

**West Hartford Senior Citizens Advisory Commission
2015 Report to the West Hartford Town Council
Pursuant to WH Code Sec. 5-39**

I. Introduction

The West Hartford Senior Citizens Advisory Commission meets monthly, with the exception of July and August, at the Elmwood Senior Citizens Center, generally commencing at 10 or 10:30am on the mornings of the third Tuesday of the month. Meetings of the Commission are open to all and guests are always welcome. The Commission has nine members. Phil Walker is currently its Chair. The other members are Ray Guenter, Linda Hanson, Bob Kennedy, Ruth Kurien, Connie Melo, Ellen Phillips, Donna Sterling and Noreen Bachteler. Once again, we have been fortunate in having the services of our Volunteer Recording Secretary, Amy Lynn Silverman who, with Commission member, Donna Sterling, participated in the Town Clerk's program earlier this year concerning the legal requirements for conducting public meetings.

The Commission relies heavily on our liaison with several Town of West Hartford administrators who serve our senior citizens on a daily basis. Through them we are kept up to date on the interests and needs of our seniors and how they are being addressed. We look forward every month to hearing from Gina Marino, Director of the Senior Center at Bishops Corner; and Kathleen Faroni, Director of the Elmwood Senior Center. Prior to her retirement in the latter part of the past year, Susan Huleatt, Human Services Manager, added greatly to our meetings. We shall miss her contributions. A key contributor for us has been the Council's liaison with the Commission, Deputy Mayor Shari Canton, who attends most of our sessions. We

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depend on Shari to keep us up to date on matters coming before the Town Council, particularly those affecting senior citizens.

II. Senior Job Bank

Last year the Commission continued its support for the revival of the Senior Job Bank. Our interest in seeing this resource prosper, both for seniors who need its services and those able to provide them, remains a priority. We look forward to hearing how the SJB is progressing from Jim Doran on a regular basis. On November 5, the American Association of Retired Persons (AARP) awarded its 2015 State Andrus Award for Community Service to Jim in a ceremony at Town Hall for his efforts in reestablishing the Senior Job Bank as a much appreciated community resource. The presentation ceremony included well-deserved accolades to Jim from Mayor Slifka, AARP officials and Phil Walker.

III. Senior Transportation Needs

Providing adequate transportation facilities for West Hartford seniors has been a priority for the Commission. One of our Commission members, Ruth Kurien, is on the board of ITN Central, an important transportation option for seniors. In late 2014, ITN Central acquired a part-time executive director, Kevin Farmer, who has been quite successful during this past year in adding drivers and increasing ridership significantly. On June 17th, ITN celebrated its ten-thousandth ride at a ceremony at the Pond House which was covered by local TV. Under Kevin's leadership, ITN has commenced fund-raising efforts to support its operation.

At our April meeting, we heard from "CTfastrak" representatives Barbara Bellott and Lizette Cruz, describing this new operation by Connecticut Transport centering on the bus way between New Britain and Hartford. Earlier that month, Ms. Belott had led Commission members Donna Sterling and Phil Walker on an orientation trip over the CTfastrak route.

At our October meeting we heard from Danielle Herbert and Ally Gagnon of "Way to Go CT" who presented a power point presentation of the transportation resources available to West Hartford and surrounding town, and distributed to the Commission a 36 page comprehensive guide "Transportation Resource for West Hartford, CT".

IV. Communications with Seniors

The Commission makes a special effort to communicate with West Hartford Seniors and to hear from them concerning their needs and interests. As previously stated, we look forward to briefings from our Senior Center Directors, Gina Marino and Kathleen Faroni. Several on the Commission have signed up as Senior Center members and frequently attend events at the Centers. This enables us to hear directly from seniors about programs that affect them, or future ones that may have this potential. Commission members have also attended and spoken at lunches held by the Senior Centers to recognize and honor their volunteers. A number of us attended the Forum for the candidates running for the Town Council at the West Hartford Senior Center. We conveyed to the candidates our hope that the interests of seniors will continue to be taken into account.

V. Elmwood Senior Center Parking Issue

For some time, the Commission has had a concern with the adequacy and safety of the parking facilities at the Elmwood Senior Center. Commission member, Ellen Phillips spent some time with Town officials to develop some background on the feasibility of remedying the situation. As a result of these efforts we invited John Phillips, West Hartford Director of Public Works, and Duane Martin, the Town Engineer, to our October meeting. Understanding our concerns, they assisted in educating us to the practicalities of fitting this project into the Town's public works projects. Helen Rubino-Turco was our guest at the November meeting when we again addressed this issue. Helen was quite helpful in guiding our discussion. We have decided to send a letter to Mayor Slifka and the Town Council concerning our conviction that the condition of this parking lot, particularly because it involves the safety of our seniors, needs to be addressed in the near future.

VI. Special Guests

We heard from a number of special guests during the year. In March, we heard from Senator Beth Bye who represents the Town in the General Assembly and who has a continuing and consistent interest in the welfare of senior citizens. Also at the March meeting we had invited as guests, Shawn Land and Chris Sesta. Both are activists for LGBT issues. We invited Shawn and Chris because the senior population on West Hartford includes those who identify with the LGBT community and we felt it was necessary for us to become more knowledgeable about their needs and concerns.

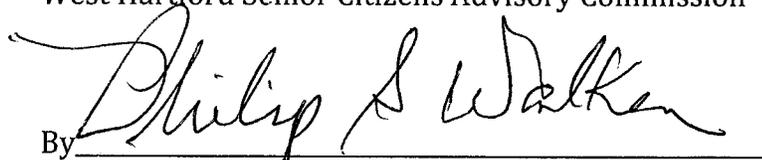
In May, we heard from Margaret Murphy, Associate Director of the Center for Medicare Advocacy, which provides legal support for seniors.

VII. Conclusion

The members of the Commission are dedicated to our service to the Town of West Hartford and its senior citizens. We experience a large measure of personal satisfaction from our role. The years of growing old may not always be golden but they can be brightened by the caring concerns of those within and outside of the Town administration. We intend to do our part to promote those "caring concerns". Toward this end, we are always available to meet with the Council and/or any of its individuals and with Town officials.

Respectfully submitted,

West Hartford Senior Citizens Advisory Commission



By _____
Philip S. Walker, its Chairman
December 31, 2015