



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

Monday, May 11, 2020

A meeting of the Committee of Ways & Means was held Remote via Zoom Webinar, on Monday, May 11, 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 arrived @6:07pm
Julia Flaherty, Member
Steven Sciascia, Member

Also Present: Nicole Taub, Chief of Staff
Ed Spellman, Finance Director
Shawn McGoldrick, Town Auditor
James F. O'Brien, Fire Chief
Mark DuBois, Police Chief
Tim Cohoon, Deputy Police Chief
Michael Want, Deputy Police Chief
Corey Chambers, Sargent/Financial Coordinator (Police)
Maryann Bosse, Financial Coordinator (Fire)

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:

APPENDIX F

Pages

Fire

43-51 (Chief Jim O’Brien, Maryann Bosse)

Police

33-42 (Chief Mark DuBois, Corey Chambers)

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>

Nicole Taub, Chief of Staff explained the Braintree Fire Department and Braintree Police Department are here this evening to present their budget to the committee. Their first priority is the health and safety of all the residents in the Town of Braintree.

Ms. Taub gave an update on the Billboards and that the court had moved the date of the hearing and now has all documentation to make a decision.

Ms. Taub gave an update on Allen Street and noted she would be sending documentation on the history and where the Town is currently at with the potential sale of Allen Street and information on the RFP that will be hopefully going out by June 2020.

Fire

The Braintree Fire Department FY2021 Budget request is \$8,850,625.00.

James F. O’Brien, Fire Chief stated the top priority as Fire Chief is the health and safety of our firefighters. In particular, dealing with the current pandemic we all face. It is of utmost importance we have a continued supply of PPE, cleaning products as well as a sanitary environment in which to work in. Another priority is the pending renovation of our Headquarters. It was built in 1931 and last modified by our own firefighters in 1975. Through Capital funding we hope this will bring the station to the 21st century.

Councilor Boericke, Chairwoman of the Committee of Ways & Means expressed the gratitude of all members to the Chief and his crew on all you do for the residents 24 hours a day.

Councilor Connors asked if there were 5 new firefighters added looking at the uniform account. Chief O'Brien stated in the past 8 months we had 4 vacancies and 2 will not be filled until April 2021. We anticipate there will also be about 5-6 retirements during that time.

Councilor Connors asked about \$43,000 for the Overtime line item on page 46 of the budget book. Chief O'Brien stated this is to try to get the Overtime budgeted so we don't have to come back for a supplemental.

Councilor Sciascia asked about reductions in the Fire budget like Hazmat Expenses on page 48 and Fire Alarm Repairs on page 47. Are these expenses we really want to cut? Does this budget give you everything you need to keep the people of Braintree safe as you have done in the past? Chief O'Brien stated yes this budget is more than suitable for what we need. We have eliminated the street boxes which required less maintenance by our Fire Alarm Superintendent. Going forward we will keep only the municipal boxes at schools and at Town Hall. We have over 250 miles of fire electrical wires that need constant repair.

Councilor Ryan stated I see the budget went up less than 1%. Were you asked to keep the budget down given the fiscal situation? So we can revisit if you require more money throughout the year. Chief O'Brien stated yes we were. The bulk of the money was taken from building maintenance. We plan to do the renovations so we will not need a lot of that money that would generally go to that yearly maintenance.

Councilor Ryan asked if the Coronavirus has impacted the Fire Budget. Chief O'Brien stated it has impacted the budget very little. People want to be in work. Attendance is up and overtime is down.

Councilor Flaherty asked if you have in your budget enough to keep the firefighters as safe as you can. Specifically exposure to carcinogenic chemicals that you are exposed to more than the average person. Chief O'Brien stated we now are compliant with two sets of gear per firefighter. After a fire you need to wash all gear in one of the two the extractors which are commercial washing machines. This takes about 3-4 hours. This is where the second set of gear comes in. We are fully compliant there.

