

Sullivan Building free of COVID cases

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NEWBURYPORT — The Sullivan Building at 25 Temple St. has not had any reported COVID-19 cases this year, likely due to strict protocols and increased sanitation efforts.

The eight-story, state-aided building, named for late city Marshal James E. Sullivan and managed by the Newburyport Housing Authority, features 100 units occupied by approximately 140 to 150 elderly people and people with disabilities.

Tracy Watson, executive director for the Housing Authority, said neither residents nor the Board of Health have reported any cases of the coronavirus in the building since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic a year ago.

Watson said the maintenance team “worked tirelessly, seven days a week, sanitizing that building top to bottom — all common areas, elevators, laundry rooms.”



RICHARD K. LODGE/Staff photo

The James E. Sullivan Building at Temple and Fair streets, Newburyport.

Staff members have reportedly been sanitizing railings, hallways and all common spaces several times a day since March 2020.

“I truly attribute the success to the diligence of my maintenance team,” Watson said. “They are incredibly dedicated and have been there seven days a week

for over a year, doing everything they could to keep our residents as safe as possible.”

A year ago, the Housing Authority shut down all community spaces and activities such as bingo to keep residents safe amid COVID-19 concerns. The staff asked residents to avoid

congregating in spaces such as the lobby.

Laundry rooms remained open, but staff members asked residents not to linger while doing laundry.

A few months ago, the Sullivan Building welcomed back its hairdresser in the community room on Tuesdays, but other activities are still on hold.

Watson has had some residents call her “the warden” because of the strict protocols, but “a year into it with no cases — that’s OK, they can call me ‘warden,’” she said, recognizing that she has a responsibility to protect “our most vulnerable population.”

“We are hoping to start up activities again as we move toward the light,” Watson said.

On Sunday, the Housing Authority teamed up with the Council on Aging to help transport residents to and from a COVID-19 vaccination clinic at the Senior Community Center.

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The 200 doses were secured from the state by the Board of Health. Residents from

Heritage House also participated in the clinic.

Watson anticipates second doses will be given to residents April 6 at Hope Community Church on Hale Street.

Throughout the year, the Housing Authority has continued to operate as it normally would, despite its office remaining closed to the public. The state continues to maintain its waitlist

for public housing.

“We have stayed true to the mission of housing people throughout the pandemic because it’s actually when people needed housing the most,” Watson said.

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