



Town of Bridgewater

Town Council

March 4, 2025

7:00 PM

66 Central Square

Academy Building

Council Chambers/2nd Floor

The Town Council meeting is being streamed Live via You Tube.

Go to the Town of Bridgewater Facebook Page for the link.

MEETING AGENDA

Due to Massachusetts Open Meeting Law requirements, discussions will not take place during Public Comment periods. If appropriate, responses to questions and concerns will be given by the Town Manager at a future Town Council meeting.

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, March 4, 2025 in the Council Chambers.

Present: Fred Chase, Paul Murphy, Mary McGrath, Kevin Perry, Mark Linde, Adelene Ellenberg, Johnny Loreti and Sonya Striggles.

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

Councilor Perry read the names of veterans who have recently passed away and held a moment of silence:

- Donald Swarce: US Navy Vietnam Era. Passed away on February 12th.
- Dexter McDonald: US Army Korean Era. Passed away on February 14th
- John Sipe: US Navy Vietnam Era. Passed away February 18th
- Thomas Locke: US Air Force Grenada. Passed away on February 20th
- Herbert Nagle: US Army Korean Era. Passed away on February 24th

APPROVAL OF MINUTES FROM PREVIOUS MEETINGS

a) February 18, 2025 Meeting Minutes

Councilor Striggles made a motion to approve the February 18, 2025 Joint meeting minutes, which was duly seconded by Councilor Chase.

A voice vote was taken with the results recorded as follows: Loreti – Yea; Ellenberg – Yea; Murphy – Yea; Perry – Yea; Linde – Yea; Chase – Yea; Striggles – Yea; McGrath – Yea; Motion passed 8-0.

ANNOUNCEMENTS FROM THE PRESIDENT

Councilor Perry announced the fundraising effort of the flag poles in front of the Academy Building. Engraved bricks are going to be sold to raise money for this project.

Councilor Perry announced that the resolution is going to be tabled at this time.

PROCLAMATIONS – None

CITIZEN OPEN FORUM

- Sean Kennedy, 487 Summer Street: noted that the resolution should be voted down entirely and the emergency order to establish a new voting procedure is an inverse count, do not agree on that.
- Robert Joseph, 5 Fernwood Circle: noted that he has spoken about commercial vehicles that go down High Street to 106, bridge we just fixed and down through residential, Town roads being destroyed by overweight vehicles. Also, Center of Town – people don't realize what a stop sign or yield means need police enforcing laws.
- Jill Sheridan, Pleasant Street: spoke about the resolution being tabled and that people are misrepresenting what it was for.
- Samantha Felt, 457 Main Street: spoke about the resolution and why it should not be tabled. Not DEI or sanctuary in this document.
- John Donna, 261 South Street: spoke in regards to the resolution and the wording about the immigration status and the classroom sizes. We need to take care of in house.
- Elizabeth Sharp, 1000 South Street: spoke about the town school budget, class sizes and ask that the town to work through a solution. Starting with less money for each student.
- Christopher Riley, Noland Park: spoke about resolution being a waste of time, if can't raise all money for flagpoles don't put them up.
- Kelly Hailey, 5 Jaclyn Way: spoke about the town and the resolution and how we don't need it and councilors should concentrate on the issues.
- Ahsley Mallard, Grange Park: noted about the school stand outs and thanked everyone for participating. Let's come to a resolution for the schools and water problems. Wants total number for water, schools and roadways.
- Michelle McLeod, 989 High Street: spoke about the morale at the schools, no heat. Can't find substitutes, classroom sizes.
- Kim Burke, 14 Heather Lane: spoke in strong support of the resolution and how the BCCR was berated.
- Casey Rodriques, Janes Way: mother of children and special ed teach at the high school, spoke about using BSU to help with teaching, asked that the town move away from this.
- Chrstina Amendola, High Street: spoke about the resolution and where people are getting their facts from, a Boston Twitter account. It does not make Bridgewater a sanctuary city.
- Christine Ajamian and the BCCR group: spoke about the resolution and BW being a welcoming community. Sorry that the councilors received hatred from some of the residents.
- Keith Buohl, 10 Crest Drive: here as a citizen, love our town. Did not know hate until my son felt it.

