

**City of Westfield
Minutes of the Council On Aging
July 11, 2022**

I. The Meeting was called to order by the Chair, James V. Liptak at 1:00 p.m.

Board Members Present: Elizabeth Boucher, Ed Ekmalian, John Greaney, James Liptak, and Eileen Rockwal. Barbara Taylor was absent. Also present were Ralph Figy, City Council Liaison to the Westfield Council On Aging and Tina Gorman, Executive Director of the Council On Aging.

II. Approval of Minutes of June 13, 2022 Meeting:

Upon Motion duly made by Judge Greaney and seconded by Ed Ekmalian, it was

VOTED unanimously: To approve the Minutes of the June 13, 2022 meeting with the following correction: The Minutes reflected that Eileen Rockwal and Barbara Taylor were absent from the meeting when in fact, both were present at the June 13, 2022 Board meeting.

III. Public Participation:

No public participation.

IV. Items for Discussion/Information:

A. FY23 City Budget Update

Mrs. Gorman advised that the FY23 budget was submitted to the entire City Council following an extensive review by the Finance Committee, and was approved. The major revisions to the COA budget were as follows:

- The line item for the Westfield Gas & Electric purchase of service was increased.
- The Activities Aide position was moved from the City budget to the State Formula Grant.
- The salary for the Senior Benefits Coordinator position was increased.
- The 25-hour per week Special Projects Coordinator position was approved with funding beginning in January 2023.

B. Staffing Update, Senior Benefits Coverage

Mrs. Gorman advised that the Senior Benefits Coordinator position has been filled. Lynn Hills is currently the Benefits Coordinator for the City of Westfield Schools. Ms. Hills has accepted the position at the COA. Her start date will be within the next month. Qualifications for the position include SHINE certification. Ms. Hills recently graduated from the SHINE training program. Prior to Karen Noblit's retirement, Lorraine York-Edberg, the Regional SHINE Coordinator from Franklin County, met with Mrs. Gorman and Mrs. Noblit to discuss a smooth transition for Ms. Hills. Ms. York-Edberg will be readily available to assist in both Westfield and Southwick, which also has a

newly certified SHINE Counselor. In addition, Trina Moskal, Independent Medicare Planning Specialist, is available to assist with referrals. Ms. Moskal was a guest last week on Mrs. Gorman's cable television show. Ms. Moskal has worked closely with Mrs. Gorman in the past and is a reliable reference for Westfield's seniors.

C. Second Floor Renovation Project, Update

Mrs. Gorman advised that the funding for the second floor renovation project is in the City account. Mrs. Gorman is working with Tammy Tefft, City Purchaser and Bryan Forrette, Facilities Director, on the first phase of the project which is the design stage. They would like to work with Dietz and Associates Architects since they designed the Senior Center. Depending on the cost, the project may have to go out to bid. In the meantime, the entire area to be renovated must be emptied of all storage items. Toward that end, Mrs. Gorman and a volunteer will be sorting through the seasonal decorations and other items in storage. A tag sale will be held at the Center on August 27 for those Senior Center items to be sold. No items will be collected from the public for sale. Items to be kept will be moved across the hall to the other storage area on the second floor. Chief Valliere, WPD, has offered the assistance of some of the police officers to move the heavier building items (tiles, insulation, doors). Mrs. Boucher asked if the Senior Center has a basement. Mrs. Gorman said that a basement was considered at the time the building was designed, but it was cost prohibitive.

D. FY23 Tax Work-Off Program

Plans are underway for the FY23 Senior Citizen Property Tax Work-Off Program. Mrs. Gorman reminded the Board, that the program was revised last year to increase the maximum property tax deduction from \$500 to \$800 and decrease the maximum number of participants from 40 to 25. In FY22, only seven volunteers completed the program. Most were placed in the schools. There were problems with high Covid numbers throughout the City. In addition, the Volunteers in Public Schools (VIPS) Coordinator resigned suddenly mid-schoolyear, so there was a lot of confusion with placements. With the Covid cases down and a new VIPS Coordinator, Lesley Lambert, Mrs. Gorman is planning for a more robust Tax Work-Off Program in FY23. The application period will be held throughout the month of September with placement in October.

E. Comstar Ambulance Breach

Westfield residents, many of the them older adults, who used ambulance services through the Westfield Fire Department, received a letter from Comstar Ambulance Billing Service last week describing a potential breach of information. Some of the seniors brought their letters to the COA staff and had questions about what happened and what, if anything, they need to do. Mrs. Gorman received a call from Milagros Johnson, Director of the Mayor's Office of Consumer Affairs (in Springfield), who had also received calls from Westfield residents about the potential breach. She offered to work with the COA on an informational session. Mrs. Gorman has arranged for Ms. Johnson to appear on her *Wake Up Wednesday* cable show on Wednesday, July 13 from 7 to 8 a.m. Ms. Johnson will also provide Mrs. Gorman with written information that can be distributed to our seniors. The link for the segment will be posted on the City website after the show is aired. Mrs. Gorman has notified the Mayor, City Councilors, State Representative and State Senator about the show and asked that they spread the word to their constituents.

