



Braintree Town Council

Committee on Elder Affairs & Veterans' Services

One JFK Memorial Drive
Braintree, Massachusetts 02184

MEMBERS

Joseph Reynolds, Chairman
Shannon Hume, Vice-Chairman
Peter Morin, Member

AGENDA

Monday, December 1, 2025

**Starting Time – 6:30 p.m.
Johnson Chambers**

Pledge of Allegiance/Moment of Silence

Roll Call

Approval of Minutes

- February 18, 2025

Old Business

- **035 24** Councilor Reynolds: Elder Affairs and Veteran Services Committee Discussion/Update or take up any action relative thereto (*previously tabled*)

New Business

- **041 25** Councilor Reynolds: Review the Mayor's proposed discount increase of the Town's Veteran Tax exemption or take up any action relative thereto
- **042 25** Councilor Reynolds: Status update on the Senior Tax Program or take up any action relative thereto
- **043 25** Councilor Reynolds: Community feedback on Elder Affairs programming and services or take up any action relative thereto
- **044 25** Councilor Reynolds: Community feedback on Veterans Services programming and services or take up any action relative thereto
- **045 25** Councilor Reynolds: Discussion on proposed Braintree Veterans Memorial Steering Committee or take up any action relative thereto

Adjournment



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February 18, 2025

MINUTES

A meeting of the Committee on Elder Affairs & Veterans' Services was held in Johnson Chambers, on Tuesday, February 18, 2025 at 6:30p.m.

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

Chairman Reynolds was in the Chair.
Chairman Reynolds conducted the roll call.

Present: Joseph Reynolds, Chairman
Shannon Hume, Vice-Chairwoman
Peter Morin, member

Also Present: Michael Esmond, Finance Director
Elsa Buccini, Elder Affair finances
Michelle Metro, Coordinator Elder Affairs
Dawn DiMartino

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

- January 30, 2024

Motion made by Councilor Hume to Approve Minutes of January 30, 2024

Motion: by Councilor Hume to Approve Minutes of January 30, 2024

Second: by Councilor Morin

Vote: For (3 – Hume, Morin, Reynolds), Against (0), Absent (0), Abstain (0)

OLD BUSINESS

- None

NEW BUSINESS

- 035 24 Councilor Reynolds: Elder Affairs and Veteran Services Committee Discussion/Update or take up any action relative thereto

Chairman Reynolds stated Sharmila Biswas, Director of Elder Affairs was unable to join us this evening. We do not have a Veterans Agent for the town at this time. Thank you for joining us Elsa Buccini, Elder Affair finances and Michelle Metro, Coordinator Elder Affairs. We also have Michael Esmond, Finance Director to give us updates as they pertain to some tax services that are available to our seniors and veterans as well.

Chairman Reynolds stated this year the state passed the HEROs Act which is a significant update to the Veterans services and programs available.

Michelle Metro, Coordinator Elder Affairs explained it is so busy and it is really good. It took a lot for people to come back from COVID but it is back as it was in 2019. We are seeing new faces. We started the Corn Hole League. We listen and change things accordingly to keep people coming in. Elsa Buccini, Elder Affair finances explained we are changing the radios in our vans. We have done all the paperwork and it has been all approved.

Chairman Reynolds asked if the vans were ever used for anything else or rented out for other uses. Michelle Metro stated we have used them for the Braintree Day and also for voting. Councilor Morin stated you are also doing medical appointments, groceries and do you do social events to restaurants?

Ms. Metro stated in nicer weather we try to do one dinner out a month.

Councilor Morin asked are you still getting grants to assist in the purchase of vans?

Ms. Metro stated yes. We have three working vans now. The ages are anywhere from 4 to 7 years.

Our first trip of the season is April 10th a Bingo cruise in Boston.

There are multiple St. Patrick's Day celebrations starting on March 14th with a band and full Irish dinner, and bag pipes on March 17th.

We have a men's coffee hour and they requested the Domino's game to play.

Tuesday's there is a group that plays cards and are very welcoming to others.

Chairman Reynolds asked about the Senior Work-off Program. This is to work up to \$1,500 off the real estate taxes in exchange to do work in town hall.

Michael Esmond, Finance Director stated the mayor increased the total amount from the town from \$30,000 to \$50,000. We also increased the cap for households to \$1,500. The target is about 30 households we could impact from that. We want to continue to work at how our seniors interface with this program – how they apply for it. The intension is to streamline the application process and support the COA process. They align people with their skillset and support departments.

Ms. Metro stated it is a lot for the seniors to apply. The online is difficult for them. They have to have a physical as well.

Councilor Hume asked is this all state requirements for all this?

Michael Esmond, Finance Director stated there probably are some things that are at our discretion. Some have to do with insurance. We don't want to do anything reckless but want to make sure it is right sized to what we need. They are "employees" so there is a uniform onboarding process.

Councilor Morin suggested an online video to explain the process. I am willing to help with the paperwork.

