



# City of Cambridge

4.

IN CITY COUNCIL  
February 6, 1995

VICE MAYOR RUSSELL  
COUNCILLOR SULLIVAN  
COUNCILLOR BORN  
COUNCILLOR DUEHAY  
COUNCILLOR GALLUCCIO  
COUNCILLOR MYERS  
MAYOR REEVES  
COUNCILLOR TRIANTAFILLOU

**WHEREAS:** At the Massachusetts Municipal Association's Annual Meeting and Trade Show, which was held recently in Boston, the Kenneth E. Pickard Memorial Innovation awards were presented to those communities which demonstrated that they are continuing to formulate new approaches to solving problems and delivering services; and

**WHEREAS:** The Town of Chelmsford was the recipient of one of the awards which was entitled "Senior Tax Rebate Program - A Valuable Community Operation"; and

**WHEREAS:** This program allows senior citizens to decrease their annual property tax bill by volunteering their services to the town. The program is a creative way to accomplish two goals: to tap into the wealth of knowledge and skills of senior citizens and to alleviate the financial tax burden on senior citizen homeowners; and

**WHEREAS:** Eligible seniors could perform such services as library assistance, public building maintenance, and parks and recreation grounds work, (mowing, raking, planting, etc), working in clinics, classrooms, lunch rooms, playgrounds, and offices. Volunteers earn \$5 per hour, up to a maximum of \$500 toward their property tax bills; now therefore be it

**RESOLVED:** That the City Manager be and hereby is requested to look into the possibility of initiating this program in Cambridge on a small scale and report back to the City Council as soon as possible. (Information attached)

In City Council February 6, 1995  
Adopted by the affirmative vote of seven members.  
Attest:- D. Margaret Drury, City Clerk.

A true copy;

ATTEST:-

*D. Margaret Drury*

D. Margaret Drury, City Clerk

**Town of Chelmsford**  
**Senior Tax Rebate Program:**  
**A Valuable Community Option**

The Senior Tax Rebate program allows Chelmsford senior citizens to decrease their annual property tax bills by volunteering their services to the town. The program is a creative way to accomplish two goals: tap into the wealth of knowledge and skills of senior citizens, and alleviate the financial tax burden on senior citizen homeowners.

Chelmsford Town Meeting has appropriated \$25,000 per year to allow 50 seniors to participate. By performing such services as library assistance, public building maintenance, and parks and recreation grounds work (mowing, raking, planting, etc.), volunteers earn \$5 per hour, up to a maximum of \$500, toward their property tax bills. Some seniors help out in the town's

clinics, classrooms, lunch rooms, playgrounds, and offices.

Like many communities, Chelmsford already offers low-income senior citizens a "no-strings attached" abatement of \$500 per year under state-set criteria. But many individuals who don't qualify still find it difficult to afford their property taxes, which average \$2,500 in Chelmsford. Seniors on fixed incomes with nowhere else to turn may be sacrificing necessities such as food, heat, or medical care, to pay their tax bills.

To be eligible for the Senior Tax Rebate program, a person must be at least 60 years old, a Chelmsford resident, and a homeowner (or the spouse of the property owner). The volunteer must live at the property for which his or her earnings will go toward the tax bill.

Volunteers fill out a form at the town's Senior Center that provides a general biography and the type of community service they would like to perform. The town tailors a position to an applicant's expertise and skills.

A subtle but important benefit of this program, its founders say, is that it brings together sectors of the community that may not otherwise cross paths. Senior citizens who work in the schools now better understand the needs of teachers and students today, and young people learn that older people still have a lot to offer their community.

Approximately 75 senior citizens have participated in the Senior Tax Rebate Program since its inception in 1992. It has had a positive influence on the town's relationship with its senior citizens and has been an asset to the town by using the skills and experience of the seniors taking part in the program. Because of the program's success, other communities have adopted similar programs or are considering doing so.



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COUNCILLOR SULLIVAN

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Born, Duhaig, Galluccio, Myers  
Reves Triantafillou.

Consent Order #4

CM-39

Vice Mayor Russell, Councillor Sullivan  
re: Senior Tax Rebate Program - to allow  
senior citizens to decrease tax bills  
by volunteer service to the City.

In City Council, February 6, 1995

Order adopted