

500 HUMAN SERVICES

- **541 COUNCIL ON AGING**
- **543 VETERAN'S SERVICES**

HUMAN SERVICES

PROGRAM SUMMARY: Human Services (budget code 500)

COMMENTS:

The **Human Service** Program accounts for those services which assist Montague elders, veterans and their families. Sub-Programs which operate under this program include the Montague **Council on Aging** and the **Veteran's Service Program**. The Montague **Council on Aging** provides a wide array of services to elders from the towns of Montague and Gill at the Gill-Montague Senior Center. These include referral, outreach, nutrition and health services; operation of a senior center and meals program; and through the provision of health education, and recreation programs and services designed to enhance the quality of life of seniors. The **Veterans Services** division provides qualified veterans with assistance available under various state and federal programs.

Expenditure Profile

Requested spending on the Human Services Budget is \$202,659 or 2.5% of Total General Fund Operating expenses. This represents a \$21,021 or 11.57% increase over FY 2014. The biggest increase is in the Veterans Services Account.

Significant Changes

The primary reason for the increase in the Human Services Program costs is the rising expense of Veteran's Benefits which would grow by \$20,000 or 13.1%. This is due to the growing caseload (currently 25) for veteran's assistance and veterans benefit attributable to the economic slump. Surprisingly the projected impact of veterans returning home from the Iraq and Afghanistan conflicts has not as yet hit the budget. Most of the caseload is comprised of Vietnam-era veterans. It should be pointed out that the Commonwealth reimburses the Town on its "Cherry Sheet" for 75% of all costs paid out.

Highlights of Goals and Objectives

The primary objective of the Council on Aging in the next year will be the evaluation of space needs for the Senior Center. The Town currently leases the space that it uses for the Senior Center; and that lease expires in March, 2016. Over the next year the COA and other departments will use Community Development Block Grant funds to conduct a space needs and feasibility study. This study will include an evaluation of the adequacy of the current space and the possible development of an alternative space for

the Senior Center. The current Senior Center space has many problems including a lack of parking, a kitchen that is not handicap accessible and a program/meal space that is very small.

Accomplishments (last 5 years)

- The Veteran's Services Division continues to provide the highest possible level of benefits to veterans available from the State and Federal governments. Although the Federal Veterans Administration no longer provides data that tracks the level of federal assistance provided to Montague veterans, the Veterans Agent reported that this activity has increased significantly in recent years. Much of this is attributable to the successful outreach and education programs operated by the Veteran's District.
- The Council on Aging is proud to report that it has been able to expand the operating hours of the Senior Center by an hour each day of operating. This has enabled the Senior Center to expand its afternoon program and add a weekly wellness class on Mondays. Credit is due to the COA Director for her effective use of volunteer staff who play a key role in the operation of programs.

1. Program Description – Council on Aging (541)

The stated mission of the Council on Aging is to provide referral, outreach, nutrition and health services in cooperation with other town departments and area agencies; to set policy for the operation of the senior center; to enhance the quality of life for seniors in the community by providing health education, and recreation programs and activities.” Put simply, the Council’s charge is to connect individuals to resources in order to maintain or improve quality of life for the community’s seniors. The Council serves a broad spectrum of seniors from those who are in extreme need to those who simply attend programs or classes at the Senior Center. Specifically, the Council on Aging’s services fall into the following categories

- Provision of information, referral, nutrition and health services
- Operational management of the Gill Montague Senior Center
- Provision of physical space, furnishings, and equipment for congregate meals provided by Franklin County Home Care
- Counsel to elders in accessing services including but not limited to legal assistance, food stamps, fuel assistance, tax preparation, home repair, elder abuse, access to transportation, home delivered meals and housing applications.
- Administration (adherence, budgeting, and reporting) to the requirements of state grants
- Transmission of information relevant to seniors by newsletter, press release, and local media outlets.
- Identification of unmet needs in the community’s senior population

The Council on Aging occupies office space at the Gill Montague Senior Center and the office hours are 10:00 am to 2:00 pm Monday through Thursday. There are 12 appointed and unpaid Council on Aging members: 7 representing Montague and 5 representing Gill. The Council meets monthly September through June on the first Thursday of the month and the meetings are open to the public.

