



WATERTOWN COMMISSION ON AGING REGULAR MEETING MINUTES

**WATERTOWN TOWN HALL
FIRST FLOOR CONFERENCE ROOM
61 ECHO LAKE ROAD, WATERTOWN, CT**

Thursday, August 20, 2026

I. The meeting was called to order at 6:30 PM by Melanie Flaherty, Chair

II. Roll Call

PRESENT: Melanie Flaherty, Chair
Debra Desena
Alan Mickel
Cynthia Blanchard
Sally Kuslis
Amy Quinnan
Andrea Corcoran
Tracy Dasilva

ABSENT: Wilbur Hughes, Vice Chair

OTHERS PRESENT: Michael Ganem, Director of Parks, Recreation, Senior, and
Social Services

III. Public Participation –

- Carol Lafferier commented on transportation and having to be persistent to obtain a ride from the FASC.
- Deb Manley commented on the calendar and “pop-up” trips.

IV. Correspondence –

- None

V. Approval of Minutes:

July 16, Regular Meeting

Motion by Sally Kuslis, seconded by Amy Quinnan, to approve the minutes of the June 16, 2026, meeting.

Correction: Wilbur Hughes is the Vice Chair, not Alan Mickel.

Motion passed with 7 yes votes and an abstention by Debra Desena

It was suggested that all correspondence be included in the meeting packet.

VI. Reports

A. Chairman – no report

B. Parks & Recreation Director

Michael Ganem:

- Written report is attached to the minutes

C. Senior Center Coordinator/Municipal Services

Laura Garay:

Provided a written report (attached to the packet)

Motion by Alan Mickel that statistics, available through MySeniorCenter.com, for programs at the FASC be presented to the COA each month. Second, by Amy Quinnan.

Michael Ganem, Director, suggested a point of order as this seems to conflict with the powers and duties of the COA and with the chain of command between the Director, the Town Manager, and Town Council.

Motion passed 4 to 3 with one abstention. Yes: Alan Mickel, Cynthia Blanchard, Sally Kuslis, Amy Quinnan. No: Melanie Flaherty, Debra Desena, Andrea Corcoran. Abstain: Tracy Dasilva

VII. Old Business- the commission discussed the updated mission of the Commission on Aging recommended by the subcommittee.

The mission of the Watertown Commission on Aging is to serve as an ongoing voice for Watertown's and Oakville's senior community by researching, identifying, and listening to their housing, economic, health, transportation, and recreational needs. And to provide recommendations to the Parks and Recreation Department and the Town Council.

Motion by Sally Kuslis, seconded by Cynthia Blanchard. Motion passed unanimously.

VIII. New Business – None

IX. Adjournment -

Motion: Alan Mickel, seconded by Cynthia Blanchard to adjourn the Regular Meeting at 7:44 P.M.

The motion passed unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,

Melanie Flaherty, Chair
Watertown Commission on Aging

Approved: _____
Susan King, Clerk

AGENDA

Date: 8-20-20

Number: VIC

Falls Ave Senior Center

July 2026 Monthly Activity Summary (July 1–31, 2026)

- (10) New FASC Members came on board between July 1- July 31, 2026.
- (11) Seniors enjoyed **Movie & Popcorn** for the showing of *1776: The Musical* on Wednesday July 1.
- (16) Seniors attended **Milkshake Monday** on Monday July 13.
- (5) Seniors participated in 25-minute sessions of **Reflexology** on Tuesday July 14.
- (11) Seniors attended a **Painting Class** led by Middle School Art Teacher Stephanie Lauro-Goetz who generously donated her time and talent on Wednesday July 15.
- (40) Seniors participated in a **Bus Trip featuring lunch at Bill's Seafood in Westbrook and a two-hour Cross Sound Lighthouse Cruise** on Friday July 17.
- (32) Seniors attended our **Sixth Annual Blueberry Bake-Off** on Wednesday July 22 which featured two new judges; Business Owner Gabi, owner of Gabi Ghouls by Hardcore Sweet Bakery as well as our Watertown Parks and Recreation Director, Michael Ganem. Our Town Manager, Mark Raimo, attended to support our talented bakers, judges, and senior tasters. This event continues to be one of our signature summer traditions!
- (14) Seniors attended a **Bus Trip** to the **Litchfield Hills** where they enjoyed lunch at **Patty's Restaurant in Litchfield** followed by a visit to the **Bantam Farmers Market** and **Poppy's Ice Cream in Morris** on Friday July 24.
- (68) Seniors attended our **Second Annual Luau Party** making it our largest event of the month and a festive conclusion to July's activities on Friday July 31.

