



TOWN OF BLACKSTONE

Senior & Veteran Property Tax Work-Off Abatement Program Policy

1. Purpose:

The purpose of this policy is to establish a clear framework for the Senior & Veteran Property Tax Work-Off Abatement Program, enabling eligible seniors and veterans to reduce their property taxes by contributing their time and skills to the Town. This policy ensures:

- Fair and transparent administration.
- Clearly defined eligibility requirements and participant responsibilities.
- Equitable compensation and work structure.
- Compliance with Mass General Law (MGL) Chapter 59 Sections 5K and 5N.
- Accountability in program management, outlining the roles of Town staff and department heads to support participants effectively.

This policy seeks to reduce financial burdens for eligible participants and fosters community involvement by leveraging the skills and expertise of our senior and veteran residents, enhancing the Town's operations and services.

2. Eligibility:

Participants must meet all the following criteria to qualify:

Age: Must be 60 years of age or older to qualify for the senior tax work-off abatement or a veteran verified with a DD214 to qualify for the veteran's tax work-off abatement.

Residency: Participants must own and occupy their property as their principal residence. For properties in trust, participants must have legal title (i.e., be a trustee) as of January 1 or when the work is performed. Participants must have resided in the Town of Blackstone for at least five years.

Taxes and Utilities: Participants must be current on all tax and utility payments (e.g., water and sewer).

Municipal Employees: Current Town of Blackstone employees are prohibited from participating.

3. Application Process

- Applicants must submit a complete application packet including:
 - CORI
 - Physical
 - DD214 (Veterans)
- Incomplete applications will not be considered.
- Applicants may be required to attend an interview or provide additional documentation if needed for verification.

4. Compensation and Work Structure

Hourly Rate: Participants will be compensated at the current minimum wage.



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Work Hours and Abatement Limits: Participants may work up to the maximum exemption allowed under MGL Chapter 59 Sections 5K and 5N to achieve the program's annual abatement limit.

Tax Abatement: Compensation will be applied directly to the property tax bill for the fiscal year in which the work was performed. No direct payments or paychecks will be issued.

Tax Documentation: A W-2 form will be provided to participants by January 31 of the following year for federal tax purposes.

Tax Credit Limit: Only one tax credit per property address is allowed per fiscal year.

Municipal Employee Designation: Participants will be considered municipal employees for the duration of the program and must adhere to all applicable policies and restrictions under G.L. c. 268A (Conflict of Interest Law).

5. Administration and Oversight:

The Senior Center Director will oversee program administration with the following responsibilities:

Program Promotion: Develop and distribute brochures, application packets, and promotional materials. Organize informational sessions to educate the public about the program's benefits and requirements.

Application Management: Accept and review applications for completeness and compliance with eligibility requirements. Work with the Assessor's Office to verify income, residency, and tax compliance.

Placement Coordination: Facilitate interviews with department heads to assess skills and match participants to appropriate roles. Maintain a list of available opportunities within Town departments to ensure smooth placement.

Recordkeeping and Compliance: Maintain accurate participant records, including applications, work hours, and documentation. Ensure compliance with all applicable state and local laws governing the program.

Reporting and Evaluation: Provide regular updates to Town officials, including program participation rates, hours worked, and abatement amounts awarded. Conduct periodic evaluations to identify areas for improvement.

Department Heads are responsible for managing program participants within their departments:



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Supervision: Assign tasks that align with the participant's skills and abilities. Provide proper training and ongoing guidance as needed.

Tracking Work Hours: Monitor participants' work hours to ensure accuracy and compliance with program limits.

Timesheet Submission: Submit approved timesheets monthly to the Senior Center Director for processing.

Feedback and Support: Offer constructive feedback to participants and address any issues promptly. Communicate regularly with the Senior Center Director regarding participant performance or concerns.

6. Contingency for Limited Work or Funding

When there is insufficient work or funding to accommodate all eligible participants, priority will be given based on the following criteria:

- **Financial Need:** Applicants with the lowest incomes (as documented in their application) will be given priority.
- **Age:** Older applicants may be prioritized, reflecting the additional challenges they may face.
- **Residency Tenure:** Length of time as a resident of the Town may serve as a tiebreaker.

If work opportunities are limited, available hours may be distributed among eligible applicants proportionally, allowing more participants to benefit, albeit at reduced individual abatement levels. The total abatement for each participant may be adjusted downward to ensure more participants can benefit from the program.

Applicants who are eligible but cannot be accommodated due to work or funding limitations will be placed on a waitlist. Waitlisted applicants will be notified promptly of their position on the list. If additional work becomes available during the program year, those on the waitlist will be contacted in priority order.

If funding is limited, the Town may establish a reduced maximum abatement per participant, ensuring more individuals can participate within the budget constraints. In extreme cases where funding is entirely unavailable, the program may be suspended for the fiscal year, with applicants notified promptly. Alternatively, a smaller-scale version of the program may be implemented, focusing only on the most financially vulnerable participants.