein read two notes of praise received on behalf of the Senior Center. Upon request, she also agreed to distribute copies of the aforementioned petition to the Board of Finance, Town Council and First Selectman.

Treasurer Report: None.

Center Director Report: J. Ferreira requested that future Director's Reports be distributed together with the agenda prior to the meetings to facilitate the review of same in a more-timely manner. She formerly requested committed volunteers to operate the Snack Bar. She explained that providing a stipend to a Snack Bar operator would be difficult given the historically low revenue generated; therefore, to operate with a neutral budget (zero balance) as requested by the Town Treasurer, the commission may have to commit to subsidizing this stipend and the costs of training and licensing the food handler. Lengthy discussion followed. Ultimately, it was decided that the commission would not make any recommendation until the Health Department inspection and following report is available for review. J. Ferreira confirmed that bingo games are held monthly and that the attendees are made aware that the gift card prizes are provided by the commission. She requested funding for future parties as stipulated in the Budget Report.

MOTION made by J. Mehlhorn to subsidize the St. Patrick's Day budget of \$300 as stipulated in the Director's Report for February 2012, seconded by G. Raytar.

VOTE: motion carried unanimously.

Discussion of Snack Bar operation was touched on in brief, with the determination that a food handler and a cashier are needed. J. Ferreira will seek out a committed pool of volunteers to cover the cashier duties. J. Ferreira informed the commission of the issues with the operation of the Hair Salon at the center. Currently, although the hair dresser is licensed, the facility itself is not; according to the Health Department this license will cost the Center \$150. G. Raytar stated his opinion that this licensing was not the responsibility of the commission and, instead, should be covered by the Town since the Center is a town-owned facility. J. Ferreira confirmed that she will pursue the license through the town. A. DeZenzo suggested that, if the town did not agree to fund the license, the commission should be alerted immediately and should vote to cover the licensing cost to preserve this service for the seniors. All agreed that this step was necessary to avoid any undesired cuts to current Center services.

J. Ferreira shared her impressions that the presentation of the Senior Center budget to the Board of Finance went well. The proposed budget was then reviewed item-by-item. She pledged to seek additional newsletter sponsorship in the event that the requested budget was not approved so that programming cuts could be avoided. The transportation service provided by the Senior Center was discussed, with emphasis on the need for late-day rides home from the center and the problems with providing such services. A new event, Murder Mystery Theater, was discussed and enthusiastically embraced by all. J. Ferreira explained that, if well-received, she would like to hold dinner theater events as special fundraisers in the future and suggested that a stipend may be necessary to secure the drama coach on such a long term basis, but that the cost would be minimal.

MOTION made by J. Mehlhorn to provide a stipend to the drama instructor in the amount of \$100 for services associated with the Murder Mystery Theater events, seconded by C. Cleary.

VOTE: motion carried unanimously.

Old Business: C. Cleary presented a plaque created for the recognition of the dedicated service of past Center members. Wanda Dick and Doris Tkacs are the inaugural recipients of this honor, and the plaque was warmly received by the members in attendance. S. Jones asked where the plaque would be displayed, and it was agreed that a prominent spot in the main lobby was appropriate. J. Ferreira pledged to mount the plaque promptly.

Nick Ruospo, a representative from the Texas Hold 'em group, asked for an update as to the status of his former request for the commission to purchase a larger table for the card room. The commission explained that the group's privileges were reinstated by the town with the stipulation that there be no more than eight players per table, and that such numbers could play at the existing tables without crowding. Therefore, the request for the purchase of a larger table would not be considered until/unless he obtained permission from the town to expand the maximum seating requirement.

New Business: L. Ciocci introduced Patrice Sulik, representing the Trumbull/Monroe Health District. P. Sulik then outlined at length the requirements and procedures for obtaining the necessary certification to operate a food service establishment and nutrition program at the Center. She emphasized that the requirements were facility- and menu-specific and that she would work together with the Center Director to map out the certification compliance needs as stated in the Health Code of the State of Connecticut. J. Ferreira emphasized the desire to reinstate the Snack Bar as a healthy daily nutrition alternative and also to enable the Center to cater special events throughout the year, as these events historically have been successful as fund-raisers. L. Borowy expressed skepticism as to why the issues had come to the forefront, noting that the Center had operated openly for some time without

issue. P. Sulik stated that random inspections are state-mandated and occur throughout the year and that the noncompliance was known; she further stated that the Health Department did not close down the Snack Bar. J. Ferreira stated that recent expansion of the Snack Bar to incorporate a cut in prior nutrition services was the probable cause for the heightened level of concern on the part of the Health Department and that she closed the Snack Bar pending achievement of the needed certification. A. DeZenzo reiterated the two key issues at hand: establishing a desired menu and bringing the site up-to-code based on Health District requirements for that menu. She added that the compliance issues were brought to the forefront because of the recent request to provide a stipend to the current Snack Bar volunteer. L. Ciocci expressed a desire to reopen the Snack Bar as soon as possible. P. Sulik cautioned that the compliance procedures are very specific and that the associated time table, therefore, is not particularly flexible. She emphasized that the main focus is to avoid the potential liability associated with food service operation. J. Ferreira agreed to arrange a site inspection together with P. Sulik to initiate the compliance process; she further identified the need for a volunteer(s) to provide coverage in order to reopen the Snack Bar in any capacity, no matter how basic.

The next meeting of the Trumbull Senior Citizen Commission is scheduled for Friday, March 23, 2012, at 10:00AM.

MOTION was made by J. Mehlhorn to adjourn the meeting, seconded by G. Raytar.
VOTE: Motion carried unanimously.

Adjourned: 12:36 PM

Respectfully submitted,

Diane Donahue, Clerk