



# Braintree Town Council

## Committee of Ways & Means

One JFK Memorial Drive  
Braintree, Massachusetts 02184

### MEMBERS

Meredith Boericke, Chairwoman  
Charles Ryan, Vice-Chair  
Donna Connors, Member  
Julia Flaherty, Member  
Steven Sciascia, Member

# MINUTES

## May 6, 2020

A meeting of the Committee of Ways & Means was held Remote via Zoom Webinar, on Wednesday, May 6, 2020 at 6:00p.m.

Councilor Boericke was in the Chair.

Clerk of the Council, Susan M. Cimino conducted the roll call.

All votes were taken by Roll Call Vote.

Present: Meredith Boericke, Chairwoman  
Charles Ryan, Vice-Chair  
Donna Connors, Member  
Julia Flaherty, Member  
Steven Sciascia, Member

Also Present: Nicole Taub, Chief of Staff  
Ed Spellman, Finance Director  
Shawn McGoldrick, Town Auditor  
Daryn Brown, Golf Director

### Approval of Minutes

- None

### Old Business

- None

**New Business**

- 20 038 Mayor: FY2021 Operating Budget or take up any action relative thereto

Chairwoman Boericke asked if there was a Motion to take off the table Order 20 038.  
 Councilor Ryan made a motion to take off the table Order 20 038.

**Motion:** by Councilor Ryan to take off the Table Order 20 038

**Second:** by Councilor Flaherty

**Roll Call Vote:** For (5–Boericke, Connors, Flaherty, Ryan, Sciascia), Against (0), Absent (0), Abstain (0)

The following Departments were in attendance to present their proposed FY2021 Budget:

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Golf®	107-115
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Committee members asked each department many questions about increase/decrease line items.  
 Some of the questions/answers are below.

Please find all FY2021 budget questions/answers posted on the town website at  
<https://braintree.ma.gov/449/Fiscal-Year-Budgets>

**Department 610 Golf**

Daryn Brown, Director of Golf reported the FY2021 Budget request is \$1,970,153 an increase of \$51,448 from the previous year. This is Director Brown’s 27<sup>th</sup> year managing the golf course. We annually to about 40,000 rounds of golf per year. We have programs with special needs and veterans. We participate in many community functions. In 2017 an addition was put on the club house and allows us to host many larger tournaments. We can host events up to 150 people which increases our revenue. We also host small events and luncheons. There is no rental fee for residents. We have finished our first year of in-house food services. We have got great feedback on this. We have two simulators. We were up 30% revenue with those prior to COVID.

Councilor Flaherty stated the Mayor asked departments to cut their budgets by 4%. Were you included in that request?

Daryn Brown stated yes we were included in that request.

Nicole Taub also stated the Golf is within the Department of Public Works and that department was asked to cut their budget by 4% which they did.

Daryn Brown explained due to anticipated functions and events they had to pad that account for food services. Without that, the overall budget would have been more of a decrease.

Jim Arsenault, DPW Director explained Golf is an Enterprise fund. It brings revenue in and expends it. It is self-funded.

Councilor Sciascia asked if any free tee times, carts, meals have been provided to anyone besides some Braintree High School and some benefit programs.

Daryn Brown stated no. Unless you are a paid member you cannot book a tee time without a credit card payment.

Councilor Sciascia asked if Golf shows a loss for its year is this anticipated anywhere.

Ed Spellman, Finance Director stated we would need to cover that loss before we set our tax rate in the fall of 2020 for our FY2021 budget. The last two years we needed to cover the Golf deficit before setting the tax rate for the next year. The Department of Revenue will not all a deficit to continue. The last two years we have transferred free cash to cover it.

Councilor Ryan asked why the reduction in laborers.

Daryn Brown stated we will save the full time costs and health care and pension costs that go along with it. We will utilize more part-time help and seasonal help.

Daryn Brown stated we had 12 huge events booked but may not to be held because of this COVID.

Councilor Ryan we are very lucky to have our own Golf Course. Hopefully going out to play golf should be allowed if they do it safely.

Daryn Brown stated we give revenue back to the Town of over \$100,000 to the general fund. We had a couple tough years but we do give each year. This year we were doing great until COVID. We had increase in simulator use and our food services were doing great. We are hoping to get the green light to open the golf course this weekend.

Councilor Connors asked about food service revenue.

Daryn Brown stated these small events and golf tournaments food sales were unexpected revenue. Projections were just based on daily food sales. We are still trying to see what the new normal will be.

Councilor Boericke asked about free cash and any golf deficit. How does that impact the FY21 budget.

