

## Senior Center at Risk!

### City Counsel considering removing Funding

Two weeks ago, I was at the Elders Planning Meeting at the Senior Center when I discovered the City Council's future plans to de-fund the Senior Center!

Here's what I learned and a little background.

#### How is the Senior Center Funded?

Our Senior Center has a yearly 2-million-dollar budget. Which covers building expenses/maintenance, staff salaries, vehicle care, a multitude of program costs, food etc..

About 1 million of that budget is less than dependable coming from dozens of different sources each year including, many small grants, donations, fund raisers and participation fees. These sources and amounts vary greatly from year to year and are far from guaranteed/dependable.

\$600,000 Comes from the **Joint Sales Tax** here in Durango and is distributed by the City Council. This has been a dependable income source and much of the Senior Centers budget is based on having this income.

\$500,000 comes from the Older American Act funds and is awarded through the San Juan Basin Area Agency on Aging. This amount is static and doesn't increase or change each year, also being very dependable.

#### How is the funding at Risk?

City Council is discussing removing the **Joint Sales Tax** moneys from the senior center!! That would wipe out ¼ of their budget which is half of their dependable income! This change could occur at the start of the new fiscal year, this June if we don't stop it.

What does cutting these funds mean? Vicki, the Director of the Senior Center, said "It's not good, we could go under, but most likely we will cut the majority of our programs and staff, so a shadow of current self could still exist for our community of seniors. But what that looks like is grim."

#### What does the Senior Center currently provide for our community of seniors?

Affordable healthy food. Every weekday lunch at the senior center happens for just a voluntary 4\$ donation. All the food is made fresh from scratch and is a balanced diet. Meals on Wheels delivers this food to those that can't make it to the Senior Center all across La Plata County in extremely rural areas serving hundreds that otherwise couldn't eat or at least afford quality food.

Legal Support for Seniors and available aide for taxes. Lawyers are available and give education throughout the year at the Senior Center. Affordable service and free tax clinic.

Free transportation, not just to the Senior Center but to doctor's appointments and other important places.

Social activities and education for any senior that wants to stay social, active and learn something new. Classes and groups are available every weekday, on topics like dementia, fitness, health, budgeting, insurance, end of life planning and much much more.

Cleaning and home repair for seniors, free of charge quarterly.

Home companion program. Bringing companionship to the home bound. Volunteers from the Senior Center go to homes with seniors who need human interaction and kindness.

Computer Lab, community rooms, and thrift store are all available in the Senior Center.

Durable medical equipment. The senior center has canes, walkers, rollator, wheelchairs, shower chairs, and toilet lifts available for free.

Medicare enrollment and support for anyone seeking information or care.

Finding additional aide and support for seniors that have a need that the Senior Center doesn't provide, they will help you find it and get it going!

Where will our senior community go for all these programs if they aren't offered at the Senior Center?

### What can we do to prevent de-funding the of the Senior Center?

Write to your City Council and County Commissioner, make sure they understand how important the **Joint Sales Tax** money is to keeping our senior community well served through the senior center. Email them at [CityCouncil@DurangoGov.org](mailto:CityCouncil@DurangoGov.org)

Attend City Council meetings and voice your concerns about moving the **Joint Sales Tax** money away from our Senior Center. They meet at 5:30 p.m. on the first and third Tuesday of every month at City Hall, 949 East 2nd Ave.

Share this information with everyone you know and encourage them to speak out on behalf of the Senior Center.

Write letters to the editor about this issue to raise public awareness. The **Joint Sales Tax** is critical to keeping all the services our Senior Center offers and many of them can't be found elsewhere, much less under one convenient roof!

Nationwide, the baby boomer generation is beginning to age into the senior category which could triple the number of seniors needing support. What's needed now is definitely only a piece of what will be needed for our future seniors. If anything, senior programs should be growing!