



Town of Bridgewater

Town Council

September 19, 2023

7:00 PM

MEETING MINUTES

CALL TO ORDER

A quorum being duly present, Town Council President Erik Moore called the meeting of the Bridgewater Town Council to order at 7:00pm on Tuesday, September 19, 2023 in the Council Chambers.

PRESENT:

Fred Chase, Paul Murphy, Shawn George, Erik Moore, Susan Robinson, Kevin Perry, Brad McKinnon and Mark Linde. Also in attendance was Town Manager Michael Dutton and Town Attorney Jason Rawlins.

ABSENT:

Dennis Gallagher

APPROVAL OF MINUTES FROM PREVIOUS MEETINGS

a) September 5, 2023 Meeting Minutes

Councilor George made a motion to approve the September 5, 2023 meeting minutes, which was duly seconded by Councilor Perry.

A roll-call vote was taken with the results records as follows: Chase – Yea; Murphy – Yea; George – Yea; Gallagher – Absent; Moore – Yea; Robinson – Absent at the time of the vote; Perry – Yea; McKinnon – Yea; Linde – Absent at the time of the vote. Motion passed 6-0

ANNOUNCEMENTS FROM THE PRESIDENT – None

PROCLAMATIONS – None

CITIZEN OPEN FORUM

- Raymond Ajemian, 221 Aldrich Road: attended on behalf of the BCCR to notify residents of a forum taking place at the Library on 10/4 at 6:00pm on the topic of book banning.

APPOINTMENTS – None

HEARINGS - None

LICENSE TRANSACTIONS – None

PRESENTATIONS - None

a) Finance Orientation Presentation

Finance Director Laurie Guerrini presented an orientation of municipal finance to the council. Some highlights included:

- The department serves as the foundation for various town services.
- Sources of revenue include grants, property taxes, utility fees, state shared receipts, ambulance receipts, licenses and sales tax (meals/hotel).
- Annually funded is the general fund, transfer station, water and sewer.
- The finance department works with each department and then meetings with Budget & Finance and Finance Committee on the annual budget.
- Accounting department pays the bills; Assessors office sets the tax rate and the Treasures office collects the taxes/money due to town.
- Tax rate formula: $\text{total tax levy} / \text{total assessed/property value} \times 1000 = \text{tax rate}$.
- Regular reporting is done for informed decisions.
- CIP = Capital Improvement Program – covers 5 year periods, major purchases (ie. Fire Station, High Street Dam, Water Treatment plant)
- DLS = Division of Local Services – finance training and resource center that provides information.

Councilor Linde noted that this was a good presentation and will not see overspending with the controls that are in place.

Councilor Moore asked if there was a way to categorize what is being spent on things such as downtown revitalization and school. Ms. Guerrini noted that we could look into doing something like that in reporting.

Councilor George noted that he is all for free cash but feels to conservative.

TOWN MANAGER'S REPORT

a) High Street Bridge Closure Update

Town Manager Dutton noted that there are no reported problems, project is proceeding as planning. The completed date is early November because of the late start due to permitting.

b) Fire Station Update

Town Manager Dutton noted that the project was progressing well. Project Team will be coming to a council meeting in October. \$21M was budgeted and we are currently in a better environment so hope to see bids around what was budgeted.

Councilor George noted that there were only about 9 bids for the Mitchell School project so now over 100 to choose from.

c) Water Update

Town Manager Dutton first gave an update on the water quality. The new plant is up and running, calls have shrunk for discolored water. Wells treat for iron and magnesium, test for PFAs, work closely with DEP for PFAs testing. Water is tested daily, weekly and monthly for various items.

Councilor Robinson noted that residents have trust issues with discolored water, letters sent out, how do we regain their trust. Town Manager Dutton noted that it is a byproduct of the scary notice that DEP requires the towns to send out. We are transparent, water department does not hide results.

Councilor McKinnon noted that there are signs on Winter Street about water and suggested they be used

more around town for those that do not have/use internet.

Councilor Moore noted that water is a hot topic and sees the town trying to notify residents. Maybe put all of the things that have been done about water (videos, etc.) on one webpage.

Councilor Linde noted that copies of water related items could be put at the Library.

Town Manager Dutton noted that on the supply side, there are 2 loan orders on tonight's agenda. #5 and #9 wells need to be replaced, losing 30% flow. On the Vernon Street wells, DEP laid out the next steps.

Councilor McKinnon requested that a Mobil Station update be put on the next agenda.

DISCUSSIONS

a) April Election - Marilee Hunt, Town Clerk

Town Clerk Marilee Hunt discussed the low turnout of voters at town elections and presented an option. Would like to purchase 250 annual Town Election signed with a cost of \$2,900.

