

NEWTOWN COMMISSION ON AGING
Regular Meeting
Monday, March 21, 2022
Newtown Municipal Building, 3 Primrose Street, Newtown, CT 06470
Called to order at 4:00pm

THESE MINUTES ARE SUBJECT TO APPROVAL BY THE COMMISSION ON AGING

Present: Barbara Bloom, Claire Theunee, Xiao Han, Larry Passaro, Judit Destefano, Bill Darrin, LeReine Frampton

Present via Zoom: Anne Rothstein, Tricia Gogliettino

Absent: Joanne Albanesi, Lia Levitt

Also Present: Director of Human Services Natalie Jackson (via Zoom), John Boccuzzi and Mary Salley from Nunnawauk Meadows.

Public Comments – None

Minutes – B. Darrin moved to approve the minutes of the 2/28/22 meeting. B. Bloom seconded, all in favor.

Chair Report – Reviewed the results of the AARP Survey (attachment A). The grant application is due 3/23/22.

Vice Chair Report – No report

Director of Human Services – Reviewed her report (attachment B).

Treasurer's Report (attachment C)– L. Passaro reported that there is no change from last month.

First Selectman Dan Rosenthal – No report

OLD BUSINESS

Report on meal plan expenditures– N. Jackson reported that they have not used any funds from the COA gift fund yet.

NEW BUSINESS

Report on Transportation Survey – B. Bloom and J. Boccuzzi reviewed the 2021 Senior Transportation Survey (attachment D).

Member Comments – None

Having no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 4:55pm.

Respectfully Submitted,
Arlene Miles, Clerk

Attachments: Chair Report, Report from Director of Human Services, Treasurers Report and Transportation Survey results

Attachment A

Chair's Report

AARP Survey Results

10 individuals responded to the survey (including 7 COA members)

The results were entered into an Excel Spreadsheet and averaged.

Item	Average
Complete Patio at Senior Center	2.70
Tables/Benches at Fairfield Hills	4.00
Permanent Pickle Ball Court at Fairfield Hills	4.10
Tele-wellness (a pilot program with Danbury Visiting Nurse.)	4.30
Expand Dial-a-Ride by Hart to later in the evening	4.30
Extend CT bike trail (from Monroe) through Newtown	4.70
Outside fitness equipment around path at Fairfield Hills	4.70
Hire Part-Time webmaster to upgrade Newtown Senior website	5.70
(1=highest priority to 10=lowest priority)	

The highest priority was to complete the patio at the Senior Center. However, the town is planning to fund that.
The second highest priority was Tables/Benches followed closely by a Pickle Ball Court.



Attachment B

Department of Human Services

Supporting a high quality of life for the Newtown community through services, programs and information that promote mental, physical and social well-being.

Commission on Aging Report: March 21, 2022

Hello Members of the COA,

There are several important updates to share for Human Services in our financial assistance programs and happening at the Senior Center. Check it out.....

HUMAN SERVICES AID PROGRAMS

Renters Rebate:

The 2022 program opens April 1st. CT State law provides a reimbursement program for renters who are 65+ or totally disabled, and whose incomes do not exceed certain limits. Persons renting an apartment or room, or living in cooperative housing or a mobile home may be eligible for this program. Renters' rebates can be up to \$900 for married couples and \$700 for single persons. The renters' rebate amount is based on a graduated income scale and the amount of rent and utility payments. Residents can call Human Services for more information and to complete an application.

Senior Earth Day:

The Friends of Newtown Seniors, Chore Services, is organizing a senior earth day for residents in need of assistance cleaning up their property this spring. Volunteers will come together to spruce up the yards of seniors unable to do the labor. Human Services is working with FONS to help screen requests for need. Interested residents can contact the Senior Center.

Transportation Assistance:

Human Services has been able to assist several residents in need of transportation this FY. Funding has been made available through the DHS budget, as well as grant funding obtained by FONS. We are looking to expand our ability to subsidize transportation in the coming months. More to come on this.

Energy Assistance:

This program is winding down for the season with applications being accepted through the end of May 2022. Human Services has completed 172 applications to date.

