



Braintree Town Council
Committee of Ways & Means
One JFK Memorial Drive
Braintree, Massachusetts 02184

MEMBERS

Joseph Reynolds, Chairman
Julia Flaherty, Vice-Chairwoman
Elizabeth Maglio, Member

MINUTES
Thursday, May 4, 2023

A meeting of the Committee of Ways & Means was held via Zoom Webinar on Thursday, May 4, 2023 at 6:00pm.

Councilor Reynolds was in the Chair.
Clerk of the Council, Susan Cimino conducted the roll call.

Present: Joseph Reynolds, Chairman
Julia Flaherty, Vice-Chairwoman
Elizabeth Maglio, Member

Also Present: Margaret Laforest, Chief of Staff/Director of Operations
Ed Spellman, Director of Municipal Finance
James M. Casey, Town Clerk
Terri Stano, Library Director
Cindy DePina, HR Director
Shawn McGoldrick, CLA – Town Auditor
Matt McCullough, CLA – Town Auditor
residents

Approval of Minutes

- December 1, 2022

Motion read by Councilor Flaherty to approve the Minutes of December 1, 2022

Motion: by Councilor Flaherty to approve the Minutes of December 1, 2022.

Second: by Councilor Maglio

Vote: For (3–Flaherty, Maglio, Reynolds), Against (0), Absent (0), Abstain (0)

- December 6, 2022

Motion read by Councilor Flaherty to approve the Minutes of December 6, 2022

Motion: by Councilor Flaherty to approve the Minutes of December 6, 2022.

Second: by Councilor Maglio

Vote: For (3–Flaherty, Maglio, Reynolds), Against (0), Absent (0), Abstain (0)

Old Business

- None

New Business

- 23 025 Mayor: FY2024 Operating Budget or take up any action relative thereto

FY2024 Revenue Forecast Overview

<u>APPENDIX F:</u>	<u>PAGES</u>	<u>APPENDIX L (salary detail)</u>
152 Human Resources	17-20	9-11
610 Library	85-91	103-107

Chairman Reynolds stated 2024 will be a very challenging year for us. Braintree has had some difficult financial years. Not just in the last 3-4 years but we’ve struggled as a community for the last decade for revenue generation. Braintree over the last 8-10 years we have had negative growth. This brings challenges in the budget and particularly COVID exacerbated an already difficult situation. With the lack of growth in revenue there had to be some tough decisions that were made by the administration.

FY2024 Revenue Forecast Overview

Margaret Laforest, Chief of Staff stated we are here tonight to submit the revenue forecast this evening. The FY24 Budget General Revenue Fund is \$160,405,001. State Aid is \$28,035,138. FY24 State Aid Offsets and Assessments \$4,954,588. Local Estimated Receipts \$20,882,990. Other Financing Sources \$5,755,074. FY24 Department Recommendations \$160,405,001. Over 50% of the Municipal Budget is spent on Education.

Ed Spellman explained all departmental salaries are broken down in L1 by individual.

Councilor Flaherty stated that the proposed new growth is \$850,000 which is the same as last year though we did not hit that target last year.

Ed Spellman explained we use a 5 year average and there where two years we did not hit it; one being last year and one being 2009.

Margaret Laforest stated there are projects that are coming along including Integra and the Allen Street project will come on the tax rolls; as well as Banner Park where there is going to be development there.

Shawn McGoldrick stated I will say trash fees have not increased in 12-13 years. It has been in an operating deficit. The costs of operating the trash do not get offset by the actual revenue generated.

Shawn McGoldrick stated the closer you get to your actuals in your budget will negatively impact your free cash generation.

Councilor Flaherty asked about pros and cons to balance the budget with free cash.

Ed Spellman stated that the use of free cash is a one-time revenue source. What you try to do is match your revenue and expenses. This year we had a drop in the Federal ARPA aid and also there was a drop of approximately \$2.2 million in Federal School ESSR aid. That \$4 million had to be made up somewhere. We used free cash in the fiscal year of roughly \$4.2 million to balance a budget without making reductions to the School budget or to town services. Our free cash was about \$8 million.

Shawn McGoldrick stated this is not new and we know why it is done because no one wants to cut expenditures or appropriations for departments or school children. Over the past 3-4 years there has been a directive to tighten the belt and for budgets to be what departments need not what they want.

Councilor Maglio stated we are asking to level fund but that is still more than last year and it is still with severe cuts made 2-3 years ago. So what happens is we make decisions on what we are going to do without instead of making decisions on what our priorities are. When we trim we are starting further back when we go to plan next year. Where is the list of fees that we have control over versus those set by the state. We are down to pennies and pennies add up. Where are the big ideas that will give us less than \$1 million of new growth.

