

Commission on Social Services

Town of Wilton

Minutes of April 11, 2013 Meeting

Attending: Betty Jo Corridon, Roseann DeSimone, David Graybill, Sibylle Kinley (guest observer), Cathy Pierce, Virginia Smith, Christine Tenore, and Judy Zucker

The meeting was called to order at 5:33 pm.

The minutes of the March 14 meeting were approved.

Commission Business:

Cathy Pierce presented an update on changes to the holiday gift-giving program. The program is being modified so that it is more equitable. Starting in 2013, there will be a limit of \$100 per child, regardless of the child's age. Donors will be permitted to fund more than one child if they request to do so. Social Services will send out a letter to parents advising them of the policy changes. Families will be asked to submit gift request lists by 11/17/13, and gifts will be distributed on 12/15/13. Food pantry volunteers, who already are familiar with the recipients, will distribute the gifts. The gift-giving program will be funded by private donors as well as a contribution from the Wilton Community Assistance Program.

Roseann DeSimone updated Commissioners on the Security Task Force, of which she is a member. The Task Force includes security experts and representatives from the school system, the Board of Selectmen, and the Police Department. The Task Force has met four times since its inception. Dr. S. David Bernstein, a forensic psychologist with expertise in identifying and treating youth at risk for violence, presented a program to the Task Force at a meeting that was open to the community. Dr. Bernstein's recommendations include fortifying windows and doors of public buildings, improving identification of students at risk for violence, and improving the community notification system.

Liaison Reports:

Wilton Interfaith Council: Cathy Pierce reported that the Wilton Interfaith Council is in the process of finalizing its name change to the Wilton Community Assistance Fund. The name change must be filed with the CT Department of State and the Wilton Town Clerk.

Underage Drinking Task Force/Public School Health and Guidance: Roseann DeSimone reported that school health and guidance personnel have been seeing increased numbers of students with problems, including academic difficulties,

family conflicts, and difficulties handling stress. These issues appear to be district-wide.

Food Pantry: Betty Jo Corridon reported that the Food Pantry continues to be used regularly by its clients. Social Services staff screen and verify the need of all clients who use the Food Pantry. Clients also may be eligible for other assistance such as food stamps, and Social Services has been helping clients with these applications. To ensure equitable distribution of food, individual clients are limited to one bag of food each week, and families with children are permitted two bags. There have been a few problems with individuals attempting to exceed this limit, but this is a minority of clients. Donations of paper products and detergents are most needed.

Comstock Renovation Committee: Judy Zucker reported that the list of bonded capital project requests that will be proposed at the Annual Town Meeting in May will include a single item related to Comstock and extending the useful life of the 57-year-old building for an additional twenty years by funding the following: a new boiler; architectural and engineering design fees for a renovation plan; a forensic evaluation of the building; and five limited-scope items that meet immediate needs. These five items are: the partitioning of the Social Services downstairs staff room into two offices, constructing a canopy outside the Senior Center entrance, soundproofing the wall between the gym and the Senior Center café, removing a wall between rooms 16 and 17, and converting the former Nursing and Home Care kitchen into an art room. Repairs to the gym ceiling already are underway. Townspeople will vote on the list of bonded capital projects at the annual town meeting on May 7 at Middlebrook or at the extended voting on Saturday, May 11 at the Clune Center.

Wilton Commons: David Graybill reported on the status of Wilton Commons. Mutual Housing of Southwest Connecticut is the developer and will also manage the facility's ongoing operations. The Certificate(s) of Occupancy are expected soon, and the move-in target date remains on or before May 1, 2013. Details about the selection of residents are not yet known as of the Commission meeting date.

NOTES: (1) Subsequent to the Commission meeting, David understands that specific lease signings will take place on Tuesday, April 23 with Elderly Management, an experienced agency contracted by Mutual Housing to manage the resident selection process. On that same date, David understands that Nancy Hadley, Executive Director of Mutual Housing, will brief the Wilton Commons Board's Selection Committee members and Cathy Pierce on the selection process and move-in dates. (2) After much Board discussion, the Opening Ceremonies and Reception will remain on Saturday, June 15, at 4 pm at Wilton Commons. "Save the Date" notices will be mailed at the earliest possible time subsequent to required town and state approvals.

Youth Council: Virginia Smith announced that the mental health services fair will be held at the Wilton High School Little Theater on Tuesday, April 23 from 6 to 9 pm. The evening will feature a screening of Joe Pantoliano's film "No Kidding! Me 2!!"

followed by a panel discussion including professionals and individuals who have struggled with mental illness. The mental health services fair will feature mental health and wellness agencies and organizations from the area.

On March 20, there was an evening program at Trackside for parents of teenagers: "Navigating the Teen Years: Helping Our Kids Make Healthy Choices and Stay Safe." There were presentations by Liz Jorgenson, a local psychotherapist and substance abuse counselor, and Kristin Dineen, Roseann DeSimone, and Richard Ross from Wilton High School. The program, which focused on substance abuse prevalence and prevention among teens, contained much useful information. However, attendance at the event was sparse, possibly because a band concert and other events were being held that evening at the high school.

The meeting adjourned at 7: 03 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Virginia Smith, Co-Secretary