

Shelley Chapel

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As regards the FY 2022 budget, I would like to say a bit about the Senior Nutrition Center because that operation is in a kind of uncertainty mode, for reasons that are outside of everybody's control here at the City. I will explain in a moment. First, a little background, since we have two new Council members, and since many folks have a limited understanding of the operation.

Located at Morgan Tower and operated by National City employees, the Nutrition Center feeds lunch to seniors and certain other eligible people two ways. One of those ways is a home-delivered meal program where drivers take hot meals to homes during the mid-morning. The deliveries are Monday through Friday, but actually seven days of lunches are provided. The funding sources are a per-meal reimbursement from the County, plus donations from customers, plus some City money.

The second way involves serving lunches at the Nutrition Center itself. And again the funding sources are the County, donations from customers, and some City funding. The County's contribution is in the ball park of \$6.00 per meal. I want to draw your attention to how this has changed under the Covid. Before the Covid, this was sit-down dining. In fact, it was forbidden to hand out a to-go meal. Why? Because the County funding is actually federal funding, and all of that is based on the need and desire to have seniors congregate and socialize. When the Covid hit, this feeding piece was required by County and State authorities to make a 180 degree change. Suddenly, dine-in was forbidden, and all meals had to be packaged to go. This resulted in a cost increase to the operation of about \$1500 per month, to purchase food containers and bags. That may sound high off the cuff, but even at a well-researched best available price of around 35 cents per meal,, by the time you serve two hundred meals per day times twenty two days per month, it adds up. Annualize that and the container cost is about \$ 18,000 per year! And the County has not increased its contribution to address this.

Costs are up for another reason: Both the home-delivered and picked-up meals have increased in number significantly since the Covid started.

So why do I say the budget for them is unclear and in flux? Because no one in the City knows what rules will be dictated by the County, State and Federal governments in the coming months. Will they be required to go back to sit-down dining only? Will they be required to stick with take-out only? Will they be allowed to do both? Will the County increase its per-meal contribution? Will it raise the cap on the number of clients per month that are reimbursable under their contract with the City? Will there be expansion opportunities under President Biden's proposed programs?

All of this will probably be in flux long after a budget must finalized for this City. Therefore, there may be needs for budget adjustments down the line that are not the fault of anyone at the City. I urge you to learn more about this program and the needs it is currently serving.

-Joan Rincon, National City