



Town of Bridgewater
Town Council
August 27, 2024
7:00 PM
Special Town Council Meeting

MEETING MINUTES

CALL TO ORDER

A quorum being duly present, Town Council President Kevin Perry called the meeting of the Bridgewater Town Council to order at 7:00pm on Tuesday, August 27, 2024 in the Council Chambers.

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

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

ANNOUNCEMENTS FROM THE PRESIDENT

Council President Perry held a moment of silence for 4 recent veterans who passed away:

Gary Tardiff, US Air Force, June 11, 1963 – July 17, 2024

Fay McCabe, US Army, Vietnam, October 17, 1943 – July 23, 2024

Kendall Burrill, US Navy, Vietnam, February 14, 1941 – August 1, 2024

Michael Minsk, US Army, Vietnam, July 31, 1946 – August 1, 2024

CITIZEN OPEN FORUM

- Tim Fitzgibbons, 238 South Street: spoke about the ad hoc order on the agenda and noted the councilors should not give away the process of hiring a new Town Manager.
- Bill Wood, 388 Hayward Street: spoke about Stiles & Hart Park and hopes the Town Council does something to recognize the Stiles family.
- Gary Marrese, 48 Village Gate Drive: would like 11 person ad hoc committee
- Lynnette Delano-Chase, 60 Old Farm Road: in favor of 5 member ad hoc committee not 11; concerned that one person chose the 11 names.
- Tom Pratti, 37 Bolton Place: noted that he started attending meetings a few months ago, spoke about hiring a new Town Manager and council should listen to the residents.
- John Donna, 261 South Street: spoke about ad hoc committee, council should take a step back.
- Carlton Hunt, Austin Street: spoke about the Emergency Order, town not buying Hanson Farm buying a conservation restriction, would like that changed.
- Janet Hanson, Pleasant Street: asked how many hours per week the acting Town Manager would work.
- Sandra Wright, East Street: concerned about the number of hours Ms. Robinson could work and

salary range.

- Linda Schmuck, 15 Sunset Lane: spoke about water issue would like a councilor to come forward and sponsor a moratorium on building permits for two years.

DISCUSSIONS – None

NEW BUSINESS

- a) Order O-FY25-008: Emergency Measure - Appointment of Acting Town Manager
Councilor Perry gave a brief background of the order. Needs to be an emergency order because of timing, need an acting Town Manager in place.

Councilor Chase made a motion to declare the emergency and suspend the council rules, which was duly seconded by Councilor Striggles.

Councilor Linde asked the Town Attorney if the interim assistant Town Manager could function in that role and the Town Attorney noted no.

After some discussion Councilor Linde made a motion to move the question of the Emergency Measure, which was duly seconded by Councilor Striggles.

A roll call vote was taken on the motion to move the question with the results recorded as follows:
McKinnon – Yea; Robinson – Yea; Ellenberg – No; Murphy – Yea; Perry – Yea; Linde – No; Chase – Yea; Striggles – Yea; McGrath – No; Motion passed 6-3.

A roll call vote was then taken on the motion to declare the emergency and suspend the rules and the results recorded as follows: McGrath – No; Striggles – Yea; Chase – Yea; Linde – No; Perry – Yea; Murphy – Yea; Ellenberg – No; Robinson – Yea; McKinnon – Yea. Motion passed 6-3.

Council President Perry introduced Blythe Robinson and asked her to give the council and residents some background information.

Ms. Robinson introduced herself and gave a brief history of her past employment and noted that she would be working 30 – 35 hours per week.

Councilor Robinson thanked Ms. Robinson for her work behind the scenes, was concerned around capacity but appreciate the number of hours will work.

Councilor Linde asked if the hours worked will be in house or remote and Ms. Robinson noted that the hours she works will be in house. She also noted that she does read emails and works at home often when not required to.

Councilor Murphy noted that the Town has communication issues and would ask for better communication with residents and council.

Councilor Perry noted that we are fortunate to have someone like Ms. Robinson willing to step into the role.

Councilor Chase made a motion to amend Order O-FY25-008 by changing #6 to be “Conservation

Restriction” instead of “Purchase & Sale Agreement”. This was duly seconded by Councilor Striggles.

A roll call vote was taken on the amendment 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.

Councilor Chase made a motion to appoint Blythe Robinson as Acting Town Manager, which was duly seconded by Councilor Striggles.

A roll call vote was then taken on the motion and the results recorded as follows: McGrath – Yea; Striggles – Yea; Chase – Yea; Linde – No; Perry – Yea; Murphy – Yea; Ellenberg – No; Robinson – Yea; McKinnon – Yea. Motion passed 7-2.

- b) Order O-FY25-009: Town Manager Search Preliminary Screening Ad Hoc Committee Selection
Councilor Perry noted that Mr. Dutton was hired by an ad hoc committee that had 4 councilors. This Order calls for 4 councilor plus 1. Ad Hoc Committee would be a conduit for council to get candidates, search firm will do most of the work.

