

**MINUTES OF THE TOWN OF CHESHIRE YOUTH AND HUMAN SERVICES COMMITTEE**  
**MEETING HELD WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 2, 2026 AT 5:00 P.M.,**  
**84 SOUTH MAIN ST, CHESHIRE, CT 06410**

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**YHSC Members and Liaisons Present:**

Phillip Belcher (YHSC Chairman)  
Susan Pappas (YHSC)  
Amy Russell (CDTC)  
Sally LaRusso (CDTC)  
Deborah Manke (Town Council Liaison)  
Marlena Soble (CDTC/Cheshire Food Drive)  
Abby Maldonado (WCTC)  
Dawn Cronin (YHSC)  
Michelle Piccerillo (Human Services)  
Alice Santello (Cheshire Senior Center)  
Anne Lee (Social Worker Intern: Senior Center)  
Elizabeth Mayne (Cheshire Parks and Recreation)  
Stefanie Theroux (Cheshire Senior Center)  
John Bajor (Minutes Clerk)

**1. CALL TO ORDER:**

**MOTION** by Sally LaRusso to call the meeting to order at 5:06 P.M.  
**SECONDED** by Amy Russell, with motion passing by those members present.

**2. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE/ROLL CALL/DETERMINATION OF QUORUM:**

The pledge was recited, roll was obtained by manual signature and a quorum was determined to be present.

**3. APPROVAL OF MINUTES:**

There were no corrections to the previous minutes.

**MOTION** by Sally LaRusso to approve the prior meeting minutes.  
**SECONDED** by Marlena Soble, with motion passing by those present.

**4. HUMAN SERVICES UPDATE AND COMMITTEE MEMBER SHARING:**

## **Human Services:**

The Yellow House is done for the summer in which many activities were held over the extended summer due to the school schedule. While it is nice to hold meetings there, the capacity is only 42 and there are issues with the HVAC system. Currently working on a grant proposal to expand possibilities to make more suitable as programs always max out.

Five interns were recruited this year to manage the case loads focusing on housing insecurities. For example, the enforcement of the Blight Ordinance is not always due to laziness but more often financial and health issues. Currently looking to hire a part-time case management position to work with social services (i.e. from hoarding to a clean house).

A booth will be present at the Fall Festival.

## **Cheshire Parks & Recreation:**

We are coming off a very successful summer camp season for our sports camps, Mixville Adventure Camp and Therapeutic Camp. The staff did an amazing job and we defeated burnout even though we ran our longest summer camp season to date this year.

Bartlem Beats concerts have been going well. We had some stressful days in the office dealing with questionable weather forecasts. We hope to see you this Friday night for the Orchard Hill Band concert at 7 P.M. The Public Works staff have been on the site collecting food donations for the Food Pantry each concert and to date have collected 686 pounds of food to donate.

Some upcoming special events include the Scarecrow Contest which we are accepting registrations for now and I hope that you all put together a scarecrow for this year. Last year was the first year we moved the whole contest to Bartlem Park and it was very well received. We are looking forward to even more scarecrows this year. Please register by October 1<sup>st</sup>. We will also be hosting the Mixville Halloween Bash in collaboration with CPFA Artsplace, BSA Troop 92 and the Cheshire Lions Club on Friday, October 23<sup>rd</sup>.

Fall programs are starting later this month and registration is going on now. This includes Youth Basketball for grades K-12 and the deadline to register for is October 1<sup>st</sup>.

## **Cheshire Senior Center:**

September is National Senior Center Month, a time to recognize the vital role Senior Centers play in enhancing the lives of older adults and strengthening communities. This year's theme, "Happier Birthday's Happen Here", encourages us to challenge outdated stereotypes about aging and elevate the positive contributions of older adults.

More than 10,000 Senior Centers across the United States connect older adults to wellness, creativity, purpose, and essential services. Senior Centers are dynamic community hubs that reflect the diversity and resilience of today's older population. National Senior Center Month is more than a celebration – it's also a time to challenge misperceptions. Senior Centers value the contributions of



older adults, support the importance of social connections and lifelong learning, and take an active role in promoting health, economic security, and social engagement. Communities thrive when everyone is supported across their lifespan.

We invite you to join us for the special community programs and activities that we have scheduled for you this month and help us celebrate National Senior Center Month! To register or inquire about any of these programs please call 203-272-8286 or email [lgravel@cheshirect.gov](mailto:lgravel@cheshirect.gov).

