



**Town of Sherman**  
**Commission on Aging**  
**Monthly Meeting Minutes**  
**June 16, 2025**

Commissioners Present: Janet Wey (Acting Chair), Lynda Arnold, Keith Barton, Meredith Kroeger, Sheila McMahon, Jeanne McRoberts, Kim Thomson

Absent: Lynne Gomez (Social Services)

Also Present: Don Lowe (First Selectman), Suzette Berger (Senior Center), C. Aruza (Clerk), Merialis Lewis, Susan White

The meeting was called to order at 4:00 PM by Acting Chair, J. Wey.

**Motion made by:** J. McRoberts moved to approve the 5/19/2025 minutes with corrections.

**Seconded by:** M. Kroeger

**Vote For:** Unanimous

J. Wey welcomed new commissioner Keith Barton. He wrote a book, *'Retirement is for Sissies'* about 18 years ago. This will be a part of his discussion at the Senior Center on July 17<sup>th</sup>. K. Barton passed out a list to the other commissioners of activities and healthy habits for seniors.

**Senior Center/Social Services Report:**

**Senior Center Report**

S. Berger shared that the new driver has been trained and has started to drive clients with another employee in attendance to facilitate the transition. The current driver will retire on July 1st. The last two Fridays she has attended conferences. The first event was the annual Connecticut Association of Senior Center Personnel

(CASCP) conference. Last week she received a Focal Point Award from the state for the Senior Center's accomplishment in serving the senior community in Sherman with its transportation assistance and various programs.

S. Berger next explained that the Department of Transportation (DOT), as a consequence of receiving the new bus, has decided to perform an audit. The initial notification was sent to a town employee that was on medical leave as opposed to her at the Senior Center. Thus, they were not aware of the audit and there is only two weeks left to provide the requested information to DOT by the audit deadline. L. Gomez is assisting her with the audit process and paperwork.

S. Berger went on to share new program statistics. Compared to last year at this time they have experienced a 17% YoY increase in program participants. In addition, they have had 217 people utilize the senior center this year, with some utilizing it multiple times a week. This equates to over 6,400 uses of the center. The largest increase this year was a 30% increase in fitness class attendance (e.g., Tai Chi, Chair Yoga, Flexibility). The lunch program has also increased and is to capacity.

S. Berger thanked the commission for the program they sponsored last week with speaker Art Gottlieb ("Effective Communication Skills"). She shared that it came up in discussion at breakfast and engendered positive feedback and good conversation. Art Gottlieb has agreed to come back again for another two talks with the topics to be determined at a later date.

### **Social Services Report**

See Addendum for submitted written report.

### **Ongoing Business:**

#### **1) Building Committee Update**

J. Wey expressed concern that the commission no longer has a liaison on the Senior Center Building Committee. Per D. Lowe the committee has just set a new schedule and will meet every two weeks at town hall at 7 p.m. He also shared that he added two new committee members this week (Frank Barta & JodiAnn Eure). He can add more members if the commission would like to add a representative.

S. McMahon said she really hasn't heard a lot about the plans for the new senior center. Per D. Lowe there hasn't been a lot of public outreach yet about the proposed new senior center as they are not ready yet. He emphasized that the Town Meeting held on Saturday, June 14<sup>th</sup> was to secure funds for preparing the plans and items they need for public outreach. There will be a tremendous push with articles in the newspaper, information posted to the town web site, and public forums. He anticipates the first public forum will be in six weeks with a town referendum in early spring or winter of 2026. J. McRoberts inquired if outreach will all be initiated and handled by the Building Committee especially as the commission has no one on the committee at present. D. Lowe will come to the commission's meetings to report on building committee updates and will email the meeting schedule to J. Wey. K. Thomson offered to be the commission's liaison to the committee as did M. Kroeger.

D. Lowe provided additional information to the commission on the proposed new senior center's: site location; potential size and cost; private financial contributions; financing plan; parking area; and entrance. They are still making final decisions about where offices for Social Services and Park and Recreation will be located. If the decision is made to also make the it a community center it can take pressure off of Charter Hall which serves a variety of town and private functions. That decision will be made Wednesday evening. J. McRoberts asked about the construction manager. D. Lowe advised it will be Hawley Construction who will assist with final cost estimating and pre-construction planning.

