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Colchester Commission on Aging

Annual Report 2014

Introduction:

The needs for senior services are growing and will continue to grow over the next 2 decades. This backdrop is guiding the priorities and focus of the Commission on Aging. It is our hope that early awareness will assist in planning for the future, and that this report will serve as a vehicle to begin the discussion.

Objective:

The Commission on Aging has incorporated the requirement to produce an annual report as part of its bylaws. The goal is to promote more effective long and short term planning to address the needs of Colchester's senior population, and communicate the opinions and advice of the Commission with greater clarity. The Annual Report is produced along with a budget request for the coming fiscal year in conjunction with the budget plan submitted by our Director of Senior Services, Patty Watts.

Mission:

The purpose of the Commission shall be to review and analyze the needs and conditions of the elderly and aging in relation to housing, nutrition, employment, economic welfare, health, recreation, social services, transportation and other matters and problems of concern to the elderly. The Commission shall also plan, coordinate, develop and implement programs to meet the needs and to improve the conditions of the elderly and aging within the Town of Colchester and shall provide coordination and linkage of such plans and programs among existing services. The Commission shall act as an advocate for the elderly and aging and shall make recommendations from time to time to the Board of Selectmen.

2014 Accomplishments:

- The Commission revised the Colchester Commission on Aging organizing ordinance in an effort to better align with how the Commission operates, and to remove obsolete requirements for membership in an effort to promote greater community activism. This was adopted by the Board of Selectmen, and achieved Town Meeting approval.
- The Commission has completed revisions to the operating Bylaws as part of the ongoing effort to align our operating principles with our actual operation and with the ordinance. This is currently before the Board of Selectmen for approval.
- The Commission completed the Senior Resource Guide for Colchester's senior population. This is currently available on the for the Commission's and the Senior Center's website. It has been printed, with copies distributed to many locations convenient to Colchester senior residents.

- The Commission has formed a sub-committee that is working with Patty Watts, the Director of Senior Services, to develop a Senior Center Policy & Procedure manual. The writing and implementation of this manual is a joint goal for both the Commission and our Senior Center Director.
- The Commission has recognized the need for a working budget to support our objectives. In keeping with past funding strategies, the COA raised funds through various fundraising programs. This year we raised $492, with a current balance of $142 after expenses. The Commission members also recognized that we will benefit by having a small town budget to cover planned operating expenses. The COA currently does not have a town funded budget and we are currently sharing a budget line with the Senior Center, but it is not an ideal method for managing funds. The proposed 2014- 2015 COA budget is appended to this document.
- The Commission co-sponsored our first program of the year which focused on Elder Law, and is in the planning stage for a second program intended to meet the needs of Colchester Seniors. We have also created a plan that incorporates two events annually with the intent that it will complement the efforts of AARP, thus creating an education opportunity quarterly.
- The Commission has worked more closely with the Director of Senior Services to be an advocate for the Senior Center. Our goal is to attract new members to the Senior Center which acts as the hub for safety-net, health and wellness, and social services for Colchester seniors. We assist in distributing the Senior Center Newsletter, and posting events that brings people into the hub and creates awareness.
- In order to be effective advocates for Colchester Seniors, the Commission needs to increase visibility, be recognized by town residents, and focus on ways to achieve these goals. We have taken a first step by committing to getting information into the news at least quarterly, and have set a goal to increase that in 2015.
- The Commission has been focused on advocacy for a new Senior Center. This has taken a back seat to other more pressing initiatives, but will ramp up in 2015. Our goal is to insure that the need for investment in a new Senior Center is not lost and remains a planning priority for the town. The Commission has adopted a goal to help flesh out physical requirements for a facility that reflects a shared vision for the next 25 years. This is being considered in collaboration with the Director of Senior Services.

