

TOWN OF WETHERSFIELD

WETHERSFIELD ADVISORY COMMITTEE FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

MEETING OF JANUARY 17, 2007

I. INTRODUCTIONS

Present:

Carol Keenan, Chairperson
Joan Haines, Vice Chairperson
Eileen Knapp, Secretary
Jim Grise
Frank Meunier, Jr.
Judith Tacey
Kathleen Sullivan
Louise Ryan
Karen Romaniello

Liaison:

Natalie Morrison, Recreation and Parks

Guests:

Andy Adil, Mayor
Nancy Stillwell, Director of Social and Youth Services
Steve Kirsche, Town Council Liaison
Robin Hamilton, Logisticare
Sal Morato, Ambassador Wheelchair

Nancy Stillwell and Mayor Andy Adil introduced themselves and the other guests who were present to hear public discussion regarding transportation and Dial-a-Ride concerns.

Nancy Stillwell said the town has signed a memorandum of agreement with St. Luke's in Middletown and will be working with them to establish a volunteer driving program in Wethersfield. They will be training about 10 drivers to fill the gaps that Dial-A-Ride can't fill for local transportation. They are hoping to start the program by the end of spring. Because the volunteers are not professional healthcare aids you will have to be able to transfer in and out of the volunteer's car without assistance. More information will be passed along as it comes available.

II. PUBLIC COMMENT

Transportation: The following is a summary of the points the public made at this meeting regarding transportation for persons with disabilities.

- o People generally agreed the service going to appointments was very good but there were complaints regarding pick-ups. The vans are taking longer than 45 minutes to show up. Mr. Sal Morato of Ambassador Wheelchair said they recently added a dedicated driver just for pick-ups and returns in the Wethersfield and Hartford area to help with this problem. They may be adding another driver for pick-ups if there is a need for it.
- o Individuals would like be dropped off in a spot that is safe for them, which may not be the marked bus stop. Nancy Stillwell said passenger's are within their rights to ask to be dropped off in an area that is safe.
- o Some people were told they had to wait for pick-up because the vans were driving school children. Sal Morato said they have added dedicated driver's just to do pick-ups so there shouldn't be any

conflicts with picking up school children.

- When calling for a ride some individuals said the operators weren't always pleasant on the phone and they felt the environment didn't sound very professional. There was a lot of noise and yelling in the background.
- There was a question about the repair of sidewalks and how soon they should be replaced after being marked. Broken sidewalks are a hazard not just for the handicapped but also for all residents. Mr. Steve Kirsche homeowners are responsible for their own sidewalk repair and there is a time frame in which they should be replaced but he would look into it.
- It would be nice if they could take more than 3 bags on the vans when shopping. Nancy Stillwell said a 3-bag limit was recommended because otherwise you get too much clutter on the vans and it can become a tripping hazard.
- There have been times where the vans can't find the correct address or have shown up at the wrong address and this results in individuals being late for appointments.
- There were complaints about the condition of some of the older vans. Doors don't always open, vans stall and seatbelts are broken. There have been vans with electrical tape and bungee cords holding windows in place. Bungee cords have also been used to hold wheelchairs and equipment in place. Mr. Morato said vans are checked daily and reports are made when necessary. He will look into those issues. New vans have been purchased recently.
- One passenger requested a van pick-up because she was wheelchair bound and instead a car came to pick her up.
- Another passenger was making a trip lasting only 20 minutes and asked the operator to make sure the driver waited for her, but when the driver dropped her off he did not wait as promised. Sal Morato said the policy is not to wait for returns but in the future she could book a return time 10-15 minutes later to force the driver to stay.
- Individuals want to be treated as people not numbers. ADA used to ask for their names but Logisticare asks for their number. Robin Hamilton said they don't think of their passengers as numbers but they do have thousands of riders unlike ADA and this is the best way to keep track of everyone.
- There have been group trips where not everyone was listed on the pick up sheet. It would help if they could confirm the list not just with Logisticare but also with Ambassador.
- Some people prefer a set return time as opposed to calling in for a pick-up when you are ready. Sal Morato said you could do it either way.
- There have been instances where people are waiting to be picked up but when the van comes he can't pick them up because their names aren't on the list. The drivers should be able to call dispatch and ask for permission to pick up additional people.
- There was a question as to why they had to call a 1-888 number instead of a local number. Robin Hamilton said they are located in Wallingford; they are not a local company.
- Some people were confused as to when to call ADA versus Dial-A-Ride. Nancy Stillwell said ADA is generally for trips to and from work and Dial-A-Ride should be used for local trips to the doctor and shopping.

Robin Hamilton of Logisticare said her office handles all the calls to book rides and she will be looking into these issues and they will be addressed. She is very concerned about the level of quality being offered.

*****There will be no February meeting. The next meeting will be held March 21, 2007 at 7:30 p.m. in the Town Hall Conference Room.**

Meeting adjourned at 8:50 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Eileen Knapp
Secretary