

Ridgefield, Connecticut
Commission on Aging
Minutes of February 27, 2023 Meeting

As a first order of business, Andrea Beebe, Chair of the Ridgefield Commission on Aging (CoA), called the meeting to order at 2.33 pm, welcomed all, and took a roll call:

Present: Andrea Beebe, Carmen Martin, Clemencia Saleeby, George Noyes, Karen Gaudian (Town of Ridgefield Municipal Agent for Seniors and ex officio advisor to the CoA), Tony Phillips (Town of Ridgefield Director of Social Services and ex officio advisor to the CoA) and Joseph Ternullo

Absent: Debra Franceschini-Gatje, Maureen Culhane

As a second order of business, Ms. Beebe invited public comment. Mr. Stephen Connor was in the audience and said hello to the Commissioners. Mr Peter Bancel was also in the audience and similarly greeting the Commissioners. Messrs. Connor and Bancel are both contemplating applying for the two open CoA volunteer positions and, in furtherance of their interest, were attending the meeting to learn more about the CoA and gain a perspective of the current issues. Personally and on behalf of the CoA, Ms. Beebe welcomes Mr. Connor and Mr. Bancel.

As a third order of business, Ms. Beebe proposed that the Commissioners hold a vote for the CoA chair and secretary positions and, toward that end, she invited nominations for chairperson. Mr. Ternullo motioned that the vote be deferred to the March 2023 CoA meeting, in the hopes that at that point the CoA would have a full complement of nine Commissioners. That motion was duly seconded. A discussion followed. A vote was taken. It was unanimously voted to defer voting to the March meeting.

As a fourth order of business, Ms. Beebe invited Mr. Ternullo to update the CoA on the status of the development of a CoA grant plan. Mr. Ternullo referred the Commissioners to his pre-read report which was sent to the Commissioners along with the CoA February 2023 meeting agenda. A brief discussion of the action items referenced in the pre-read report followed.

As a fifth order of business, Ms. Beebe invited Ms. Saleeby to update the CoA on the status of the development of a CoA Senior Citizen Event Plan. Ms. Saleeby made the point that many seniors are active and engaged in a myriad of Ridgefield senior citizen activities already and that a special focus should be placed on engaging and building community with those who are not. She thought that taking events right to seniors where they are (i.e. holding events the meeting rooms at Ballard Green and Congregate housing, for example) was worthy of further consideration. The Commissioners agreed that this was a novel and worthwhile strategy to engage seniors and that it should be further pursued. A discussion followed on how the CoA reaches residents. Methods included facebook groups, collaborations with the library, Founders Hall, Meals on Wheels, etc. The discussion also included suggestions for targeted collaborations with the Playhouse, Prospector Theater and other community resources to offer an array of event opportunities for seniors. It was also suggested that the CoA be enhanced to serve as a vibrant go-to destination site for individuals looking for a single source of information catering to Ridgefield seniors. Ms. Beebe thanked Ms. Saleeby for her progress.

As a sixth order of business, Ms. Beebe invited Ms. Martin to update the CoA on the status of the development of a CoA media outreach plan. Ms. Martin referred the Commissioners to her pre-read report which was sent to the Commissioners along with the CoA February 2023 meeting agenda. A brief

discussion of the report followed. Ms. Beebe was very pleased that a good rapport had been established between the Ridgefield Press and the CoA and thanked Ms. Martin for her progress.

As a seventh order of business, Ms. Beebe invited discussion on any CoA-related charter revisions that might be proposed. In view of the vacancies that have existed on the CoA, it was suggested that reducing the term from a 3 year commitment to a two year commitment might encourage volunteerism and that, in turn, would facilitate advancement of the CoA's mission. Mr. Ternullo introduced a motion that Ms. Beebe bring to the Charter Revision Commission a proposal to reduce the term of service on the CoA from a 3 year term to a 2 year term. He further proposed that the number of commissioner slots available, nine, remain unchanged and that, consistent with the current process, the commissioner terms be staggered (four appointed in even years and five appointed in odd years) thereby ensuring that there was always substantial continuity on the CoA. Finally, he proposed that there be no term limits – that is the Ridgefield Board of Selectmen could appoint an individual for multiple successive CoA terms of service. The motion was duly seconded. Further discussion followed. A vote was taken. The motion was unanimously approved.

As an eight order of business the Ms. Beebe brought up the March and April CoA/Library speakership learning activities. The March event will be on Tuesday, 3/21 from 1 pm – 2:30 pm and will feature the Town of Ridgefield HR Director who will speak on Transportation options available to Ridgefield seniors. The April event has not yet been planned. Mr. Ternullo will work with Ms. Franceschini- Gatje on this in early March. Ms. Martin offered to promote the 3/21 event through her local media contacts. Mr. Ternullo and Ms. Franceschini- Gatje, upon their return to Ridgefield, will work collaboratively with Ms. Martin to provide her with the needed information.

As a ninth order of business, Ms. Beebe called for an update on the Senior Guide. The matter was tabled to the CoA March meeting when Ms. Franceschini-Gatje would be present.

As a tenth order of business, Ms. Beebe invited new business discussions. The Commissioners turned to Mr. Bancel and Mr. Connor and invited their comment. Both expressed appreciation for the work of the CoA and expressed interest in advancing their CoA volunteer service interest to the next step. The Commissioners concurred that both would be needed and valued CoA members and advised that meeting of each with the First Selectman would be arranged forthwith.

There being no further business for the CoA, Ms. Beebe entertained a motion for adjournment. The motion was duly made and seconded and unanimously approved. Ms. Beebe noted that the next CoA meeting was on 3/20 at 2:30 pm at Town Hall, Small Conference Room, thanked everyone for their participation and adjourned the meeting.

These minutes were prepared by Joseph Ternullo as acting secretary.