



# Braintree Town Council

## Committee on Elder Affairs & Veterans' Services

One JFK Memorial Drive  
Braintree, Massachusetts 02184

### MEMBERS

Lawrence Mackin, Chairman  
Joseph Reynolds, Vice-Chairman  
Stephen C. O'Brien, Member

## AGENDA

**Monday, October 3, 2022**

**Starting Time – 6:00 p.m. to end by 6:30pm  
Fletcher Hall (In-person)**

### **ZOOM (optional for viewing)**

Please click the link below to join the webinar:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/81567288847>

Telephone: Dial US: +1 312 626 6799

Webinar ID: **815 6728 8847**

International numbers available: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/81567288847>

### Roll Call

### Approval of Minutes

- October 6, 2021

### Old Business

- None

### New Business

- 050 22 Councilor Reynolds: COA Parking Lot Expansion Project Discussion or take up any action relative thereto (*Initial Discussion*)

### Adjournment



# Braintree Town Council

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One JFK Memorial Drive  
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### MEMBERS

Julia Flaherty, Chairwoman  
David Ringius, Vice-Chairman  
Donna Connors, member

## October 6, 2021

### MINUTES

A meeting of the Committee on Elder Affairs & Veterans' Services was held Remote via Zoom Webinar, on Wednesday, October 6, 2021 at 7:30p.m.

Chairwoman Flaherty asked there be a moment of silence for all those serving in our military both home and abroad.

Chairwoman Flaherty was in the Chair.  
Clerk of the Council, Susan Cimino, conducted the roll call.

Present: Julia Flaherty, Chairwoman  
David Ringius, Vice-Chairman arrived @7:35pm  
Donna Connors, member

Also Present: Sharmila Biswas, Director of Elder Affairs  
Vincent Fontaine, Veterans Agent  
Padro "Pete" Vidal, Braintree Veteran's Council

### APPROVAL OF MINUTES

- September 10, 2020

Motion made by Councilor Connors to Approve Minutes of September 10, 2020

**Motion:** by Councilor Connors to Approve Minutes of September 10, 2020

**Second:** by Councilor Flaherty

**Roll Call Vote:** For (2 – Connors, Flaherty), Against (0), Absent (1 - Ringius), Abstain (0)

### OLD BUSINESS

- None

Chairwoman Flaherty stated there is no Old Business.

## **NEW BUSINESS**

- 030 21 Councilor Flaherty: Discussion with Committee members and attendees or take up any action relative thereto
  - Introduce Veteran Services Coordinator Vincent Fontaine and discuss the short and long term plans he has to use his office to help Braintree Veterans.

Councilor Flaherty introduced Veteran Services Coordinator Vincent Fountaine. Vincent Fountaine, Veteran Services Coordinator stated we are making a plan to help Veteran's in Braintree. There are over 1,800 Veterans that live in Braintree. We have 484 Veterans/Widows who receive VA benefits. Each receives about \$2,800 monthly for their disabilities or pensions. We work very hard so that Veterans receive the benefits they deserve.

Councilor Flaherty asked in what way can this committee be of service to you. Vincent Fountaine replied it would be good to come before the committee to suggest what we would like. I think in Braintree we could use some type of Veterans housing. Councilor Flaherty agreed she would like to see Veteran housing in Braintree. Noting that initiative we can advocate for but beyond our scope. That would be a Mayoral power. I would be happy to be of support.

Mr. Fountaine stated the mayor is very supportive of the Veterans in town.

Mr. Fountaine stated during COVID Veterans are isolated. Mental health is an issue. I am seeing more come into the office on a daily basis. Many come in for their Veteran claims. We are very compassionate about their needs and get through the weeds of the VA.

Councilor Connors stated welcome and thank you for your service. Do you have a priority list we can advocate for? Could there be a coffee-hour?

Mr. Fountaine stated the American Legion had a coffee hour every Friday at 10am. They have been a great partner. The VA social worker has given this information to her clients that the American Legion is a good place to go.