Chairman Reynolds stated there are a lot of questions we have on the revenues.

152 - Human Resources FY2023 Budget presented by Cindy DePina, HR Director

Human Resources proposed FY2024 Budget request is \$24,533,923. The Human Resources Department is comprised of four full time employees; Human Resources Director, Benefits Coordinator, Human Resources Generalist and Veterans' Agent and one part-time Administrative Assistant to the Veterans' Agent. There are four programs within Human Resources; Administration, Employee Benefits, Veterans' Benefits and Celebrations.

Our department is responsible for coordinating hiring, resignations and retirements of all non-school and non-BELD employees. We process all salary increases for steps and cost of living adjustments, contractual agreement provisions and track employee accruals, usage and balances. The Director is part of the negotiating team for collective bargaining and handles step 2 and step 3 grievances as well as investigations of any Massachusetts Commission Against Discrimination (MCAD) complaints. We approve/deny all Family Medical Leave (FMLA), Families First Coronavirus Response Act (FFCRA), Massachusetts COVID-19 Emergency Paid Sick Leave and other leave requests.

Employee Benefits for all Town employees including School and BELD are administered by Human Resources. The Town is self-insured for its health insurance, workers' compensation and injured-on-duty programs and unemployment. Department of Transportation (DOT) drug and alcohol testing and non-DOT drug and alcohol testing are coordinated through our department. Employer Medicare/Social Security and Pension payments are paid out of our department also.

The Veterans' Division assists Town of Braintree veterans with Chapter 115 Benefits, Federal disability benefits, health benefits, food, housing and other needs. The Division also runs the Memorial Day, (including placing a new flag on each gravesite), Veterans' Day and Pearl Harbor Day events for the Town. The following is a summary of the accounts with significant changes and the reason for each:

0115201-517004	Unemployment Compensation	12.9% decrease	Based on current year paid to date and projection until the end of the fiscal year.
0115201-573001	Dues/Membership	33.6% increase	MMHR, SHRM membership increases. NEHRA membership(s) added.
0115204-512007	Workers' Comp Public Safety	38.6% increase	Based on information from carrier that this is the anticipated increase due to claims experience.
0115204-515003	Employee Assistance	28.2% increase	Increase from utilization and programs for employees
0115204-515003	Health Reimbursement	6.9% decrease	Based on March 2022 headcounts.
0115204-517002	Workers' Compensation	21.8% decrease	Based on current year expenditures to date and projection until the end of the fiscal year.
0115204-515003	Employer Medicare	.8% increase	Based on salaries times 1.45%.
0115204-517005	Group Health & Medical Insurance	.8% increase	FY2023 budget.
0115204-517006	Pension Fund	8.8% increase	Based on FY23 projected increases in Pension costs.
0115206-511002	Department Head	2% increase	step COLA increase.
0115206-511004	Administrative/Clerical	4.8% decrease	retirement at a higher salary
0115206-530003	Data Processing	66.7% increase	For VetraSpec software annual fee anticipated increase.
0115206-534004	Cell Phone	0% increase	
0115206-571001	Meetings/Seminars	2,000% increase	Based on increase with keeping current with state & federal laws, state statutes & compliance.
0115206-577001	Veteran Benefits – Ordinary	11.8% decrease	Based on FY23 expenditures to date, projections through the end of the fiscal year,
0115207-553004	Celebrations/Signs	0% increase	funds available for Veteran Celebrations/Events.

Questions/Answers:

Division 152 (Human Resources, pg. 17-20):

Can you explain the decrease in group life/medical (0115204-517005)? Rates obviously did not go down, so the assumption is that we are planning on drawing and utilizing reserve from the internal service fund? If so, what is the balance in the fund and how will this use impact the fund moving forward?

The Town is freezing the FY 2023 rates for FY 2024. The original projection was a 6% increase. The Town has also budgeted for a planned premium holiday for FY 2024 in May 2024, which is why there is a decrease in the health insurance line for FY 2024.

The 6/30/22 internal service fund balance was 13.6 million.

the level funding of the FY 2024 rates will reduce it by 1.1m and

The premium holiday is approx. 1.2m for a reduction of 2.3m from the 13.6m to 11.3m

Employer Medicare (0115204-517003); why is this budget essentially remaining stagnant?

This should reflect approximately a 5% increase as has been the case in the last few years. This is an error and will need to be amended to show an increase. The increase is estimated based on COLA and step increases for the FY. $1,487,820 * 1.05\% = 1,562,211$. This will be corrected through a supp appr in FY 2024

Director DePina stated we are responsible for hiring, on-boarding and off-boarding and the benefits for the entire town including BELD and Schools. This includes workers compensation. I am looking to leverage more technology to become more efficient. We need to stay on top of state statutes and state regulations. Not doing so could result in large penalties.