Councilor Hume stated you could get BELD help you make the video. Why do they need a physical? That is an additional cost to the seniors.

Ms. Metro stated we can use a physical if it is not too long ago. It is inconvenience more than anything else.

Elsa Buccini, Elder Affair finances explained we are reaching out for best practices on streamlining the process from other municipalities as well.

Councilor Morin this is hard to administer and to make sure the person fits with what they are asked to do.

Chairman Reynolds stated Governor Healey recently announced annuities for veterans through the HERO Act as well as recent legislation that applies to municipal finance related provisions of the HERO Act.

Essentially new Veterans property taxes clause to our general laws. They are increases in the percentage or COLA that can increase the amount of taxes that a veteran may be able to get off of their home.

Michael Esmond, Finance Director stated for FY25 there are 231 households taking advantage of this. The HERO Act increases the benefits. The total cost is about \$234,000 in FY25 for the existing current benefits. Adoption of this would be an additional cost of about \$248,000. This is an annual enrollment and are applied for every year. In FY25 we had 6 new eligible veteran households that applied.

Chairman Reynolds stated benefits are also available to seniors, blind persons and spouses. I am excited about the increased benefits to our veterans community members and seniors. It will come as a cost to the town. We will need to balance that going forward and look at what we can afford in the years to follow.

Chairman Reynolds explained the excise tax for a disabled veteran. They can request their excise tax exempt, reimbursement from the state.

Massachusetts has done a great job in leading the country in the types of veterans benefits that they have made available. The Executive Office of Veterans Services has done a great job in identifying those needs including incremental increases that do make a difference.

Chapter 115 Benefits is a monthly benefit paid directly to veterans. It is approved through our local Veterans Service officers.

Chairman Reynolds stated there will be a woman's town hall by the woman's veterans administration Executive Office of Veteran Services that is scheduled for Wednesday, February 26, 2025 from 5pm-7pm at Suffolk University.

The state of Massachusetts and Executive Office of Veteran Services announced 2025 is the year of the 250th anniversary of the American Revolution. There will be a year long campaign of "acts of service" campaign to benefit veterans. This is to show our gratitude to veterans.

Chairman Reynolds asked Elder Affairs representatives about the drainage project and how it went and if there is an update on that.

Ms. Metro explained the stormwater part is fine. They did take some parking spots away. We are filling up the parking lot most days between 9:30am and 2pm it is pretty full.

There are still some parts of that project to finish up. The top parts have some cracks and potholes that will be fixed when the project is complete. We can't wait!

It was noted a big veteran outreach was held by the Norfolk County Sheriffs Department in Braintree. Volunteers were given packets with information on VA and state benefits, local benefits, private providers and volunteer providers.

Chairman Reynolds stated the mayor is thinking of naming a Veterans Memorial Committee. A talent pool application is on the mayor's website if you are interested.

Councilor Hume asked about the Hometown Hero's banners all across town.

Chairman Reynolds stated a volunteer in the VSO is taking information for any families who are interested. It is \$100 and provide a picture and a little background.

Councilor Hume asked about the "Wall of Honor" outside of the Collector's office. What is going on with that? Ron Fasier brought this up at our last meeting. It is tucked away out of sight.

Chairman Reynolds stated this committee would help and there is money from the state that could cover the costs.

Chairman Reynolds stated there is an idea to put it into the main hallway.

Councilor Hume stated senior housing also needs to be addressed.

Councilor Morin stated we have to keep working for relief of property taxes for seniors as a whole. I appreciate the efforts for the "work off" being expanded. Some towns have adopted a piggy-back program on the circuit breaker relief program that has provided tax relief using the list of individuals who are found eligible for circuit breaker tax relief to provide local option property tax relief as well. We should consider doing this in the upcoming fiscal year utilizing whatever we have in overlay surplus that we can use for that. Free cash is not a good way to fund it.

Councilor Hume stated seniors can't afford to move from their current housing. Whatever we can do to help seniors stay in Braintree I fully support.

Director Esmond stated thank you to all three of the councilors tonight. We can budget for a predictable amount of relief for seniors each year. The mayor asked me to look at this and I will certainly bring back to the mayor this discussion. We can do more to try to explain what programs exist and are offered to seniors who are eligible. There are asset/income restrictions that may not seem sufficient.

A Motion was made by Councilor Hume to table item 035 24 for future discussion.

Motion: by Councilor Hume to table item 035 24

Second: by Councilor Morin

Vote: For (3 – Hume, Morin, Reynolds), Against (0), Absent (0), Abstain (0)

Chairman Reynolds asked if there was a motion to adjourn.

A Motion was made by Councilor Hume to adjourn.

Motion: by Councilor Hume to adjourn

Second: by Councilor Morin

Vote: For (3 – Hume, Morin, Reynolds), Against (0), Absent (0), Abstain (0)

Meeting adjourned at 7:15PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Susan M. Cimino
Clerk of the Council