Issues:

- The Commission is focused on obtaining a small operating budget for 2014-2015 to support the Commission's goal to become a more effective resource and advocate for Colchester Seniors. Though the amount is small in relative terms, it will serve our goals to be an active partner on behalf of Colchester Seniors.
- The Commission currently has two member vacancies, and one alternate vacancy. We are anxious to attract new members who have the desire to contribute to the Commission's agenda.
- The Commission is working with Patty Watts to advocate for "My Senior Center" software implementation in 2015. As both the number of programs and attendance continue to expand at the Senior Center, we are concerned that the lack of available administrative time will limit the Center's ability to deliver services. We also see a growing need for more and better data to track a rapidly growing need for service.

Long Term Planning:

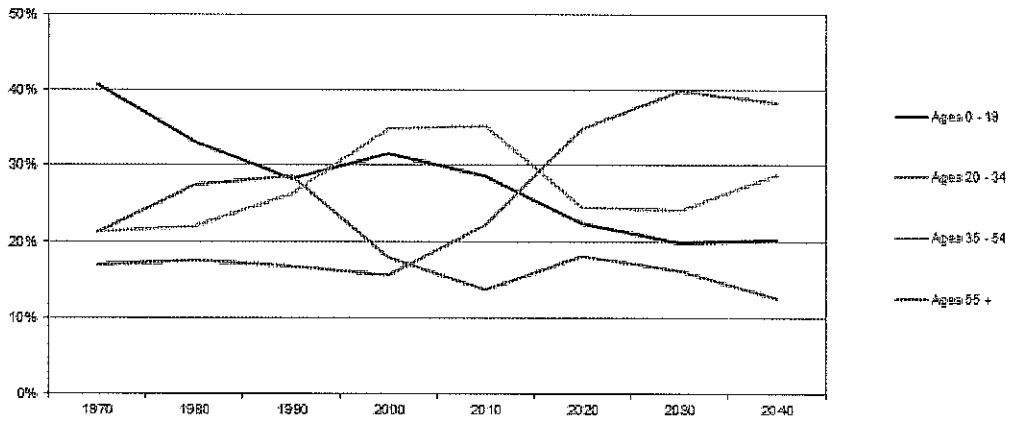
The Commission's long term planning takes a three-pronged strategic approach. These are our focused strategies:

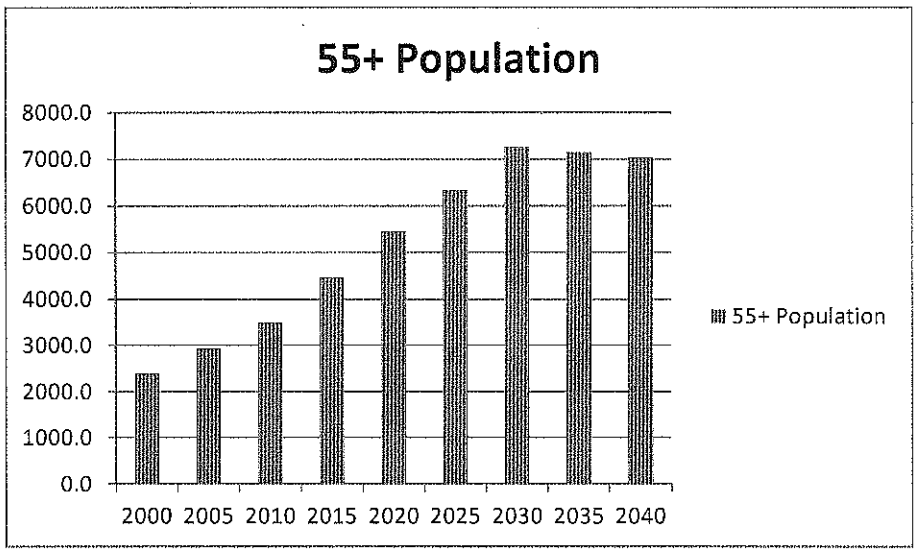
- Awareness, education, and advocacy for the needs of a growing senior population
- Support, planning, and advocacy for a new Senior Center, critical as the hub for a growing population
- Economic Development links to business and services for the rapidly growing demographic segment

All of these strategies are based on the recognition that the senior population in Colchester is projected to grow rapidly, that our service utilization is growing rapidly, and that our current Senior Center facility is not adequate to keep pace with the growth.

