

Peter Morin
President
District 6

David M. Ringius, J
At Large

Julia C. Flaherty
At Large

Ryan Sterling
At Large



Elizabeth Maglio
Vice President
District 3

James Daiute
District 1

Joseph Reynolds
District 2

Annmary Quilty
District 4

Meredith Boericke
District 5

OFFICE OF THE TOWN COUNCIL

Special Town Council Meeting

Wednesday, April 15, 2026

MINUTES

A Special Town Council meeting of the Town Council was held in the Cahill Auditorium, Braintree Town Hall, on Wednesday, April 15, 2026 beginning at 7:30p.m.

Council President Morin was in the chair.

Clerk of the Council, Susan Cimino conducted the roll call.

Present: Peter Morin, President
Elizabeth Maglio, Vice President
David M. Ringius, Jr.
Julia Flaherty
Ryan Sterling
James Daiute
Joseph Reynolds
Ann Quilty
Meredith Boericke

Also Present: Erin V. Joyce, Mayor
Michael Esmond, Finance Director
Freddie Viola, Fire Chief
Tim MacDonald, School Superintendent
Sara Kauffman, Director of Finance & Operations for Schools
Justin Rollo, Chair School Committee
Nora Venaza, Assistant Superintendent
Bob Kuther, Principal
School Committee members

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

- None

ANNOUNCEMENTS

OLD BUSINESS

- **26 019** Superintendent of Schools: MSBA Statement of Interest Core Project Braintree High School or take up any action relative thereto (CONTINUED from April 7, 2026)

Council President Morin asked for a Motion to take Order 26 019 off the table.

MOTION: To Take off the Table Order 26 019

Motion: by Councilor Maglio to Take off the Table Order 26 019

Second: by Councilor Reynolds

Vote: For (9 – Boericke, Daiute, Flaherty, Maglio, Morin, Quilty, Reynolds, Ringius, Sterling),
Against (0), Absent (0), Abstain (0)

Council President Morin stated this is so the council can ask questions. The mayor will make a presentation. The superintendent of schools can also make a presentation. The chair of the school committee can speak. The council will ask questions. I will try to give each councilor 5 minutes of question time. There will be another opportunity for follow-up and then we will take a vote.

Council President Morin asked for a recommendation from Councilor Boericke, Chairwoman of the Committee of Ways & Means.

Chairwoman Boericke stated the Committee of Ways & Means met on April 7, 2026 and we had a split vote 2 in favor and 2 opposed (and 1 absent) for moving this forward to the full Council.

Tim MacDonald, Superintendent of Schools explained the school department with the facilities department and the mayor's office has prepared a statement of interest (SOI) to the Mass State Building Authority (MSBA) for Braintree High for your review and your possible approval. The SOI was approved by the School Committee on March 2nd. Our town has previously submitted SOI's under prior administrations. Most recently in 2024. In 2024 we were excited as the MSBA decided to visit Braintree High School but unfortunately we were not invited into the process in 2024 after that visit. We did not submit an application last year as the district was conducting the school master plan process. As you are aware, the SOI is due April 17th, Friday. MSBA will review applications from April until July. They may choose to visit schools between August and November. We'll be notified in December if we're invited into the process. The submission in front of you is made under two priorities. The are priorities #5 and #7 which reflect the need for updated building systems and modernize learning spaces.

Priority #5: Replacement, renovation or modernization of the school facility systems, such as roofs, windows, boilers, heating and ventilation systems, to increase energy conservation and decrease energy related costs in a school facility;

Priority #7: Replacement of or addition to obsolete buildings in order to provide for a full range of programs consistent with the state and approved local requirements;

