

REGULAR MEETING MINUTES

Thursday, Nov. 20, 2008

1:30 PM, Durham Town Hall

3rd Floor Meeting Room

Members Present: Becky Anderson, Henry Coe, Lainey Melvin and Hank Robinson. **Staff:** Trish Dynia, Sherry Hill and Jan Muraca. **Guests:** Susan Vicarro, Laura Francis and Stuart Keating.

*Please note: Five members were needed to constitute a quorum. There were only four in attendance.

Approval of September 18, 2008: Deferred.

Superintendent of Schools Susan Vicarro: Mrs. Vicarro reported that she has found a teacher who is very willing and excited about offering a computer class for Durham and Middlefield residents age sixty and over. She determined that since most seniors probably have IBM based computers, the high school computer lab was the best option, but wondered if the long hallways would be too much of a distance for them to walk. Members agreed that seniors mobile enough to get to the high school would likely be able to negotiate the hallways. Mrs. Vicarro could also arrange to have the maintenance staff create additional handicapped parking near the Board of Education office on the days the course is offered.

The class will appear in the adult education brochures going out in January and will be offered to Durham and Middlefield residents age 60 and over. Additional publicity, including the fact that the idea for the course was spearheaded by the Durham Senior Committee, will come through the Town Times. There will be a nominal fee for the course but anyone who cannot afford the cost can be provided with scholarships through the Recreation Department.

Members determined that to make the course meaningful and apprehension-free, there should be a heavy emphasis on setting up and using e-mail and internet, basic computer knowledge, short cut sheets, and contact information at the libraries for people who will primarily use those public venues. It was also determined that a six to eight week program, avoiding Mondays and Fridays, would be best.

The committee discussed at length other possibilities for utilizing classrooms, art and tech rooms, and the gyms in District 13 for senior activities, noting that tax

payers who do not have children in the school system would be more likely to support Board of Education budgets if they had some use of the buildings. A spirit of life-long learning, especially in tough economic times when the town is unlikely to pass another referendum regarding a senior center, would go a long way to help those who do not normally use the school facilities to feel some “ownership” of them.

Mrs. Vicarro noted that higher security measures put in place since 9/11 limits access to the schools, as do the limits of parking and building capacity during the school day when many seniors would prefer to hold programs. She will contact school principals to see what the possibilities might be regarding scheduling classes to allow for free time during the school day in classrooms, gyms, art and tech rooms.

Sherry Hill expressed concerns regarding lack of storage space if senior exercise classes were to take place at one of the schools. All agreed that this and other factors needed to be worked out but the feasibility of such co-use was worth exploring.

Human Services Director’s Report: Jan Muraca reported that the RX-Xpress Mobile Unit and Flu Clinic were great successes. All Xpress appointments were booked and all walk-ins were accommodated because the event, scheduled to run from 9AM to 1PM, ran through 3PM. Approximately 200 townspeople age eighteen and over took advantage of the flu clinic and the lines flowed quickly.

Applications are now available for the Elderly Home Heating Assistance Program. Income limits range from \$48,787 for a single individual, up to \$108,832 for a family of five. Further limits: Singles cannot have more than \$7,000 in liquable assets, or \$10,000 if married.

Henry Coe asked about the process by which Jan’s office came in contact with people. Jan replied that generally people came to her looking for services, but when she has been told of a need she will call the resident to determine if the town has any services appropriate to their needs.

Jan reported that Anne Cassidy’s writing class was a great success and will be offered again in January. She further noted that participants found the retired Middlesex Community College professor to be very personable and inspiring.

Recreation Director's Report: Sherry Hill reported that the exercise classes and bingo events have been very popular. She has also conducted an informal poll regarding the possibility of having a Christmas Older Americans Celebration and determined that people are very busy during December and would prefer a larger, "spiced up" program in the spring.

Other Business: First Selectman Laura Francis reported that the Lake Grove School property owner would like to offer the Town of Durham use of their unused buildings, on a month to month basis while they are empty, for the cost of utilities. The campus buildings are easily accessible for seniors, and the classrooms gym and storage rooms would provide ample room for a variety of uses. Lainey Melvin will try to schedule a site walk of the property on Thursday, December 4th at 1:30 PM. By that time there should be more information available regarding the monthly utility costs.

At the request of the Board of Finance, the committee reviewed the current budget and was able to cut it by \$500 for the fiscal year.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 3:00 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Patricia Dynia
Recording Secretary

Cc: Town Clerk, Recreation Director, Human Services Director, Committee Members.

RECV'D: Office of the Town Clerk
November 26, 2008 at 4:22pm