2. Budget Statement

Pursuant to instructions, the Council on Aging is submitting a level services budget for FY 2015. This budget includes line items identical to those in the FY 2014 budget and reflects wage and salary numbers provided by the Town Accountant and a projected energy related cost increase of 5%.

As in the past, the Town of Gill reimburses the Town of Montague for 20% of the budgeted wage and salary line item. The Council on Aging Director is the only paid staff and holds a non-benefit 17 hour per week position. The Town of Gill’s reimbursement is not reflected in the submitted budget.

The Massachusetts Executive Office of Elder Affairs (EOEA) provides formula grant money to all but two of the towns in the Commonwealth based on a per senior allocation with small towns receiving a specified minimum allocation. The number of seniors is based on the most recent (2010) census and counts all citizens who are 60 or older. The census indicates the Montague has 1921 seniors and Gill has 343. In FY 2014, the town of Montague received \$15,368 based on \$8.00 per senior and the town of Gill received the \$4,000 minimum allocation. This money pays primarily for programming, dues (Massachusetts Council on Aging and National Institute for Senior Centers), training, volunteer recognition, and newsletter printing and mailing. The allocation amount per senior is determined by legislative act and is customarily announced in spring of the previous fiscal year.

The Town of Gill pays for the Senior Center telephone and internet service, specific programming which exceeds the scope of the EOEA grant, and 20% of the COA director's salary. The Town of Montague funds the remaining Senior Center expenses and the balance of the Council on Aging director's salary.

The Council on Aging is not requesting additional funding beyond the mandated salary adjustments and the directed 5% increase in utilities. The Council has been successful at keeping expenses modest and expects to continue to do so. This year the Council finds itself in a unique position of looking toward the future. Community Development Block Grant funds have been made available to assess the existing Senior Center and potential sites for a new senior center. Until the completion of this study the Council will not request funds for improvement to the existing senior center or capital acquisition. The Senior Center building is owned by and leased from PowerTown Limited Partnership Halkeen Management. All repair and maintenance expenses are the responsibility of the Town of Montague.

3. Objectives

- The Council on Aging will continue to provide the same level of services as those provided in FY 2014.
- Additionally, the Council will participate in a community wide and professionally directed study of our current senior center and the need for the renovation or replacement of that facility. Part of this examination will be the identification of appropriate and additional services which will be required to address the growth of our community's senior population and the new cultural and generational needs such a population will express.
- The council will work with the Executive Office of Elder Affairs and the Massachusetts Council on Aging to identify best practices in senior center management to enhance our current operation while maintaining an eye toward future needs.

Looking toward the future, the Council on Aging will play a larger role in the community as our population ages. Better facilities and more services will be required to bring necessary resources to a growing group of seniors. This age cohort comprising those individuals born between 1946 and 1964 (commonly known as "baby boomers") will want different educational, cultural, and social programming and will expand the level of services required to meet their needs within the community.

4. Major Accomplishments FY 2014

- Expansion of Senior Center operating hours from Monday through Friday 9:00 am to 2:00 pm to Monday through Friday 9:00 am to 3:00 pm with an additional Monday program schedule to 4:00 pm. This expansion of hours has occurred at minimal cost (additional utilities only) and has allowed for the growth of existing afternoon programming and the addition of a weekly wellness class on Mondays. Because the Senior Center has only one activities room and is staffed by volunteers assisted by the Council on Aging Director, program expansion is difficult.
- Benefits Counseling is now more available through the senior center as the Council on Aging Director has participated in the Volunteer Benefits Counselor program at Franklin County Home Care and received additional training in fuel assistance application and recertification processes.
- SNAP (food stamp) application assistance is now available at the senior center monthly in cooperation with the Western Mass Food Bank.
- The Senior Center has provided additional fitness classes and programs including chair yoga, balance enhancement, and monthly music programs. A beginner's Hatha Yoga program will begin in the spring of 2004
- Collaboration with the Montague Public Libraries Director to apply for a Community Innovation Challenge Grant from the Massachusetts Office for Administration and Finance for computer equipment and instruction to increase elder computer literacy and access. This is a need which is becoming increasingly significant as services to which seniors need access are moving to on-line platforms or geographically less accessible locations. (e.g. regional Social Security office)
- Created volunteer opportunities for youth from Turners Falls High School and The Third Place at the Senior Center and the Brown Bag Program which distributes monthly food packages to low income seniors