Councilor Chase made a motion to refer O-FY25-009 to Rules and Procedures committee. This motion was duly seconded by Councilor Striggles.

Councilor McGrath noted that maybe an administrator from the school would be better to serve on the Ad hoc Committee. Councilor Robinson noted that the only purview that the council had with the School Committee was the budget.

A roll call vote was taken on the motion to refer the order with the results recorded as follows: McKinnon – Yea; Robinson – Yea; Ellenberg – No; Murphy – Yea; Perry – Yea; Linde – No; Chase – Yea; Striggles – Yea; McGrath – No; Motion passed 6-3.

- c) Proposed Ordinance D-FY25-005: An Ordinance Establishing the Process for Hiring a Town Manager

Councilor Murphy noted that he is presenting this Ordinance to put forth a plan for now and in the future so when hiring a Town Manager something would be in writing.

Councilor Striggles made a motion to refer Proposed Ordinance D-FY25-005 to Rules and Procedures, which was seconded by Councilor Chase.

Councilor Ellenberg made a motion to amend Proposed Ordinance D-FY25-005 with 11 members as she submitted in writing. This motion to amend was seconded by Councilor Linde.

Councilor Chase noted that he was concerned by this proposed amendment and does not understand why the 3 councilors who were originally appointed were replaced with names of councilors with less tenure.

Councilor Ellenberg noted that it would provide an inside situation, the will of the voters.

Councilor Striggles noted that by putting names on the amendment, it as caused dramatics, she was not

aware that her name was part of the amendment.

Councilor McGrath noted that she feels some of the names are a conflict of interest.

Councilor Robinson asked if the people on the list were aware of their names appearing as she was informed that one did not.

Councilor Murphy made a motion to limit debate on Proposed Ordinance D.FY25-005, which was seconded by Councilor Striggles.

A roll call vote was taken on the motion 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.

A roll call vote was then taken on the motion to amend with the results recorded as follows: McKinnon – No; Robinson – No; Ellenburg – Yea; Murphy – No; Perry – No; Linde – No; Chase – No; Striggles – No; McGrath – No. Motion failed 1-8.

Councilor Ellenberg made a motion to amend Proposed Ordinance D-FY25-005 by removing the names of the residents but keeping the job descriptions. This motion was seconded by Councilor Linde.

A roll call vote was then taken with the results recorded as follows: McKinnon – No; Robinson – No; Ellenburg – Abstained; Murphy – No; Perry – No; Linde – Abstained; Chase – No; Striggles – No; McGrath – No. Motion failed 0-7-2.

A roll call vote was then taken on the motion to refer the ordinance with the results recorded as follows: McKinnon – Yea; Robinson – Yea; Ellenburg – Yea; Murphy – Yea; Perry – Yea; Linde – Yea; Chase – Yea; Striggles – Yea; McGrath – Yea. Motion passed 9-0.

d) Proposed Amendments to Proposed Ordinance D-FY25-005: An Ordinance Establishing the Process for Hiring Town Manager

CITIZEN COMMENTS

- Lynette Delano-Chase, 60 Old Farm Road: noted the disrespect from certain councilors.
- Bill Wood, 388 Hayward Street: noted that council could look at the handbook he submitted to see the order of charter, rules and Roberts Rules.
- Carlton Hunt, Austin Street: Would like to know how Ms. Robinson will interact with boards and commissions.
- Eleonor Wentworth, 14 Ridgewood Circle: noted that maybe new Town Manager should be required to move to town within a certain period of time.
- Janet Hanson, Pleasant Street: thanked Ms. Robinson for speaking about her hours.

COUNCIL COMMENTS

- Councilor McKinnon: wants everyone to stay healthy.
- Councilor Robinson: thanked those that spoke. Noted that rumors and speculation about integrity have been spread and when asked for specifics none are given. Would appreciate knowing what the issues are.

- Councilor Ellenburg: noted that she is acting on her conscious, thinks she has been respectful.
- Councilor Murphy: noted that citizens want to move Town forward and he put forth a document that he believes to be the best process, will be as transparent as possible.
- Councilor Linde: noted that he is doing what his constituents have asked of him; does not appreciate lectures from other councilors or past councilors.
- Councilor Chase: no comments.
- Councilor Striggles: noted that a level of decorum needs to remain in chambers.
- Councilor McGrath: noted that she is going to have a table at Autumnfest for boards and commissions and will reach out to the council for help.
- Councilor Perry: noted that we are moving forward with the order and ordinance, we will get there.

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.

Councilor Perry read the executive session language into the record.

Councilor Chase made a motion to enter into executive session which was seconded by Councilor Robinson.

A roll call vote was then taken on the motion to refer the ordinance with the results recorded as follows: McKinnon – Yea; Robinson – Yea; Ellenburg – Yea; Murphy – Yea; Perry – Yea; Linde – Yea; Chase – Yea; Striggles – Yea; McGrath – Yea. Motion passed 9-0.

ADJOURNMENT

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, September 17, 2024, to approve the aforementioned minutes, as submitted.