



Town of Bridgewater

Town Council

August 7, 2024

7:00 PM

Special Meeting

MEETING MINUTES

CALL TO ORDER

A quorum being duly present, Town Council President Kevin Perry called the Special meeting of the Bridgewater Town Council to order at 7:00pm on Tuesday, August 7, 2024 in the Council Chambers.

Present: Fred Chase, Paul Murphy, Mary McGrath, Susan Robinson, Kevin Perry, Brad McKinnon, Mark Linde, Adelene Ellenberg and Sonya Striggles.

Also in attendance was Interim Assistant Town Manager Blythe Robinson and Town Attorney Jason Rawlins.

CITIZEN OPEN FORUM

- Tina Larsen: spoke on behalf of the Cultural Council, explained the council and asked residents to volunteer. Would love 2 more people in place before people start applying in September. Clerks office mailed out 3,000 ballots and early voting begins.
- Bill Wood, Hayward Street: following up on email he sent as being the interim Town Manager.
- Pat Neary, Lakeside Drive: been speaking with residents in Town and had suggestions. Should have acting Town Manager right now; Ms. Robinson resume is quite impressive but can only work a limited amount of hours, need a full time person. Marilee Hunts name has come up in discussion.

APPOINTMENTS

- a) Town Charter Section 4-6. Vacancy in Office. A vacancy in the office of town manager shall be filled as soon as possible by the town council. Pending appointment of the town manager or the filling of any vacancy, the town council shall forthwith appoint some other qualified person to perform the duties of the town manager. The appointment of the acting town manager shall be for a term not to exceed 3 months; provided, however, that a renewal, not to exceed an additional 3 months may be provided.

Council President Perry noted that this line item is being postponed. Mr. Dutton is not here. Based on feedback from parties with different options. Ask those that are interested in being submitted to supply their letter to the Town Council secretary to be on the next schedule.

- b) Discussion with Blythe Robinson and possible vote to appoint as Acting Town Manager

PRESENTATIONS - None

DISCUSSIONS

a) Composition of the Preliminary Screening Ad Hoc Committee

Councilor Perry noted that the Town Council voted on the formation of an adhoc committee. Now we need to vote on number of members. Recent discussions have had 4 people and up to 9 people. If an outside firm is hired part of the process will include public sessions and surveys from the public. They will do this with the council and address what questions should be asked. Councilors are indemnified by the Town and residents could be held liable for any HR violations. Department heads will be reporting to the Town Manager and could be conflict.

Councilor Perry suggested 5 members (4 councilors and 1 seated Bridgewater member of the School Committee.

Councilor Chase made a motion to establish 5 member preliminary screening committee made up of 4 Town Council members and 1 seated Bridgewater member of the Bridgewater School Committee. The motion which was duly seconded by Councilor Murphy.

Councilor Ellenberg noted that there could be a conflict of interest situation. General liability covers supervised or unsupervised volunteers. We can get citizens on the committee.

Councilor Perry noted that citizens will be part of the process, there will be two or more sessions to get their point across.

Councilor Ellenberg made a charter objection motion and noted that the entire committee needs to be rethought.

Councilor Perry noted that if Ms. Ellenberg wanted a 9 member committee then she could state her arguments.

Councilor Ellenberg noted that she would like 3 members of the Council, 3 citizens and 3 department heads.

Councilor Robinson entered the meeting at 7:32 pm.

Town Attorney Rawlins noted that there should be an order before the council. Ad hoc committees are usually formed without any issues. Each of you should legislate, this is an order and the ad hoc committee be of this many people. All have opinions but no order.

Councilor Ellenberg noted that the composition of the ad hoc committee is very important. Would like this council to hear from the citizens. Retracted her motion.

Councilor Striggles noted that the people she has spoken to want it to be a council decision.

Councilor Perry noted that an ad hoc would decide on an outside firm, working with the firm/agency to bring candidates forward. Preliminary Screening committee. The public will be part of the process. Meetings to discuss what they want in a Town Manager. The more people you add to an ad hoc the more it will hard to make decisions.

Councilor Linde asked if the Town Manager or Town President would be selecting the members.

Councilor Perry noted that the Town Manager selects the ad hoc members and then the Town Council ratifies.