**1. Monthly Tech Class Series: Thursday, September 17<sup>th</sup> at 10 A.M.**

Presented by Michelle Puzzo of UR Community Cares. The first topic of this series will be **MyChart**. Has your doctor or healthcare provider ever mentioned MyChart? Come learn about this electronic health record portal that works both in a web browser and app. We'll go over how MyChart can help you keep all of your health information in one place, communicate with your providers and have a virtual visit. You'll also learn about the portal's privacy and security features. Registration is required.

**2. Medium – Patricia Griffin: Friday, September 18<sup>th</sup> from 6-8 P.M.**

Join us for a unique and enlightening evening as we welcome back Medium Patricia Griffin. Patricia has had this gift her entire life, but at first was afraid and unsure of what to do with it. She began reading professionally in 2014 and has since performed readings across the East Coast. She finds gratitude in helping to provide peace of mind, closure and validation for many guests. Patricia will connect you and loved ones. Cost is \$5 per person and registration is required.

**3. AARP Smart Driver Course: Wednesday, September 23<sup>rd</sup> from 9 A.M. to 1 P.M.**

AARP's driving course teaches evidence-based strategies to keep you safe behind the wheel. Pre-registration is required and payment will be taken the morning of the class. The fee is \$20 for AARP members and \$25 for non-members and there is limited seating.

**4. Flu Clinic: Friday, September 25<sup>th</sup> from 10 A.M. – 12 P.M.**

We have partnered with Chesprocott Health District to bring this flu clinic to the Cheshire Senior Center. Call or stop in today to schedule your appointment or inquire about insurance coverages. Please note that this clinic is by appointment only.

**5. Mitchell's Farmers Market: Wednesday, September 30<sup>th</sup> from 10:30 A.M. – 12:30 P.M.**

The Mobile Farmers Market is open to all and seasonal produce will be available. They will accept cash, credit cards, Venmo and Farmers Market Nutrition Program debit cards (Senior and WIC).

**6. Blood Drive: Thursday, October 1<sup>st</sup> from 12:30 P.M. – 6 P.M.**

Sign up today at [redcrossblood.org](http://redcrossblood.org) or call 1-800-RED CROSS (1-800-733-2767)

**7. Caregivers Support Group: Thursday, October 1<sup>st</sup> at 10 A.M.**

The complexity of caregiving can severely impact care recipients, caregivers and their families. This support group provides an opportunity to find and engage support throughout the caregiving journey. This open group is held the first Thursday of each month by Rani Bellemere of The Village at East Farms. Registration is requested.

**8. Medicare and You 101: Thursday, October 1<sup>st</sup> from 1-2:30 P.M.**

Learn the basics of Medicare from Anne Lee, MSW intern and Certified CHOICES Counselor for a clear, beginner and friendly introduction. Registration is requested.

**9. Senior Mental Health 101: Thursday, October 8<sup>th</sup> at 1:30 P.M.**

Join representatives from the National Alliance of Mental Illness (NAMI) for discussion on this important topic. Some topics that will be addressed are mental health and aging, combating isolation and loneliness, prescription misuse and opioids, self-care and coping as well as support groups. Registration is requested.

**Cheshire Housing Authority:** No Update

**Cheshire Junior Women:** No Update

**Cheshire Food Drive:**

The 53<sup>rd</sup> Annual Food Drive will be held November 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> on the Town Green ([www.CheshireFoodDrive.org](http://www.CheshireFoodDrive.org)). Last year raised \$50,000 as many more residents are using food vouchers. Both food and cash donations will be accepted.

**Western CT Coalition:**

September is National Suicide Prevention Month. There are three numbers that are critical for help and support:

- 1) 911: Emergencies
- 2) 988: Suicide and Crisis Lifeline
- 3) 211: Everything Else



**Help is 3 Numbers Away**

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| <p><b>911</b></p> <p><b>Emergencies</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Medical</li> <li>• Fire</li> <li>• Crime</li> <li>• Abduction</li> <li>• Domestic Violence</li> <li>• Impaired Driving</li> <li>• Suspicious Activities</li> </ul> | <p><b>988</b></p> <p><b>Suicide and Crisis Lifeline</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Thoughts of suicide</li> <li>• Mental health crisis</li> <li>• Substance use crisis</li> <li>• Emotional distress</li> </ul> | <p><b>211</b></p> <p><b>Everything Else</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Food</li> <li>• Housing</li> <li>• Utility Assistance</li> <li>• Healthcare Services</li> <li>• Transportation</li> <li>• Legal Services</li> <li>• Homelessness</li> <li>• Counseling and Support Group</li> </ul> |
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Western CT Coalition [wctcoalition.org](http://wctcoalition.org) CONNECTICUT Mental Health & Addiction Services