Councilor Boericke, Chairwoman of the Committee of Ways & Means stated we have been talking about overtime and I know there is work to get that budgeted appropriately. How is overtime assigned and how does it affect the rate of overtime? Chief O'Brien stated the BFD is on a 17 man minimum that is contractual for 25 years now. We are allowed to have 4 off per shift. If 5 are off then you need to "dip" into overtime to keep the minimum manning clause. There are two separate charts one for officers and one for firefighters.

Police

The Braintree Police Department FY2021 Budget request is \$11,180,117.00.

Mark DuBois, Police Chief stated I started here in November 2019. We established two new Deputy-Chiefs. Along with Sgt. Corey Chambers we went through the budget and did an analysis on what we do and how we do it and if we can be better at it. We analyze the needs of the BPD and the community and how we can serve them most efficiently.

Councilor Connors asked what the department is looking at this year for new hires vs retirees.

Chief DuBois stated we put in for three new hires due to three retirements this year. One took place in January 2019, one in May 2019 and one expected in July 2019. This is just replacing the personnel who retired.

Councilor Connors asked about a significant reduction in the Administration line item.

Corey Chambers stated to increase transparency we moved two Deputy Chiefs out of the Admin/Clerical line and shifted them to the Sworn personnel account which did not previously exist in that program. Additionally the Staff Executive is now in the Administration line which Sgt. Chambers has taken over for about 3 years now.

Councilor Flaherty asked about the budgeted overtime and why initial funding is allocated to the Patrol Bureau.

Chief DuBois answered the following questions:

21004-5130 Overtime: we have routinely been expending ~\$1mm in overtime (and are on pace for the same this year), but we have budgeted less than \$500K.

In conjunction with strategic staffing decisions and resource allocations recently implemented that are intended to reduce actual overtime expenses going forward, we are working with the Mayor's Office and Director of Municipal Finance to incrementally increase the overtime budget over the next 3-5 years so that if funding allows, our overtime accounts will be budgeted at a realistic figure and managed to that amount.

21006-5130 Overtime: we have routinely been around \$200K in OT for detective bureau. Why are we budgeting zero?

In light of the total amount budgeted for overtime for the entire department, the entire balance of initial funding is allocated to the Patrol Bureau (21004) because it generates the most overtime (there is also a nominal amount budgeted for Animal Control). When supplemental funding is received, the total amounts are allocated amongst the various overtime-generating programs of 21004, 21005, 21006, 21007 (if applicable), 21008, and 21010.

Councilor Sciascia asked if the new hires will help reduce the overtime amounts.

Chief DuBois stated yes.

Councilor Sciascia asked with Police overtime proposed FY21 budget at \$500,000 and last year \$1.3 million was spent on overtime is it realistic that additional funds will be requested from Free Cash? Nicole Taub stated there are a number of reasons for overtime. Management and oversight is one thing that will be a priority for this administration. Increased oversight and increased funding will hopefully get us to a place where the overtime will more realistically be funded.

Councilor Sciascia agreed this is a good idea but right now will the additional overtime come from Free Cash?

Ms. Taub stated not necessarily. It can come from other unspent lines within the Police Departments budget.

Councilor Sciascia stated yes but there is concern already about Free Cash. If there is a short fall will it have to come from Free Cash?

Ms. Taub stated it is not a guarantee that it a short fall would have to come from Free Cash. There are other possible sources to cover short falls.

Councilor Sciascia stated when counting personnel I am one off my count.

Sgt. Chambers stated there is a retiree and a new hire that are "splitting" a position. This is the additional personnel but really one position.

Councilor Ryan asked if there are any concerns on trying to cut your budget.

Chief DuBois stated what they did is delay some of the new hires. At this time with COVID the Academy is not happening and it would not be possible to hire anyone right now anyway.

Councilor Ryan asked if Shift Differential and Detective Stipend both went up a bit. Are they new contractual items?

Chief DuBois stated yes.

Councilor Ryan asked how the department is doing in this Coronavirus world right now.

