



Impacts of a 17% Reduction in the FY2021 General Fund Operating Budgets for Town Departments

Reduction of 27% of staff, equivalent to 21 full time employees

Fire Department

- 6 firefighter layoffs (25% of the department)
- Working for the Plainville Fire Department will become more dangerous for all of its members
- Protecting life and property will become more difficult and require greater risk taking to do so.
- Response times to 40% of our calls will double (10-16 minutes instead of the 5-8 minutes presently)
- We will be trying to protect Plainville with 2005 shift staffing levels being 86% busier since then (54% increase from 2004-2014, 32% increase from 2014-present)
- No second ambulance (the Fire Chief recommends a reduction in ambulance revenue of \$250,000 in the town budget)
- No fire base training
- Minimum legally required EMS training (10 paid hours for each person for the year). We will quickly fall behind the curve at providing cutting edge advanced life support to our residents
- No department training allowing us to practice working together in a large group at a fire or other large incident
- No daytime department mechanic. Maintenance costs will go up as preventive maintenance will no longer be able to be done. We will only be able to work on the trucks when they break down. Life expectancies will go down on all of our equipment. The mechanic currently covers overtime on the shifts and for long term injury and illness to offset costs. If we run into long term injury or illness, we will have a funding problem as overtime will be the only way to cover the shifts.
- The Deputy Chief will be assigned to shift instead of days. We will lose a key administrative role in any fire department. No other area fire department of our size and run volume lacks a daytime Deputy Chief to take care of the vast regulatory requirements we face. We will undoubtedly become deficient in these areas. The Deputy Chief currently covers overtime on the shifts and for long term injury and illness to offset costs. If we run into long term injury and illness, we will have a funding problem as overtime will be the only way to cover the shifts.
- Morale will suffer greatly due to all of the above
- We run the risk of more people resigning to go to other fire departments that provide better staffing and more long term stability. If anyone besides the laid off firefighters leave, we will have no choice but to backfill with overtime until a new firefighter can be hired and trained. This is a tremendous expense until the vacancy is filled.

Police Department

A reduction of 5 full-time police officers which will result in the following effects on the daily staffing of our shifts and the ability to fulfill our core mission of public safety. (This will bring our staffing back to 1970's-1980's staffing levels.)

- Day Shift – 40% reduction in staffing, we would have two officers available for calls for service unless they were transporting prisoners to Wrentham District Court in which case there may be 1 officer left in town to respond to calls. The shift supervisor or court officer needs to attend Wrentham Court daily, which may leave only 1 or 2 officers available for calls while they are in court.
- Evening Shift- 25% - 50% reduction in staffing depending on availability. The shift will be reduced each night by 1-2 officers depending on availability.
- Midnight Shift- 2 officers all shifts, loss of Impact shift officer 12am-2am
- Detective Division – Eliminated, officers will be back in uniform. Limited ability to follow-up on victims of crimes such as, drug investigations, drug task force, theft investigations, breaking & entering investigations etc.
- Elimination of the Dare Program which has been in place for the past 25 years
- Reduced hours for the processing of Firearms Licensing
- Elimination of part-time front desk staff (Dark Station)
- Reduced ability for officers to complete mandatory yearly training due to shift shortages
- Reduced ability to perform daily traffic enforcement
- Special Event Coverage – there may not be extra officers available for large special events
- We will be stretching 1 chief and 13 officers over 7 days a week, 3 - shifts a day, each 24hrs. This will be a health and safety concern for the staff as they are forced to work overtime to maintain a minimum of officers per shift.
- Officers may not be able to use a percentage of their vacation time, since there will not be enough officers to fill all the requests.
- In the event officers are injured or on extended sick time this will further reduce our ability for proper staffing
- Officer Safety will be affected by the reduction in staffing!
- In order to train a new officer, it takes 1 year to complete the hiring and training, with the loss of so many officers it could take years to gain back trained staff and the cost for that training.

