

# Town of Braintree, Finance Department

## Municipal Fee Setting Policy

### 1. Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to establish a consistent, transparent, and equitable framework for setting, reviewing, and updating municipal fees for services, permits, licenses, and programs provided by the Town of Braintree. This ensures that fees adequately reflect the cost of service delivery and comply with applicable laws and regulations.

### 2. Scope

This policy applies to all departments, boards, commissions, and agencies of the Town of Braintree that assess fees for municipal services, permits, or programs.

### 3. Objective

It is the policy of the Town to set fees:

- Based on the cost of providing services, including personnel, materials, overhead, and regulatory compliance.
- In a fair and equitable manner, avoiding disproportionate impacts on any single group.
- With public accountability and periodic review to ensure relevancy and fiscal responsibility.

### 4. Definitions

- **Fee:** A charge imposed by the Town for a specific service, permit, or program.
- **Cost Recovery:** The practice of setting fees to recover all or a portion of the costs incurred in delivering the associated service.
- **Subsidized Fee:** A fee set below the cost of service, often due to policy decisions related to equity, accessibility, or public benefit.

### 5. Fee Development Process

Fees shall be developed according to the following steps:

1. **Cost Analysis:** Departments shall conduct a cost analysis to determine the full cost of providing the service.

2. **Benchmarking:** Wherever possible and appropriate, departments should regularly compare fees with those of similar municipalities.
3. **Policy Considerations:** Consider public access, affordability, and strategic priorities (e.g., public health, economic development).
4. **Stakeholder Input:** Departments may seek public or stakeholder feedback when setting or increasing fees.
5. **Recommendation and Approval:** Departments submit proposed fees to the Town Finance Director for review. Approval for all changes to fees shall be granted in accordance with Massachusetts General Laws. In most cases the approving authority is the Mayor. Departments should consult with the Town Solicitor and Finance Director if there are any questions regarding appropriate approval. Any municipal agency which is otherwise authorized to issue a license, certificate or permit, or to render a service or to perform work for a person or class of persons, may from time to time fix a reasonable fee for the license, certificate, or permit or for rendering the service or for performing the work in the manner provided in MGL c. 40, § 22F. No municipal agency shall establish a fee or charge pursuant to this section without the prior review and consent of the.
6. **Adoption and Publication:** Approved fees are incorporated into the Town's official Fee Schedule and made available to the public. The Town Treasurer/Collector shall be made aware by Departments of any approved fee changes. Any fee or change in fee adopted under this section shall be posted on a bulletin board at Town Hall, posted in a public place in the office of the department authorized to collect such fee, posted on the Town's official website, and on file with the office of the Town Clerk.

## 6. Fee Review

All fees shall be reviewed **at least every three (3) years** to ensure they remain aligned with the cost of service, policy goals, and market conditions. Some fees may be reviewed more frequently based on legal requirements or significant cost changes.

## 7. Exemptions and Waivers

No fee shall be waived or reduced by a Department unilaterally. In certain cases, such a waiver or reduction may be authorized, but only after careful review and approval by the Town's Treasurer/Collector.

All fee waivers must be documented and correctly adjusted in the appropriate municipal fee tracking system.

## **8. Enforcement**

No municipal service shall be delivered without appropriate fee payment unless a waiver or exemption has been granted. Fees unpaid after the due date are subject to penalties, interest, or service suspension, as allowed by law.

## **9. Transparency**

All current fees shall be compiled into a centralized **Municipal Fee Schedule**, maintained by the Director of Municipal Finance, and published online and updated promptly following any changes.

## **10. Responsibilities**

- **Department Heads:** Prepare cost analyses, recommend fees, and ensure compliance.
- **Finance Director:** Support departments in cost calculations and financial analysis.
- **Town Solicitor and Treasurer/Collector:** Ensure compliance by Town departments with all governing statutes and regulations.
- **Mayor / Other Approving Authorities:** Approve changes to fees.

## **11. Monitoring and Reporting**

The Finance Department (or designated body) shall:

- Annually review and report on the Town's debt position and compliance with this policy.
- Update the debt affordability model based on latest financial forecasts and capital needs.
- Provide regular briefings to senior management and/or governing bodies.

## **12. Policy Review**

This policy shall be reviewed annually to account for any significant financial, economic, or regulatory changes that may occur.

## **Appendix A: Fee Schedule**