**La ayuda está a 3 números de distancia**

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| <p><b>911</b></p> <p><b>Emergencias</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Médico</li> <li>• Incendio</li> <li>• Crimen</li> <li>• Secuestro</li> <li>• Violencia doméstica</li> <li>• Conducción bajo los efectos</li> <li>• Actividades sospechosas</li> </ul> | <p><b>988</b></p> <p><b>Línea de Prevención del Suicidio y Crisis</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pensamientos suicidas</li> <li>• Crisis de salud mental</li> <li>• Crisis por consumo de sustancias</li> <li>• Angustia emocional</li> </ul> | <p><b>211</b></p> <p><b>Todo lo demás</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Alimentación</li> <li>• Vivienda</li> <li>• Asistencia para servicios públicos</li> <li>• Servicios de atención médica</li> <li>• Transporte</li> <li>• Servicios legales</li> <li>• Personas sin hogar</li> <li>• Consejería</li> <li>• Grupo de apoyo</li> </ul> |
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Western CT Coalition [wctcoalition.org](http://wctcoalition.org) CONNECTICUT Mental Health & Addiction Services

There is an opportunity through a survey to ensure adult community members experiences and priorities are reflected in WCTC's work. The survey will close October 1<sup>st</sup> and a minimum of 800 responses are desired. The survey is anonymous and should take approximately 14 minutes.

## 5. THIRD SPACES AS PREVENTION ENVIRONMENTS:

The goal of Third Spaces is to provide safe, protective areas for youths that are substance free. Explore how community spaces outside of home and school can strengthen protective factors, foster belonging and positive youth development, and support substance misuse prevention and mental health and wellness by creating environments where young people feel connected, valued and empowered to make healthy choices (see attachment).

## 6. ADJOURNMENT

**MOTION** by Marlena Soble to adjourn the meeting at 6:30 P.M.

**SECONDED** by Sally LaRusso with motion passing unanimously by those present.

Attest:

  
John Bajor

# YOUR VOICE WILL HELP SHAPE WHAT HAPPENS NEXT.

Survey responses help regional and community organizations better understand adult health trends, community strengths, emerging issues and prevention needs in western CT. Survey respondents should be **18 and older**.

**SCAN TO TAKE  
HERE SURVEY**



Responses are **anonymous** and you can skip any question you don't want to answer.

The survey should take about **14 minutes**. We know this is a meaningful amount of your time, and we appreciate you considering it.

This is an opportunity to ensure community members' experiences and priorities are reflected in WCTC's work. Email [admin@wctcoalition.org](mailto:admin@wctcoalition.org) with questions or concerns.



Survey will close October 1, 2026

This project was made possible with funding from multiple contracts with the CT Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services.





# THIRD SPACES:

## Where Does Community Happen?



Strong communities grow in spaces where people connect.

**Let's strengthen the spaces that bring us together.**

### THE BIG IDEA

A **Third Space** is a place outside of home and work/school where people can regularly gather, connect, relax, and build relationships.



**Examples:** libraries • parks • coffee shops • community centers • playgrounds • restaurants • barbershops • bookstores • recreation areas • community events

*It's not just the space that matters—it's what happens there.*

### 1 ANCHOR



Start with what you know.

Think, pair, and share.

Reflect on your own experiences.



Think of a space you enjoy going even when you don't have a specific reason to be there.

What makes you want to return?

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Where do people in our community naturally connect with one another?

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### 2 ADD



Learn the key ideas.

A third space isn't really about the building. It's about the relationships and interactions that happen there.

#### WHAT MAKES A "THIRD SPACE"?



**Neutral Ground**

People can come and go freely.



**Leveler**

People feel equal regardless of age, job, status, etc.



**Conversation**

People have opportunities to talk and connect.



**Accessible & Accommodating**

It is easy, affordable, and comfortable to use.



**Regulars**

People return regularly and become familiar faces.



**Low Profile**

It feels informal, comfortable, and not intimidating.



**Playful Mood**

People can relax, laugh, and have fun.



**Home Away from Home**

People feel comfortable, welcome, and like they belong.

### 3 APPLY



Work in your group.

Choose one community space and evaluate it. Identify who is missing and one idea to make it stronger.

Our group chose this space:



**What is working well?**

Which Third Space qualities does it already have?

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**Who is missing?**

Who might not feel comfortable, welcome, or included here?

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**What could make it better?**

What is ONE small change, activity, partnership, or idea that could make this a stronger space for connection and belonging?

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### 4 AWAY



Take one idea with you. Write one space and one small action to move forward.



One third space our coalition should pay more attention to is:

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One thing we could explore doing is:

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**Remember:** We don't always have to create a new program. Sometimes prevention starts by strengthening the spaces where people already gather.