Chief DuBois stated we check our supplies of PPE daily. We have what we need. We take more precautions going out on calls. It is going well. There seems to be less traffic and less calls for service because of this. The officer's health and safety is the first priority. If we think someone has been exposed they either stay home until they get tested or the quarantine period is over.

We limit social interaction and keep the 6 foot rule inside the station. It is working well and no concerns there.

Councilor Connors asked about the need for additional overtime money and that it would end up being from Free Cash in FY22 if using FY21 unspent funds.

Ms. Taub stated if overtime needs to be supplemented it either comes from Free Cash or it comes from FY20 money so no matter where you take the funds from you are starting the subsequent fiscal year with less free cash.

Councilor Boericke asked how overtime is assigned.

Chief DuBois stated there is a variety of ways someone would get overtime. A major incident will create the need for additional officers. Per officer, 40 hours of in-service training is required each year. That is a driver for overtime because it is contractual. Any vacancy needs to be filled whether sick, training, court time or on vacation. We have internal minimum staffing levels we need to meet every shift.

The following questions were asked about traffic enforcement:

I see it noted in the summary that staffing a traffic enforcement officer is within the FY21 plan, but do you have an anticipated/realistic timeline? On the website, Joseph Tosone is currently assigned to the traffic division; is Officer Tosone currently taking on a dual role?

Officer Tosone retired in July 2019 and based on current staffing and other needs the unit has been vacant since his retirement (the website has been updated to reflect this change). Staffing the Traffic Unit is a top priority for this Administration but will largely depend on the status/result of our COPS Grant application (if awarded would fund new hires), FY21 hiring, and the ability to strategically manage staffing and overtime costs in a way that balances fiscal responsibility with the needs of the Town.

The Department currently staffs a part time parking enforcement officer that ensures compliance with parking restrictions in Town. This officer would work under the Traffic Enforcement Unit when one is established.

Do we not have the person-power/budget to set speed traps, enforce red-light running, and enforce not blocking intersections? If not, what would it take to get enough officer(s) to be able to enforce these serious traffic and safety concerns?

Even without a dedicated traffic enforcement unit, traffic related enforcement, including monitoring high accident intersections, speeding, commercial motor vehicle enforcement, special event escorts and accident investigation, is performed as part of officers' regularly scheduled duties.

In 2019 the department wrote 994 citations that include a fine, 1,476 written warnings, and 2,896 verbal warnings for a variety of motor vehicle violations for a total of 5,605 stopped vehicles. They also investigated 1,320 motor vehicle accidents. Additionally, officers responded to a total of 27,257 calls for service.

We also apply for and receive traffic enforcement grants throughout the year that can be used to hire officers on overtime to conduct traffic enforcement (i.e. total FY20 award is \$14,000) and must be focused on certain traffic initiatives that are dictated by the State and Federal Government at certain times of the year (i.e. impaired driving in December/January, speed enforcement in March, distracted driving in April, seat belt enforcement in May, and speed enforcement in June/July). This overtime is removed from our overtime accounts once reimbursed. Grant activity and related enforcement has been paused during the COVID-19 pandemic; however, we continue to review all possible funding sources to support our operations. Also, previous grants have allowed for the purchase of new traffic enforcement equipment, such as LIDARs, PBTs, and tint meters. LIDAR is a laser radar unit for measuring speed, PBT is a portable breathalyzer testing device that officers use during roadside field sobriety testing, and tint meters measure the darkness of tint on vehicle windows.

SEE CLICK FIX is the best way to get notified about speeding issues.

Motion made by Councilor Ryan to TABLE Order 20 038 to the Committee of Ways & Means meeting on May 13, 2020.

Motion: by Councilor Ryan to Table Order 20 038 to May 13, 2020

Second: by Councilor Sciascia

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)

Motion made by Councilor Ryan to TABLE Order 20 040 to the Committee of Ways & Means meeting on May 18, 2020.

Motion: by Councilor Ryan to Table Order 20 040 to May 18, 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 7:21p.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