

**Minutes of the Ridgefield Commission on Aging (“CoA”) Meeting
March 18, 2024, 2:30 pm, Large Conference Room, Town Hall**

The meeting was called to order at 2:36 pm. It was moved to the Large Conference Room because speakerphone capabilities were needed for two commissioners who were phoning in. Commissioners Culhane (participating via phone because of a schedule conflict) Martin, Saleeby, Ternullo and Yaffa (participating via phone due to recent surgery) were present. Commissioners Bancel, Beebe, and Tewes were excused because of out of state travel. Mr. Phillips, Social Services Director, and Ms. Gaudian, Municipal Agent for Elders, ex officio advisors were present.

As the **1st order of business**, Mr. Ternullo invited public comment. There was none.

As the **2nd order of business**, Ms. Martin moved that the 2/26/24 CoA minutes be approved. Ms. Saleeby seconded. There being no discussion, a vote followed. The minutes were unanimously approved.

As the **3rd order of business**, progress reports on the CoA’s 2024 goals were provided as follows:

Goal	Description	Lead	Report
1.	Collaborate with Fire Department to distribute File of Life to requesting residents, explore ways CoA can assist in creating awareness of and participation in FD’s safety initiatives, and invite Chief to present at a Senior Voices forum.	Yaffa	IN PROCESS: Meeting pending. Chief accepted invite to speak at future Senior Voices. Full report next month, when Ms. Yaffa recovers from surgery
2.	Write to SB to express support for a cost-of-living adjustment for all elderly-related tax credits, tax deferments and renter abatements and offer to engage in primary research needed and appear before the SB in further support.	Ternullo	COMPLETED earlier this year. Included here only for informational flow re status of all goal
3.	Explore whether CoA is the proper organization to identify senior citizen behavioral health needs and coordinate municipal programs re same.	Ternullo	IN PROCESS: Discovery discussions on 1/30, 2/13, & 3/5. Next meeting on 3/27. Full report at April CoA meeting
4.	Grow CoA’s email list and develop a recurring CoA communication plan	Yaffa	IN PROCESS: Ms. Yaffa will present a draft plan at April CoA meeting
5.	Activate a CoA grants program	Ternullo	IN PROCESS: Mr. Ternullo presented a funding priorities list. Ms. Martin moved for approval. Ms. Saleeby seconded. Discussion followed, clarifying edits were proposed and seconded. The amended motion was unanimously approved. The funding priorities are attached.
6.	With Commissioner Tewes as editor-in-chief, explore expanding the Senior Directory to a revenue generating	Tewes	IN PROCESS: In Mr. Tewes absence, this was tabled to April CoA meeting
7.	Adopt and grow Gold Card Program	Martin	IN PROCESS: Ms. Martin presented a draft trifold brochure listing participating organizations and associated discounts.
8.	Launch an awards program celebrating excellence and commitment to serving seniors	Beebe/ Culhane	Update tabled to CoA’s April meeting
9.	Explore the feasibility of CoA authoring a book on high performing CoA’s	Ternullo	DROPPED: earlier this year. Included here for info flow re status of all goal

The **4th order of business**, relating to a review of proposing adjustments of CoA commissioner terms to comply with the recently approved Town Charter changes, was tabled to the CoA’s April meeting.

As the **5th order of business**, Mr. Ternullo reported that fence erected on the Grove St hard-topped sidewalk pathway had been removed.

The **6th order of business**, Mr. Ternullo announced that new town email addresses were available and CoA website updates were in process.

The **7th order of business** was informational regarding future dates. No discussion occurred.

The **8th order of business** was a call for new business to be discussed. There being no other business, Ms. Saleeby called for adjournment. Ms. Martin seconded. The motion to adjourn was unanimously approved at 3:40 pm.

The above is a true and accurate summary of the CoA 3/18/24 meeting. - Joseph Ternullo, Acting Secretary

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Ridgefield Commission on Aging Priority Funding Areas

Steeped in history, beauty and a welcoming spirit, Ridgefield’s quality of life ranking is among the very highest nationwide. Charged with understanding the needs of Ridgefield seniors and coordinating programs to meet those needs, with a “no senior left behind” motto, we identify the following priority funding focus areas:

Behavioral Health

We aim to elevate support for seniors grappling with behavioral health challenges by:

- empowering social service professionals to deliver personalized support services
- integrating pet therapy services
- delivering post-care community paramedic follow-up

This multidisciplinary approach is intended to enable early intervention, foster holistic well-being, and achieve sustained long-term recovery across the community in need.

Digital Divide

We aim to reduce or eliminate disparities in access to information and communication technologies among seniors. The intent of this initiative is to foster social interaction and empower isolated seniors through a connected and inclusive community and use the power of technology to bring seamless community engagement opportunities right to the point of need and into the homes of Ridgefield senior citizens, thereby creating a new robust option to overcome loneliness and social isolation so common to seniors today.

Emergency Assistance

This priority focus area is dedicated to ensuring the well-being of vulnerable senior citizens facing relentless crippling financial constraints. By providing essential support services for heating, electricity, medical assistance, physical activity and recreation, and other necessities, we aim to create a safety net that preserves the dignity and comfort of seniors living with illness, disability, and other life challenges.

Food Insecurity

Overcoming the scourge of food insecurity among seniors, we seek resources to implement new initiatives that provide nutritious meals, support community gardens, and develop sustainable solutions to ensure their wellbeing. Our aim is to enhance the quality of life for all seniors and foster a healthier and more resilient aging community.

Social Isolation

Our goal is to reinforce vibrant community hubs where seniors - at all levels of health status - can connect, share experiences, and thrive, fostering a culture of inclusivity and support to combat social isolation among our aging population. We aim to enrich senior living experience in Ridgefield, open new avenues of accessing community, and break down barriers that diminish the quality of life.

Transportation

Our commission seeks to enhance the well-being of non-driving seniors by establishing expanded in town and out of town transportation options. This initiative aims to break the barriers of isolation, fostering community engagement and ensuring that our seniors can lead active, independent, and fulfilling lives outside their homes.