



4.

CITY OF CAMBRIDGE • EXECUTIVE DEPARTMENT

Robert W. Healy, City Manager

Richard C. Rossi, Deputy City Manager

January 27, 2003

To The Honorable, The City Council:

In response to Awaiting Report Item No. 03-02, regarding a report on the back-up plan for when inclement weather cancels delivery of meals to senior citizen meal sites, Assistant City Manager for Human Services Jill Herold reports the following:

Somerville-Cambridge Elder Services (SCES) is the agency, which coordinates both the home-delivered meals and the congregate meals sites for seniors in both cities.

The Executive Director of Somerville-Cambridge Elder Services, in consultation with that agency's Nutritional Director, makes the determination to cancel the programs on the morning of the weather emergency. The cancellation of home delivered meals and the closing of congregate meals sites due to weather emergencies is a rare occurrence and has only happened once in the past two years. A cancellation occurs only when the weather conditions make travel very dangerous, for the drivers delivering the home-based meals, for the seniors traveling to congregate sites, and for the company trucks delivering to the congregate sites. Also, weather emergencies create an increased problem for the drivers delivering the home-delivered meals to find parking in the two cities in order to deliver the meals to the house or apartment.

The food for both the home-delivered and the congregate meals is provided by a catering company under contract with SCES. The current vendor is Valley Services and their base of operation in this area is Woburn. The food is packed by Valley for individual servings and delivered to the home-based meal clients by drivers who are hired by SCES. These drivers generally use their own vehicles for the delivery to seniors' homes. The food for the congregate meals sites is delivered by Valley packaged in serving containers, which are heated and served by the meals coordinator for that site.

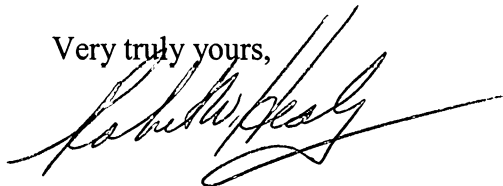
Those seniors who receive home delivered meals are those who are not able to prepare an adequate meal for themselves and are not able to travel to a meal site. Those seniors who attend congregate sites are usually more mobile. They often travel to the meal sites independently. There is meals site transportation available on a limited basis for some seniors who are not able to travel to a site independently. This transportation is funded through SCES, and seniors are transported via local taxicabs. In addition to providing nutritious meals to seniors, the congregate meal sites also have the goal of providing seniors an atmosphere in which to socialize and reduce isolation.

In general, if the home-delivered meals are cancelled then the congregate sites will also be closed. Also, if the building in which the meal site is hosted is closed due to inclement weather, that meal site will also be closed. Once made, the decision to close the programs for the day will apply to both cities of Cambridge and Somerville, even if the two cities have made different decisions from one another on whether to close schools or city programs due to the weather. The coordination of the staffing and the delivery of the food does not allow the food programs to be cancelled in one of these cities and be open in the other.

In preparation for possible emergency cancellation of home delivered meals, SCES delivers emergency back-up provisions to all its home-delivered clients in November. The delivery includes two meals worth of shelf staple food (including such items as cans of soup, stew, ravioli and fruit as well as crackers and juice). A letter is distributed explaining that the provisions should be saved for use only in emergency situations. The letter includes a phone number for clients to call for further information. Because the seniors who eat at the congregate meals site are more mobile than those who receive home-delivered meals, there are not specific emergency back-up plans in place for the closure of a congregate site.

Of the nine (9) congregate meal sites operated by SCES in both cities (5 in Cambridge; 4 in Somerville), eight (8) of them are located either in senior housing residential buildings or senior centers. With the exception of the Cambridge Citywide Senior Center, which prepares its own meals on site daily, all other eight (8) congregate sites rely on the delivery of food daily. Meals are always available for seniors at the Citywide Senior Center, even if senior programming is cancelled due to emergency weather conditions.

Very truly yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Robert W. Healy", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Robert W. Healy
City Manager

RWH/mec

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Consent Agenda #4

Awaiting Report Item

Number 03-02, regarding a report on the back-up plan for when inclement weather cancels delivery of meals to senior citizen meal sites.

In City Council January 27, 2003

**REFERRED BACK TO CITY
MANAGER FOR INCLUSION
OF INFORMATION ON WHAT
BACKUP IS AVAILABLE
WHEN SENIOR CITIZENS'
CONGREGATE MEALS SITES
ARE CLOSED DUE TO
WEATHER.**