



City of Cambridge
Department of Human Service Programs
51 Inman Street, Cambridge, Massachusetts 02139, 498-9076

TO: Robert W. Healy
FROM: Jill Herold *[Signature]*
DATE: September 28, 1990
RE: Awaiting Report No. 19, dated 5/14/90

The following additional information is being provided in further response to Council Order No. 5, 3/26/90 regarding improvement in the quality of food being offered to senior citizens by Meals on Wheels, etc. Somerville Cambridge Elder Services operates all of the senior nutrition sites in Cambridge, including the home delivered meals provided through those congregate sites. They bid the food contract out to a vendor who also serves five neighboring home care corporations. They work together as a consortium in terms of menu planning.

In order to have an impact on the quality of food served, the nutrition sites must receive and document complaints from seniors who eat the food. All of the complaints are reviewed by the local Nutrition Project Council as reported by meal site managers or directly by telephone. They will not modify menus on the basis of one or two complaints; however, if many complaints come in about a particular menu item, that item will be removed from future menus.

Regarding the complaint that food is too fatty or caloric, in discussions with the Nutrition Manager at SCES, she tells me that the food is targeted to people for whom this meal may be the only substantial meal of the day and they try to make it as hearty as possible. If people are complaining that the food is not seasoned enough, there are salt/pepper, and condiments at the center to spice it up to individual tastes. The caterer which has the contract presently may be removed through the bid process which occurs every two years. This caterer has consistently come in with the low bid and holds nutrition contracts with other home cares in this consortium including West Suburban Elder Services, Minuteman Home Care, North Shore Elder Services, and Southern Middlesex Opportunity Council. Should Somerville Cambridge Elder Services contract with a different vendor, I'm not sure how that would affect their ability to participate in the consortium.

If I can provide more information, please let me know. It sounds as if the best way to really get changes is for seniors themselves to complain. We can advocate on their behalf by making sure that they know the complaint process.

DIVISIONS:

Childcare
498-9076

Community Learning Center
547-1589

Community & Youth
498-9037/9072

Council on Aging/Elderly Services
498-9039

Low Income Fuel Assistance
498-9038

Planning & Development
498-9076

Recreation
498-9028

MultiService Center/Homeless Services
864-6340

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CITY OF CAMBRIDGE

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EXECUTIVE DEPARTMENT

ROBERT W. HEALY

City Manager

RICHARD C. ROSSI

Deputy City Manager

October 1, 1990

To The Honorable, The City Council:

In reference to Awaiting Report Item No. 19, relative to the quality of food being offered to senior citizens by Meals on Wheels, etc., please find attached a response from Jill Herold, Assistant City Manager for Human Services.

Very truly yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Robert W. Healy", is written over a horizontal line.

Robert W. Healy
City Manager

RWH/mev
enclosure

Agenda # 5S-960

Awaiting Report Item Number 19, regarding
the quality of food being offered to
senior citizens by Meals on Wheels, etc.

In City Council,

Oct. 1, 1990

Placed on file