Growth

Our Senior Population is expected to reach about 40% of Colchester's population by 2030, with state projections peaking in 2035. This translates into having over 7,000 seniors in Colchester in need of services. It also means a dramatic shift in the demographic profile for those voting, and a louder voice for funding from a finite town budget.





Current demand supports this rapid growth, and is an indicator that we must recognize this trend now.

	2013	2014	% Change
Attendance/Participation	12,158	12,928	+6.3%
Number of Program Sessions	1,309	1,832	+40.0%
Meals on Site	2,458	2,588	+5.3%
Medical Transportation	2,215	2,516	+13.6%
Non-Medical Transportation	9,007	10,203	+13.3%
Information & Referrals	3,971	5,065	+27.5%

Strategic Steps:

1. Awareness, education, and advocacy for the needs of a growing senior population
    a. Create awareness within the various town Boards, and among the citizens of Colchester.
    b. The Commission will continue our efforts for mass media publication, and use River East "Letters to the Editor" as a vehicle
    c. We will take up discussion of having a "Facebook" page in 2015 as a way to extend our reach
2. Support, planning, and advocacy for a new Senior Center, critical as the hub for a growing population
    a. Support the acquisition of the existing Senior Center building as a way to stabilize our immediate future.
    b. Insure that the acquisition is part of a larger plan that is well communicated to the residents of Colchester
    c. Advocate for support to address the most critical barriers in the existing building for the short term, parking being one of the most critical.
    d. Work to better define the physical requirements for a new Senior Center that can be a foundation of basic needs. The Commission views this as a collaborative effort with the Director of Senior Services.
    e. The Commission is open to exploring any combination of public and private collaboration to meet our planning needs.
3. Economic Development linkages to business and services for the rapidly growing demographic segment
    a. The Commission plans to present to the Economic Development Commission in early 2015. The goal is to make them aware of the changing demographics and the potential we see for new businesses that support our senior population.
    b. The Commission will continue to partner with the Connecticut Commission on Aging to seek opportunities for development that may have a more broad regional impact.
    c. The Commission will continue to communicate with our State Representatives to advocate for resources that may serve our community.
    d. The Commission will advocate for specific services to fulfill the needs of the senior citizens of Colchester, and therefore represent the greatest opportunity. Affordable transportation, both medical and those that support keeping residents in their homes, is a high priority. Access to a supplier for durable medical goods is also a missing resource that represents opportunity.

Summary:

The Colchester Commission on Aging has adopted a more active role in our community. We believe it is vital to keep the needs of our aging population in the consciousness of our government and community, and to the extent we are able to do that we will have been successful. Aging is a natural blessing that is not constrained by race, religion, or political leanings. We will continue to advocate for our grandparents, parents, and ultimately ourselves to make Colchester a recognized senior friendly community.

Colchester Commission on Aging

Gary Siddell, Chair
Jean Stawicki, Vice Chair
Golder Liveant, Treasurer
Rob Gustafson, Member
Rose Levine, Member
Susan Choma, Alternate Member

Budget 2014-2015:

Note: The budget for Clerk is being moved out of the Director of Senior Services budget and should be considered as budget neutral. Therefore, we are seeking only $810 to supplement what we can accomplish through fund raising.

Commission on Aging Budget 2014-2015					
Town Clerk / Meetings	14 Meetings	$60	$ 840.00	12 Regular & 2 Special Meetings	
Lunch & Learn Programs	2 events	$ 240	$ 480.00	Assumes TVCCA lunch ($8 each/ 30 participants)	
Printing			$ 300.00	Assumes handouts, etc. for Lunch & Learn, Senior Resource Guide 2015 update	
Communication/Postage			$ 30.00		
			$ 1,650.00		