This submission represents the perspective of the entire school leadership team, central office staff, principals, curriculum directors, that future capital investment should prioritize Braintree High School. Key goals include modernizing science laboratories, expanding elective offerings particularly in the arts and technology and exploring opportunities to introduce selected trades and other post-graduate pathways for our students. The SOI also outlines the possibility of either maintaining our 9 through 12 high school structure or shifting to a 7 to 12 grade configuration. The SOI does not make any final determination on grade span. If we were invited to proceed, the first step would be a feasibility study with the MSBA to identify the best option for Braintree schools incorporating community input and ongoing discussions with school leadership, school committee and town officials. Regarding the grade reconfiguration as part of our master planning process, the school leadership team met and did engage in robust discussion about what the grade configuration span could look like. We would need further discussion and vetting as a leadership team before fully supporting this option. We would also need further discussion with our community regarding change in our grade configuration in the schools. The SOI presented tonight is the first step in what would be a multi-year process. If selected the next phase would be the feasibility study for which the town approved \$1.5 million in 2020 as part of the South Middle School debt exclusion. This study would be in partnership with the MSBA. The project would go out to bid with a scope that includes evaluating both the site and the building and considering factors like grade configuration but also location of the preschool and potentially where to place central office administration. If we submit the SOI and we are invited in, the feasibility study requires we look at at least three options, base repairs, addition renovation and a new building. It's been noted by the firm that we hired during the master plan process that the existing structure of Braintree High School is in good condition but we know the systems struggle. The study would carefully explore both renovations and new construction possibilities. Based on conversations with the mayor's office, any significant modernization effort will likely require a debt exclusion vote. We know we need to build strong community support as part of this process. If you approve this SOI and we are excepted into this process by the MSBA, I commit to meet with you at each school in the district with families to discuss options and answer questions. I have been superintendent for 10 months and have heard a new modernized Braintree High School is a shared community priority. We are excited to pursue this SOI. The high school not only impacts all of our students, but has the potential to be a community resource for all our Braintree residents.

Mayor Joyce stated thank you to the council for taking more time and having a stand alone meeting to ask questions. A new high school has long been a supported community project. If we do get accepted in with the MSBA we want to have a successful project. We want to really work hard to ensure that we can afford a project that has already had community support through a prior debt exclusion to support a feasibility study. This vote tonight would keep the ball rolling. This is to see if the MSBA would partner with us.

Councilor Ringius stated the deadline is April 17th with no deadline so we need the vote tonight. You did in essence inform or check off the box to the MSBA of the possibility of consolidation. You noted with the debt exclusion the community included \$1.5 million to do a feasibility study which would be the next step on this. This was as far back as 6 years with a broad-based community engagement with wanting to move forward with a new high school. We have approved and built a new East and a new South Middle. It seems like the next step would be a brand new or completely renovated high school.

Mayor Joyce stated if the schools come up in conversation people comment about wanting a new high school. We just want to be really sure we can afford that. It is more glaring to go from a new modernized middle school to the high school.

Councilor Ringius explained we weren't getting approved sometimes because we were not meeting standards that other towns might. The high school was always under enrolled. It was built for 2,200. This isn't as much as a building problem as it is a systems problem.

Councilor Reynolds stated I had a conversation with the mayor and read up on the SOI. I think all of would like to see better facilities for our high school students. How do we get there.

Mayor Joyce stated we would eventually be looking for community support on a project through a debt exclusion.

Councilor Reynolds stated I would be comfortable voting for the SOI tonight because it is not a commitment along with the master plan. It is a preliminary step.

Mayor Joyce stated if we don't get invited in with the MSBA we would not be single-handedly supporting a new high school on our own. We have been submitting for years without getting in. It is a significant partnership and funding resource for us to fix the high school.

Councilor Flaherty stated we have been submitting SOI for many years. 2024 MSBA came to visit. Does that signal anything at all?

Mayor Joyce stated we were hopeful. They had come and tour the facility but we did not get feedback why we were not chosen to partner.

Councilor Sterling thanked the superintendent to commit, if we get in, to go to every school to speak on this. Do we have any cost estimate between building a new school or renovating?

Superintendent MacDonald stated it would be hard to give a cost estimate right now.