Ed Spellman stated if we have a deficit for the golf fund on June 30, 2020 we would have to cover that deficit. It would need to be covered and voted by Town Council before we set our tax rate.

Councilor Boericke stated the Golf Course is a great resource and open space.

Councilor Connors asked why the food is not in a revolving account. Could this be more of a revolving account in the future.

Ed Spellman stated when this was set up it was a private contractor handling the food service. We can look into this and potentially set it up for food service. There are different statutes for enterprise funds and revolving accounts.

### **Department 151 Law**

Nicole Taub, Town Solicitor noted the FY2021 request is \$182,450 a reduction of \$139,843.96. The Legal office provides legal counsel to the Mayor, various Town Departments and its commissions and the Town Council when requested. Practicing in Municipal Law you get exposure to just about every area of legal practice that there is out there. The one major change is somewhat of a reorganization proposed in the Legal and Mayor's budget. The legal office has funded a part-time legal assistant/paralegal and part-time Town Solicitor. We thought it best to combine the Town Solicitor and Chief of Staff position and then restructure the legal office to provide for a full time Assistant Town Solicitor. This reorganization yields a savings of almost \$100,000 in the overall Operating Budget.

Councilor Connors asked if there is any conflict of interest with Ms. Taub being Chief of Staff and the Town Solicitor for the Mayor.

Nicole Taub stated as Town Solicitor, I work for the Mayor and ensure the town engages in legal behavior and I protect the town from risk. If I found myself in a position where I was asked a question as Chief of Staff, my answer would be the lawful one regardless. If there was ever a question we could engage outside counsel.

Councilor Connors stated my concern is there is a perception. Now she is doing both jobs and how are we going to get a fair decision. Should we get outside counsel to confirm there is no conflict.

Nicole Taub stated I can certainly talk to the Mayor but these roles work in tandem for the Mayor in an advisory capacity.

Councilor Flaherty asked about the jobs being one.

Nicole Taub stated the supplement of the full-time Solicitor will help with the day to day of this job.

Councilor Sciascia stated our Town Auditor Shawn McGoldrick has been of great value to the Town Council. This is the way the Mayor has chosen to staff its office. It is great at this time there is a cost savings. Would it be possible for the Town Council to get its own legal counsel?

Nicole Taub stated in other communities as the Town Council as the Legislative branch obtaining its independent legal counsel has come up and the overwhelming legal opinion is that it would be inappropriate.

#### **Department 121 Mayor's Office**

Nicole Taub, Interim Chief of Staff noted the FY2021 department budget request is \$511,609.

The Mayor's office is responsible for the daily management of our town. There are 3 staff members working under the direction of Mayor Kokoros. We made reductions to accounts that have historically been underspent. We reduced mileage. Mayor Kokoros tends to use the electric vehicle as opposed to his own vehicle. Project Manager IT line has been partially funded for the assistance in Munis to continue if we need it.

#### **Department 133 Finance Programs**

Edward Spellman, Finance Director noted the Finance Programs Budget for FY2021 is \$10,946,948. Finance there are three operations: Cash disbursements, cash receipts and a payroll function. That encumbers all the town finances operations. Our three main clients are the residents, employees, the Mayor and department heads and the Town Council. The increases in the budget are either contractual or COLA and/or step increases who are not at the maximum step.

Councilor Connors asked about the OPEB Actuarial?

Ed Spellman explained this valuation is conducted every two years. It was budgeted for in the FY20 budget (and is currently underway). Funds will be requested again in FY22.

Councilor Sciascia asked about the photocopier rental costs.

Ed Spellman explained the town had consolidated the copier lease process. We work with BELD and the procurement company. We saved significant money with the leases. All 3 in town hall are under the town accountant's budget. We standardized the copier's town-wide.

Ed Spellman explained it is about a 2 ½ year plan to phase from Softright to Munis.

Councilor Connors asked about the \$75,000 Consultant.  
Ed Spellman explained this is the contract with BELD to provide our IT Support.

Councilor Boericke asked about free cash and what are the long term implications of this.  
Ed Spellman stated currently we have about \$9.2 million dollars. Anticipated to draw down about \$254,000 in the Capital Plan. In the past we have taken a lot more. This will make the balance about \$8.9 million dollars. We are looking at a Supplemental Appropriation of about \$1.5 million dollars. Free cash would be brought down to about \$7.4 million. In this budget request we are asking for \$2.3 million. That would bring our balance to \$5.1 million. The way to rebuild free cash is the revenue you collect is over or higher than your budgeted revenue and your expenditures you budgeted you spend less than that.

