

April 30, 2024

Council President Charles Ryan, Councilor At-Large
Meredith Boericke, Chair, Ways and Means Committee

Today I am pleased to file my proposed Fiscal Year 2025 (FY25) budget in accordance with the Town of Braintree's Charter. The budget as enclosed solves an \$18 million structural budget gap, relying on a balanced, sustainable, and responsible approach to put Braintree on solid financial footing over the next several years and finally in a position to avoid continuing the annual process of closing substantial deficits for the anticipated years ahead through troublesome cuts and program and service reductions.

I would like to highlight a few notable items we have worked on to identify and solve the serious structural operations deficit we are faced with as a Town going into planning for FY25:

- Spending Controls and Cost Containment – Roughly 90% of the solutions we identified to close the gap were from measures taken to lower spending from the original forecasted level. This includes meaningful reductions in key municipal services and programs, including in education, public safety, and public works. During this process we also evaluated “all-in” cost proposals from Departments that rely on supplemental requests at the end of the fiscal year to close out operational budgets to ensure that we captured the full picture of what needed to be reduced.
- New or Expanded Revenues – The options for additional locally-generated revenues outside the annual tax levy are limited. However, the budget calls for the adoption of increased local options in FY25 for hotel occupancy taxes and meals taxes, as well as the adoption of a new motor vehicle excise surcharge. Each of these proposals were proposed by Governor Maura Healey as part of her Municipal Empowerment Act. In addition, the Town budget will generate additional revenues through increased fees for services performed by various departments, most notably beginning a 3-year plan to increase the Town's annual trash collection fees to cover the actual expense of the service.

The spending reductions noted above, especially those that would be required to fully close the entire structural deficit of \$18 million, represent a dramatic decrease from the level and quality of town-wide services that Braintree residents and businesses have come to expect. While I believe budget cuts are necessary to bring spending in line with long-term available Town resources, the long-term impact of JUST cutting would be substantial and likely would not place us in a better financial position in future years as we would anticipate structural gaps occurring almost immediately.

For this reason, I am also filing today a proposal for Town Council to authorize a special election for an Override; respectfully allowing voters, our Town residents, to decide whether to increase the tax levy by an amount of \$8 million for FY25. The additional tax revenue funds generated by the Override allows the Town to avoid an additional level of impactful cuts to our public schools, public safety and public works, while also helping to ensure that Town's financial picture will be much improved in the subsequent three years (through FY28).

I look forward to our partnership in addressing Braintree's financial challenges as we work collaboratively through this budget process.

Truly Yours, in Service to the Town of Braintree,



Erin V. Joyce, PE
Mayor of Braintree