Councilor Sterling asked if a new school could be potentially built on the existing land around the high school because at one point it flooded and was more of a swamp land.

Superintendent MacDonald stated that is a good point. It would be part of the feasibility study.

Councilor Sterling asked if there are current communications with the MSBA.

Superintendent MacDonald stated yes more about how the SOI should be filled out.

Councilor Sterling what is the estimate the town would owe back due to past projects.

Superintendent MacDonald stated I do not have an exact amount yet. We sent a letter about the Highlands School. We expect it to be in the range of \$500,000. We do owe money on the old South as well for \$250,000. We hope to get information from them soon about what that cost would be.

Councilor Maglio asked what department does some of the grants sometimes for like green initiatives for the schools.

Sara Kauffman stated the Facilities department.

Councilor Maglio asked if there is a list of the grants somewhere.

Mayor Joyce stated this has come up a lot and you've been a great advocate for better grant tracking and outreach. As part of the upcoming budget we are hoping to highlight grants spending within departments. I do not have that list but would be happy to get more information on that.

Councilor Maglio stated the master school plan is different from the master plan. The master plan referred to in here is about the school facilities. Correct okay. But there isn't a plan. It is in progress? Yes okay. So am I to understand that asking about the plan it is not clarifying the SOI.

How can these major decisions be made about the high school without the plan on what the impact will be. I'm seeing a reluctance on naming what is going to happen (with Ross and other schools) and I think that is short-sighted because I think we need to bring the town along with all of this particularly if there is going to be a price tag of hundreds of millions that we have to come up with.

When I vote it is as a councilor for my district. Pausing a plan is not against the outcome. I pride myself on doing my homework as best as I can. I go to meetings and get information. We need a solid plan and we need to move forward together. Its not that I am against a plan, its that there's no plan and I'm just for a plan.

President Morin stated thank you to the Superintendent for meeting with me and having a thorough meaningful discussion and allowed me to address my concerns regarding the SOI. Many were addressed in your opening statement including there will be outreach to each school and the council will be invited to those outreach sessions as the final plan for Braintree High will be developed.

In the SOI, I brought this to your attention, a note that in FY25 the school budget was reduced by \$3.5 million and 43 positions were cut. On page 228 of our budget book for FY25, it shows there was a \$4.5 million increase in the FY25 school department budget. I think its more attributable to the reduction I staff is that there was a reduction from the request of an additional \$3.5 million so that for level services, there was a reduction of 44 personnel, but that wasn't attributable to a reduction in budget. There was a reduction in the increase in the budget that ensued. Those 44 personnel that were laid off represented roughly 5% of the school department employees. Between 2020 and 2025 alone, we are now enrolling 400 less students which is like a 7% decrease in the number of students in that time. I think it would be appropriate to correct that assertion that there was a reduction in budget when in fact there was an increase, primarily attributable to the passing of the override.

Sara Kauffman stated thank you yes that is a \$3.5 million reduction versus the level service budget request as you said and when I submit the SOI I can make sure that that's very clear in there.

President Morin stated my trouble with that is the question isn't about level services. The question is about did your department experience reductions in budget? And the answer is no. You received a 5 or 6% increase that year. You did not get a level services budget, but based on the fact that you're serving 400 less students, you know there's an argument to be made that you didn't need the personnel that you had and you hadn't made adjustments in prior years. In fact, while the number of students was decreasing, the number of employees was increasing until FY25. I think it's important that we accurately reflect the funding that has been provided. Otherwise, I think this is going to be questioned. I want to see this succeed, unlike the last 0 for 16 on this. If we are going to do it, we should do it well. We should be right about what we say. The fact we are returning money on two projects to the MSBA is a red flag I think. My concern is that we be accurate in everything that we put into this SOI. The capital plan over the next 3 years is for over \$770,000 for a new boilers in the high school. We've done a roof, electrical, HVAC, but we haven't done enough. I am in favor of a new high school. I am in favor of a traditional model 9 through 12. If this statement in the SOI can be clarified appropriately, I will support it. This needs to be clarified we did not cut our school budget in FY25.

