



# 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 17, 2021

A meeting of the Committee of Ways & Means was held Remote via Zoom Webinar, on Monday, May 17, 2021 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-Chairman  
Donna Connors, Member  
Julia Flaherty, Member  
Steven Sciascia, Member

Also Present: Nicole Taub, Chief of Staff/Town Solicitor  
Ed Spellman, Director Municipal Finance  
James M. Casey, Town Clerk  
Frank Hackett, Superintendent of Schools  
Jim Lee, Asst Superintendent of Schools  
Ed Cronin, Business Director  
Lisa Freely, School Finance Director  
School Committee members  
Shawn McGoldrick, Town Auditor

FY2022 documentation and questions and answers can be found on the Town's website:

<https://braintreema.gov/449/Fiscal-Year-Budgets>

Town of Braintree YouTube channel will also have recordings of the budget meetings.

### Approval of Minutes

- None

### Old Business

- None

## **New Business**

- **21 020 Mayor: FY2022 Operating Budget or take up any action relative thereto**

**MOTION:** by Councilor Ryan to take off the TABLE Order 21 020

**Motion:** by Councilor Ryan take off the TABLE Order 21 020

**Second:** by Councilor Connors

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

- **CALL BACKS:**  
Town Clerk  
Education
- Discussion - FY2022 Budget

Nicole Taub, Chief of Staff/Town Solicitor noted all FY2022 documentation and questions and answers can be found on the Town's website: <https://braintreema.gov/449/Fiscal-Year-Budgets>

### **TOWN CLERK – CALL BACK**

Town Clerk James Casey stated on May 4, 2021 he presented a proposed FY22 budget of \$443,397. Town Clerk Casey stated he looked at Early Voting which he could cut \$22,000 but would need a supplemental if the state requires it for the November 2021 election. We do believe Early Voting to become a permanent fixture. He could cut Meetings/Seminars of \$700 and he could cut out his Town issued Cell Phone of \$550.

Councilor Ryan stated we are responsible to approve two budgets: Town Council and Town Clerk. The Town Clerk needs his cell phone to do his job. I would not cut anything to do with Elections.

Councilor Sciascia stated there is nothing that can be cut here. If we are looking for cuts we might need to look at an employee. In this budget I am not seeing much else that can be cut. I think if that is something the Council wants to look at then we should look at this. The majority of expenses in this budget are election related and we are not going to cut those. How deep does this Committee want to go into cutting this budget because I believe it will have to be a headcount.

Councilor Ryan stated I recommend we reduce the budget by \$750 for Meetings/Seminars because Clerk Casey has told us he can't cut any more than that.

Chairwoman Boericke stated Town Clerk Casey should have another conversation with Town Council President Hume prior to the approval of this budget.

**SCHOOL DEPARTMENT – CALL BACK**

Dr. Frank Hackett went over the enrollment numbers again. He stated this is more of a shift than a reduction in enrollment. We are making a best guess on enrollment numbers for next school year. We expect our students who were home-schooled or private school settings to return. Our enrollment numbers are still very favorable for classroom sizes.

**DESE Enrollment 2016-2021:**

School	2016-17 SY Total Enrollment	2017-18 SY Total Enrollment	2018-19 SY Total Enrollment	2019-20 SY Total Enrollment	2020-21 SY Total Enrollment
Flaherty Elementary	346	355	350	321	238
Highlands Elementary	403	403	380	398	378
Hollis Elementary	405	408	390	394	291
Liberty Elementary	448	460	432	401	365
Morrison Elementary	397	398	406	386	282
Ross Elementary	262	266	249	237	213

**FY22 Projected Enrollment & Staffing:**

ENROLLMENT	Ross	Flaherty	Hollis	Highlands	Morrison	Liberty
2021 enrollment (Oct 1, 2020)*	213	238	291	312	282	365
2022 enrollment (proj)*	197	238	299	384	310	375
2022 Avg Class Size	17.9	19.8	19.9	20.2	22.1	18.8

FY22 STAFFING PLAN	Ross*	Flaherty*	Hollis*	Highlands*	Morrison*	Liberty*
General Classroom Teachers	11	12	15	19	14	20
Math Specialists	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.5
Reading Specialists	1	1	1	1	1	1
Guidance/School Psych	1	1	1.5	1	1.5	1
Administrators	1	1	1	1	1	1
Art Teachers				(3.4 all elementary)		
Music Teachers				(4.8 all elementary)		
PE Teachers				(7 all elementary)		

**FY22 Budget: Funding:**

PROPOSED BUDGET*	Chapter 70*	Local Funds**	Federal Funds (One Time)
\$74,683,280	\$18,459,141	\$53,114,977	\$3,109,162

Dr. Hackett stated the federal funding will likely not be available next year - FY23. You will be looking at how will the Schools/Town manage this one-time funding we used for FY22.