F. COVID Tests

Four cases of COVID tests were delivered from the Board of Health for distribution at the Senior Center. Although each box is marked, "Best if used by July 28," the CDC has increased that time period to October 28, 2022. The tests at the Senior Center are available to any Westfield resident, regardless of age.

Mr. Liptak asked when the Senior Center room capacities would be increased, specifically the Great Room. Mrs. Gorman replied that the capacity has been increased to a maximum of 76. She will be changing the signs indicating the new room capacity numbers. The number of diners at each large table may be increased to five. However, the COA staff is sensitive to those seniors who are most comfortable with four at a table, so that option will remain.

V. Items for Action: NONE

VI. Director's Report

Review of Programs

- *Happy Everything June! Curbside Luncheon*
 - o 125 Participants
 - o Live entertainment on the patio was a great success (Richie Mitnick and Dave Colucci)
 - o Both Mayor McCabe and Senator Velis participated in the event
 - o Friends 50/50 raffle tickets were sold curbside and added to the festive atmosphere
 - o All men received a small gift in honor of Father's Day

- *Monthly Side By Side Support Group*
 - o Seeing an uptick in new participants
 - o Common thread: grief and loss
 - o Four out of five of the new group participants have lost a spouse in the last 10 months

- *July 'Westfield Council On Aging Presents' Series*
 - o *Friends for Life*
 - o Presenters from the Friends of the Westfield Senior Center, Inc.
 - Kathy Millas, Treasurer, Clerk
 - Tina Gorman, COA Director
 - o Goal is to educate the public about the history, mission, and goals of the Friends group

- *July WCPC Performance*
 - o Shown on cable Channel 15 on Wednesday afternoons and Saturday evenings throughout the month of July
 - o Entertainment: *Knightsmen Band*
 - Replay of the 2020 July 4th two-hour studio performance

Upcoming Programs

- *Summer Sizzle and Float Party*
 - o First indoor party with entertainment since pre-COVID
 - o Thursday, July 21; Entertainment 11 to 12 (Richie Mitnick and Dave Colucci)
Lunch served at noon
 - o Root beer floats for dessert
 - o Will cap at 76
 - o 52 people signed-up to date

- *New Classes/Programs Scheduled*
 - o Beginning August 16: weekly guided imagery session *Rest, Relax, Recharge*
 - Facilitator: Nancy Greenwood, Retired Reiki Practitioner
 - Tuesdays, 2:45 to 4 p.m.
 - o Beginning mid-September: weekly *Zumba* classes
 - Instructor: Milli Odabashian
 - Wednesday mornings
 - o *Bingocize*
 - Ascentria Care Alliance – SNAP Nutrition, Education
 - A 7-week program designed to increase physical activity and reduce sedentary behavior among participants.
 - A combination of bingo, physical activity, and nutrition education.
 - Trained educators lead weekly, one hour sessions, where winners can receive prizes and incentive items, including aprons, grocery totes, and cooking utensils.
 - Beginning Wednesday, September 21 at 1 p.m.

- *'Westfield Council On Aging Presents' Series*
 - o Five 'Best Of' shows throughout the month of August on Tuesday afternoons
 - o August 2: 'The Path to Same Sex Marriage in Massachusetts,'
Judge John Greaney
 - o August 9: 'Conversation and Dementia,' Tina Gorman, COA
Director
 - o August 16: 'Text to 9-1-1,' Nina Barszcz, Dispatch Administrator,
Westfield Public Safety
 - o August 23: 'Navigating Senior Living Options,' Eric Aasheim,
Owner of Oasis Senior Advisors Western Massachusetts
 - o August 30: 'Senior Scams: What To Look For and How To Fight

Back,' District Attorney Anthony Gulluni

- *August WCPC Performance*
 - o Shown on cable Channel 15 on Wednesday afternoons and Saturday evenings throughout the month of August
 - o Entertainment: Westfield Technical Academy 'Chef Showdown'
 - Three episodes
 - Team cooking competition that students from the Digital Media shop conceived and directed with students from the Culinary Arts shop as their capstone senior project

Miscellaneous

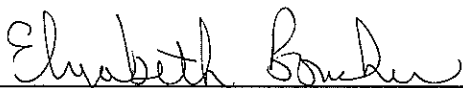
- Exploring the needs and resources available in the area to those with Parkinson's Disease and their caregivers
 - o Collaborating with the Westfield YMCA

VII: The Chair reminded the Board that our next meeting is to be held on Monday, August 8, 2022 at 1:00 p.m. at the Westfield Senior Center. Ms. Rockwal mentioned that she is unable to attend the August meeting.