SENIOR CENTER UPDATES:

Meal Program:

In March we brought the congregate meal program back in on Tuesdays and Thursdays. The cost of the meals to patrons is \$3 with the remaining cost subsidized by the Senior Center. We are on track for the grant funding through WCAAA to begin April 1 so meals will be covered by the grant and the patron contribution (remaining at \$3). It will be published that any member who may need financial assistance to participate in the meal program can reach out to me and assistance through the COA will be provided confidentially. The feedback on Whitsons as the new meal provider has been overwhelming positive. The meals are nutritious, very plentiful, and according to members are delicious.

March Celebrations:

In addition to all of our weekly and monthly programming being back in full effect we were able to host 2 larger celebrations in March. On Sunday, March 6th we partnered with the Community Center to host a Mardi Gras celebration complete with jambalaya, king cakes, and dancing. Then last week we held our Saint Patrick's Day Party where we were able to increase our capacity to 50 members. Attendees enjoyed a full Irish feast prepared by Whitsons, bingo, and music by Anita Siarkowski, the "Accordion Chameleon"! Planning for the Spring Fling in April in partnership with Parks & Recreation and the Community Center is underway.

New Programming:

We are thrilled to continue to grow the diversity of our programming. This month we are bringing trivia to the programming menu. In April will be previewing a new music program, offering reflexology, beginning a monthly walking tour of Fairfield Hills with history provided by a Senior Center member and former employee of Fairfield Hills Hospital, the men's breakfast in-house returns, and we are kicking off the return of day tours. We also have several new programs on the horizon for May—so stay tuned!

Respectfully submitted,

Natalie

Natalie Jackson, LCSW

Director, Newtown Human Services

Attachment C

COA/SENIOR SERVICES GIFT FUND

DATE	RECEIPTS/DISBURSEMENTS	C/D	C/R	FRANK KNOTTS TRUST FUND	BALANCE
7/1/21	Beginning Balance				39,338.65
7/26/2021	Qtrly Distribution- Knotts Trust- 200-16				
7/30/2021	Ck #45928- Anna Wiedemann-Reim for Gift Card for Zach Macey & Ice Cream	(121.38)		705.75	40,044.40
					39,923.02
8/11/2021	Donation for Suicide Prevention- Archdeacon Family Foundation		525.00		40,448.02
8/18/2021	Donation from J. Albanesi for flowers for Wiedemann event		200.00		40,648.02
9/2/2021	Ck #46532- Anna Wiedemann- Reim for thank you dinner for crafters	(279.49)			40,368.53
9/16/2021	Ck #46747-John Voket-Grandparent Sock Hop	(150.00)			40,218.53
9/22/2021	Bazaar -Donation 220-15		218.50		40,437.03
9/28/2021	Aug P-Card- Caraluzzi's- Flowers for Anna Wiedemann event	(200.00)			40,237.03
10/20/2021	Bazaar-Donation 220-18				
10/29/2021	Qtrly Distribution Knotts Trust- 200-91		200.00		40,437.03
10/31/2021	Sept- P-Card- Amazon- Speaker refreshments-L. Passaro	(29.12)		705.75	41,142.78
					41,113.66
11/4/2021	Ck #47332- Planters Choice- Red Maple Tree- for recognition for those who died from suicide	(567.00)			40,546.66
11/9/2021	Bazaar- Donation 220-19		190.00		40,736.66
11/24/2021	Bazaar- Donation 220-22		579.00		41,315.66
11/30/2021	Oct- P-Cards- The RD Store- Dishes for Senior Center	(676.62)			40,639.04
12/1/2021	Ck #47661- Anna Wiedemann- Reim for Bob Sharpe Plaque	(15.95)			40,623.09
12/16/2021	Donation-Bazaar 220-23		1,159.75		41,782.84
12/16/2021	Donation- Archdeacon Family Foundation		5,000.00		46,782.84
12/31/2021	Qtrly Distribution- End of Year - Knotts Fund			185.80	46,968.64
1/25/2022	Qtrly Distribution- Knotts Trust 200-172			767.00	47,735.64
2/10/2022	Ck #48513- Newtown Community Center- Senior Pottery Class*	(250.00)			47,485.64
2/18/2022	Jan P-Card- Frames for artwork for Senior Center	(1,095.06)			46,390.58
2/18/2022	Jan P-Card- Large Screen TV & wall mount	(2,260.96)			44,129.62
2/22/2022	Donation- Bazaar		652.50		44,782.12
* COA approved \$225.00 for Pottery class					(201.87)
Less unspent Approvals					(500.00)
Sr lunch balance					
Valentines Day lunch					
Available balance					\$ 44,080.25

