

## *From The Directors Desk...Economic Security for Seniors*

"Rising Tides: Embracing Population Growth of Older Adults" was the theme of this year's MA Association of COAs & Senior Center Directors Annual Conference. On December 31, 2016, for the first time in MA history, the number of people in our Commonwealth age 60 and over will be greater than the population under 20. This massive swing in our demographics has already begun changing the demands for services. A tool being used by policy makers and service providers is the Elder Economic Security Standard, which demonstrates the depth of elder insecurity in Massachusetts. The national Elder Economic Security Standard Index (Elder Index) is maintained by the Gerontology Institute at UMASS Boston, who presented this information at the conference. The 2 major findings of the Elder Index include:

- The average gap between the annual income and typical basic and necessary expenses for older adults age 65+ in MA is about \$9,800/year. (Actual incomes and expenses vary by person, housing status, health status, and region of the state.)
- In 2016, 61% of all elder-only households in MA are economically insecure, meaning they don't have enough income to cover all the basic and necessary monthly expenses related with housing, food, health care, transportation and common miscellaneous expenses.

There are programs and services that can help alleviate this financial stress. One place seniors can "find money" is at the Assessor's Office. Did you know there are personal exemptions/deferrals to a property tax owners for which you as a homeowner may be eligible? The Chatham Assessing Department at Town Hall (508) 945-5103 can assist you with an application or you can contact the Outreach Department at the Council on Aging. (508) 945-5190. The filing deadline is 3 months after the mailing of the first-half tax bill of the fiscal year.

The following is a listing of the exemptions/deferrals available in Chatham:

**Veteran Exemptions:** Veteran Exemptions are given with no income limitations to honorably discharged veterans who lived in Massachusetts 6 months prior to enrollment in the service or 1 year prior to application for exemption and one of the following:

- **Clause 22** **\$400.00 Exemption**  
Veterans with a war service connected disability of 10% or more, or Veterans of Spanish War, Philippine Insurrection, Chinese Relief Expedition, Lebanese Peace Keeping Force or Grenade Rescue Mission, or Recipient of a Purple Heart.
- **Clause 22A** **\$750.00 Exemption**  
Veterans who has suffered dismemberment or loss of vision, or who has award the Congressional Medal of Honor, Distinguished Service Cross, Navy or Air Force Cross, or has received "specially adapted housing" assistance.
- **Clause 22E** **\$1,000.00 Exemption**  
Veterans with a 100% disability and who are unable to work as determined by the Department of Veteran Services.
- **Paraplegic** **FULL Exemption**

This exemption is available to veterans who are certified by the Veterans Administration as paraplegic and their surviving spouses.

A complete list of Exemptions designated for Veterans is available from the Chatham Assessing Department or Department of Veterans Services at 1-800-827-1000.

### **Clause 18: Temporary Financial Hardship Property Tax Deferral** **Defer up to 100%**

The applicant must demonstrate a financial hardship i.e., the applicant currently lacks financial resources to pay the taxes because of a change to active military status (not including initial enlistment), unemployment, illness or other reason as determined by the Assessors.

### **Clause 37: Blind Exemption** **\$437.50 Exemption**

Property owners must be determined by the MA Commission for Blind or a qualified doctor as legally blind as of July 1. Application must be filed annually together with certificate. No limits on income or assets.

### **Clause 41A: Property Tax Deferral** **Defer up to 100% of property tax**

Tax Deferral is available to anyone 65 years of age or older on July 1 of the fiscal year, who has owned and occupied their property on July 1 as their domicile and has been domiciled in Massachusetts for the preceding 10 years and has owned and occupied real estate in Massachusetts for at least 5 years. Income may not exceed \$40,000. The Assessors record an agreement at the Registry of Deeds describing the property stating the owners' names with the following conditions: No sale shall consummate without paying the deferred taxes plus 8% interest per annum. Total taxes plus interest deferred may not exceed 50% of the market value of the property. Any mortgage holder must give written permission that will become part of the agreement.

### **Clause 41C (D): Elderly Exemption** **\$1,030.00 Exemption**

The application(s) must be 65 years of age before July 1 of the fiscal year; continuously domiciled in Massachusetts for 10 years and have owned and occupied the property or any other property in Massachusetts for 5 years; Or is a surviving spouse who has inherited the real estate and occupied it for 5 years. Income may not exceed \$25,196.36 (single) \$37,794.54 (married) plus social security exemption \$4,381 (single) \$6,572 (married); whole estate which does not include the value of your home, may not exceed \$50,392.73 (single) \$69,290.01 (married); Note, the previously mentioned amounts are adjusted each year for the increase in the cost of living.

*Mandi Palma*