Department of Public Works – Highway Division

- Loss of 31% of the staff. An already small department will be reduced from 6.5 personnel to 4.5, the lowest it has been in decades
- Highway staff will likely only be able to respond to emergent or urgent repairs and any preventative maintenance on the town's roads, sidewalks, catch basins, trees, signs, traffic markings, etc. will not be able to be performed adequately. The result will be further deterioration and depreciation of the town's public infrastructure
- We will no longer be able to mow the town parks or provide various assistance to the Senior Center and other departments in town

Building Maintenance

- Loss of the only position in this Department and any part time administrative help that was shared with other departments, this will result in no preventive maintenance being done on any of our town buildings
- Reduction in custodial services for town hall

Treasurer/Collector

- Loss of 43% of the staff, reduction of 1.5 positions eliminated
- Office would need to be closed for an additional full day
- This office handles all revenue for the town (the major source of income), staffing this loss will likely result in payments not being processed timely and more room for error with less staff providing appropriate checks and balances
- The Treasurer/Collector's office is also responsible for processing payroll for all town employees and managing the health insurance benefits for all employees since there is currently no Human Resources Department.

Inspectional Services

- Loss of Administrative Assistant and reduction of hours for Inspectors, which will have a detrimental effect on wait times for residents and businesses and could result in a drop in permit fees collected, a detrimental impact on a major source.
- Office would need to be closed for additional full day

Selectmen/Town Administrator

- Loss of administrative staff causing reduction in service and ability to manage license holders in town, provide procurement assistance and human resources support to town employees. In addition to handling all the license holders in town, this department also provides human resources related services to employees as much as possible, given that the Town does not have any human resources staff or budget.
- The office consists of two staff members, a much smaller level than our surrounding and comparable towns, and as a result of the reduction would need to be closed for an additional day
- The expense budget contains items that help support the town hall and all departments, many that could not be cut. Some examples include: phone charges for town hall phones, copy machine lease payments, annual fee for the town to belong to the Massachusetts Municipal Association, fee to belong to the SERSG bidding consortium, advertising required for public hearing, printing of the annual report as required by town by-laws and the expenses required to hold a Town Meeting.

Public Library

- Reduce Hours Open from 40 to 30
- Layoff 1 position
- Reduce all other positions by 4 hours/week
- Library staffing FTE will be reduced from 4.1 to 3.1
- Cancel Movie License - No more summer movie days for recreation camp next summer
- Reduce the number of Storytimes in half means serving fewer families
- Stop circulating Wifi Hotspots resulting in no temporary household internet access for patrons
- Stop the Boston Globe and Providence Journal delivery resulting in unhappy patrons

- Relying on the Municipal Complex Maintenance budget for all outdoor and indoor maintenance, although if those are also cut by 17% they may not be available for assistance
- Cancel the Cleaning Company - ideally should be done by Complex Building Maintenance, but they will likely be cut by 17% as well.
- Limited outreach and programming due to staffing reductions
- 4th Public Internet computer will NOT be replaced resulting in stricter time limits for public
- Less ongoing maintenance resulting in higher repair costs later
- Fewer new items for Adults and Children increasing wait times for Print and eBooks
- Reduced hours for Passport Acceptance, package pick up, shredding service drop off
- Restrained heating and cooling of the building to stay within budget means dress in layers
- Reduce office supplies resulting in fewer repairs made to items

When our budget was cut by 7% in 2008 it took us 9 years to return to being open 39 hours a week and 13 years to return staffing levels to 4.1 FTE. When Plainville reaches 10,000 population we will be required to be open 40 hours and we have been planning for years to meet this standard. A 17% cut will force the library backwards with even less open hours, materials and services than in 2008.

What if we fund the Plainville Library at less the Municipal Appropriation Requirement?

Funding the library at less than \$241,929 will result in applying for a waiver for State Certification with the understanding and having a plan in place to return the library budget to the Municipal Appropriation Requirement within 5 years. Waivers are not guaranteed. Applications are reviewed by the Massachusetts Board of Library Commissioners who vote to award a certain number of waivers based on their criteria. Disproportionate Cuts are when the percentage change from year to year of the Adjusted Municipal Budget and the Library Budget differ by more than 5%. Disproportionate cuts are dangerous territory and will result in the loss of Certification to receive State Aid. We want to avoid loss of certification at all costs because it will cost our citizens dearly.