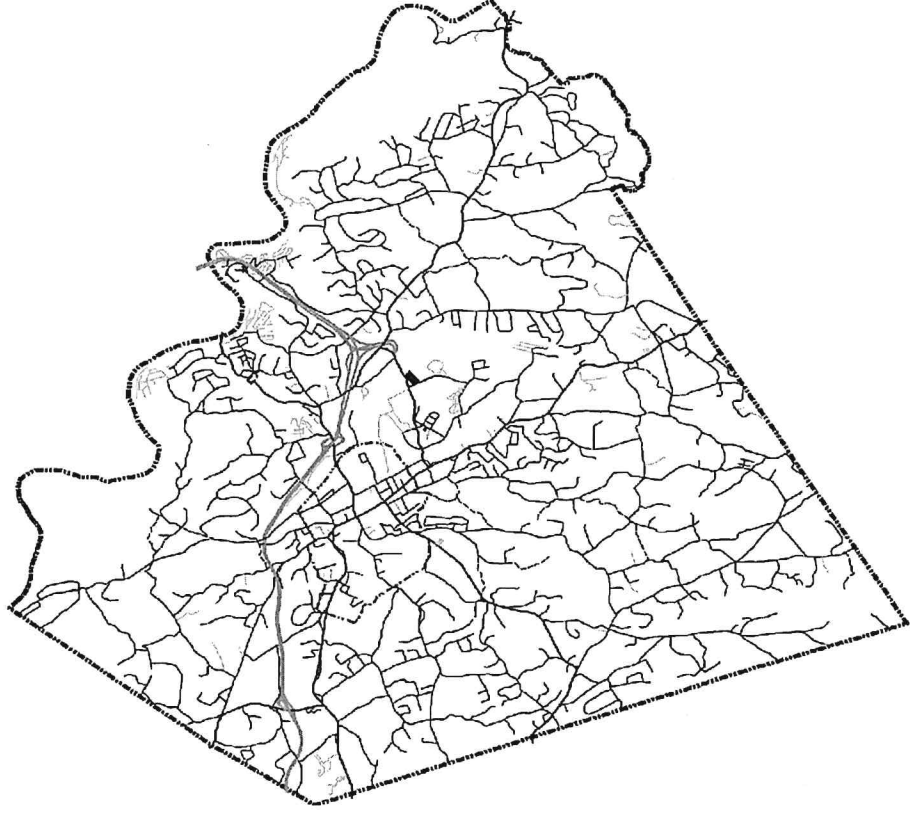
2021 Senior Transportation Survey

**Friends of Newtown Seniors (FONS)
Newtown Human Services
Newtown Commission of Aging (COA)**

February 8, 2022



Transportation in Newtown



- * Since the start of the Age Friendly Livable Community Initiative in 2016, Transportation has been identified as a problem area
- * 60 square miles with 250 miles of roads in Newtown
- * Life in Newtown is dependent on automobile transportation

Transportation in Newtown

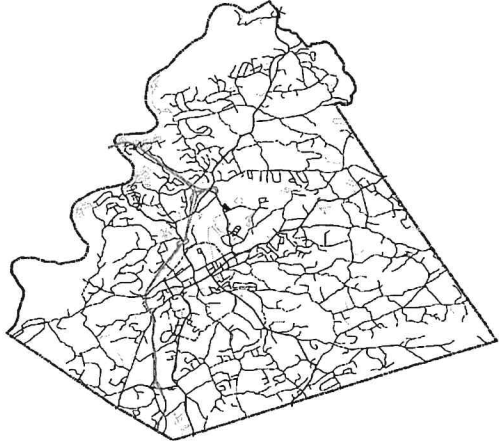


- * Senior Services budget funds HART (Housatonic Area Regional Transit) \$160,700 a year partially supporting HART service in Newtown.
- * Survey comments: Praise for HART drivers, but wishes for more flexibility and hours