Planned Activities – August 2026

- Zumba (Sponsored by Oak Street Health) 8/4/2026
- Bus Trip to the Pond House Café & Bushnell Park Carousel 8/7/2026
- Bus Trip to the Aqua Turf Club for Dinner and Entertainment 8/11/2026
- Reflexology 8/11/2026
- Bus Trip to the Nathan Hale Homestead & Bidwell Tavern 8/14/2026
- Milkshake Monday 8/17/2026
- Bus Trip to the Waterbury Senior Center for the Brass City Harvest Farmers Market 8/18/2026
- Blood Pressure Screenings (Sponsored by NCE Home Health Care) 8/18/2026
- Movie & Popcorn *featuring newly released, "Young Washington"* 8/21/2026
- Bus Trip to BARC's, Hidden Café for Lunch 8/24/2026
- Book Club 8/25/2026
- Bus Trip to Aldi's in Bristol 8/26/2026
- Picnic in the Park at Veterans Memorial Park 8/28/2026

To: The Commission on Aging
From: Michael Ganem, Director of Parks and Recreation
Date: August 20, 2026
Subject: Director's Report – August 2026 Updates

1. Transportation & Legal Agreements

Master Agreement & New Senior Bus Acquisition

- **State Vehicle Master Agreement:** We have received the official Master Agreement from the State Attorney General's Office regarding the acquisition of a new wheelchair-accessible senior bus. The document is currently on the Town Manager's desk awaiting final signature execution.

Housing Authority Collaboration & Operational Scope

- **Special Request Assessment:** The department recently evaluated a request from the Watertown Housing Authority to provide transport for residents on a mini-golf trip. To safeguard our primary operational capacity and maintain strict focus on our core mission and efficient service delivery for Watertown seniors, we have placed a pause on this specific request.
- **Precedent & Inter-Agency History:** When consulted by the Town Manager, neither Laura nor I have record or experience of this type of inter-agency transit service during our respective tenures. In discussions with Sashoy Redmond (Resident Service Coordinator for the Watertown Housing Authority), a past instance was noted where the center transported Housing Authority residents to a casino, though no precise timeline or documentation exists for when that accommodation was granted.
- **Strategic Vetting & Cost of Distractions:** Both Laura and I remain open to exploring future collaborative opportunities with Sashoy, but all new initiatives must be thoroughly vetted. Unplanned, immediate distractions impose severe operational costs—studies consistently show it takes over 20 minutes to regain deep focus after a disruption, driving up error rates and creating organizational whiplash. Responding hastily to ad-hoc requests directly degrades our team's ability to remain present and deliver our core daily services efficiently.

2. Falls Avenue Senior Center (FASC) Staff Recognition

- **Operational Commitment:** I want to formally recognize the exceptional work executed daily by our staff at the Falls Avenue Senior Center. Having worked closely with senior center operations throughout my career, I can attest firsthand to the high level of effort required to keep these facilities running smoothly.
- **Team Excellence:** Our team performs yeoman's work day in and day out. The high standard of service and reliable support provided to our senior community are only possible because of the dedication and enthusiasm our team brings to the facility every day.

Respectfully Submitted,

Michael Ganem

Director of Parks and Recreation Town of Watertown, CT