Loss of Certification will result in:

- No Interlibrary loan
- Plainville residents cannot borrow items from other libraries in person or online
- Loss of access to State Grants
- Loss of \$16,000 for SAILS and the need to find that money from elsewhere in the library budget

A budget cut to \$200,571 severely limits the Plainville Public Library's ability to serve our community. These library cardholders may be job hunters, students, avid readers or movie buffs. They are those who can't afford cable, internet and the cost of buying eBooks; who are learning to read or reading to learn; who rely on the library for school work or need wifi to work from "home"; who need to print shipping labels or fax healthcare information; who need material to learn a new skill or enjoy reading fiction to keep busy. Your Library is here for Everyone!

Accounting

- No room for expense reductions - 90% of expense budget is the cost of the annual audit and maintaining the accountant's governmental certification
- Office hours will be reduced to 29 hours per week for the two employees (Finance Director/Town Accountant and Assistant Accountant)
- Delayed processing of expense and payroll warrants could result in assessment of late fees

- Delayed reconciliations of cash, receivables, budgeted funds and non-budgeted funds including capital projects, grants and stabilization funds.
- Such delays will have a negative impact on but not limited to:
 - Audit Results and Financial Statements
 - Bond Rating and Interest Rates
 - Budget Preparation
 - Free Cash and Retained Earnings Certification
 - Setting of the Tax Rate and Tax Recapitulation Certification

Council on Aging

- The Senior Center budget is running barebones operations with salaries that are lower than other surrounding towns at senior centers that are less attended. The bus driver's (and substitute's) salary is completely reimbursed to the town by GATRA. Cuts may impact loss of seasoned staff that seniors have come to count on.
- The senior center has a minimal operating budget that was engineered to keep the center well maintained and safe. Cutting the budget would risk work not being done to maintain a 20 year old building and which may jeopardize safety.
- The current expense budget also reflects the high volume of attendance every day at the center. The seniors well being is our priority. This means heat, air conditioning as needed. If the budget is cut, we cannot keep the comfort of the seniors that attend.
- The center, for some, is a necessary food source and acts as a congregate meal site. The hours must be maintained in order to facilitate these services.
- The senior center operates the town's social services center. Social services are not just for the senior population in town. It is a center for people looking for food stamps, fuel assistance, housing, medical equipment, etc. Staffing is required at all hours to accommodate these requests.
- The senior center has not had a large budget increase in years. Cutting back on the minimal budget we have now, would significantly impact all aspects of the center. Due to the development of new apartments in town, we have a senior population increase as well as non-seniors coming in. Each request requires paper goods, office supplies, telephone, postage, etc. If there is a cut, we would need to cut back on these services to the public.
- With COVID19, the senior center requires extra cleaning products, cleaning time from the janitor, PPE products, etc. This is a priority and will eat up part of the budget that we never had to before. Adding a further cut, would prevent us from purchasing products to keep the public safe. The center has over 100 seniors a day.
- The center has a yard and plantings that need to be maintained and cared for. The center also purchases flowers in the spring and seasonal decorations to keep the center attractive to all. Cutting our expenses would take away these pleasantries that some seniors do not have at home and rely on the center for good cheer. It has become a very important expense that would be greatly missed if we needed to cut back.

Town Clerk, Elections and Board of Registrars

- A \$35,031 reduction to the Town Clerk, Board of Registrars and Election Budget will be devastating.
- These budgets are and have been bare bones for the 12 years that Ellen Robertson has been Town Clerk.

