

MEETING OF MARCH 11, 2008

In the absence of Chairman Earl Temchin, Vice Chairman Sandra Micalizzi called the meeting to order at 7:02 p.m.

Members present: Ben Cammuso, Lynn Maschi, Sandra Micalizzi, Guss Nevelos, Connie Proll and Michael Rossi.

Members absent: Susan Locks, Ruth Riccio and Earl Temchin

The minutes of the February 5, 2008 meeting were presented to the Commission. A motion was made by Michael Rossi to accept the minutes as presented; seconded by Lynn Maschi; all were in favor.

The Commissioners expressed their sympathies to Lynn Maschi upon the loss of her mother. Sandra Micalizzi passed around the thank you note Lynn sent for the fruit basket. Also noted was the passing of North Central Regional Planning Manager Tony Savino who was a good friend to Southington, very helpful and instrumental in obtaining grants for our buses.

It was noted that the Southington Town Council Chairman John Barry has appointed two individuals to the commission, replacing Connie Proll and Ruth Riccio. Appreciation was expressed to Connie and Ruth for their "above and beyond" service to the Calendar House and the senior citizens in our community. Both have generously contributed their time and skills in many areas, and will be missed. Connie assured the commissioners and staff that she would continue to be available to offer help in any way needed.

Referencing Executive Director Robert Verderame's March 3, 2008 letter to Town Manager John Weichsel, it was reported that during a recent ice storm, damage was done to the Calendar House flat roof causing leakage and subsequent water damage. During the storm, the Director was able to get immediate assistance to prevent further damage; following up with repair work, including the damage to the roof, installation of gutters and addressing an electrical short. Mr. Verderame will request an appropriation from the Finance Board to cover expenditures totaling \$3,450. In addition, he noted that pine tree limbs had come down, blocking the street and sidewalk. These were removed, but the tree should be taken down, as it presents a recurring problem. Sandra Micalizzi concurred citing it a major safety factor.

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The Treasurer's Report was given by Connie Proll. She reported that of the \$474,585. current budget, \$291,111.27 (61.3%) has been expended, leaving \$183,473.73 remaining. Lynn Maschi asked if we were doing okay. Connie Proll responded that the budget had been well-devised and with three and a half months left in the fiscal year, we were doing well. At the request of the Finance Director, an appropriation was requested totaling \$37,526.25 in anticipation of payment from the DOT Matching Grant, to be placed in the Part time Bus Drivers Line Item, (\$22,000); Staff Overtime, (\$8,000.); Bus Maintenance & Repair (\$3,526.25); and Gasoline, (\$4,000.) A motion was made by Guss Nevelos to accept the Treasurer's Report as presented; seconded by Michael Rossi; all were in favor.

Robert Verderame was asked to present the Director's and Program Coordinator's Report. He noted that 654 one-way rides were provided. There was a marked increase in social service requests. Several new Medicare recipients requested counseling on Medicare, Medicare Supplements and Medicare Part D benefits. There were also on-going problems with people who had been switched from their preferred carriers by unethical insurance agents. ConnPACE applications and benefits counseling were also on the rise. We are currently making plans to participate in training for the Renters Rebate Program that begins on May 15th. This year they are requiring that applications be done on computer.

We have been receiving numerous calls regarding the F&S Oil problem. It presents a very frustrating and upsetting situation for many of our senior citizens.

Regarding our Income Tax Assistance Program, the Economic Stimulus Package has caused some scrambling for information and procedural updates. The important thing will be communicating to seniors who do not normally file a return. They must submit a simplified 1040A return. This rebate will not affect eligibility for state or government entitlements programs. It does involve considerable more work for our Tax Assistance Program. However our dedicated volunteers have risen to the challenge, willingly scheduling additional days and time. We have provided instruction to the Housing Authority Staff so they can assist their residents.

Regarding Bus Maintenance, the broken frame on the 2000 bus will be fixed – it is a relatively inexpensive welding repair.

Under Building Maintenance, as previously discussed, repairs were made to the roof and the gutters damaged in the ice storm. Fallen tree limbs were removed from the sidewalk and street. The timer for the parking lot lights was adjusted. Workshop tools were repaired by volunteers Ed Knap; Joe Angellilo and Andy Hubeny. Pins on the overhead garage door were replaced.

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On February 14th, a very successful intergenerational Valentine's Day Dinner Dance, co-sponsored by the Kennedy Middle School National Junior Honor Society and the Calendar House was attended by ninety seniors. This innovative program initiated by Executive Director Robert Verderame and Kennedy teacher and advisor Karen Sciota, featured TOPS Market catering, DJ Jerry Limmer, decorations and preparation by Kennedy students, place mats and "goodie bags" made by Derynoski Middle School fifth graders and enthusiastic interaction between senior guests and their student hosts. By popular request, we anticipate repeating this event annually.

Highlights of the Program Coordinator's Report included: Trip Sale on February 8th; and monthly membership meeting on February 28th. Mr. John Lehnaw, photographer/artist exhibited his work, with a power-point presentation by Dick Fortunato. Seventy-two people attended.

A motion to accept the Director's Report as presented was made by Guss Nevelos; seconded by Michael Rossi; all in favor.

