

TOWN OF WETHERSFIELD

WETHERSFIELD ADVISORY COMMITTEE FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

MEETING OF JANUARY 18, 2006

I. INTRODUCTIONS

Present:

Carol Keenan, Chairperson
Joan Haines, Vice Chairperson
Eileen Knapp, Secretary
Frank Lane
Jim Grise
Christine Taylor
Frank Meunier, Jr.
Judith Tacey
Kathleen Sullivan

Liaison:

Natalie Morrison, Recreation and Parks

Guests:

Russ Morin, Mayor
Bonnie Therrien, Town Manager
Nancy Stillwell, Director of Human Services
Steve Kirsche, Town Council Liaison

Carol Keenan introduced the guests from the Town of Wethersfield who were present to hear public discussion regarding transportation and Dial-a-Ride concerns.

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 Not enough transportation is being offered. People would like to have Friday medical transportation. It seems the passengers always have to conform to the rules but they don't have enough say.
- o Passengers would like more leeway to go to different places (ie. Bloomfield, West Hartford Center)
- o Town Manager Therrien said because of budget constrictions they try to offer the most requested services
- o There was a question about when you have to call to schedule your shopping trips. Reservations must be made no later than 1 p.m. the day before so the routes can be charted out.
- o There were concerns raised that the scheduling of pick-ups was not efficient. Individuals end up waiting too long for the buses to show up. Sometimes they are forgotten after they have been dropped off. On average the wait is approximately half an hour to forty-five minutes.
- o Some people liked it better when there was a set time for pick-ups instead of having to call when you are ready.
- o It was suggested that the WACPD hold another transportation meeting to allow more people who use the service to attend and voice their concerns. Mayor Morin thought more people would be apt to attend an afternoon meeting.
- o Some individuals would like to add Westside Market to the list of stops.
- o Transportation is only available up until 6:30 p.m. It prevents individuals from attending any nighttime functions (ie. Bingo, Adult Education, Hartford Theatre). Town Manager Therrien asked if there is any interest in individuals paying an additional fee for nighttime services.
- o Town Manager Therrien said requests for proposals for transportation have been sent out and are due back

January 31st. The Town Council will be looking these over and reviewing their options.

- Questions were brought up about how surrounding towns operate their transportation services. Newington uses volunteer drivers and their own vans. Other towns offer transportation to church services. Town Manager Therrien said the town could look into combining services with other towns to keep the costs down. Steve Curtis said the Town Council could look into the cost of the town's owning their own vehicles. This creates issue of using volunteer drivers who need to be properly insured. Mayor Morin suggested getting the churches involved to provide transportation to services.
- There were safety concerns regarding the transportation services. Individual's wheelchairs aren't always being tied down properly. Maybe there should be additional driver training programs.
- People are looking for Saturday and Sunday transportation.
- There were questions about whether or not Ambassador has enough drivers to service the town's needs. They are required to meet the needs according to their contract with the town.
- There were some compliments about the drivers asking when they individuals need to be picked up and about being prompt.
- There was a discussion about pay scales instead of having a flat rate. Some town's employ a per trip fee and offer a book of trip tickets that can be purchased ahead of time.
- Mayor Morin said they are doing everything they can to not raise the transportation fees.
- ADA Advisory Committee is changing to a forum. This will allow people to come to meetings and speak about any issues or concerns they have. They will be meeting once a month and will notify users of the dates and times.
- Currently the elderly population in Wethersfield is about 28%. This number will increase as the baby boomer population gets older.
- There was a suggestion to use taxicabs as a back up for transportation. Town Manager Therrien said that would be very costly.
- A suggestion was made to distribute ID cards that have all current phone numbers for Dial-a-Ride and ADA so they can be kept in a wallet.

There will be no February meeting. The next meeting will be held March 15, 2006 at 7:30 p.m. in the Town Hall Conference Room

Meeting adjourned at 8:55 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Eileen Knapp
Secretary