

East Montpelier Selectboard Meeting: December 21, 2020

Montpelier Senior Activity Center's 2021 Town Meeting Funding Request for FY2022 Operations

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Amount being requested: \$9,000

The mission of Montpelier Senior Activity Center is to enhance the quality of life for the older adults in the Montpelier area through opportunities that develop physical, mental, cultural, social, and economic well-being in a welcoming, flexible environment.

Reason for a level-funded request: After a funding increase last year, we are requesting level funding this year, to use toward operations in FY22, for several reasons:

1. First and foremost, we understand that despite, and perhaps even more so because of the pandemic, **MSAC continues to be a valuable and vital resource for East Montpelier residents**, particularly your older residents age 50+. They come for affordable classes (online in many cases now), free drop-in activities, delicious meals at no cost for age 60+ twice weekly (served safely curbside), and, when possible based on public health and safety, a warm, welcoming facility where they can avoid social isolation, maintain or improve their health, get their tax returns completed for free, use our computer lab and DVD collection, and keep their minds and bodies flexible.
2. 2020 has brought huge changes in our operations due to COVID-19, but **our COVID-19 Pandemic Response has been robust, resourceful, responsive, and geared toward future flexibility and growth in how we serve older adults and enhance intergenerational connection:**
 - a. Like other senior centers and meal sites, we changed our indoor community meals to **outdoor “to go” services** and have maintained nutritious, delicious offerings twice weekly, with increased cost to us and still at no charge to your town’s age 60+ residents who choose to attend curbside.
 - b. The majority of our paid **classes are being offered online** via the Zoom platform, we are also offering **many free weekly groups online** and **some outdoor activities** when allowed by State guidance.
 - c. While in response to less than ideal circumstances, our **online classes actually open up opportunities for greater participation**. Most of these online courses have no size limit and many are open up to a wider age group, than when

offered in-person; there is also no longer a transportation barrier. While we anticipate returning to in-person courses once safe, if online courses are well received, we are pursuing the idea of continuing to offer them, or to move toward 'hybrid' delivery on-site and on-line, simultaneously. We are **budgeting money in FY22 to purchase more equipment to make that possible.**

- d. We have been **hosting free trainings to help people learn to use Zoom and answer other technology questions**, and your town's residents are eligible for these services.
 - e. On a related note, we are **advocating** with the legislature and others **to get more funding for older Vermonters to equitably access more devices, internet connection and technology training** to reduce isolation, encourage connection, and to support Telehealth.
 - f. We are in the early phase of developing **new "Aging in Place" Village services, and brought a new Americorps member on staff in September.** An early project is to call everyone one of our members for a wellness check, find out what they might need, and share resources. Dozens of your town's residents will be benefiting from this by the time it is complete, and they will be eligible for an ongoing friendly callers service in partnership with CVCOA as well.
 - g. While we are starting aspects of **the home-based offerings of this Village initiative** in Montpelier, (such as **outdoor chores** help), we look forward to the potential for expanding the model into our surrounding towns such as East Montpelier, in the future.
 - h. Our regular communications (including a weekly e-letter and monthly newsletter) **help announce important COVID and partner news and community resources** such as online cultural, health, educational and social events. Such services further help with the important goal of reducing isolation among older adults, and our publications are read by hundreds weekly. Anyone can subscribe by emailing a request to msac@montpelier-vt.org or calling 223-2518.
3. We are facing **some increases in the operating expenses** necessary to maintain and continuously improve our facility and our high-quality and diverse healthy aging and lifelong learning services and programs, and **due to COVID, we are facing some projected revenue losses** in the coming year, too. However, we **seek equitable ways to continue spreading the burden** across many revenue streams, including **proportionately fair requests across many towns** whose residents benefit from MSAC as residents of "supporting towns." The City of Montpelier is also likely to be "level-funding" our operations based on an almost \$135K tax appropriation.
4. We are **seeking level funding from five of the six towns** from which we request funding at Town Meeting in 2020. The comparisons from 2019 to 2020 are:

- a. Berlin: \$15,000, level fund request (MSAC provides Meals on Wheels to part of this town)
 - b. Calais: \$4,900, level fund request
 - c. East Montpelier: \$9,000, level fund request (note: MSAC serves more residents of E. Montpelier than any other town outside Montpelier)
 - d. Middlesex: \$7,000, level fund request
 - e. Moretown: \$1,100, level fund request
 - f. Worcester: reduced from \$3,000 to \$2500 by Social Concerns Committee, and we opted not to petition for more this year
5. Despite the pandemic, the number of **documented participants from East Montpelier increased in the past year from 113 to at least 117** people, while the actual number could be as high as 130 since we have hosted many free events and drop-in activities for which no registrations were required, and people from all surrounding towns attend. We offer financial aid for dues and class fees to ALL who request it. **For our membership year starting July 2020, we waived membership dues** although we had budgeted to increase them by \$10 each in all towns including Montpelier.
 6. We calculated our East Montpelier request **based on approximately \$70 per person served from your town last year**. For comparison sake, the **City of Montpelier taxpayers**, budgeted to directly contribute \$134,795.65 next year toward our annual budget, are slated to support your residents at an additional cost of approximately \$85-\$90 per person based on average annual attendance of 1500 unduplicated people. (That does not include the many Montpelier other city-funded services that also support MSAC operations).
 7. We believe that **our services complement rather than compete with other senior centers and senior organizations**. Each senior center and other agency brings something unique to the table, with different programming and services serving different sets of seniors.

Addendums:

- a. To view our **Winter class and program offerings**, click here: <https://www.montpelier-vt.org/751/Classes>
- b. To read our **latest newsletter**, click here: <https://www.montpelier-vt.org/304/Newsletter>
- c. To find a detailed explanation of **MSAC's relationship with our six supporting towns** and our **tiered class fees and membership dues structure**, [click here: https://www.montpelier-vt.org/1142/MSAC-and-surrounding-communities](https://www.montpelier-vt.org/1142/MSAC-and-surrounding-communities)