VIII. There being no further business to come before the Board, upon Motion duly made by Ed Ekmalian and seconded by Judge Greaney, it was unanimously VOTED to adjourn the meeting at 1:52 p.m.

List of Exhibits:

- Director's Report
- Information Sheet about Comstar potential breach and COVID-19 test



Elizabeth Boucher, Secretary

Memo To: COA and Veterans Staff
From: Tina Gorman
Subjects: Comstar Ambulance Billing Breach
COVID-19 Tests
Date: July 6, 2022

Comstar Ambulance Billing Breach

Attached please find an article that was on the front page of today's Westfield News. We have already had several questions from seniors who received a letter about the Comstar Ambulance Billing Breach. Milagros Johnson from the (Springfield) Mayor's Office of Consumer Affairs contacted me because her office staff are also receiving calls related to this breach of information.

Milagros has offered to help with providing information on actions that our seniors can take to minimize the potential damage. We have worked closely with Milagros and her staff in the past. She will be appearing on my *Wake Up Wednesday* cable show next week, July 13 from 7 to 8 a.m. After we air the show, Pete Cowles can post the link to the City website where it will be available to anyone who wants to view it. Milagros will also provide some written information that we can distribute or mail to those who received a letter.

COVID-19 Tests

We have received four cases of COVID tests from the Board of Health for distribution at the Senior Center. On each individual box, it says, *Best if used by July 28*. The CDC has actually increased that time period by three months. So if anyone notices and asks, the tests are good until October 28, 2022. Most of the tests will be located at the Greeter's desk. Evelyn will have one box in her office. Anyone requesting a test can have one. We are a distribution site so please distribute the tests freely, regardless of age. Joe Rouse will get us more tests if we run out. There are two tests per box.



Westfield News

Westfield, Southwick and surrounding Hilltowns

Wednesday, July 6, 2022

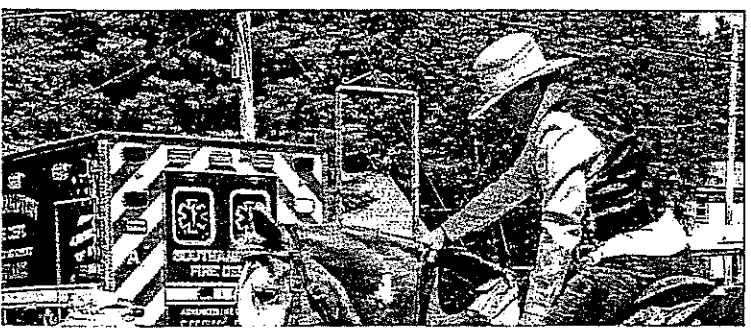
\$1.00



Rep. Kelly Pease greet their Westfield constituents in Wyben on July

Investive 4th on North Side

Fourth of July was celebrated with two parades on the North Side, in and at Hampton Ponds. Below, Pam Bergeron helps grandkids Sam and Travis Archambeault meet a horse at the Hampton Ponds parade. For more from Hampton Ponds, see page 5. (MARC ST. ONGE / THE WESTFIELD NEWS)



Breach may have exposed residents' data

Incident possibly affected those who were billed by Comstar for ambulance transports

BY PETER CURRIER
pcurrier@thereminder.com

WESTFIELD — Anyone in Greater Westfield who has been billed by Comstar Ambulance Billing may have been exposed to identity theft after a data breach earlier this year.

Westfield Fire Chief Patrick Egloff said in a letter to Westfield residents that anyone in the area who has been transported by ambulance may have received a legitimate letter from Comstar warning them of the breach possibly including their personal data.

Egloff said he is not yet aware of how many people in Westfield could be affected by the breach, or how far back in time the data breach may have affected customers.

"I know of people who are getting letters who haven't used an ambulance in a couple years," said Egloff.

He said that between July 1, 2021, and June 30, 2022, approximately 6,000 billable emergency calls were processed by Comstar from Westfield.

Egloff urged anyone who has received a letter or may have been billed for ambulance ser-

vices by Comstar not to call the Westfield Dispatch Center, Police Department, or Fire Department, but to instead call Comstar's dedicated assistance line at 877-587-4280.

Comstar said in its letter to possibly affected customers that suspicious activity was detected on March 26, 2022 in certain company servers.

"We immediately took steps to secure our network, and launched a thorough investigation, with the assistance of third-party experts, to determine the nature and scope of the incident," said the Comstar letter. "Through the investigation, we determined that Comstar was the subject of a cyber-attack that impacted our network. The investigation determined that certain files on our network were subject to unauthorized access."

The letter goes on to say that the data that was accessed may contain names, dates of birth, Social Security numbers, medical assessments and medication information, and health insurance information.

Comstar urged potentially affected customers to monitor their financial accounts and personal credit for suspicious activity.