- Most of the duties of the Town Clerk are mandated by the Secretary of State. Every year the cost of postage, paper, envelopes and toner for the printer increases. The budget stays the same and doesn't increase to reflect the increased expense.
- The Town Clerk is mandated to provide a yearly Census and Street List Book. Register voters, print acknowledgements for every new voter, every voter who has moved and been deleted or any change to address or name. The cost has increased dramatically after January 1st of this year. Anyone who visits an RMV or State Agency and doesn't check off a box to NOT register to vote will automatically be registered in their town. This box is most often not seen and as a result we are receiving many more voter registrations that are actually duplicates and need to be sent an acknowledgement as being rejected.
- The Town Clerk is mandated to send out a yearly statement of conflict of interest and ethics training to every municipal employee. This needs to be logged as to when it is sent and when it is acknowledged as received by each employee. Also, to keep track of who has taken the test. This is a job that takes many hours to prepare and keep track of.
- The Town Clerk is the keeper of the records and needs to bind certain records. The Town Clerk hasn't been able to have any binding done in the last two years. There wasn't enough money in the budget to do this.
- The Town Clerk is mandated to hold Elections. An election will cost around \$10,000. There will be three elections in FY21. The Town Clerk is required to have a Warden, Clerk and four Inspectors in each precinct. Every election needs to have the voting machines programmed, the Automark handicapped accessible machine programmed, ballots printed and machines tested. Precinct boxes packed and precincts set up the day before the elections.
- The Town Clerk is mandated to have Early Voting before the November Presidential Election and most likely they will require the same for the September State Primary with the Covid-19 virus. This means 10 days before the election early voting will be going on during normal office hours and weekend hours. Election workers will need to work during those hours. Every ballot cast will need to be entered into the State Computer and filed in the vault to be counted on Election Day where we will need two extra early voting workers to process the ballots.
- The Town Clerk is mandated to certify Town Meetings. Check in voters, take minutes, certify articles, notify DOR, Public Records, Attorney General, County Commissioners, update by-laws, etc.
- The Town Clerk serves as the Records Access Officer. This is another time consuming job that needs to have a log and paper trail of requests made and fulfilled.
- Regular business of the office brings the Town Clerk into contact with every level of government, State Agency, County Agency, almost every officer, board or committee member in Plainville. We are issuing Vital Records, Burial Permits, Business Certificates and answering questions for the public, who rely on the Town Clerk to either have the answers or know where to direct them to the right department.

These are just a few of the mandated duties that the Town Clerk must have the funds to perform.

- The Town Clerk's expense budget is only \$18,700 (bare bones). The only place to reduce \$35,031 would be Salaries. Cutting that amount would be devastating and result in a loss of staff. The office would need to be closed for one more additional day.

Assessing

- The reduction of \$27,359 from the Assessing Budget would be overwhelming. The 17% or \$27,359 is more than the entire expense line. The Assessor's budget is already extremely lean. The Assessor's Office is mandated by Mass General Law Chapter 58 & 59
- Reducing the assessor's budget could jeopardize State Certification.

The following services are needed to conform to state guidelines for “full and fair cash values” and setting the tax rate. These programs are critical to the operation of the department. The total amount of these services is \$18,481. These three line items must remain in the budget.

1. **\$6,496 would eliminate the entire budget for Vision Appraisal software. We will not conform to DLS requirements.** This is the system that we use in our daily work. It is used to for the maintenance of real property in the town. The DLS regulations is as follows: Property record cards (PRCs) shall be completed for all parcels indicating the name and mailing address of the property owner. PRCs should contain all information regarding improvements and land required by the appraisal system to produce equitable assessments along with the visit/inspection history, sale information and assessment history. Additionally, the PRC should contain a sketch and photograph or digital image
2. **\$2,785 would eliminate the entire budget for Mapping Services. We will not conform to DLS requirements.** Every community requires adequate tax maps, which may include a geographic information system (GIS) conforming to the MassGIS parcel mapping standard, which can be found at <http://www.mass.gov/anf/research-and-tech/it-serv-and-support/application-serv/office-ofgeographic-information-massgis/standards/standard-parcels>. Without tax maps, assessors may not have a readily accessible, complete parcel inventory or detailed land area information, such as frontage and square foot area, for each parcel. As a result, they may be unable to precisely analyze market influences on the value of land, such as, size, shape and frontage, or develop a land valuation system based on these accurate measures of market value. Moreover, without accurate land information, existing appraisal systems cannot produce uniform assessments. Assessors in communities that do not have adequate tax maps must include the development and implementation of a tax-mapping program as the initial component of their reassessment program. Assessors in all communities must provide for the maintenance and updating of their tax maps as a component of their reassessment program.
3. **\$9,200 would eliminate the budget for Personal Property maintenance.** The Board of Assessors has agreed to hire RRC for Personal Property valuation. The total cost of this service is \$9,200. In FY 2020 RRC increased our Personal Property New Growth by \$70,000 dollars. The cost-benefit analysis of hiring this company is highly beneficial.

