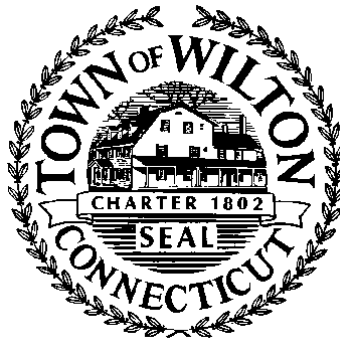


Office of Social Services
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TOWN HALL
238 Danbury Road
Wilton, CT 06897

**Wilton Social Services Commission
Regular Meeting
Thursday, September 10, 2020 at 6:00 PM
Zoom**

Present: Deborah List, Genevieve Eason, Paul Nisco, Danielle Mancuso, Bettye Ragognetti, Sarah Heath

1. Welcome

Deborah welcomed the commissioners and thanked Pam Kelley, who resigned from the commission when she moved out of town. The commission appreciated all her contributions and her input, insights and expertise will be missed.

Commissioners welcomed Bettye, who was recently appointed to the commission.

2. Acceptance minutes from: April 9 meeting, May 1 meeting, May 18 meeting, July 28 meeting

The minutes of the April and May meetings were accepted as submitted.

The July 28 minutes state that Mike O'Connell and Sarah coordinated the above meetings. That was Deborah's understanding, based on conversations with Mike. Sarah's recollection is that Mike coordinated the meetings and she simply provided him with her availability. The minutes of that meeting were accepted with this notation.

Lynne Vanderslice has informed Deborah that the commission should vote on the minutes, rather than accepting them as submitted as we have for the last few years. Deborah is waiting for more information.

3. Director's Report

Sarah will no longer be providing a written report to commissioners. Instead she will give a verbal report in the meeting.

The Senior Center is still closed, but Stephanie has organized some outdoor events. There is now a tent in the back of Comstock with a safe entrance. Masking and social distance will be maintained. There are also Zoom events being offered by folks who have helped the Senior Center in the past and others in the community. The latest issue of Corridors is online.

Youth Services is offering getting referrals from the schools and the community and is bridging services and making referrals. There were two referrals in August.

Social Services has gained some clients. They are expecting that number to go up in the coming months. They have a lot to offer with programs, gift cards and the food pantry. In August 70 households utilized the food pantry. In July 71 households did.

The department has reached out on several occasions to their most vulnerable clients who are on their emergency call list – starting in August and continuing through the recent storm (Isaias) – to make sure they have what they need. There are about 80 households on this list and the list is revised at least once per year with the help of EMS, the police department and the fire department. There is also a notice about it in Corridors. When the list is revised, they gather info such as who is in the home and whether they have a generator.

The department is hoping that Ellen Abend will be available twice per week to assist Wilton residents with Medicare Counseling during open enrollment. Assistance will be given over the phone.

Commissioners expressed disappointment about not receiving written reports, as the level of detail is substantially less this way. They also expressed concerns about the ability of the department to continue to provide the same services with greatly reduced capacity.

4. Budget concerns

Wilton Rocks for Food, which has been a significant source of funds for the food pantry, will not take place this year. Paul wondered if this will create a gap in the budget and how we will make it up.

Sarah assured the commission that due to the generosity of the town, the Wilton Community Assistance Fund has gotten many donations from concerned residents. While we will miss Wilton Rocks, the food pantry is funded to provide the same level of service with no changes for some time. Residents continue to reach out to see what they can do to help, and Kiwanis is running a gift card drive this weekend.

Some donations to the WCAF are designated for other kinds of assistance, like rent, utilities or child care, so funds are available to meet those needs as well.

The town is also in good shape this fiscal year.

Sarah is not concerned about the budget at this time.

5. Priority needs

The commission reviewed the goals set at the September 2019 meeting. Most of them were accomplished or no longer relevant. The commission might want to connect with WiACT this year. There was also interest in inviting staff to present at meetings, but Sarah said that would not be possible until the summer.

Deborah suggested that the commission re-think liaison assignments this year. Rather than each commissioner liaising to a particular Wilton agency, she suggested each commissioner focus on a priority area, and reach out to different groups that serve that priority area, in order to broaden our reach. Commissioners will report on their area at meetings. Liaisons were identified:

- Youth Mental Health – Genevieve

- Seniors – Danielle
- Housing Committee – Bettye (Lynne already asked her to be on this committee.)
- Adult Health and Well Being – Paul

Additionally, Lynne has assigned the commission a special project. We are to:

1. Look at local non-profits to determine how we can prioritize them and how the town can assist in their survival during the pandemic
2. Evaluate the effectiveness of the Seniors and Persons with Disabilities Relief Act

Ross Tartell is our contact on the Board of Selectmen for this project and will have more information.

Also, Lynne has identified the four priorities for the town and town employees for the remainder of the year:

1. Covid-19 related issues and outcomes
2. Improved resiliency following weather event and improved public utility services
3. November election
4. Providing critical town services

6. Advocacy for Commission Charge

Commissioners would like to understand what the process for reviewing the charge and when the commission will have the opportunity to participate.

7. Public Comment

Judy Zucker made the following comment:

- She suggested that there are occasions when the commission can go into executive session to discuss things that can't be discussed publicly.
- Stephanie keeps an email list for Corridors. She asked that Sarah please add the commissioners to that distribution list.
- Regarding concerns about the future and responsibility of the commission, Judy urged all of the commissioners to appear at any BOS meeting where this is on the agenda and ask to be heard because the commission must make sure to be involved in any changes.
- She would like the commission to remind the Democratic and Republican town committees that the commission needs two more members and it can take a long time for them to be appointed.

Adjourn, 7:12 pm

Next regular meeting October 8, 2020, 6:00 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Genevieve Eason
Secretary