

**TRUMBULL SENIOR CITIZEN COMMISSION**  
**MINUTES**  
**March 23, 2012**

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

**Commission members not present:** Helen Weinstein, Secretary

**Non-Commission Members in attendance:** Jean Fereira, Senior Center Director

**Public Attendance:** David Rutigliano and Center members Roseanne Blanco, Lucille Borowy, Sylvia Jones and Gloria Monaco.

*Meeting called to order: 10:04AM*

**Public Session:** Center member Roseanne Blanco questioned the criteria for persons chosen as members of the Senior Citizen Commission. D. Chiota explained that when openings occur they are announced so that interested citizens can send a cover letter and resume to the party chairperson per their affiliation and/or to the First Selectman's office indicating their desire to fill the opening. Potential candidates are then called in for an interview with the Town Council Recommendation Committee of their party and/or the First Selectman's office. Ultimately, the First Selectman appoints the replacement commissioner, who serves a two-year term. She added that currently there are no openings. In response to a follow-up question by R. Blanco, D. Chiota explained that the most-recent appointee, Rita Grossi, was one of four candidates who interviewed for a position as Alternate. R. Grossi further explained that she was a resident of Trumbull in the 1980s and recently returned to Trumbull from Stamford. Center Member Sylvia Jones stated that she applied a year and a half ago and never received notification about the recent opening. D. Chiota stated that she did not receive S. Jones' application when seeking a candidate for the Alternate position. Center member Lucille Borowy noted that she was considered for a spot on the commission two years ago but was asked to an interview at a residence in the evening and felt uncomfortable with that scenario. C. Cleary shared details of a similar scenario experienced by a friend. D. Chiota stated that typically interviews were conducted in the evening and usually took place at Town Hall, and that openings typically are announced at Town Council meetings and/or posted through Town Hall. L. Ciocci asked if submissions from interested individuals were retained in a file. D. Chiota clarified that procedures were specific to the respective party affiliation and that she was familiar only with those procedures taken by her party. S. Jones reiterated that she submitted her letter of interest directly to the First Selectman's office and was disappointed that she was not considered for the recent opening. She stated further her strong opinion that current commissioners were not "sticking up for" the seniors.

L. Borowy asked if the commissioners were still considering charging nonresident members for participating in programs, stating her opinion that such fees would cause a reduction in nonresident membership renewals and, therefore, would push the fixed programming costs onto a smaller, resident-

only membership, becoming even more of a financial burden. J. Ferreira stated that the proposed budget was proceeding through the approval process and further that the commission had voted at the February 23<sup>rd</sup> meeting to recommend that participation fees not be initiated.

L. Borowy then asked if the Rotary Club and/or Finance Club had been approached with a request to help finance the needed kitchen upgrade. S. Jones added her opinion that the Snack Bar reopening was a necessary step to enable the Center to provide a positive social outlet for the senior community, and that more programs were needed in the afternoons. J. Ferreira countered that attempts to institute afternoon activities historically met with poor attendance but that she was open to all suggestions and welcomed any volunteers who might help expand programming to include afternoon activities. L. Ciocchi stated that reinstating the Snack Bar remains a priority of the commission.

**Approval of Minutes:**

Amended the Minutes of February 24, 2012 as follows:

**Page 1**, under the heading “**Public Session**”, paragraph 1, third line from bottom, where it states “...reiterated that comments made ...” please amend to read “...*reiterated that a rumor based on comments made ...*”.

**Page 2**, paragraph 2, line 6, delete “Per F. Hanna’s request, ...”.

**MOTION** by A. DeZenzo to approve the minutes as amended, seconded by D. Chiota.

**VOTE:** Motion carried with seven votes in favor and G. Raytar abstaining.

**MOTION** by D. Chiota that the tape of the February 24<sup>th</sup> Senior Citizens Commission meeting be reviewed by the clerk and checked for content with regard to how the subject of the newsletter came up so that the clerk can advise as to corrections to the minutes if needed, seconded by F. Hanna.

**VOTE:** Motion carried unanimously.

**Chairperson’s Report:** None.

**Secretary’s Report:** None.

**Center Director’s Report:** J. Ferreira outlined proposed upcoming events planned for the Senior Center to highlight May as Senior Citizens’ Month. She emphasized that providing refreshments is a key component to attracting attendees to events; therefore, any current plans are on hold pending resolution of Board of Health (BOH) issues. Lengthy discussion followed as to specifics associated with BOH compliance requirements per inspection of both upstairs and downstairs kitchens by a BOH representative. David Rutigliano provided insight as to how the Center could achieve the needed licensing in a timely, cost-effective manner based on his extensive knowledge of the food service industry. At length it was agreed that a one-day event combining all proposed activities under a single, “special event” BOH permit application may be the best approach. To minimize the need for food handling and/or preparation, the event would be scheduled away from meal time, although prepackaged, light refreshments could be included. J. Ferreira asked A. DeZenzo to check the First Selectman’s availability so that the date of the event could be coordinated with his schedule. Discussion turned to financing of the event, estimated costs, and proper accounting procedures necessary for obtaining funds from the Special Agency account to cover these costs.

