



Montpelier Senior Activity Center

58 Barre Street, Montpelier, VT 05602

A Place for Healthy Aging and Lifelong Learning

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TO: City Manager, Assistant City Manager, City Council
FROM: Sarah Lipton, New Director of MSAC, Recent FEAST Senior Meals Program Manager
RE: FY22, Q2-Q4, MSAC Hiring a Kitchen Manager/Chef and discontinuing contracting with caterer for FEAST Senior Meals
DATE: August 20, 2021

The following is a summary list of significant changes MSAC staff intend to initiate as the FY22 Q1 contract for FEAST Senior Meals production with Good Taste Catering comes to an end September 30. A robust proposal was created in recent months that has the backing of city and MSAC leadership.

1. FEAST Senior Meals Program is in need of a new Kitchen Manager/Chef to run the kitchen to provide meals to senior community members in need of food and nutrition.
2. The attached proposal identifies the reasons this change is needed and how we intend to approach the re-design of this essential service that has thrived at MSAC for eight years.

\$96,525.00 was budgeted in FY22 “Senior Center Meal Program Purchase” Account 38.3801.56.00.5, which was based on budgeting in Fall 2020 that suggested we should be conservative and decrease our meal program costs. We are anticipating spending more than budgeted in Q2-4 in this fiscal year, but less than we would spend if we continued with Good Taste Catering. The new spending for Q2-4 will not be from the above account but will be from a personnel line and food cost line. Budgeted would be \$24,131.25 per quarter or \$72,393.75 for the next three quarters. Based on the new proposal for Q2-4, we will spend an estimated \$30,343.75 per quarter or 91,031.25 for the three quarters. This will be \$18,637.50 over what was budgeted for FY22, but it is also at least \$6,600 less than if we extended a similar contract as we have with Good Taste Catering (for off-site meal production) and significantly less than if we brought GTC back to our own kitchen for an estimated additional \$41K based on figures they quoted in May.

Included in the proposal is the following:

- **Executive Summary:** The FEAST Senior Meals Program provides essential meals and social engagement so that Montpelier’s older adults are able to thrive as they age at home. The program, however, faces a critical need for change.

- **Explanation of the Need for a Redesign:** Upon meeting with Good Taste Catering (GTC) to re-negotiate a 2021-2022 contract in late May, GTC made it clear that they would be increasing their meal cost to such a degree that FEAST would be unable to accommodate a new contract with them (an 85% increase from \$6.05 to \$11.22 to return to production in our kitchen, twice weekly on-site congregate meals and M-F hot meal delivery).
- **Proposal Options:** Listing costs for renewing a contract with GTC, sending out an external RFP, or hiring an internal Kitchen Manager/Chef to run the FEAST kitchen.
- **Social Value:** In order for the City of Montpelier to become a shining example of solving food security for our senior community, MSAC needs to return to pre-pandemic practices like producing meals on-site and serving hot meals in person and through delivered meals. The fundamental value of these pre-pandemic practices centers on social equity, which is at the forefront when senior meals are produced on-site, because of the incredible value to a broad cross-section of Montpelier's community. MSAC has invested an estimated \$66,000 in time and effort, and over \$75,000 for equipment purchase over eight years to create and maintain an excellent commercial kitchen. Our VT Department of Health licensed restaurant kitchen has passed inspection with flying colors every year. There are distinct benefits that can be enumerated to having an internal kitchen manager/chef for FEAST.
- **Financial Viability of Options:** The chart shows the high costs of continuing to have an external caterer produce the meals for FEAST. GTC's quote to come back to produce meals at MSAC is \$11.22/meal, for a total of \$185,130/year. For FEAST to have an internal Kitchen Manager Chef, the per meal cost of food and labor is reduced to \$7.36/meal, for a total of \$121,375/year.
- **Feasibility of the Proposal:** We have plans in place to achieve necessary and budgeted funding. Our FY22 budget includes revenue sources for FEAST that cover the majority of projected costs, as listed in the proposal. We are confident we can bring in more grants than we budgeted for, and we are currently working on more grant proposals with more to be explored this Fall, and we have we received significant unbudgeted FEAST support from CVCOA in FY21 through various federal COVID relief funds distributed at multiple points. Opening up the licensed restaurant kitchen at MSAC creates multiple revenue generating options to help cover the costs of the FEAST Program Manager position *and* the FEAST Kitchen Manager/Chef position such as offering daily lunches, special events rentals, weekly dinners, and economic development opportunities for the community. The model we are proposing is what - in large part - already exists in most Vermont senior centers. We are not proposing an outrageous solution, we are proposing a sound model with proven benefit, cost reduction, and feasibility.
- **Kitchen Manager/Chef Position:** Description enclosed.

- **Future Goals:** According the most recent census, Montpelier has just over 1,600 older adults. FEAST only serves about 80 of them per week. Why? Is it lack of awareness of the senior nutrition program? Is it quality of meals? Is it a misperception of eligibility? Is it due to societal stigma regarding the need to ask for help? All of these questions and more have been highlighted by the pandemic, which illuminated the essential nature of senior nutrition and ensuring equitable access to it. But before we can fully answer any of these questions and create a truly robust solution to food security for our older adult population in Montpelier and beyond, the FEAST program needs to be re-organized.
- **Historic Perspective:** The FEAST Program Manager position has been expanded in order to support the new model we have designed. The expansion incurred a slight increase to our costs, but that has been addressed by the above-listed grants. In order for FEAST to successfully move forward into the future, it needs a dedicated Kitchen staff member and team of volunteers to ensure the high quality of meal production, lowered production costs, and more robust social engagement for the community. FEAST fully intends to continue to grow and embrace past and current collaborative partners in the pursuit of excellence.
- **Summary, Appendixes (Collaborative Partners List, Recent Contracts with Good Taste Catering, and Kitchen Manager/Chef Job Description).**

In conclusion, my proposal to re-design the City's FEAST Senior Meals Program has the support of the City Manager, the Assistant City Manager, the Finance Director, the outgoing MSAC Director, and the MSAC Advisory Council. We are excited to implement this next phase of an essential service for our city's older adults, long-supported by City Council!