Councilor Sciascia asked if it is correct if in FY23 the Schools will receive a one-time fund from the State for \$1.8345 and ESSR funds remaining for that year are about \$346,388?

Dr. Hackett stated that is approximately the figures. We also submitted for FEMA reimbursement and potentially we will see some funds from that.

Councilor Sciascia asked if a 4% increase is a good place to start with the budget each year.

Dr. Hackett stated yes that is a good place to start.

Councilor Flaherty stated when we come back to the classroom there will be deficits that the kids have to overcome. If we cut specialists now we really end up paying more in the long-term, down the road because we will have to increase our special ed program substantially. The other concern is a budget is an expression of priorities and values. Can we justify cutting specialists? Can we look at other places instead of cutting them? The Athletic Department has a budget of \$750,000. Can we look there to make cuts instead of specialists?

Dr. Hackett stated I made it known we did not want to cut program including Athletics, Arts & Music, Performing Arts, World Languages, PE and Guidance and that support system. There is no place that has a better Special Education program than Braintree. Parents come because they know we care deeply about our Special Education students. That is about 20% of our students. We keep them in-house.

Shawn McGoldrick, Town Auditor stated I agree with everything being said this evening. Every department would want more help if it was given to them. Right now it is a math problem for the Town of Braintree. If we are using the ESSR money for FY22 of \$3.1 million plus ARPA of \$1.8 that is \$4.9 million one-time revenue. Then add the 4% and the replacement from this year is an overwhelming amount of money we will need for the next fiscal year. Going forward Braintree cannot sustain to keep living the

way they are at in terms of appropriations over expenditures without using and utilizing one time revenue sources.

Councilor Connors asked if Shawn McGoldrick's previous comment could be documented. She stated the way we are spending money and free cash we are going to be in a situation that will significantly effect this town in FY23/FY24 and how it is run.

Mr. McGoldrick replied I am working on a memo which I do every year summarizing at a high level and adding more detail about these budget requests.

Councilor Flaherty asked if the Teachers were asked to defer their annual increase.

School Committee Chairperson Tom Devin stated he tried asking BEA President if they could discuss this and the President said he does not like to waste his time so NO and that conversation was over. I found this disappointing. He represents the BEA but our teachers are a far different group. They came through for us trying to get back to school. Our teachers are excellent and know what is good for our children.

Councilor Flaherty stated it is important for the residents to know most of our budget is contractually agreed salaries and we do not have the ability to change this.

Councilor Flaherty asked what cuts are due to enrollment and which are due to budget cuts?

Dr. Hackett stated in a normal budget year we would not have reduced the number of specialists that we had to reduce. The students who originally began in Flaherty then went to South Middle have now aged out from that program and will go to the High School. Those teacher specialists in South are no longer needed. Those students are not there anymore. We would love to reuse those funds from these teachers to add programs but not now due to the enrollment shift.

Chairwoman Boericke stated let me understand: If we did not have a revenue shortfall we would retain 6 literacy specialists. How many are coming back next year?

Dr. Hackett stated we will have one specialist per elementary level coming back. We reduced the specialists by one at each elementary school and at East as well.

Chairwoman Boericke asked if the number was 28 teachers not coming back?

Jim Lee stated that number would be due to retirements as well. At this point the number would be laying off 12 individuals.

Chairwoman Boericke asked if this was due to the revenue shortfall.

Mr. Lee explained due to budgets due to enrollments and/or budget shortfalls and reductions in positions such as the specialists.

Mr. Lee stated 12 individuals will be laid-off. The number of positions being reduced is in the 20's. Some of those numbers are based on retirements and others leaving on their own. 6 are the reading specialists at the elementary level. The other 6 are due to enrollment and special education mostly at the Middle School level.

Councilor Flaherty asked if re-districting would save any positions.

Dr. Hackett stated re-districting would reduce more positions. Re-districting consolidates. We decided to go the way of flexible boundaries.

Councilor Flaherty asked about the Preschool.

Jim Lee stated there have been some questions about the Preschool. The projected enrollment for next year is 117 students with a Certified Teacher and 2 paraprofessionals in each classroom. We intend to run 8 sections down from 10 sections that were run this year. The ratios are well within where we need to be legally.

Councilor Flaherty stated expenditures are out-pacing revenue. What is the long-term plan to contend with this problem.

Dr. Hackett stated the Town of Braintree is well over net school spending when you look at the per pupil rate we are about in the middle of the pack. We operate old buildings that are costly. Running neighborhood schools are costly. If you consolidated to 3 elementary schools you would save in staffing. This is a budget that will meet the needs of all of our students.

Chairwoman Boericke stated we are cutting 2 preschool classes from 10 to 8 classes. Is this due to revenue shortfall?

