

## **Minutes of the Ridgefield Commission on Aging (“CoA”) Meeting December 18, 2023, 2:30 pm, Small Conference Room, Town Hall**

Commissioner Ternullo called the meeting to order at 2:32 pm. Commissioners Martin, Saleeby, Ternullo, and Yaffa were present. Absent were Commissioners Bancel, Beebe, and Culhane. Tony Phillips, Ridgefield Social Services Director, and Karen Gaudian, Ridgefield Municipal Agent for Elders, both CoA ex officio advisors were present.

As the **1<sup>st</sup> order of business** of public comment:

- Jeffrey Ash and Vivian Epstein, residents involved with our community emergency response team, introduced themselves and expressed support for the CoA work.
- It was mentioned that last week’s CoA/Library Senior Voices was successful and well received. It was suggested that there is an opportunity to improve the Zoom experience.

As the **2nd order of business**, Ms. Martin moved that the 11/20/2023 CoA minutes be approved. Ms. Saleeby seconded. Mr. Ternullo invited discussion. There being none, he called for a vote. The minutes were unanimously approved.

As the **3rd order of business**, Mr. Ternullo read a statement from Mr. Bancel. In summary, at the request of the Thrift Shop (“TS”) leadership, last month Mr. Bancel explored opportunities for TS volunteer parking relief. He approached Fairfield County Bank leadership, who offered five of its Governor St parking spots to ease the TS’s holiday busy season volunteer parking burden. Mr. Bancel checked back with TS leadership and reports that ‘all is good’ and that this temporary informal arrangement is working well.

As the **4<sup>th</sup> order of business**, Mr. Phillips reported that the survey has closed, results are being tabulated and over 2,000 seniors responded. The CoA discussed preliminary findings of issues on the minds of seniors: a) sidewalks (more are needed), b) taxes (updated cost-of-living adjusted relief for seniors is needed), c) transportation (more options are needed, including impromptu/spur-of-the-moment transportation availability) and d) traffic (much of it appears to be ‘cutting through the town’ and this has become a public safety and quality of life concern). Mr. Ternullo reported that Ken Devane, president of Mine Tech, the international market research company that administered the survey, will present the findings publicly at the March 2024 CoA/Library Senior Voices forum. Mr. Ternullo also reported that nearly 500 survey takers expressed interest in the File of Life.

Following this discussion, Ms. Yaffa introduced 2 motions, each of which Ms. Martin seconded:

Motion 1: The CoA:

- take on as a 2024 signature initiative a collaboration with the Fire Department resulting in, at no cost to the Town, distribution of the File of Life to all residents who have requested it,
- explore with the Fire Chief ways in which the CoA might assist the Fire Department in creating awareness of and participation in its many safety initiatives including, but not limited to, Knox Box Rapid Entry service, CT and Ridgefield Alerts, and free smoke detector battery replacement.
- explore additional safety opportunities such as the feasibility of providing kitchen size fire extinguishers to all seniors at no cost.
- invite the Fire Chief to present at 2024 Senior Voices meeting.

A brief enthusiastic discussion followed. It was noted that Mr. Ash and Ms. Epstein, with their specialized expertise, offered to assist the CoA and the Fire Department in these matters. When discussion ended, Mr. Ternullo called for a vote. The above motion was unanimously approved.

Motion 2: The CoA write to the Board of Selectmen forthwith expressing support for a cost of living adjustment to a) all elderly-related tax credits and tax deferrals, including raising the Town Elderly Deferral income requirement to ‘not to exceed \$85,000 of household income’, and b) all elderly

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renter abatements, and that the CoA offer to engage in the primary research needed and appear before the BoS in support of this motion.

A brief enthusiastic discussion followed. When discussion ended, Mr. Ternullo called for a vote. The above motion was unanimously approved.

As the **5th order of business**, Mr. Phillips presented briefly on transportation options.

As the **6th order of business**, Mr. Ternullo provided a CoA financial update:

- Annual Budget allocation unspent balance: \$ 40
- Grants/Donations unspent balance: \$867

As the **7th order of business**, Mr. Ternullo noted that there are routine annual CoA reports due to the Town Clerk and that he would attend to them promptly.

As the **8th order of business**, Mr. Ternullo invited discussion of new business matters. Ms. Yaffa offered several winning ideas for future Senior Voices educational speakers and advised that she would begin to line these up. Ms. Saleeby reported that she had ideas for follow on Profiles of Seniors, an effort that Ms. Martin commenced late last year/early this year. They will discuss this separately. Ms. Saleeby also requested that a late spring/early summer CoA-organized senior event, perhaps at Martin Park, be placed on our January 22 agenda.

There being no other business, Mr. Ternullo invited a motion to adjourn. Ms. Saleeby called for adjournment. Ms. Martin seconded. The motion to adjourn was unanimously approved at 3:57 pm.

The above is a true and accurate summary of the CoA 12/18/2023 meeting.

Joseph Ternullo  
Acting Secretary