- Rachael Daly, 305 Harvest Lane: thanked everyone for their service, announced running for town councilor at large.
- Justin Dupru, 32 Wall Street: spoke about how divided the town is now, do not need the resolution to have a tight community.

Councilor Murphy made a motion to take Presentations out of order, which was duly seconded by Councilor Chase.

A voice vote was taken with the results recorded as follows: Loreti – Yea; Ellenberg – Yea; Murphy – Yea; Perry – Yea; Linde – Yea; Chase – Yea; Striggles – Yea; McGrath – Yea; Motion passed 8-0.

APPOINTMENTS – None

HEARINGS

- a) Proposed Ordinance D-FY25-013: Proposed Amendment to Part II – Administrative Code: Chapter 290, Article I, Section 1 Shade Trees

Public Hearing: Advertised in the 2/18/25 Enterprise. Rules and Procedures voted 3-0 at their 1/15/25 meeting.

Councilor Perry opened the public hearing at 9:56pm

Councilor Perry asked if anyone from the public had any questions. No questions were asked.

Councilor Perry asked if anyone from the public wished to speak in favor. No one spoke.

Councilor Perry asked if anyone wished to speak in opposition. No one spoke.

Councilor Perry asked if any councilors had any questions. No questions were asked.

Councilor Perry closed the hearing at 9:58pm

Councilor Striggles made a motion to approve Proposed Ordinance D-FY25-013, which was duly seconded by Councilor Loreti.

Councilor Linde noted that he does not believe election positions should be taken away from citizens, voting no.

A voice vote was taken with the results recorded as follows: Loreti – Yea; Ellenberg – No; Murphy – Yea; Perry – Yea; Linde – No; Chase – Yea; Striggles – Yea; McGrath – Yea; Motion passed 6-2.

LICENSE TRANSACTIONS – None

PRESENTATIONS

- a) Town Manager Finalists Announcement: Community Paradigm

Bernie Lynch from Community Paradigm gave an update on the Town Manager Search. He included the timeline, search summary, interview topics, selection of finalists. Mr. Lynch noted that 4 candidates were chosen but 2 withdrew. The two being brought forward are Keith Hickey and Justin Casanova-Davis. Next steps are a meet and greet scheduled for 3/9/25 and interviews in front of full council on 3/11/25.

b) Fire Department Update: Chief Schlatz

Fire Chief Schlatz gave an update on the fire department which included the department structure, types of calls, operational plan, grants received and operational challenges.

Councilor Murphy asked how many calls were related to State Prison and BSU? Chief Schlatz noted that 241 for BSU and 197 for prison.

Councilor Linde thanked the department for all that they do and noted that Fire Department does ceremonies but keeps them private, would like councilors to be aware of those events.

Councilor McGrath noted that she liked the Facebook page with the monthly calls and asked if that increase was related to drug use? Chief Schlatz noted that there has been no spike in drug use.

Councilor Chase thanked the chief for their work and asked about the future needs slide and additional apparatus. Chief Schlatz noted that there is one additional fire engine and ambulance coming this summer. Adding that it takes 3 years to get a ladder truck, in the past we have had aid from the state and he is currently speaking with Rep Gallagher.

Councilor Loreti noted that he would love to volunteer his time for wellness at the Fire Department.

c) Water, Sewer and Road Projects Update:

Azu Etoniru, DPW Director gave an update starting with the Water. Noting Capital Projects, Plymouth Street wells; Carvers Pond and High Street; status of other projects (Lead service line inventory, great hill water tank upgrade, Carver's pond valve replacements, High Street Plan dehumidification, Flagg Street & Cross Street Water mains, Vernon Street wells and treatment plan). Spoke about funding options and gave an update on the Wastewater Treatment Plant Phase 2 and funding options.

Mr. Etoniru gave an update on Roadways and the priorities and what is under consideration for Spring/Summer 2025.

Councilor Linde noted that the price tag is the scary part.

Town Manager Robinson noted that the Town does not have the funds to address all the roads so creating a new list.