The following budgetary amounts are essential in running the department but would not prevent setting a tax rate this year. We would not be providing customer service to the residents. Mailings will not be sent out Etc.

1. **\$3,000 would eliminate the entire budget for contract services.** This amount has already been reduced. From \$5,000. We use this money to hire Appraisers for our big box properties that pay \$200,000 to over \$500,000 in property taxes each. Without representation on cases like this we could lose thousands of dollars.
2. **\$500 would eliminate the entire budget for office supplies.** We have already spent \$1,500.00 this year. The biggest expense is toner for the printer. We print to the Town Hall machine whenever possible.
3. **\$500 would eliminate the entire budget for postage.** We need to mail out Income & Expense forms to 250 Commercial/Industrial Property Owners annually, 400 Personal Property Forms to Business Owners annually and over 100 forms to residents applying for exemptions. Also, correspondence with residents on many other issues.
4. **\$1000 would eliminate the entire budget for education.** This would result in the Principal Assessor not maintaining her MAA certification and the Assistant Assessor not furthering her education in the Assessing field. The staff would not be up to date on new laws and guidelines governing the assessing practices.

5. **\$500 would eliminate the entire budget for in state travel and mileage.** This would prevent the staff from attending educational seminars. There would be no money for mileage to assess new properties and renovations.
6. **\$350 would eliminate the entire budget for Professional Dues/ Memberships.** Assessors will not maintain their professional status.
7. **\$2,400 would eliminate the SFTW on-line database maps.** This program is used by most of the departments in town: Police, Fire, Planning, Conservation, Zoning, Selectman, Assessors along with the general public.

Most of the \$27,359 would have to come out of personnel. There are only two full-time employees in the office. Similar sized towns in the area have 3 full time employees. The Principal Assessor is not sure how we could perform all the job duties in less hours. They can barely stay afloat now. The department would need to close one day a week.

Health

The Board of Health has submitted a level funded budget for FY-2021 in the amount of \$145,095. \$113,086 will be used for salaries and \$32,009 will be for expenses. This represents a 0% cost of living allowance for employees.

If the town passes a non-override budget, approximately 17% or \$24,717 will be required to be cut from the submitted budget. This will have a devastating effect on the operation of the Health Department.

Considering the growth of Plainville and the economy, responsibilities of the office has increased steadily in the past years. These responsibilities include, but are not limited to; an increase in the amount of inspections required for housing, septic systems, food establishments, pools, camps, wells, body art establishments, motels and marijuana establishments. In addition, with an increase in the population and town growth comes an increase in the amount of calls the office receives for general questions and complaints. These responsibilities require both Health Agents to be in and out of the office with some frequency. In the past, the Board of Health office has been closed numerous times due to staffing issues resulting from inspections, mandatory trainings, sick and vacation leave.

Currently the Board of Health does not have its own Public Health Nurse. An agreement was made between the Towns of Plainville and Wrentham to share nursing services. These services were to be limited and were to provide minimal basic coverage. A grant in the amount of \$5,000.00 was applied for to cover some of the annual costs.

With the onset of COVID-19 and the incredible strain it put upon Public Health Nurses, current funding is rapidly depleting. The uncertainty of what COVID-19 will bring in the coming year or any other pandemic or Public Health crisis only highlights the importance of proper funding for the Health Department.

Cutting \$24,717 from the Health Department expense budget would eliminate Public Health Nursing and leave a balance of \$2,612 for operating expenses (\$4,680 is committed to the SNARC program).

Cutting \$24,717 from the Health Department salary budget would further reduce an already short-staffed office resulting in the office being closed to the public at times.