Councilor Ringius explained the SOI is the first step in a long process to obtain funding from the MSBA. I can't fathom any municipality being able to foot the bill for a new school build without the aid of the MSBA in these economic times. It is of vital importance to stay engaged and connected with the MSBA on projects such as these. We now face needed upgrades and significant upgrades to our schools with budget restraints. A new high school impacts every student. We are committing and losing nothing by submitting an SOI.

Councilor Boericke stated the school committee put together a comprehensive and strategic application to the MSBA. It falls squarely in the school committee's purview. The Council's involvement stems from the need to publicly acknowledge that should Braintree choose to move forward with a partnership with the state, it will require a voter-approved tax increase, and a request for financial help from the state to renovate the high school. Voting yes for the statement of interest is not a guarantee of state funding, but voting no is a guarantee that the entire cost of renovating or rebuilding BHS, should we even choose to pursue it, would fall solely and exclusively on Braintree's taxpayers. I believe Braintree's tax payers deserve every opportunity for the potential of lowered costs, and I will be fully supporting asking for the states help to achieve a long-held and community-wide goal to renovate or rebuild BHS. I will be providing my unequivocal support for the SOI.

Councilor Flaherty stated back in 2020 Braintree voters agreed by 71% approval for a feasibility study to renovate or rebuild the high school should the MSBA invite us in. That is one reason I vote in favor of submitting an SOI each time. I will vote to support this SOI tonight.

Councilor Sterling stated I am in agreement there are major needed renovations for the town's high school. I would like to see the feasibility study done as it was voted by the voters in 2020. The vote last week was to table the conversation so that the process was given the time needed. It gave us councilors more time. I appreciate that.

Councilor Quilty stated my only goal in this whole situation is to do what is right for the students of Braintree. As far as the SOI is concerned, if you don't play the game you don't win. I am fully going to support this SOI tonight.

President Morin stated we sat through two plus hours of about 17 Motions on capital projects totaling about \$33.8 million last week. There were about 8 hours of hearings on those. They were thoroughly vetted. I am proud they were thoroughly vetted. I am proud of the way the council conducted its business this evening. They asked questions and suggested ways to improve upon a statement of interest that has failed repeatedly in its submissions in prior years. If we are going to do it, let's do it to win it. Let's do it the right way and have accurate information included in it.

There are a lot of disappointed people in my district right now. Even if we get this SOI we are going to need a vote. In the Highlands they turn out to vote. You better start reaching out and doing a good transition to the Old South. I hope there is an opportunity for my neighborhood to have a say in what goes on there. I want this to pass and I want this to be accepted by the MSBA.

The mayor stated we have some proposed alternative language or if some other language is suggested, that I am happy to share. The alternative language we could consider is, "In fiscal year 25 the school department did have a reduction in force of 43 positions. While the school department budget was still able to grow at 5% thanks to a successful override, the growth did not meet the needs to maintain all staff."

President Morin stated we also paid for East on our own budget without a debt exclusion. That is \$2.7 million on principal and interest payments that we carry on our operating budget that other communities do not. We should include that. That inhibits our ability to fund a more aggressive capital plan for the schools. Including that language will enhance the SOI. It will show the commitment the Town of Braintree shows to our schools. We deserve credit for that from the MSBA.

Council President Morin asked for a Motion on Order 26 019.

