

Congressman Higgins & Amherst Supervisor Kulpa Announce Investments in Senior Services

Kicking-Off Older Americans Month, Leaders Detail Senior Center Improvements, Meals on Wheels Upgrades & New Senior Van

Congressman Brian Higgins (NY-26) and Town of Amherst Supervisor Brian Kulpa kicked off Older Americans Month by announcing investments totaling more than \$334,000 in programs and facilities serving senior citizens.



"Amherst is home to a busy senior center that offers local residents a range of opportunities to socialize, learn, dine, and engage," **said Congressman Higgins.** "Through these investments, we are enhancing the existing infrastructure and expanding the ability for seniors to maintain an active, healthy, and independent life."

"Thank you to Congressman Higgins and his colleagues for providing this federal

support for critical services to meet the needs of our senior residents. Our Community Development Office and Center for Senior Services, along with Meals on Wheels program, understood the immediate needs of members during an extremely difficult time and ensured that we invested these funds in critical services, which we continue to prioritize today," **said Supervisor Brian Kulpa.**

The Town of Amherst dedicated \$147,000 in federal funding awarded through the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act to Senior Center improvements and services. Restroom upgrades include touchless faucets for added sanitary safeguards as well as the creation of a single-use bathroom to accommodate people with disabilities and caregivers. Work will soon begin to make the front desk

ADA-compliant. In addition, a part-time social worker was added during the peak of the pandemic and is continuing to support the mental health of seniors in the town. Although the Senior Center was closed for a period during the pandemic, the town held "Senior Park Pop-Ups" in outdoor spaces to maintain safety while decreasing isolation.

Amherst is planning to use \$10,000 the town received through the federal Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) program to add a van to the fleet operating Amherst Senior Transportation Services. The program provides Amherst residents 55 years of age or older who need transportation with rides to medical appointments, senior center programs, and grocery stores.

Senior lunch programs and Meals on Wheels receive funding approved by Congress in the federal budget through the Older Americans Act Nutrition Program. Higgins and Kulpa also announced \$177,000 in CDBG CARES Act investments which support a growing demand for Meals on Wheels nutrition services. This includes a large new freezer, kitchen equipment such as a steam table, and slicer, as well as the addition of a full-time cook to handle increased requests for participation in the Meals on Wheels program. The number of Amherst residents requesting Meals on Wheels service jumped by over 40% during the pandemic, from 51,170 in 2019 to 72,008 in 2020, and the elevated demand for meal delivery continues.

Amherst received nearly \$1.6 million in additional federal Community Development Block Grant funding through the CARES Act, over \$15.23 million in direct federal aid through the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) and shared over \$3.4 million in HOME-ARPA funds awarded to the Amherst-Cheektowaga-Tonawanda HOME Consortium. In addition to the senior center improvements, federal pandemic aid supported sewer work in the town, neighborhood housing stabilization programs, and the installation of an emergency generator at the Amherst Police Training Center, among other initiatives. Erie County also allocated \$2.4 million it received through the American Rescue Plan to Amherst for the design and development of Amherst Central Park.

This year marks the 60th anniversary of the establishment of Older Americans Month, celebrated each May to recognize the contributions and needs of older Americans. According to the US Census Bureau, over 34,600 people, nearly 27 percent of the Town of Amherst population, are age 60 or older.