Cutting \$24,717 from both expense and salary budgets would still result in cuts to Public Health Nursing and staffing shortages.

All scenarios will severely affect the services to the residents of Plainville.

Planning & Development

- 96% of the Planning and Development Department is comprised of salaries, so there would be no way of avoiding a staff reduction if that office were forced to take a 17% cut. There is currently one employee in that department with some part-time administrative help. That one position administers services and attends all meetings of the following: Planning Board, Zoning Board, Conservation Commission, Open Space and Recreation and the Community Preservation Committee.
- This one staff member is also a licensed Professional Civil Engineer and in addition to servicing all of the aforementioned Boards, he provides engineering support to all other departments in town due to the fact that unlike other comparable towns, we do not have a funded Town Engineer position. Loss of hours for this staff member would result in departments having to rely more on consultant engineers, a much more costly expense for the Town.
- A 17% reduction would result in no administrative support and a reduction of hours for this one staff member who is responsible for the economic development and bringing commercial businesses into town to help ease the tax burden on residents and foster additional revenue. The development and permit fees the town receives are directly attributable to this one staff member, and cutting their hours will likely have a detrimental impact on that important source of revenue for the town.

Information Technology

- This Department consists of one staff member. One person to manage all of the technology, networking and support for the building systems and employees in: Town Hall, Public Works and the Senior Center. Because the Public Library and Public Safety have had to manage their technology either by themselves or with limited contracted help, this position also helps support those departments, as time allows. It is already too much for one person, especially given how important technology is to every employee in town and the services that we provide to residents and businesses.
- The expense budget is made up of computer licensing and maintenance agreements that could not be reduced. Therefore, the entire 17% would be taken in salaries, resulting in a reduction of hours for this one staff member. In reality, that would likely mean that we would lose this individual, as they would find employment elsewhere. As a result, the Town would have no staff for technology, an incredible risk considering this one staff member is responsible for our network and cybersecurity and making sure confidential town and staff data and information is properly protected.

Legal

- A 17% reduction in the legal services budget is a huge risk. The Town will need to defend itself from any legal matters, especially if we are forced to layoff large amounts of employees. The lack of any Human Resources staff in town only complicates this risk.

Parks and Recreation

- There is only one line item in the Parks and Recreation budget, the salary of the Director at \$57,934, the same amount as last year and well below Director salaries in comparable communities. The 17% cut would need to be made up solely by reducing the hours of the Director. Unfortunately that would mean the Town would not be able to run programs for the children and residents for at least 9 weeks next year. The reality is that our Parks Director would very likely find employment

elsewhere and the Town would have no ability to provide Parks and Recreation programs to the children and residents of the this community.

Historical Commission

There are no employees or staff in this budget. This organization is made up solely of volunteers that give an enormous amount of their time to help preserve the history of Plainville.

Because this very small budget is primarily made up of the utility costs to operate the Humphrey House, preservation would be impacted Specifically:

- Purchasing archival supplies and office supplies may be impacted depending on how much we can acquire and what is needed. These items are needed to properly store, catalogue, archive, and preserve the town's history ranging from photos, documents, artifacts (including textiles). The boxes/materials needed for preservation would feel the biggest impact. Items in the Humphrey House cannot be safely moved to the town hall storage until they are properly boxed and cataloged and that cannot happen without proper archival materials to do so.
- Preservation projects such as photo and document framing and repair would be eliminated. Some of these projects can be handled by the CPA funds, including work on the 1858 map, but we will still be limited until next year to do so and it will all depend on the town's decisions. And smaller projects may be put on hold indefinitely.
- Building restoration, maintenance, and landscaping around the Humphrey House would also be impacted. We had to hire a landscaper to care for the beds closer to the building. The area around the house, especially in the back is in rough shape. Due to the budget freeze we had to cancel the landscaper for the spring clean up and continued landscaping around the house and if our budget is reduced that will be the first area cut from our spending. However, we hope that the town can help out a little more with making the exterior of the Humphrey House look less like an abandoned property or as some have called it, an eye sore in the center of town. Unfortunately if Building Maintenance and Public Works are also cut 17%, they may not be able to provide such assistance.