SweetHART	Total	Seniors	Non-Seniors with Disabilities	Use of Lift
FY 2019	4,804	2,943	1,861	597
FY 2022 Trend	4,350	1,442	2,908	Not Available

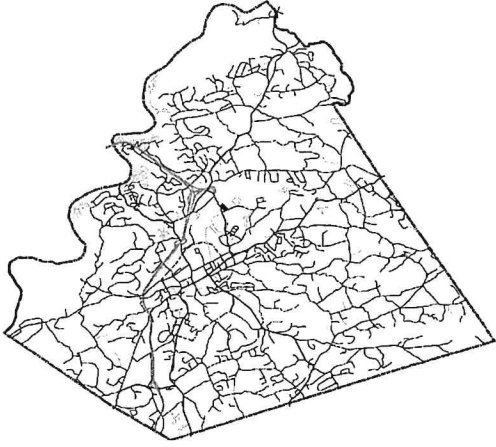
Transportation in Newtown



- * Many advertised providers of transportation, but no comprehensive vetted directory of services.
- * Education programs have been put on by Senior Center, FONS and Northwest Connecticut Regional Mobility Manager & Ombudswoman. Attendance has been very light.
- * Anecdotal stories about service availability, quality, and costs often do not match the facts provided by ⁴transportation providers.

Transportation in Newtown

What's Been Tried



- * Discussions with M-7 did not pan out
- * Discussions and study with Trans Loc for a Loop bus did not pan out
- * FISH no longer operating in Newtown
Human Services contacted all past FISH riders (150) to see if their transportation needs were being met.
- * Human Services and FONS have modest funding to provide transportation vouchers.
For whatever reason, only a handful of requests are received each month
- * Recent grant for town purchase of a wheelchair capable 10 passenger bus.
Use and funding for driver(s) and dispatch to be worked-out

FONS Transportation Committee

* FONS Transportation Committee

- * John Boccuzzi, Chair, President FONS
- * Richard A. Schreiner, CEO HARTransit
- * Natalie Jackson, Dir Human Services Newtown
- * Todd Fontanella, Senior Planner, WestCOG
- * April Chaplin, Northwest Connecticut Regional Mobility Manager & Ombudswoman, The Kennedy Center, Inc.
- * Bev Bennett, FONS Chore Services
- * Neil Chaudhary
- * Curt Symes COA & FONS
- * Barbara bloom, COA & FONS
- * Janice Garten, FONS
- * Ned Simpson, FONS

Survey Data Collection

- * Open from November 3rd to December 15th
- * Links sent on Senior Center Email, FONS email, and other
- * Article in The Bee
- * Paper copies available at the Senior Center
- * HART mailed surveys with stamped return envelope to Newtown users of Sweat HART service
- * Paper copies were taken to a meeting at Nunnewauk Meadows, low income housing for the elderly

Disclaimer

- * This is an amateur survey effort
 - * Questions could have been worded better
 - * Questions that should have been asked were not
- * 473 surveys received
- * 460 After removing duplicates and grossly incomplete surveys
- * 9,500 people over 55 living in Newtown. (CT Data 2021)
- * Response not statistically significant
- * Usable information nonetheless

Overview - Demographics

* Age of Responder

- * 55-64: 16.3%
- * 65-74: 31.3%
- * 75-84: 26.7%
- * 85-94: 9.1%
- * 95 and over: 0.8%

* Do You Use a Mobility Device?

- * Manual wheelchair 2.3%
- * Power wheelchair: 0.4%
- * Cane/Walker: 13.3%
- * None of the above: 70.1%

* Do You Drive

- * Yes: 84.1%
- * Age Under age 85 at least 90% drive themselves

* Drive at night

- * No/Depends: 52%

* Of those that do not drive:

- * 43% spouse drives
- * 57% Friend other family drive
- * 38% Use HART
(skewed by survey methods and Nunawauk?)
- * 17% Use Uber/Lyft
- * Home Aids drive some

Overall Satisfaction

Those who drive are satisfied with Newtown transportation

- * Satisfaction Overall
 - * 55% No Opinion thru Very Satisfied
 - * 24% Dissatisfied or Very Dissatisfied
- * Drivers
 - * **60%** No opinion thru Very Satisfied
 - * 22% Dissatisfied or Very Dissatisfied
- * Non-Drivers
 - * **26%** No Opinion thru Very Satisfied
 - * 37% Dissatisfied or Very Dissatisfied