Councilor Flaherty stated I recognize your budget is largely contractual though the sums are not small and not really negotiable. What is pre-employment?

Director DePina stated pre-employment is different for different employees like someone with CDL licenses or clerical. Some things include cori checks, and screening like drug testing etc.

Councilor Flaherty asked on Page 18 what is health reimbursement.

Director DePina stated our health insurance has a \$250 deductible up to \$750. We tried to help with that and make it not so painful to our employees. We supply a health card for \$250 card and family gets \$500.

Councilor Maglio asked about the outstanding contracts that need to get settled.

We have settled with all but AFSME/Police Patrol/Police Superiors/Schools. What we settled we have put aside for these other Unions as well.

Chairman Reynolds asked for a number of the various negotiations. Were the costs on track in general. Director DePina stated all contracts expire on July 1, 2022. In general it was on track for what we have budgeted.

Councilor Maglio asked if there are any town-wide performance evaluation process? Does HR have training etc. for employees.

Director DePina stated it varies. The collective bargaining agreements include some of these. If someone is excellent in every category, they should be somewhere else so we should give employees objectives and goals. Our role isn't as active as in some other organizations. The employees managers work with these. I am currently working to get some mandatory training but also the simulator for driving. Prevention of back injuries etc.

610 - Library FY2023 Budget presented by Terri Stano, Library Director

Background Information - Thayer Public Library is comprised of 30,440 square feet on three levels with a collection of over 100,000 items. The staff consists of 25 full-time and part-time employees. Eight full-time staff members are professional librarians with master's degrees in library science.

The Thayer Public Library is open 64 hours per week during most of the year; 6 days per week and 4 evenings per week. We are governed by nine active trustees and have an engaged Library Friends group, which generously supports many of our programs and services.

Thayer Public Library offers all library users a welcoming, vibrant community space where helpful, pleasant staff members strive to make their experience worthwhile. We encourage reading, civic, and cultural literacy and the creative use of leisure time by providing programs and conveniently organized materials essential for learning, personal enrichment, and intellectual growth. We are committed to responding to the changing nature of library services by providing current and emerging resources and technologies to encourage life-long use of the library.

During FY23 the library accomplished many goals outlined for that fiscal year. We analyzed positions, tasks and optimized workflow in the Technical Services Department and Children's Department. We added additional funds to meet the demands of material in digital format. We concentrated on replacing and rebuilding staffing levels due to resignations and retirements during the pandemic. We have implemented in-house training sessions, professional development courses, conferences, and webinars. Librarians focused on restoring programs, implementing new programs and growing attendance. New programs added to the library programs schedule are; Board Game night, Maj Jongg instruction and play, Science fiction book club, Yoga for toddlers, and Baby and me. One highly popular program is the Friday morning children's room drop-in play for infants to age 4.

The library continues to develop the Foreign Language, and Library of Things collections. Did you know you could borrow a blood pressure monitor or light therapy lamp? One of our newest additions to the Library of Things is memory kits for individuals with dementia. This project is in partnership with the Department of Elder Affairs.

Trustees and I have worked diligently on updating and developing new library policies. The collection development policy was recently updated, which will help us navigate the countless material challenges we have encountered this past year.

Going forward, our top priority is developing the Strategic Plan which will guide library services over the next five years and help us meet the evolving needs of the residents. The Library Board of Trustees continues to be actively engaged in the process of reevaluating the library space and services to meet the needs of the Braintree residents now and in the future. The building inside and out needs to say, we have high expectations to meet the community needs. Additionally, the library staff will continue to meet regularly to brainstorm about new trends, shifts and ways to keep the collection relevant. We continually need to evolve and adapt to changing demands.

This year's budget reflects the library's ability to identify areas that can be reduced to remain cost effective, while still striving to meet State Aid requirements for certification.

The library has a lean budget and not many areas of discretionary cash. The slight changes that are reflected in the FY24 budget are either Union negotiated increases or decreases to keep the library's budget at the Municipal Appropriation Requirement. This figure is based on a formula provided by the Massachusetts Board of Library Commissioners. It is one of the many requirements necessary to meet minimum standards for State Aid to Public Libraries. It's important to note that 3.67% of the library's budget comes from State Aid and Friends of Thayer Public Library. These funds are used directly to provide programs, digital content, museum passes, movie license and enhance the building and grounds in ways that the town cannot provide.