Under Correspondence: The rental requests for the Car Show and The Kids Day have been verbally declined. There was extensive discussion regarding the previously tabled transportation request proposal from SHS Special Ed Teacher Nancy Chiero. As requested, Mr. Verderame addressed specific concerns raised at last month meeting, which included: 1) clarification of the amount of time involved – *Exactly one hour, one day per month, several months during the school year (Sept, Oct, Nov)*; 2) consult with the town attorney regarding liability- *Attorney Mark Sciota advised that there would not be a liability concern*; 3) determine our ability to terminate or limit the commitment if the frequency or number of rides gets out of hand in terms of affecting our ability to meet the needs of the senior citizens – *we would retain the ability to terminate or limit the commitment, this is a one-time commitment, unless we extend it*. 4) address overtime concerns; wear and tear on drivers and buses – *Since this is scheduled during the day, it would not involve overtime expense and only minimal effect on drivers or buses*. For the record the commissioners are not comfortable with this request, feeling that we should be focused on meeting the ever increasing transportation concerns of our senior citizen population, and that the Board of Education should be meeting the transportation needs of their students. In terms of grant application criteria, we are pursuing expansion and coordination of services for handicap/disabled individuals in conjunction with the Southington Commission on Disability. This includes providing transportation for younger adults, (non-seniors, aged 18 and older), who are not enrolled in our educational system. Lynn Maschi asked how disabled/handicap students are currently being transported and Bob Verderame replied through the Board of Education. Guss Nevelos indicated he was totally in agreement with Connie Proll and felt we should not become involved in this. Michael Rossi asked if we have done this before or would this be the first time. Bob Verderame responded that we have not done this before.

A motion was made by Connie Proll to deny the request at this time, due to our commitment and priority to the senior citizens of our community, not the students, with the increasing volume making expansion of service to other groups prohibitive. Seconded by Guss Nevelos; all in favor. The Commission further agreed to the possibility of reconsidering the issue in the future. Mr. Verderame will keep an open dialogue with the Commission on Disability, and advise the Senior Citizen Commission on any relevant issues.

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Continuing under Correspondence: At the March 5th Department Heads Meeting, the “Elio” issue came up again, with Attorney Mark Sciota again giving explanation of the facts in this matter, after phone calls have come in from citizens who viewed TV coverage of Town Council meetings. Mr. Verderame received an enthusiastic letter from Calendar House members, Mr. and Mrs. Kwiat regarding the Valentine’s Day event, noting how thoroughly they enjoyed the day.

Under Old Business: It was noted that the Town Manager’s cuts were relatively minor. A public hearing will be held on April 7, 2008 at 7:00 p.m. Word had just been received that it will be held at DePaolo Middle School rather than Derynoski School. The much anticipated \$37,526.25 check has been received from the DOT Matching Grant. This provides much needed funds for our transportation service. The memorial plaques are scheduled to be shipped the week after Easter.

As to the parking lot, Bob will be meeting with the Town Engineer & the Contractor on March 18th at the Calendar House. Benny Cammuso and Guss Nevelos will also be present. They will discuss changes in the markings, and time frame for the final coat. Bob will request stakes at the corners. The Commissioners requested that Bob ask Town Attorney Mark Sciota if it were possible to be included in a town-wide bid for snow removal. We will need to go out to bid in August for snow removal. Ben Cammuso asked that regular sand be substituted with another material.

Under New Business: Application for the 2008/09 DOT Matching Grant will be submitted shortly. The staff is looking forward to the CASCP Training Session on Thursday, March 13, and will be joined by Commissioners Lynn Maschi, Connie Proll, Ben Cammuso and Michael Rossi.

Referencing the Easter Seals/Host Agency/Senior Community Service Employment Program, Mr. Verderame remarked that Easter Seals would like to place an 85 year old individual at Calendar House for 18 hours per week, at their expense. The problem we have encountered in the past is that in a union environment clerical/secretarial responsibilities cannot be assigned to a non-union employee. We have tried similar programs in the past, and been unable to provide enough work for them. The Town Attorney does not recommend this placement. However, an individual could possibly be placed within the nutrition program, working in the kitchen. Connie Proll inquired if this program could be utilized in the private sector. Bob felt it could be, and agreed to give her more information.

Examining the lawn bids that were received, it was noted that for 26 weeks of mowing, spring and fall cleanup the three lowest bids included: Schmidt Lawn Care at \$3,710. Spruce Hill Nursery LLC (last year’s vendor) at \$4,165 and Dan Quinlan at \$4,335. Connie Proll asked if Spruce Hill did a good job last year, and was assured that they did. Question was raised if any one was familiar with Schmidt Lawn Care, and it was reported that they are a reputable company and in fact have the contract for DePaolo Middle School. It was also noted that the Orchard Valley Garden Club has volunteered to plant and maintain the islands by the parking lot lights on Hobart Street. Connie Proll made a motion to award the contract to the low bidder, Schmidt Lawn Care; seconded by Ben Cammuso; all in favor.

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Under Public Communication: Membership Association President Ray Fecteau extended sympathies to Lynn Maschi on behalf of the Calendar House members. He commented on the Special Education Transportation request stating he felt that if it was during the school session, it should be strictly a Board of Education matter. Cliff Snow asked if Calendar House is responsible for all handicap/disabled transportation in town. Bob Verderame replied, only for those individuals over the age of eighteen needing transportation for medical or employment. This is a state mandate. Walter Kizilski complimented the recent Taste of Italy event with Bob Mel saying it was the biggest affair in some time. Expressing his appreciation, he credited the Calendar House staff for all the work they do. Ben Cammuso suggested a pasta supper every three months, to which Bob quipped, "great idea if you're cooking!" A suggestion was made to resume late afternoon movies. It will be taken under consideration. Michael Rossi inquired as to how Dawn Sargis, the new clerk typist, was doing, and Cynthia Gilbert replied that Dawn is working out extremely well, fitting in seamlessly. Cliff Snow echoed that saying he felt that she was a great choice.

Michael Rossi made a motion to adjourn, seconded by Guss Nevelos; all were in favor. The meeting was adjourned at 8:20 p.m.

The next scheduled meeting is Tuesday, April 8, 2008 at 7:00 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Cynthia Gilbert
Senior Center Secretary