From the Comments

- * Most frequent comment, paraphrased:
“I drive now and everything is fine, BUT it won’t be long until I cannot drive”
- * 30% chose full-fare ride services over HARTransit,
 - * Perhaps indicative of a general dissatisfaction with HART
 - * Comments: Praise for HART drivers, but wishes for more flexibility and hours
- * Responding to what town they want to travel to
 - * 44 towns were named
 - * New Haven was one often named. May relate to medical services there

(How) Would a Public Transportation Service be used in Newtown?

* Would Public transportation change your life?

- * All responses
 - * 54.7% life would improve
 - * 45.3% Nothing would change for me
- * Non Drivers
 - * 99.5% life would improve

* How often would you use?

- All Responders Non-Drivers
- * Occasionally: 33% 26%
- * Weekly: 31% **53%**
- * Daily: 5% 9%
- * Only in an emergency: 14% 3%

Designing a Service in Newtown

Price point

Not clear what respondents are telling us

- * Cost would have to be free or under \$5:

- * 25% Not a factor
- * 36% A consideration
- * 21% Critical factor for me

- * Cost could not exceed \$10 per trip:

- * 19% Not a factor
- * 35% A consideration
- * 28% Critical factor for me

- * Reasonable cost based on current market:

- * 11% Not a factor
- * 41% A consideration
- * 29% Critical factor for me

Designing a Service in Newtown

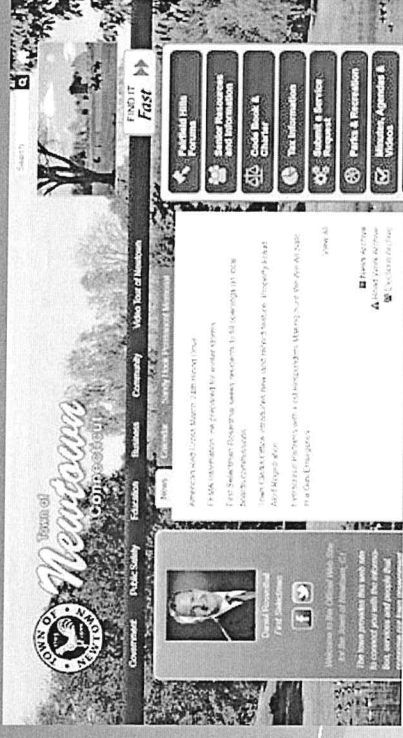
Other Considerations

- * Available assistance from the door of my house to the vehicle:
 - * 43% A consideration or Critical factor
 - * But only 16% indicated they use any mobility device.
Even less 3% use a wheelchair.
Likely the question was misunderstood
- * Asked in different ways, Medical Appointments and Shopping were the top two reasons for transportation services
- * Friends and entertainment much less could be that medical and shopping are so hard responders could not see to entertainment
- * Shopping delivery services are common now.

Designing a Service in Newtown On Demand

- * Same Day
- * Schedule via phone call to a person
- * For Medical appointments and Shopping
Not for entertainment – Quality of life

Newtown-CT.gov



- * Right side “Senior Resources and Information”
No links to information about transportation
- * Commission on Aging page
No links to information about transportation
- * Senior Center page
 - * Application for SweetHART – For Disabled not seniors
 - * Senior Resource Guide – Outdated & inaccurate
 - * SweetHART Schedule – Hours of operation graphic
 - * Transportation Resources – 1 page PDF current, incomplete
 - * Age Well CT links to Northwest Connecticut Regional Mobility
No information related to Newtown

Transportation in Newtown

Where Do We Go From Here?



1. Create a comprehensive, vetted inventory of Senior and Para transportation resources available to Newtown Residents
2. Provide the inventory information in a consistent easy to navigate manner on Newtown-CT.gov
3. Design and execute an outreach plan to get transportation resource information to all potential riders.
 - * Senior complexes
 - * C H Booth Library
 - * Senior Center
4. Establish a clearinghouse and administrative responsibilities for the transportation inventory
5. Address any feelings of social stigma, misconceptions and misinformation that exist