Councilor Ringius asked what the number one issue is for Veterans.

Mr. Fountaine stated housing and also making they are financially set. To be sure the Town will help them feel secure financially in life. The Town can advertise and get the word out there is a Veterans office in town.

Councilor Ringius stated thank you and we would like to check in with you on a regular basis.

Mr. Fountaine stated this Friday the Mayor will be signing a proclamation recognizing Braintree's Purple Heart recipients.

- Update from Elder Affairs Director Sharmila Biswas and an opportunity to highlight Elder Affairs activities and to address how Covid precautions will proceed as the weather cools in the coming months.

Sharmila Biswas, Director of Elder Affairs stated one year ago we were uncertain and doing a lot of stepping out of the box. Doing porch visits and making a lot of phone calls to see if elders were ok. Now people are starting to come in again but continue to do events outside if weather permits. We received outside heaters with the COVID funds. We have the lawyers coming in doing their free consultations. We have an open enrollment for Medicare seminar. We are keeping a waiting list for inside. We are almost back to normal, just not a full house. The best thing is a new parking lot.

Councilor Flaherty asked how can this committee be of service to you.

Ms. Biswas stated you are always welcome here. I think people know we have programs for active older adults. We welcome anyone over 60 years. We also do outreach and applications for fuel assistance, homecare services connections and food supplies. It is important people know we are here. We never stopped helping people. We bring elders to the store with our van. We used to do 8 people at a time but during COVID we could only do 2-3 at a time.

Councilor Flaherty asked how do you feel with elders being isolated during COVID.

Ms. Biswas stated we have a program called the Friendly Visitor who does porch visits and phone calls during COVID. We keep in touch with people who are isolated.

Councilor Connors asked if there is a program to adopt a senior for the holiday.

Ms. Biswas stated pre-COVID Lombardo's had a Thanksgiving dinner for elders but not during COVID. Now they did pre-packaged dinners. We had a tree outside to pick a tag and have people bring gifts so we could give to elders who did not have people to open gifts with.

Councilor Ringius stated thank you for what you do. It is great you thinking outside the box. Many elders were in isolation. The way you reach out to them is great. Keep us informed and we will get the word out. We want to be involved. Do you have a Facebook page?

Ms. Biswas stated I would like to create a Facebook page but we get the word out. We used to have young kids give sessions on how to use your iPhone and tablet.

Councilor Ringius stated it would be great to have our younger generation help out our older generation. They can learn from each other.

- Introduce the new commander of the Braintree Veteran's Council – Padro “Pete” Vidal, to say a few words.

Chairwoman Flaherty introduced Padro “Pete” Vidal, Braintree Veteran's Council and stated anything we can do to help please let us know.

Padro “Pete” Vidal, Braintree Veteran's Council stated I just took over. We have been going downhill the past two years. The VFW had to sell their building. Their membership has declined. The DAV has also lost membership. As Commander of the American Legion for the past two years, I have had problems getting people to our post. We have about 190 members. I run a Facebook page for American Legion and hoping to attract new members. It would be good for this Committee to follow us and share on Facebook.

Councilor Ringius stated hopefully people will begin to come back out and we will continue to help by sharing your Facebook page. You are a strong Veteran. Thank you for the part you play in this role.

Councilor Connors stated thank you for your service. Where is the new VFW building? I do follow this Facebook page along with the Boy Scouts Troop 22.

Mr. Vidal stated it is behind the Library at 325 Washington Street.

Chairwoman Flaherty stated thank you for coming to this meeting and giving us information on what is going on.

Chairwoman Flaherty asked if there was a motion to adjourn.

A Motion was made by Councilor Ringius to adjourn.

**Motion:** by Councilor Ringius to adjourn

**Second:** by Councilor Connors

**Roll Call Vote:** For (3 – Connors, Flaherty, Ringius), Against (0), Absent (0), Abstain (0)

Meeting adjourned at 8:25PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Susan M. Cimino  
Clerk of the Council