

FY11 Budget Address
May 3, 2010

Tonight, with this budget document, we make a statement. A statement of performance, management, and a successful fiscal focus that has put us in good stead for today and in the days ahead.

Our actions since the inception of our new government have created a sturdy foundation which will allow our schools to continue to perform well and our public safety divisions to be strengthened and thus our quality of life enhanced.

Thank you Mr. President and all the members of the Town Council for the continuing spirit of cooperation in which we have worked this past year. Together we have charted a course that is steering Braintree through the financial storm that has plagued our Commonwealth and our nation. There are certain to be challenges ahead and we may, at times, lack unanimity on what is the appropriate way to resolve them. Yet, if we collectively adhere to the principle that we act in the best interest of Braintree, I am certain that our journey will continue to be a productive one.

In our first full fiscal year, FY09, we reduced our cost of operations by nearly one million dollars through a comprehensive reorganization of our new government.

During our current budget cycle, FY10, we have used every opportunity to streamline services, embrace the efficiency of technology and reinforced our commitment to strong financial management. We worked as one, management and our unions, to offset significant reductions in local aid while preserving jobs and services. We did not

have to alter our course in midyear due to unreasonable estimates of revenue or resources. And I am pleased that we will end this fiscal year without having to tap our reserves. In fact, we will be able to modestly enhance them.

Our willingness to make hard choices these past two fiscal years has yielded positive and tangible results. Today, we have been informed by Moody's Bond Rating Agency that in light of our financial management and improved fiscal condition, that our municipal bond rating has been upgraded from Aa3 to Aa2. This is a significant step that improves our economic outlook and reduces the cost to borrow money to make much needed capital improvements to our roads, schools and infrastructure. This action by Moody's reinforces the point that Braintree's fiscal health has improved.

Our prioritization of local economic growth added nearly \$2.7 million to our tax levy for fiscal year 2011. This allows us to compensate for the projected \$700,000 reduction in general government local aid that we have planned for in FY11 with this budget

This economic growth, in combination with the Commonwealth's Chapter 70 funding and the continuing provision of municipal foundation funding allows us to increase our education budget by \$2.1 million. The school budget absorbs the majority of the positions funded by federal stimulus money in FY10. This will help ensure that these positions can be funded in FY2012 when the stimulus money is no longer available.

Local economic growth has also allowed us to reach sustainable and sensible collective bargaining agreements with our teachers and our police, which in turn have yielded their own reforms.

These unions have agreed to accept an additional share of their copayments on their health insurance plans that will allow for better control of health insurance cost for employees and our town while not reducing the quality of care.

Moreover, the police unions agreed to contract language that will take six officers from behind desks and put them on the street during FY11 through the hiring of civilian dispatchers. This will enhance our public safety in our neighborhoods.

There is a saying that success has many fathers while failure is an orphan. However the important role of our town employees both union and management have played in making fiscal year 2010 a success cannot be overstated. Their ideas, talent and commitment are a major factor in the success we have experienced thus far. Over the past two years, we have cultivated a "team approach" to our organization and the team is performing well.

We have witnessed their commitment not only on fiscal matters but in responding to a wide variety of emergencies. Most recently, the well coordinated and tireless efforts of our public works, public safety and inspectional personnel during the recent unprecedented floods, prevented the loss of life and reduced the damage to property. I am committed to continue to work with our residents to make sure the property losses they suffered are given appropriate compensation from the federal government. Moreover, I have created a working group of department heads to identify ways in which we can improve our response to future emergencies and to identify steps we as a town can take to reduce the impact of future floods.

While we have seen our share of success and have begun to benefit from the hard choices we have made, our journey is far from over. We must continue to strike a careful balance between prudent planning and aspirations to expand and improve on our services and our infrastructure. This budget takes appropriate steps to address both concerns. It includes reserve accounts for future collective bargaining agreements and to mitigate the impact of a possible midyear reduction in local aid. We also create an account to begin to offset the looming cost of retired employees' health care.

As previously mentioned, this budget funds six new civilian dispatch positions in the police department. We also propose to restore funding for the grant writer's position. We believe this will allow us to seek new revenues that will more than make up for the position's funding. We further propose modest increases in the Council of Aging budget and in our summer programs and events and celebrations budgets.

This budget also funds the principal and interest costs of an aggressive capital program that includes the renovations of the South Middle School, the purchase of 22 acres of land from Norfolk County, renovation of the East Braintree Fire Station, replacement of the HVAC at the Police Station, \$1.7 million in additional road improvements and \$700,000 in school capital improvements. We will complete and surpass our 100 Roads program, having completed 74 roads in the first two years we will repair an additional 26 this year. We will also continue our beautification efforts throughout the town. Having now completed our gateway project at Capen's Circle, we will now look to have a gateway project finished on Rt. 37 and begin our Union Street improvements. We have planted over 250 trees and will plant another 125 trees this year along our public ways.

An important goal for this year will be to finalize plans for a Tri-Town Water Treatment Facility with our neighbors of Holbrook and Randolph. This much needed capital project needs to have a sense of urgency. One need only witness the MWRA situation which began this weekend to remind us of the importance of a quality water supply system.

The work we have done over the past two years has begun to elevate Braintree above our counterparts. Communities all around us are slashing their budgets, reducing school and public safety personnel, cutting services, and raising taxes and fees.

The budget plan that I present to you tonight includes no layoffs, fully funds our collective bargaining agreements, prioritizes our schools and public safety, funds an aggressive capital plan including the purchase of 22-acres of open space and reduces the per household trash fee by \$10.

I have spoken repeatedly about Braintree positioning ourselves to be the star of the South Shore í this budget clearly demonstrates our progress towards that goal and my sincere belief that Braintree's best days are yet to come.