

Commission on Social Services
Town of Wilton
Meeting Minutes
December 12, 2013

Present: R. DeSimone, J. Zucker, V. Smith, M. O'Connell, B. Corridon, C. Tenore, P. Koellmer, C. Pierce

Chairperson Peg Koellmer called the meeting to order at 5:36 pm.

The minutes of the November 14 meeting were approved.

Chairperson's Report:

Peg Koellmer noted that there now is an App available that will allow women in abusive relationships to notify significant others and authorities if they find themselves in danger.

The Commission discussed its role in reviewing the Social Services Department annual budget. Because department budgets are now submitted to the town before Thanksgiving, it will not be possible for the Commission to review the Social Services Department budget before its submission. The charge to the Social Services Commission—last updated in June, 2001—was distributed to Commissioners, and it was agreed that the language should be modified to reflect current practices. Judy Zucker will oversee this review and will collect suggestions from other Commissioners. It was suggested that the Commission should continue in its oversight role of particular agencies in town in anticipation that there may be changes in the leadership of these agencies in the future.

Executive Director's Report:

Cathy Pierce distributed the 2014-15 budgets for the Social Services Department and the Visiting Nurse & Hospice of Fairfield County, Inc. The Social Services budget includes a \$14,000 grant from the state of Connecticut to Youth Services. This grant is matched by the town. The Department will present its budget at the Board of Selectman's meeting on Thursday, January 16 at 7 pm, and Commissioners are encouraged to attend. The changes in the proposed budget include a modest decrease in the request for medical assistance for clients. This is offset by an increase in the request for childcare costs for low-income families.

Cathy noted that Patricia Kapsinow, a part time employee, has been highly effective in assisting clients with medical, energy, food stamps, and Veterans Affairs applications.

Cathy reported that the new system for providing holiday gifts to town children has been working well. There are 97 children who are receiving gifts this year, and Lauren Hughes has been coordinating the distribution of gifts to families. Donors

who wanted to contribute more than \$100 were assigned to more than one family. It was suggested that excess donated funds be transferred to an expanded program that would assist graduating seniors in purchasing computers for college.

Liaison Reports:

Trackside/Safe Rides: Peg Koellmer reported that the Safe Rides program is going well. There is a waiting list of students who want to be trained to become volunteer drivers.

Underage Drinking Task Force/Public School Health and Guidance: Roseann DeSimone reported that negotiations are under way to get Chris Herren, former NBA player with an anti-substance use message, to present programs in Wilton. In 2014, Positive Directions, in collaboration with the school system, plans to conduct a survey of substance use patterns among the town's youth. Information on youth use will be collected from both students and parents. Data from past surveys have been useful in assessing the extent of substance use as well as demonstrating to students that not everyone is using alcohol and drugs.

Food Pantry: Betty Jo Corridon reported that there have been positive articles about the food pantry in local newspapers and Wilton Magazine that have elicited increased awareness and donations. Paper products always seem to be needed at the food pantry. The "Stuff the Bus" food drive conducted by the high school was very successful. The Village Market continues to assemble \$10 food bags that customers can purchase for donation to the food pantry.

Wilton Commons: Peg Koellmer reported that only two units remain to be rented, and there is optimism that the Commons will be fully occupied by the end of the year.

Domestic Violence Crisis Center: Judy Zucker reviewed a report from the Domestic Violence Crisis Center in Norwalk. In 2012-13, the Center assisted 62 victims from Wilton. In addition, the Center has conducted lethality assessment training for the Wilton Police Department and presented PeaceWorks programs in the Wilton public schools.

Comstock Renovations: Judy Zucker gave an update on the building renovations at Comstock. Architects and engineers have been hired for the schematic design phase. Already underway are subdividing the Social Services downstairs conference room into three spaces and installing material to decrease the sound transmission between the gym and the Senior Center café.

Youth Council: Virginia Smith reported that the Youth Council's annual fundraising appeal is under way. The Youth Council has planned a series of programs in early 2014, including promoting healthy gaming habits for students in February, a cyber-bullying educational program for parents in March, and a community event on addiction and recovery in April.

The meeting adjourned at 6:32 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Virginia Smith, Co-secretary