On behalf of the Trustees and staff of the library, I want to thank the Town Council and Mayor Kokoros for continuing to support the library.

How your tax dollars are working for you!

- 100,000 estimated people annually walk through our library yearly.
- 3,3018 total hours open this year; library is open 6 days a week including evenings
- 295,333 total circulation of all library items were check out; 237,144 are physical material (books, magazines and DVD's), 89,956 is electronic content use by library card holders
- 9 internet computers with a total of 7,280 use per year; Library provides free wireless internet for patrons to use personal devices
- 877 total programs offered with a combination of in-person onsite, off-site, virtual, hybrid or recorded. 10,107 library patrons participated.
- 47,302 items went through the OCLN delivery system
- 2,080 hours dedicated to shelving library items.
- 3,640 hours dedicated to handling 8,417 reference transactions by two Reference Librarians.
- 11,471 registered borrowers, 11,327 are Braintree residents
- 25 staff members, 8 with master's degrees in library science
- Library Express program for homebound residents (partnered with Department of Elder Affairs)
- 323 individuals used the private study room in the Reference Department
- 138 uses of logan auditorium. By outside organizations
- 54 online databases; 18 databases the library purchases independently and most can be accessed from home
- 210 Circulations per hour; Services desks handle an average of 2,000 items daily
- average of 7 circulations per card holder, value of library services calculates a savings of over \$100 per card holder each library visit.
- \$41.37 total operating per capita

Director Stano stated the Library's proposed FY2024 budget is a very lean budget. The Library budget is all state regulated. We meet all the certifications. Braintree is so supportive to their library. The library is not just what we have but what we do for and with people. The library is a place to connect, gather and socialize. We changed our lights to LED and see decrease in bills. We continue to gather information and revitalization of the youth room.

Councilor Flaherty stated the library is one of the best resources in town. The variety of resources has been expanded and I admire the versatility of the library. I noticed your Administration line item has changed.

Terri Stano stated the new administration position has been reduced due to hiring a new person at a lower step.

Councilor Maglio stated I am so proud of our library. The opportunities are so welcoming. What are some challenging decisions about library services.

Terri Stano stated we are very mindful of our spending, and we stretch the dollars with the help of our Board of Directors guidance. We receive state aid to help pay for things in the best interest of the residents. Programs that we implement comes out of the state aid. This budget you see in front of you is just the operating budget from the town. This year the library got \$68,000 in state aid.

Chairman Reynolds stated the library is a great public asset. Did you have positions funded but not filled in FY23?

Terri Stano stated 3 positions that were funded but not filled. They are support staff positions. People retired and we kept the funding because we have not filled the positions yet. So last year's funding we did not use and we are going to fund them for FY24. We hope to figure out what positions to fill.

Motion: by Councilor Flaherty to Table Order 23 025 to the next Committee of Ways & Means meeting

Second: by Councilor Maglio

Vote: For (3–Flaherty, Maglio, Reynolds), Against (0), Absent (0), Abstain (0)

- 23 026 Mayor: FY2024 Budget – Community Preservation Committee or take up any action relative thereto
(Presented by Planning Director Melissa SantucciRozzi on May 16) (Table to May 16)

Motion: by Councilor Flaherty to Table Order 23 026 to the Committee of Ways & Means meeting on May 16, 2023

Second: by Councilor Maglio

Vote: For (3–Flaherty, Maglio, Reynolds), Against (0), Absent (0), Abstain (0)

- 23 027 Mayor: FY2024 Budget - Continuation of Revolving Funds or take up any action relative thereto
(Revolving Accounts on the date Department Head presents Budget)

5/4 Library[®] (Table to May 9)

5/9 Golf[®]

5/10 Department of Public Works[®] - Recycling

5/16 Dept. of Elder Affairs[®]

5/16 Municipal Licenses & Inspections[®]

5/17 Education[®]

There were no questions on the Library Revolving Fund.

Motion: by Councilor Flaherty to Table Order 23 027 to the Committee of Ways & Means meeting on May 9, 2023

Second: by Councilor Maglio

Vote: For (3–Flaherty, Maglio, Reynolds), Against (0), Absent (0), Abstain (0)

It was unanimously voted to adjourn the meeting at 8:48p.m. by Roll Call Vote.

Respectfully submitted,
Susan M. Cimino
Clerk of the Council

Documents provided for Meeting

- 23 025 Mayor: FY2024 Operating Budget or take up any action relative thereto
- 23 026 Mayor: FY2024 Budget – Community Preservation Committee or take up any action relative thereto

- 23 027 Mayor: FY2024 Budget - Continuation of Revolving Funds or take up any action relative thereto