Councilor Linde then asked if we do not take action on hiring the Town Manager does the assistant Town Manager by default become the Town Manager. Town Attorney Rawlins noted that the Charter does not allow for that, the council needs to appoint an interim Town Manager.

Roll-call vote on Councilor Chase's motion to establish a 5 person ad hoc committee:

McKinnon – Yea; Robinson – Yea; Ellenberg – No; Murphy – Abstained; Perry – Yea; Linde – No; Chase – Yea; Striggles – Yea; McGrath – Yea; Motion passed 6-2-1.

Councilor Perry noted that appointments will be made at the next council meeting. Town Attorney Rawlins noted that the appointments should be done one by one until full composition.

b) Next Steps: Town Manager Recruitment

Council Perry noted that the ad hoc committee will meet and establish a process. Will meet with an outside firm. Will meet with the council at a meeting in September, public sessions will be scheduled and held. Also noted that an appointment of the interim Town Manager will take place at the next meeting. All names must be sent to Town Council Clerk by Friday at 10:00a.m. Q& A session with appropriate questions.

Town Attorney Rawlins asked what happens if there are 15 applicants. Councilor Perry noted will have to have a few meetings. Interviewing all at meetings.

Town Attorney Rawlins noted that seems pretty informal, prefer council votes on this. If you are going to do an appointment of Town Manager there needs to be a process. People applying do not know what to submit. Have a vote on what the process looks like. Have it as an order and in writing. Someone is applying for a job. Put it on the next agenda and someone being a sponsor of a measure and you will have to have another meeting after that. Very important and process needs to be tight.

CITIZEN COMMENTS

- Janet Hanson, Pleasant Street: –disappointed on the vote of 5.
- Keith Buohl, 10 Fieldcrest drive: big decision you have, important to have open meetings. Do not agree with citizens being on the committee, when the Town Attorney gives advice we should not argue with him, he is very confident in his answers. Not a good look for us or the Town.
- David Moore, 54 Flagg Street – have a performance audit to help identify goals for the search committee and things we should be looking for. Strengths, could be done through department head and citizen input.
- Gina Guasconi, - 35 Ball Ave – commend everyone for the hard work put into this challenge. Interim Town Manager not be considered for the permanent Town Manager. Should put that in the job description.

COUNCIL COMMENTS

- Councilor McGrath: would like to see how we become a Purple Heart community.
- Councilor Striggles: thanked everyone that came. Having a full room and citizens engagement makes our job easier when we are accessible to you. Congratulate the BW12 baseball team on their

achievements.

- Councilor Chase: thanked those in attendance and the people who corresponded with me personally. Was not able to respond to each person individually. I will continue to respond to those.
- Councilor Linde: echo comments of my fellow councilors. Do not think outside folks not part of this council should be part of the selection process.
- Councilor Murphy: thanked folks for coming out for the past couple of days and thanks for those that emailed me directly. Important that we have a clear and concise process. Important decision.
- Councilor Ellenberg: thanked Councilor Murphy for having the forums. Heard how citizens want to be heard and listened too.
- Councilor Robinson: feel the sentiments of all those who reached out. Continue to make sure we have community input.
- Councilor McKinnon: echo all of the sentiments. Thanked Paul for all he is doing. I am 4 or 5 days behind on emails.
- Councilor Perry: would like to have a special recognition when the little league team comes back to town. Thank you to all of the citizens who came out tonight. None of us have gone through this before. We want the town to run smoothly as possible.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

- a) MGL Chapter 30A, Section 21(a) (2) To conduct strategy sessions in preparation for negotiations with nonunion personnel or to conduct collective bargaining sessions or contract negotiations with nonunion personnel; and to adjourn from Executive Session.

There was not a need to executive session.

ADJOURNMENT

Councilor Linde made a motion to adjourn, which was duly seconded by Councilor Robinson .

A voice vote was taken with the results recorded as follows: McKinnon – Yea; Robinson – Yea; Ellenberg – Yea; Murphy – Yea; Perry – Yea; Linde – Yea; Chase – Yea; Striggles – Yea; McGrath – Yea; Motion passed 9-0.

Meeting adjourned at 8:27pm.