

**111 – Town Council FY22 Budget
QUESTIONS/ANSWERS**

	Department		FY21 Original		FY22 Proposed		Change
111	Town Council Programs		302,736		273,714		(29,022) 9.59%

Administrative/Clerical - line item has INCREASED due to COLA

Elected Officials – SAME - Town Council members yearly stipend

Audit Fee – SAME - Powers & Sullivan our “external auditor”. Their CONTRACT remains the same at \$57,000 per year.

Consultants – DECREASED to \$500 from \$2,000

Advertising – DECREASED to \$12,802 from \$17,802

Expenditures vary greatly from year to year depending on the # of Public Hearings.

*Advertising is required (under MGL and 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 what the Council will 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. A Rezone needs to be printed 2 consecutive weeks prior to a Public Hearing. If other measures exceed 10 columns of print then just the “title” and a summary can be submitted which is considerably less expensive.

Technology – DECREASED to \$200 from \$2,000

In FY20 we purchased keyboards, new chargers/cords and a monitor for the Council office. We did not expend from this account in FY19. We purchased our new iPads in FY18.

Postage – SAME \$300 - We use minimal amounts of postage.

Cell Phone – SAME \$600

Clerk of the Council - so you can contact me 24/7...

Printing – DECREASED to \$450 from \$750

We need new letter head and business cards every two years due to elections and the reorganization of the Town Council. Also we print copies of the Town Charter and other documents when necessary.

Office Supplies – DECREASED to \$1300 from \$2000

These are needed supplies including printer cartridges, pens, paper, folders, etc.

Meetings – DECREASED to \$2,000 from \$5,000

This line item pays for all things pertaining to Meetings at Town Hall and outside of Town Hall. This includes our Town Council/committee meetings. This can be frames, special paper, copies, recognition certificates, etc. This included Championship team pizza parties and retirement gifts in the past. This line item includes conferences and reimbursement requested by a Council member. This line item partially funds the yearly MMA meeting. The line item Dues/Memberships pays \$1,800 towards the MMA and the rest is funded through “Meetings”. (MMA cost is approximately \$250 x 10 people = \$2,500 this is without hotel reimbursement for those who submit this as well) (*MMA Conference cost \$3,472 in 2020.*)

Meetings line item is where Councilors get reimbursed from if submitting a reimbursement per Town Council Rule #64. This obviously would not even cover one Council member if they used the entire allotment.

Rule Sixty-Four: Travel/Conference Reimbursement Policy for Braintree Town Councilors

Expenses – Subject to appropriation, the Town Councilors shall be entitled to reimbursement of the actual and necessary expenses incurred in the performance of their duties (including but not limited to conference and meals). This policy will be considered prior authorization by the Town Council that also allows mileage reimbursement in accordance with IRS federal tax regulations. Such reimbursement should be submitted to the President of the Braintree Town Council. This prior authorization will be limited to \$2,500 per year for each Braintree Town Councilor and will not need an additional vote by the Braintree Town Council. Should a Councilor exceed this amount, they will still be able to submit a request to the full Braintree Town Council for approval.

Mileage –SAME \$200

Mileage is reimbursed to anyone driving/using personal vehicle to go to conferences and who submits it for reimbursement with appropriate documentation. This is calculated by mileage x IRS federal regulations standard mileage rate (.56 cents in 2021).

(In the past there were multiple conferences at Holy Cross for example)

Dues/Membership/Subscriptions - SAME \$1800

(This is used to cover cost of MMA - *Conference cost was \$3,472 in 2020*)...

Dues/Memberships/Subscriptions line item is intended to pay for the yearly MMA Conference as well as any dues or subscriptions Town Council are part of.

Historically, the Mayor's Office has covered the cost of the Town wide Membership and individual departments cover the costs associated with attending specialized meetings and the MMA Annual Conference. (For example: Town Solicitor pays separately for the Mass Municipal Lawyers Association and meetings) The Council's line for this membership should be enough to cover at least attendance at the Annual Conference but typically *the cost of the MMA meeting exceeds the Dues/Memberships/Subscriptions line item and some of it is paid from the Meeting line item. It is in the same General Fund (0111101 Council – Administration) as "Meetings". This is an acceptable practice as long as it is in the same general fund.*

Reserve fund – DECREASED BY \$15,253 – Fund is Zero

The Reserve fund was placed in the Council budget to address any unexpected expenses that may have come forward during the transition in government. It was continued in the future as a funding source for the unexpected. This unexpected would have to be approved by the Mayor and a transfer of funds and Town Council vote would be necessary.

It required the Mayor to initiate a request and the Town Council would need to approve it. The only expenditures have been to decrease the yearly budget when requested. All past Council President's agreed to this being the fund to reduce when requested.

Background on the Reserve Fund: The reserve fund is a holdover from the old Braintree Town Meeting days for unanticipated expenditures incurred between Town Meetings. The Finance Committee could review requests for spending and make a transfer out of the Reserve Fund, to a specific line, without having to wait for Town Meeting or call for a special town meeting to approve the appropriation. The fund is allowed for by MGL c. 40 s. 6 and is specific to town governments, so it is no longer necessary here. A copy of the statute is below:

MGL Chapter 40 Section 6: Towns; reserve funds for extraordinary expenditures; establishment Section 6. To provide for extraordinary or unforeseen expenditures, a town may at an annual or special town meeting appropriate or transfer a sum or sums not exceeding in the aggregate five per cent of the levy of the fiscal year preceding the fiscal year for which the fund, to be known as the reserve fund, is established. No direct drafts against this fund shall be made, but transfers from the fund may from time to time be voted by the finance or appropriation committee of the town, in towns having such a committee, and in other towns by the selectmen; and the town accountant in towns having such an official, and in other towns the auditor or board of auditors, shall make such transfers accordingly.

Town Auditor – DECREASED to \$71,000 from Contract amount of \$75,000

The way the contract is written is based on a “shall not exceed” amount. Over the 3 years, the total liability is \$225,000—broken down per year at a value not to exceed \$74,000, \$75,000 and \$76,000 in years 1-3 respectively (FY21, FY22, and FY23).

It is difficult to know how much the services will cost each year because CLA will invoice the Town monthly for services provided so the most prudent action would be to budget the full \$75,000. The Town Auditor (CLA) consistently comes in under the maximum allowable cost for services so we budgeted a lesser amount for FY22. If services increase next year we will be responsible for up to \$75,000.

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