D. Lowe updated the commission on an upcoming connectivity study. He has received a free grant from the Council of Governments for a connectivity study to determine the cost to connect different parts of the town via sidewalks. Completion of the study can lead to the ability to secure available grant funding to pay, for example, to connect from the Sherman Library all the way to the new senior center. Part of the initial grant also allows for a study of the traffic flow and will provide measures for traffic calming. He believes this can anchor the south end of the town. S. White asked if would be possible to connect Veteran's Field to the new senior center. D. Lowe said it is a goal but there are items to address.

## 2) Results of Town Meeting.

See above.

3) Discuss Representation on Building Committee.

See above.

**New Business:**

1) Invitation to New Candidates to Provide Brief Bio

Susan White lives on Leach Hollow and has an M.A. in Fine Arts. She worked for over 15 years with the organization Guiding Eyes for the Blind training guide dogs for the visually impaired and working as volunteer management and retention. She then moved on to the Peale Center for Christian living also working in volunteer management. She also worked for 15 years at Putnam Ridge. First as a certified nursing assistant (CAN) and then as a licensed nurse practitioner (LPN). She recently stepped away after two years of COVID. S. White said she speaks ‘senior’ and believes she might have talents/skills/perspective that might be helpful to the commission. She perceives that there are two senior populations in Sherman (active, still working seniors) and another population that needs more assistance and takes advantage of the senior center’s offerings.

Merialis Lewis has lived in Sherman for 32 years. She moved to Sherman from Manhattan. She trained as an interior designer and had her own firm and has worked as personal organizer. She has traveled extensively which has provided her with different experiences. M. Lewis also shared she has been on the Inland Wetlands Commission for several years and worked as stage manager at the Sherman Playhouse. She is also on the board of Merwinsville Hotel restoration project. M. Lewis believes in getting seniors active and engaged in life.

2) Vote on New Candidates

K. Barton **made a motion** to accept S. White as a commissioner to the Commission on Aging.

**Seconded by:** J. McRoberts

**Vote For:** 6 for, 1 abstain

J. McRoberts **made a motion** to accept Merialis Lewis as a commissioner to the Commission on Aging.

**Seconded by:** M. Kroeger

**Vote For:** 6 for, 1 abstain

3) Any New Business that Comes Before the COA

No new business at this time.

**Comments by Commissioners:**

None at this time.

**Adjournment:**

J. McRoberts moved to adjourn the meeting at 5:04 p.m.

**Seconded by:** L. Arnold

**Vote for:** Unanimous

Respectfully submitted by Christine Aruza  
Next meeting: July 21, 2025 @ 4:00 PM at Mallory Town Hall

## ADDENDUM – SOCIAL SERVICES REPORT

While attending the annual CLASS (Connecticut Local Administrators of Social Services) meeting last week, I learned that the Energy Assistance program is on the chopping block this year.

This program helps Sherman seniors on fixed incomes pay for their heating oil. The Trump Administration last month fired all the staff members running the federal program, called LIHEAP (Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program). The program is definitely being cut for the 2027 heating season, and the upcoming winter season is in doubt, according to State Senator Matt Lesser who spoke at the CLASS meeting.

Energy Assistance has paid about \$1,200 per household in direct payments to oil companies for heating oil to low-income seniors each winter.

Cuts and program changes are also proposed for the Medicare Savings Program, which provides low-income seniors support by paying their Part B Medicare Premium, which is \$185 per month.

SNAP (formerly known as food stamps) is also facing cuts. This is bad news for Sherman seniors on fixed incomes who rely on these 3 programs.

I attended a full day training in Rocky Hill for my role as Municipal Veterans Representative. I will report news to the Sherman Veterans Association. I am working with the Veterans Association on an evening meeting designed to draw new, young vets to the association, in addition to serving older veterans.

Sherman Social Services has arranged for nearly 20 students to attend summer camp at Sherman Park and Rec summer camp. The cost of summer camp is \$375 per student, with an additional \$270 for early drop off and late pick up. Sherman Cares, Sherman's own charitable organization, is funding summer camp for these students from low-income households.

Sherman social services is also arranging for Back-to-School kits for almost 30 Sherman students from low-income households. We are providing school supplies thru a program called "Edu-kit," which provides students with the exact school supplies teachers require for the coming year. This outreach is funded by the Salvation Army and United Way.

Sherman Social Services will be running a program on Mental Health First Aid and Hoarding Disorder in the coming months. We will also be doing a program on Narcan, or naloxone, the medication used to quickly reverse the effects of an opioid overdose. Details to follow.