Councilor Murphy noted it was a great suggestion but signage and newspaper communication does not appeal to a majority of the residents. Need to find a way to attract new voters.

Councilor Robinson noted it is a great idea but could there be some type of text voting information. Also would love to give feedback on the sign.

Councilor Chase asked if the March election will help or deter April election votes. Ms. Hunt noted that it could because of fatigue from seeing all of the ads on TV.

Councilor Perry noted that everything helps but if no contested races, people won't go to the polls.

Councilor Moore noted that he sees the community engaged at sports events, etc. but how do we keep them informed. Need to figure out what good looks like.

Councilor Linde noted that Stonehill College created an app for an election. Also noted that the April date is an issue.

COMMITTEE REPORTS – None

LEGISLATION FOR ACTION

a) Order O-FY24-009: Transfer Order - Contractual Buyouts

Budget & Finance voted 3-0 to recommend at their 9/5/23 meeting. Finance Committee voted 5-0 at their 9/18/23.

Town Manager Dutton noted that this is for employee sick buy back. Covers 6 retirements.

Councilor George made a motion to approve Order O-FY24-009, which was duly seconded by Councilor Perry.

A roll-call vote was taken with the results records as follows: Chase – Yea; Murphy – Yea; George – Yea; Gallagher – Absent; Moore – Yea; Robinson – Yea; Perry – Yea; McKinnon – Yea; Linde – Yea. Motion passed 8-0

OLD BUSINESS – None

NEW BUSINESS

a) Resolution R-FY24-002: First Responders Day

Councilor McKinnon noted that he is sponsoring this resolution to keep the recognition of first responders each year.

Councilor Perry made a motion to retain Resolution R-FY24-002 at council, which was duly seconded by Councilor George.

A roll-call vote was taken with the results records as follows: Chase – Yea; Murphy – Yea; George – Yea; Gallagher – Absent; Moore – Yea; Robinson – Yea; Perry – Yea; McKinnon – Yea; Linde – Yea. Motion passed 8-0

b) Order O-FY24-010: Loan Authorization: Water Well #5 Replacement

Councilor George made a motion to refer Order O-FY24-010 to Budget & Finance and Finance Committee, which was duly seconded by Councilor Perry.

A roll-call vote was taken with the results records as follows: Chase – Yea; Murphy – Yea; George – Yea; Gallagher – Absent; Moore – Yea; Robinson – Yea; Perry – Yea; McKinnon – Yea; Linde – Yea. Motion passed 8-0

c) Order O-FY23-011: Loan Authorization: Water Well #9 Replacement

Councilor George made a motion to refer Order O-FY24-011 to Budget & Finance and Finance Committee, which was duly seconded by Councilor Perry.

A roll-call vote was taken with the results records as follows: Chase – Yea; Murphy – Yea; George – Yea; Gallagher – Absent; Moore – Yea; Robinson – Yea; Perry – Yea; McKinnon – Yea; Linde – Yea. Motion passed 8-0

CITIZEN COMMENTS

- Carlton Hunt, Austin Street: noted that webpage is not good and calendar should not be at bottom of the page.
- Al Lacerda, 238 Comfort Street: noted that National Responders Day is important but local is also important. Wants to bring everyone together with events at Town Landing.

COUNCIL COMMENTS

- Councilor Murphy: No comments
- Councilor Linde: noted that he attended the ribbon cutting at the McElwain School, wonderful event and thanked Town Manager Dutton and Council President Moore for their speeches.
- Councilor Chase: noted that he attended Metro Commerce Bridgewater Day and Bob Rulli and Town Manager Dutton presented which was well received by those in attendance.
- Councilor McKinnon: No comments
- Councilor Robinson: Thanked Al Lacerda for speaking about First Responders Days.

- Councilor George: No comments
- Councilor Perry: Reminded everyone about the Vision to Reality event taking place on 9/26 at 6:30pm at the Mitchell School.
- Councilor Moore: noted he appreciated comment about the webpage and the ribbon cutting at the McElwain School was special, encouraged people to walk around the property.
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EXECUTIVE SESSION – None

ADJOURNMENT

Councilor George made a motion to adjourn, which was duly seconded by Councilor McKinnon.

A roll-call vote was taken with the results records as follows: Chase – Yea; Murphy – Yea; George – Yea; Gallagher – Absent; Moore – Yea; Robinson – Yea; Perry – Yea; McKinnon – Yea; Linde – Yea. Motion passed 8-0

Meeting adjourned at 9:03pm.

In accordance with the applicable provisions of the Town of Bridgewater Home Rule Charter and Town Council Rules and Procedures, the Town Council assembled voted, at their meeting on Tuesday, October 10, 2023, to approve the aforementioned minutes, as submitted, by a Roll Call vote 9-0.