MOTION read by Councilor Maglio:

Resolved: Having convened in an open meeting on **April 15, 2026**, prior to the SOI submission closing date, the Town Council of Braintree, in accordance with its charter, by-laws, and ordinances, has voted to authorize the Superintendent to submit to the Massachusetts School Building Authority the Statement of Interest Form dated **February 24, 2026** for Braintree High School located at 128 Town Street, Braintree, Massachusetts, which describes and explains the following deficiencies and the priority category(s) for which an application may be submitted to the Massachusetts School Building Authority in the future:

Priority #5: Replacement, renovation or modernization of the school facility systems, such as roofs, windows, boilers, heating and ventilation systems, to increase energy conservation and decrease energy related costs in a school facility;

Priority #7: Replacement of or addition to obsolete buildings in order to provide for a full range of programs consistent with the state and approved local requirements; and hereby further specifically acknowledges that by submitting this Statement of Interest Form, the Massachusetts School Building Authority in no way guarantees the acceptance or the approval of an application, the awarding of a grant or any other funding commitment from the Massachusetts School Building Authority, or commits the Town of Braintree or the Braintree School Department to filing an application for funding with the Massachusetts School Building Authority.

Motion: by Councilor Maglio to approve Order 26 019

Second: by Councilor Ringius

Vote: For (9 – Boericke, Daiute, Flaherty, Maglio, Morin, Quilty, Reynolds, Ringius, Sterling),
Against (0), Absent (0), Abstain (0)

NEW BUSINESS

President Morin stated we have a request for Same Night Action.

Does any Councilor object to Same Night Action on Order 26 031 or Order 26 032?

Ok - Hearing none we will take up Order 26 031 and then Order 26 032.

Refer to the Committee of Ways & Means (Requests for Same Night Action)

- **26 031** Mayor: Appointment to the School Fund Committee – Justin Rollo or take up any action relative thereto

Mayor Joyce explained these 2 Orders (Order 26 031 and Order 26 032) are to establish a committee for the School Trust Fund (Order 26 023) recently approved by Town Council.

The School Fund Committee shall consist of three (3) members – the Mayor of the Town of Braintree, and two (2) residents of the Town of Braintree who are appointed by the Mayor, subject to the review and approval of the Town Council under Section 2-10 of the Braintree Charter. Each such resident member shall be 18 years of age or older, and a registered voter in the Town of Braintree. In appointing two residents to serve on this Committee, the Mayor shall ascertain the extent to which each resident has past or present experience as an appointed or elected official of a Massachusetts city or town. Members of the School Fund Committee shall receive no compensation, stipend or fee of any kind for their service on this Committee.

Motion was read by Councilor Maglio:

MOTION: UPON THE REQUEST OF HER HONOR, MAYOR JOYCE, THE TOWN OF BRAINTREE, THROUGH THE BRAINTREE TOWN COUNCIL, IT IS SO ORDERED:

In accordance with Section 2-10 and 3-3 of the Town Charter, approves the appointment of Justin Rollo to the School Fund Committee.

Motion: by Councilor Maglio to approve Order 26 031

Second: by Councilor Ringius

Vote: For (9 – Boericke, Daiute, Flaherty, Maglio, Morin, Quilty, Reynolds, Ringius, Sterling),
Against (0), Absent (0), Abstain (0)

- **26 032** Mayor: Appointment to the School Fund Committee – Peter Morin or take up any action relative thereto

President Morin stated we have a request for Same Night Action.

Does any Councilor object to Same Night Action on Order 26 032?

Ok - Hearing none.

There were no questions from councilors.

Motion was read by Councilor Maglio:

MOTION: UPON THE REQUEST OF HER HONOR, MAYOR JOYCE, THE TOWN OF BRAINTREE, THROUGH THE BRAINTREE TOWN COUNCIL, IT IS SO ORDERED:

In accordance with Section 2-10 and 3-3 of the Town Charter, approves the appointment of Peter Morin to the School Fund Committee.

Motion: by Councilor Maglio to approve Order 26 032

Second: by Councilor Ringius

Vote: For (8 – Boericke, Daiute, Flaherty, Maglio, Quilty, Reynolds, Ringius, Sterling),
Against (0), Absent (0), Abstain (1- Morin)

Next Council Meeting is scheduled for: Wednesday, April 29, 2026 @ 7:30pm

ADJOURNMENT

It was unanimously voted to adjourn the meeting at 9:28p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Susan M. Cimino, Clerk of the Council