Dr. Hackett stated the cut is due to anticipated enrollment.

Mr. Lee stated it is due to the spacing needs and individual needs in a given year.

Chairwoman Boericke asked if the integrated preschool is staying at the high school.

Mr. Lee stated we are looking at this. It is an on-going discussion and no decision has been made.

Dr. Hackett stated it has been a conversation to get the preschool out of the high school since I have been here and before me. There have been concerns from parents with 3 and 4 year olds trans versing with 17 and 18 year olds. It is not ideal.

Chairwoman Boericke asked if re-districting would be a budgetary savings.

Dr. Hackett stated yes. The savings alone between Morrison and Ross would be \$300,000 to \$500,000 and it would be straight positions. These would be about 90 students in the Skyline area from Morrison to Ross. This would also bring students from Hollis who were east of 3 to Morrison or Flaherty. Then Hollis would get some of Highland/Liberty students.

Chairwoman Boericke asked if Chapter 70 funding is tied per-pupil enrollment.

Dr. Hackett stated yes. We do not get a lot of Chapter 70 funding. It is not a significant amount of money.

Chairwoman Boericke asked about ESCO energy savings.

Dr. Hackett stated we did not get a baseline audit due to COVID. We added HEPA filters to every school. It will be good to get this audit this summer.

Chairwoman Boericke asked where the COVID relief money has been spent and allocated to. We need to think about a couple years down the road and what we will be facing in the years to come. We need to be mindful in the decisions we are making.

Dr. Hackett stated in 2020 we shut the schools down. We spent a lot of money to get our kids back in school and we had to make quick decisions on technology, health, safety, transportation, etc.

**MOTION:** by Councilor Ryan to TABLE Order 21 020

**Motion:** by Councilor Ryan TABLE Order 21 020

**Second:** by Councilor Connors

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

- **21 022 Mayor: FY2022 Budget - Continuation of Revolving Funds or take up any action relative thereto**

**MOTION:** by Councilor Ryan to take off the TABLE Order 21 022

**Motion:** by Councilor Ryan take off the TABLE Order 21 022

**Second:** by Councilor Connors

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

Chairwoman Boericke asked if there were any questions on Order 21 022 this evening.

I would like to know about any loans from the general fund that the Golf has received and if there is a plan to getting those repaid.

Nicole Taub stated we need to allow the Golf Course to rebuild some of those revenues before we discuss a payment schedule. We took seriously the request of the Committee and we keep track of the monies that went to the Golf Course.

Ed Spellman, Director of Finance stated the intent is to stabilize the Golf operations and let them have a year or two and do the repayment over a 10-15 year period.

Councilor Flaherty asked for the dollar amount of what the Golf has borrowed from the general fund.

(Revolving Accounts discussion/questions on the date Department Head presents Budget)

5/4 Library®

5/6 Golf®

5/10 Department of Public Works® - Recycling

5/12 Dept. of Elder Affairs®

5/12 Municipal Licenses & Inspections®

5/13 Education®

## MOTION FOR CONTINUATION OF REVOLVING FUNDS

- R1.** That, in accordance with the provisions of Chapter 44, Section 53E1/2 of the General Laws, the Town of Braintree hereby sets the maximum amount that may be spent during fiscal year 2022 beginning on July 1, 2021 for the revolving funds established by ordinance for certain departments, boards, committees, agencies or officers, as follows:

<b>Revolving Fund</b>	<b>Department, Board, Committee, Agency or Officer</b>	<b>FY2022 Spending Limit</b>
Elder Affairs Services and Activities	Department of Elder Affairs	\$30,000
Immunization	Board of Health	\$50,000
Library Materials	Library Trustees	\$45,000
Library Room Rental	Library Trustees	\$5,000
Recycling Materials	Mayor, in conjunction with Recycling Coordinator	\$2,000
Household Hazardous Waste	Mayor, in conjunction with Recycling Coordinator	\$50,000
<b>Full Day Kindergarten</b>	<b>School Committee</b>	<b>\$925,000</b>
Pro Shop	Mayor, in conjunction with Director of Golf Operations	\$200,000
Food and Beverage	Mayor, in conjunction with Director of Golf Operations	\$450,000

**MOTION:** by Councilor Ryan to TABLE Order 21 022

**Motion:** by Councilor Ryan TABLE Order 21 022

**Second:** by Councilor Connors

**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 8:05p.m. by Roll Call Vote.

Respectfully submitted,  
Susan M. Cimino  
Clerk of the Council

### **Documents provided for Meeting**

- 21 020 Mayor: FY2022 Operating Budget or take up any action relative thereto
- 21 022 Mayor: FY2022 Budget - Continuation of Revolving Funds or take up any action relative thereto