Shawn McGoldrick, Town Auditor stated Braintree is not in a unique position in having to use its free cash more often right now. With the cut in local receipts and state aide it is almost a requirement unless you are to cut jobs or significantly reduce expenditures. Going forward I would suggest building free cash back up to what the town is accustomed to. The sale of properties or miscellaneous non-recurring items could bring up free cash.

Councilor Connors asked about the OPEB Liability that was removed this year.  
Ed Spellman, stated we will not be putting the amount into the OPEB Trust this year. The 2033 is the target date planned to have pension fully funded. This OPEB is primarily the healthcare component for retired employees. FY2011 we made our first appropriation into the OPEB trust.  
Shawn McGoldrick, Town Auditor stated it is something other towns are looking into this year to put off the funding but because there is no set date it has to be funded by there is no “penalty”.

Motion made by Councilor Ryan to TABLE Order 20 038 to the Committee of Ways & Means meeting on May 7, 2020.

**Motion:** by Councilor Ryan to Table Order 20 038 to May 7, 2020

**Second:** by Councilor Flaherty

**Roll Call Vote:** For (5–Boericke, Connors, Flaherty, Ryan, Sciascia), Against (0), Absent (0), Abstain (0)

- 20 039 Mayor: FY2021 Budget – Community Preservation Committee or take up any action relative thereto (**Presented by Christine Stickney on May 18**)

This item will be discussed at the Budget meeting on May 18, 2020.

Motion made by Councilor Ryan to TABLE Order 20 039 to the Committee of Ways & Means meeting on May 18, 2020.

**Motion:** by Councilor Ryan to Table Order 20 038 to May 18, 2020

**Second:** by Councilor Flaherty

**Roll Call Vote:** For (5–Boericke, Connors, Flaherty, Ryan, Sciascia), Against (0), Absent (0), Abstain (0)

- 20 040 Mayor: FY2021 Budget - Revolving Accounts or take up any action relative thereto  
**(Revolving Accounts will be presented on the date Department Head presents Budget)**

5/5	Library®	(R3, R4)
5/6	Golf®	(R8)
5/7	Department of Public Works® - Recycling	(R5, R6)
5/18	Dept. of Elder Affairs®	(R1)
5/18	Municipal Licenses & Inspections®	(R2)
5/19	Education®	(R7)

Chairwoman Boericke asked if there was a Motion to take off the table Order 20 040.  
 Councilor Ryan made a motion to take off the table Order 20 040.

**Motion:** by Councilor Ryan to take off the Table Order 20 040  
**Second:** by Councilor Sciascia  
**Roll Call Vote:** For (5–Boericke, Connors, Flaherty, Ryan, Sciascia), Against (0), Absent (0), Abstain (0)

Revolving Account R8 Golf was voted on this evening (May 6, 2020) and referred to the full Council for favorable recommendation.

Motion read by Councilor Ryan for favorable recommendation to the full Council Order 20 040 R8:

R8. That the Mayor be authorized to use a revolving fund in accordance with the provisions of Massachusetts General Laws chapter 44, section 53e ½ that may be spent by the Mayor, in conjunction with the golf greens superintendent without further appropriation during the fiscal year commencing July 1, 2020, for the collection of fees and payments from the collection of revenue generated from clinics and payments for group and individual lessons and the sales of pro shop materials collected during fiscal year 2021. The Mayor may spend up to \$110,000 in revolving fund monies during fiscal year 2021.

**Motion:** by Councilor Ryan for favorable recommendation to the full Council Order 20 040 R8  
**Second:** by Councilor Connors  
**Roll Call Vote:** For (5–Boericke, Connors, Flaherty, Ryan, Sciascia), Against (0), Absent (0), Abstain (0)

Motion made by Councilor Ryan to TABLE Order 20 040 to the Committee of Ways & Means meeting on May 7, 2020.

**Motion:** by Councilor Ryan to Table Order 20 040 to May 7, 2020  
**Second:** by Councilor Flaherty  
**Roll Call Vote:** For (5–Boericke, Connors, Flaherty, Ryan, Sciascia), Against (0), Absent (0), Abstain (0)

It was unanimously voted to adjourn the meeting at 7:59p.m. by Roll Call Vote.

Respectfully submitted,  
Susan M. Cimino  
Clerk of the Council

## **Documents provided for Meeting**

- 20 038 Mayor: FY2021 Operating Budget or take up any action relative thereto
- 20 039 Mayor: FY2021 Budget – Community Preservation Committee or take up any action relative thereto
- 20 040 Mayor: FY2021 Budget - Revolving Accounts or take up any action relative thereto