

111 – Town Council Budget QUESTIONS/ANSWERS

	Department		FY21 Original		FY21 Revised		Change
111	Town Council Programs		315,483		302,736		(12,747)

CONSULTANTS.... Is this worth keeping if we haven't expended anything in the past 3 years?
This was established by a former Council member for use to hire a consultant in any situation the Council felt appropriate without having to request a transfer of funds from the Mayor.

What falls under ADVERTISING? Why is the budget so much greater than expenditures?
Advertising is required (under Town Charter Section 2-9 C) in a newspaper as a Legal Notice prior to PUBLIC HEARINGS of the full Council. It is unpredictable what will come from the Mayor each year and the Council to be asked to hold a Public Hearing on. This newspaper submission is still important to be transparent and to notify the public. This is just an unknown amount that varies greatly each year. When a Legal Notice is submitted in the newspaper there are requirements if it is a Bonding request then it is required the entire "motion" be submitted. This is also required from the Bonding Counsel. They require to see a copy of this Legal Notice. If other measures exceed 10 columns of print then just the "title" and a summary can be submitted which is considerably less expensive. Unexpended funds will go into Free Cash at the end of the year.

SECTION 2-9: ORDINANCES AND OTHER MEASURES

(c) Publication - Every proposed ordinance, appropriation order or loan authorization, except emergency ordinances under section 2-9(a), shall be published once in full in a local newspaper, and in any additional manner as may be provided by ordinance, at least 10 days before its final passage. After final passage it shall be posted on the town bulletin board and otherwise published as may be required by ordinance. Whenever a proposed ordinance or codification of ordinances or other measure would exceed in length 10 column inches of ordinary newspaper notice print, then, in lieu of publication in a local newspaper, the document may be published and made available at the office of the town clerk in booklet or pamphlet form at least 10 days before its final passage, and this publication shall be considered sufficient notice. Whenever the town council provides for publication in a booklet or pamphlet in lieu of the newspaper publication, it shall, at least 10 days before final passage, prepare and publish in a local newspaper a general summary of the proposed ordinance, or ordinances, and a notice stating the times and places at which copies of the booklet or pamphlet may be obtained by the public.

What are the DUES for? MMA?

This line item is Dues/Memberships/Subscriptions. This line item is in the same General Fund (11101 Council – Administration) as “Meetings”. Dues/Membership line is also intended for payment for the yearly MMA Conference all Council members attend in January each year.

The cost of the MMA meeting and our Town Council meetings exceeded the Meeting line item and some of it was paid from the line item Dues/Memberships/Subscriptions. This is an acceptable practice as long as it is in the same general fund. This past year we had many more retirements than anticipated and a departing gift plaque is presented to each retiree and former Mayor. There were many more recognition citations given out this past year as well which increased our expenditures. If we did not have any additional money left in any of the general fund we would have to request a transfer from a fund we did have money in, one being the Reserve Fund for example.

The subscriptions are for newspaper subscriptions which I did not renew for a couple years now. This could also be for a subscription to a magazine or online newsletter a Councilor may request to assist in their role especially with certain Committees.

Unexpended funds will go into Free Cash at the end of the year.

Can we amend 01-11104-5101 to reflect the level funding of \$74,000 which the Town Council approved?

Town Council was requested to submit a proposed budget prior to the Town Auditor re-appointment and negotiations of the CLA contract with the Town of Braintree. We would not be able to add to the budget if the original \$80,000 was negotiated. The Town Auditor line item will be revised to reflect the negotiated \$74,000.

**Note: This \$6,000 was transferred from our Reserve Fund at the time of the proposed budget. This can be transferred back to the Reserve Fund.*

If the council adopts new rules limiting prior authorization for expense reimbursement could that potentially reduce the budget for meetings, mileage, etc.?

No. The Meetings line item is much more than just a “meeting or conference”. This line item includes meetings outside of town hall and inside town hall. The Town Council meetings require copies and printing which is not just included under Office Supplies due to the amount of printer cartridges that are required yearly. It is a requirement to print and retain every page of every agenda and document from every Committee and Council meeting.

Our Town Council meetings also present Recognition Certificates to many of our outstanding citizens and sports teams that win State Championships. Most of these teams are our school children whom we hold pizza parties for in celebration of their accomplishments and print citations that are in a frame for these events. The more you do the more it costs but they are so appreciated by the recipients and families.

The question about limiting prior authorization for expense reimbursement is still something the Council will need to adopt if Town Council rules are revised. At this time, the current O&R Committee reduced the amount to \$1,000 from \$2,500. This has yet to be approved by the full Council. This amount of \$2,500 has never been used by any Council member ever. The intent is for Councilors to have the ability

to attend a conference if one suddenly comes up without having to bring it to the full Council especially if time is of the essence, which many times a discount is involved if you sign up early. These total funds are not actually in our budget. We would have to request a transfer of funds from our Reserve fund if every Councilor was to use this full amount.

Mileage is to go to meetings at other town offices, conduct other town business or attend out of town conferences. There are many times, I am sure those in the Town Council do not submit mileage when they could if they wanted to. I suggest this small line item should stay as is. Unexpended funds will go into Free Cash at the end of the year.

Is there any documentation on how the Reserve Fund has been used in the past?

Town Council has never had an expenditure from the Reserve Fund. This was a fund put in place back at the time of the change in government for Council use. The only time funds have been “removed”/expended from this line item is when we have been asked to reduce the Town Council budget and this seemed like the likely place to reduce. The past Council/Council President’s agreed to this being the fund to reduce when requested.

Unexpended funds will go into Free Cash at the end of the year.