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New Canaan – Following a recent meeting to review and evaluate the findings of three decades worth of town studies, reports and recommendations, the New Canaan Eldercare Council has unanimously advocated the development of a New Canaan-based assisted living/Life Care Community, often referred to as a Continuing Care Retirement Community (CCRC).

The Council has expressed its support of Waveny Care Network, New Canaan's recognized source for eldercare resources, in moving forward with this endeavor. The construction of a not-for-profit CCRC would effectively fill the long-observed missing piece in a seamless continuum of care within New Canaan.

“Time and time again, our community has emphasized and delivered upon the importance of providing necessary resources, services and programs for New Canaan's seniors,” said Penny Young, Chairman of the New Canaan Elder Care Council. “However, it has yet to satisfy the single-greatest long-identified need put forth for more than 30 years – namely, the development of a CCRC. As leaders and key providers of services to our community's older adults, we are in a unique position to comment on the needs of New Canaan's aged population through experience. I can say confidently at this point in time, the need for a CCRC/assisted living facility in our town is more evident than ever.”

The Elder Care Council is a network group composed of the Presidents of the Boards of the primary providers of services to the town's older adult population. It includes: Getabout Van; Health and Human Services; Interfaith Council; Meals on Wheels; Nursing & Home Care; Schoolhouse Apartments; Senior Center at Lapham Community Center; Staying Put in New Canaan; Waveny Care Network; and several members at large.

Upon its 1994 formation, the Council's mission was to advocate for six specific community issues: Establish a permanent Elder Care Council; expand the function of the Town's Department of Social Services; establish a central point for Information and Referral to services; expand the Senior Center program at Lapham Community Center; expand the Getabout transportation system; and establish an Assisted Living Facility. Over the past 15 years, the first five areas have been successfully undertaken and developed to serve the community effectively. The only focus to remain unfulfilled concerns the establishment of adequate assisted living senior housing. First Selectman Jeb Walker addressed the issue as part of his election campaign and has lent his encouragement of Waveny Care Network's development of the concept, perhaps in a public/private partnership.

Steps toward a fully-integrated continuum of care have been made since the 1970's. Key efforts designed to provide eldercare resources include the creation of Waveny Care Center and The Village at Waveny Care Center, the development and transition of New Canaan Inn, the establishment of the School House Apartments, the enhancement of the town Human Services Department, the expansion of the Senior Center program at Lapham Community Center, and the continued availability of the Getabout transportation program.

However, considerable voids in services – specifically housing to accommodate the increasingly large sector of New Canaan's aging adults and couples – have prompted the departure of numerous New Canaan residents to neighboring town CCRC communities including Meadow Ridge of Redding and Edgehill of Stamford.

Young contends that the success and momentum of the Staying Put in New Canaan organization (SPNC) in recent years is highly noteworthy, as it represents the community's push to preserve its generational blend. "In the absence of adequate supportive senior housing in New Canaan, it underscores the desires of our elders to remain in their community," said Young. "The Elder Care Council sees the development of an assisted living facility a perfect complement to the Staying Put effort. Through it, our community will be better able to serve a growing aged population and enable New Canaan seniors to 'stay put' within their beloved hometown no matter their personal care needs or preferences."

Many locations for such a project have been evaluated over the years, beginning with the LifeSpan initiative in 1989 (which recommended a true public/private partnership and a prospective location on the west side of Lapham Road) and continuing through Waveny Care Network's more recent efforts at Windsome Farms and the St. Mark's property.

"Many projects take on a life of their own and develop in several directions, often returning to an original proposal," said Young. "The LifeSpan proposal was in many ways far ahead of its time and foretelling. The findings of numerous town and services studies conducted since then all seem to underscore the desirability of the west side of Lapham Road location. We respect Waveny Care Network's diligence in studying location options and understand they are open to the Lapham Road site as it offers numerous benefits to the nature of a CCRC: in-town location; accessibility to the amenities of Waveny Park's cultural, recreational and educational opportunities; and close proximity to the healthcare facilities of Waveny Care Network's main Farm Road campus."

"Achieving a CCRC to enable New Canaan residents to age in place is a goal Waveny is very passionate about, through its mission and commitment to the community," said Harry Rein, Chairman of the Board of Directors of Waveny Care Network. "Our not-for-profit organization has both depth and breadth of experience in championing state-of-the-art eldercare resources and residences, and developing a full CCRC is the natural next-step and progression in serving our community's growing aged population. We look forward to working closely with the community as we develop this concept."