5. Performance Indicators

	FY 13	Fy 14 projected	Fy 15 projected

Unique Seniors Served	513	520	600
Service Units	8114	8300	8500
Non Seniors Served *	60	60	60
Benefits Counseling Clients	38	40	40
Tax Preparation Clients **	48	60	72
Referrals and Information	108	120	120
Musical Cultural Programs	2	8	12
Food Distribution and SNAP Application Events	12	12	12
Fitness / Wellness Classes	168	220	220
Educational Programs Health & Safety	11	9*	9
Educational Programs Legal / Financial	1	3	2
Monthly Social Groups	14	14	18

* this includes requests for services, referrals, or interventions on behalf of community seniors

** year to year variance reflects availability of AARP Tax Aide volunteers

The Council on Aging continues to be a resource for Montague and Gill seniors. The Council provides information relevant to all age related needs from referrals to housekeepers and lawn care providers to emergency referrals to the county elder abuse agency. Seniors contact the Council on Aging when they need fuel, food, and care at home. Individuals from out of the area contact the Council on Aging when they need

resources for their elder Montague family members. Equally important, though less acute, is the seniors' needs for involvement and social interaction. The Senior Center provides opportunities to participate in programs, to take day trips, to exercise, to play cards, to share creativity, to dine together, and to just drop in for a cup of coffee and a conversation. The benefit the community accrues is enormous. 23.4% of the population of Montague is 60 or over and 75% of them are low to moderate income. Service to this population benefits the entire community.

General Category: Human Services

Department **COUNCIL ON AGING**

Dept # 541

EXPENDITURES		Actual 2013	Appropriated 2014	Expended thru 12/31/2013	FY15 Level Services Request	FY15 Fin Comm Recommend	FY15 Town Administrator Budget
5113	Council on Aging Director	16,943	17,278	8,300.08	17,631		17,631
5194	Sick Leave Buy Back						
	TOTAL PERSONAL SERVICES	16,943	17,278	8,300	17,631	-	17,631
5211	Electricity	3,509	3,200	1,533.49	3,360		3,360
5242	Buildings R & M	546	2,000	1,175.00	2,000		2,000
5251	Other Equipment R & M	149	500		500		500
5279	Custodial Services (16 hrs/wk)	3,920	4,160	1,610.00	4,368		4,368
5314	Seminars						
5320	Natural Gas	1,669	2,000	340.30	2,100		2,100
5344	Postage	273			200		200
5586	Miscellaneous			313.38			
5710	Travel	205					
	TOTAL EXPENSES	10,270	11,860	4,972.17	12,528	-	12,528
	TOTAL COUNCIL ON AGING	27,213	29,138	13,272.25	30,159		30,159

Staffing - Base Wages excluding Overtime/Shift/Holiday

Anniv Date	Title	Grade/Step 7/1/2014	Hrly Rate	Rate #1 Hrs	Grade/Step Anniv	Hrly Rate	Rate #2 Hrs	Total Annual
7/15/2014	Director 17 hrs/wk)	H6-5	19.56	34	H6-6	19.96	850	17,631.04

M-Th
Estimated 4 hrs 7/1

General Category: Human Services

Department **VETERANS**

Dept # 543

EXPENDITURES		Actual 2013	Appropriated 2014	Expended thru 12/31/2013	FY15 Level Services Request	FY15 Fin Comm Recommend	FY15 Town Administrator Budget
5771	Ordinary Assistance	139,890	145,000	91,125.48	165,000		165,000
5774	Care & Registration of Graves	4,103	7,500	1,217.02	7,500		7,500
5776	Burials			4,000.00			
	TOTAL EXPENSES	143,993	152,500	96,342.50	172,500	-	172,500
	TOTAL VETERANS	143,993	152,500	96,342.50	172,500		172,500

3-Dec rec'd