**MOTION** by J. Mehlhorn to approve \$500 from the Special Agency account to cover costs of a one-day, full-facility Open House/Special Bingo event to celebrate Senior Citizens' Month (specific date and time to-be-determined), seconded by D. Merritt.

VOTE: motion carried unanimously.

J. Ferreira reported that the proposed Senior Center Budget was well received and continues intact through the approval process. The total budget for the Senior Center was reported by the Director as \$349,602; discrepancies between that number and those published in the Trumbull Times were discussed.

**Old Business:** Many of the proposed activities featured in the Director's report, such as plans for an open house, dinner dance and/or a Seniors Prom, are on hold pending resolution of BOH compliance requirements. Details were discussed at length, and J. Ferreira fielded several questions concerning the specifics established by the BOH inspection of the Center and her attempts to provide the commission with cost estimates for needed facility upgrades for upstairs (Snack Bar) and for downstairs (Nutrition Room). She further explained that the BOH recommended focusing on upgrading the downstairs facility as the least-costly of the two; J. Ferreira then outlined what she identified as the drawbacks to using the downstairs facility for providing Snack Bar fare. Discussion turned to details of the current nutrition program, the food service company providing this program, and the multiple safety requirements necessary to obtain the varied Class level certifications for both facilities. Ideas for alternative sourcing of food service were discussed, and J. Ferreira cautioned the group against breaking from a federally-subsidized program, since costs associated with independent catering most likely would be higher and menus might not cater to the specific nutrition needs of the senior community. In any event, the Center could not move forward on food service until compliance was achieved. J. Ferreira reiterated that the nutrition program and former Snack Bar operation were key components of the Center and that the membership has expressed strongly their desires to reinstate the suspended services. D. Merritt questioned whether grants were being sought for funding the upgrade and urged the Director to investigate such options. J. Mehlhorn offered her opinion that the Trumbull Rotary and/or Lions Club should be approached for help. J. Ferreira added that the appliances needed might be sourced through the school system, possibly at a discount. The commissioners discussed whether upgrade costs should be covered by Town funds since the Senior Center is a Town facility and since it also stands as the designated Trumbull Emergency Shelter. J. Ferreira stated her opinion that, although the facility upgrade has support from the current administration, the budget cannot accommodate the costs and, therefore, funding would have to come from outside sources and/or fundraising. L. Ciocci urged all commissioners to approach contacts throughout the community and report back to her within the week on recommendations for cost-effective upgrades and on possible sources for donations. D. Merritt requested that a piece be included in the next newsletter stressing that the Commission is working to resolve issues with the Snack Bar so that services can be reinstated.

**New Business:** J. Ferreira reported that the Center has been awarded a one-time grant in the amount of \$82,000 earmarked for providing expanded transportation services to handicapped adults and to seniors. Specific services would include weekend and evening hours, which would enable users to attend religious services, summer Gazebo concerts, weekend medical appointments, etc. and also would expand the territory available. She added that the Greater Bridgeport Transit Authority (GBTA) currently is cutting services, specifying that the Sterns Village community of Trumbull already has been affected by these cuts. The current GBTA transportation grant awarded to the Center totals \$32,000 and has been renewed for the coming year; however, services are provided on weekdays only

and cover a very limited time frame and territory. The GBTA grant money does carry over into subsequent years if unused and, therefore, remains available for transportation costs. She estimated that the \$82,000 grant would last approximately three years, covering the salaries of the hired drivers and aides, vehicle maintenance, fuel, and additional dispatcher hours. D. Chiota asked if this program had any drawbacks. J. Ferreira stated that if the jobs could not be renewed at the end of the funding cycle, the individuals hired on for the program may be eligible for unemployment benefits which would represent a cost. She added that if this pilot program is extended it may affect the funds directed to GBTA programs. L. Ciocci asked why the community could not be relied upon for providing expanded transportation when needed. J. Mehlhorn offered a cautionary tale that illustrated the potential personal liability to citizens acting as good Samaritans who provide rides to elderly and/or handicapped individuals. J. Ferreira offered that approval of the grant would positively promote the Commission among the seniors community, as it broadens the scope of the Commission's outreach. She suggested that announcement of the grant should come directly from the First Selectman.

**MOTION** by D.Chiota to recommend that the Town of Trumbull accept the \$82,000 grant awarded to the Trumbull Senior Center and earmarked for expanded transportation services, seconded by C. Cleary.

VOTE: Vote passed with G. Raytar, F. Hanna, A. DeZenzo, D. Merritt, D. Chiota, J. Mehlhorn and C. Cleary in favor; L. Ciocci abstained.

The next meeting of the Trumbull Senior Citizen Commission is scheduled for Friday, April 27, 2012, at 10:00AM.

**MOTION** was made by D. Chiota to adjourn the meeting, seconded by D. Merritt.

VOTE: Motion carried unanimously.

Adjourned: 12:39 PM

Respectfully submitted,

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Diane Donahue, Clerk