

DEPARTMENT OF ELDER AFFAIRS

You need a ride to your dentist? What day? Yes we can take you grocery shopping. Looks like you need to have a consultation with one of our lawyers. You need help with Food Stamps? I will connect you with Outreach, you need your meals delivered, here is the number to call, yes we can loan you a shower chair.... and the phone calls keeps coming in. Just a few months ago before the world we all knew, changed, if one walked through the front door of the Department of Elder Affairs, these are the sights and sounds they would experience--the parking lot overflowing, hallways busy with people and the phones ringing constantly. Happy times!

The Department of Elder Affairs, as a branch of the Town of Braintree, is dedicated to serving the older adults who reside in the town. The mission of the Department is to provide information, programs and services to ensure that the older adults can live a happy, healthy and an independent life.

One of the most important services we offer is transportation. Elders who live alone and are unable to drive could not maintain a healthy and an independent life without this service. Our vans take people grocery shopping, to medical appointments, on occasion small errands and sometimes a group outing for dinner. The Department has 3 vans, two are wheel chair accessible and hopefully another new van is on its way. All the vans have been purchased through grant funding. The salary of a full time driver, gasoline and maintenance costs are provided by the town. The rest of the drivers are volunteers or are paid through grant money. Currently, maintaining social distancing and protection, we are still offering our transportation services to those who need it and our drivers are helping to deliver medical equipment as needed.

There are many older adults who are frail, isolated and sometimes very lonely. Their frailty often becomes a hindrance from getting information about services and resources they are entitled to. Our Outreach Program regularly assists these older adults to avail themselves of services that can bring them some relief in their daily lives. For elders who are home bound, staff will visit their homes. Outreach has one full time Coordinator paid by the town and one part time staff paid through a state grant. We also have a Friendly Visitor who visits elders who are extremely lonely. This position is supported through a Federal and a State grant. Currently they are keeping in touch with everyone who they feel are vulnerable and are in need of essentials. Our Activities and Volunteers Coordinator regularly coordinates with Outreach staff and delivers, food, masks and paper products to whoever needs it. We are also trying to spread some cheer by delivering handmade cards and spring baskets to our elders.

As we are all aware, the number of older adults is increasing steadily and all Senior Centers are striving to rise to the occasion. There is a now a generation gap between the older adults we serve. As they all look to Elder Affairs for providing them with programs and activities, we try to make it age appropriate. Different activities, programs, educational presentations, movies,

support groups, trips, legal consultation, tax aid, health counselling, etc. keep the Department bustling throughout the week.

As mentioned earlier, our extremely busy front desk is our front line. Almost all calls come through the front desk. Calls diverted, questions answered and various appointments are made and everything is entered into our database called "My Senior Center" used by almost all Senior Centers. There is one full time Services Coordinator at the front desk paid partially by the Town and partly through grant funding, one grant funded part time Receptionist and the rest are afternoon Volunteers who help us staff this very busy desk. Our Volunteers are invaluable. The vast number of programs we offer could never be handled by staff alone, so my favorite slogan is "our volunteers complete us."

Elder Affairs also coordinates the Senior Municipal Tax Work Off program. These seniors work in various town departments in exchange for a reduction in taxes owed.

Last Fiscal Year, the Department of Elder Affairs served more than 1,600 individuals. When duplicated, our statistics indicate these individuals have received our services more than 22,000 times.

Preparing the budget for FY 2021 was a challenge since we have a small budget, the majority of which is salary and contractual obligations. In order to reduce the budget for FY2021, we shifted part of the Services Coordinator salary to be paid through the state grant. We also reduced the Social Activities, Office Supplies, Copier Toner, and Printing Forms from Administration line Items; Vehicle Repair and Gasoline Costs from our Equipment Maintenance line items; and Natural Gas and Building Repairs from our Building Maintenance line items.

Questions from Ways & Means

- What additional expenses do we anticipate, in terms of cleaning and cleaning supplies, once the Senior Center reopens?

Our building is maintained through the Town's Facilities Department, including staffing the Center with a full time custodian. A thorough cleaning was performed after we closed to the public and we are working with Facilities to make sure that all of our custodial needs will continue to be met when we reopen. There is currently a supply of sanitizing spray and wipes available for use at the Center and we do not anticipate any costs beyond those budgeted.

- Is the State grant that will be supporting part of the Service Coordinator's salary guaranteed?

While the grant is not guaranteed, it is unlikely that all of the funding will be eliminated in FY21. We have worked closely with our representatives to ensure funding for our program and have been in contact with them regarding FY21. The money we receive is Federal grant money that flows through the state and is referred to as the "Formula Grant." The amount received is based on the number of seniors we have (as reported in the 2010 Census) and is currently funded at \$12 per senior. With the upcoming census, we are expecting the number of seniors in our community to increase, which could balance out any reduction in the per person value of the funding.

- Are we incurring any savings now, as a result of not using the building, that we can carry forward into FY 21?

Yes, we have incurred savings in various areas including Administrative Salaries (due to partial funding by the grant), office supplies, copier/toner, social activities, outside motor vehicle repairs, gasoline, building repairs, telephone and natural gas. A total of \$10,000 will be transferred to support the Town's final supplemental budget request for FY20.

- Mileage (54101-5711) – what does this cover?

In addition to grant funding, this line supports travel to/from meetings, outreach visits and deliveries to residents.