Councilor Chase noted that Cross, South, Vernon and Flagg Streets have been hard hit and deserve most rehab. Work being done on Flagg is a good sign and asked if water line work to be done on Flagg as well? Mr. Etoniru noted that it what they want to do.

Councilor Murphy discussed the Capital project slide and asked if the governor numbers could be incorporated.

Town Manager Robinson noted that updating the status of the roads in 2025 will help us refine the total cost. Then we can look at options. Chapter 90 will only bring about \$1M a year. Have to balance what is charged to the residents also.

Councilor Murphy asked how long will it take to get the information and Mr. Etoniru noted that they use a company every 5 years – Red is critical (have to do something); Orange (in 3 years) and Green (okay).

Councilor Murphy asked: “what are your thoughts on the Perkins Development and how it will impact our water?”

DPW personnel, Jonas stated: “Perkins development? Multi-use thing? I can’t support that at this time. I am telling you the truth. Right now we are struggling to maintain what we’ve got now. In the winter months, we should be topping off these tanks and resting the wells. Wells are running. Tanks are a little over half. That’s just the facts”.

Councilor McGrath asked how many gallons used a year and Jonas noted that 1.7 gallons per day.

Town Manager Robinson noted that the Town is exploring opportunities outside of Bridgewater.

Councilor Ellenberg asked what the cost would be for Brockton tie in and Taunton Tie in? Mr. Etoniru noted that it would be less than \$38M but would have to look at the infrastructure work, piping, roadway and design elements.

Councilor Linde asked if the college could get their water from the prison and Mr. Etoniru noted that it has been discussed internally.

Councilor Linde made a motion to extend the Town Council meeting past 10:00pm which was duly seconded by Councilor Striggles.

TOWN MANAGER'S REPORT

There was no Town Manager update but councilors asked that the following be on a future agenda:

Councilor Striggles noted that there is a no right turn on north street exit at the High School that needs to be reinstalled

Councilor Linde asked about the red flag on the fire hydrant in front of the Academy Building – wanted an update.

DISCUSSIONS – None

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Councilor Murphy reminded people that there is a Meet and Greet scheduled for 3/9 for the Town Manager candidates and that the interviews will take place on 3/11.

Councilor Linde noted that there will be a Budget & Finance meeting scheduled for 3/18.

LEGISLATION FOR ACTION

- a) Resolution R-FY25-006: Asking the Town Manager to explore applying for the Emerging Contaminants in Small or Disadvantaged Communities (EC-SDC) Grant as Part of a Comprehensive Strategy to Fund PFAS Remediation
This measure was not referred to committee. 14 days has elapsed per Section XVII of the Council Rules & Procedures, therefore this measure may be finally considered this evening.

Councilor Loreti noted that this grant money would be helpful.

Councilor Striggles made a motion to approve Resolution R-FY25-006, which was duly seconded by Councilor Ellenberg.

A voice vote was taken with the results recorded as follows: Loreti – Yea; Ellenberg – Yea; Murphy – Yea; Perry – Yea; Linde – Yea; Chase – Yea; Striggles – Yea; McGrath – Yea; Motion passed 8-0.

- b) Resolution R-FY25-007: A Resolution Affirming Bridgewater as a Welcoming Community for All
This measure was not referred to committee. 14 days has elapsed per Section XVII of the Council Rules & Procedures, therefore this measure may be finally considered this evening.

Councilor Chase made a motion to table Resolution R-FY25-007, which was duly seconded by Councilor Linde.

Councilor Chase noted that he regrets that the resolution is being tabled. Collectively the council does not favor passage and unwilling to consider amendment. Taking time and energy that needs to be devoted elsewhere. A resolution is a statement of principal. No suggestion of DEI or to declare the town a sanctuary city. Misinformation was amplified by an activist group in Boston. Confident that a similar resolution will arise again and be presented.

Councilor Striggles noted that the reality of the resolution was high for me and regret not speaking as clearly as intended. Wants to love Bridgewater as my grandparents did at a time when others did not. What is on thread is not the whole story.

A voice vote was taken with the results recorded as follows: Loreti – Yea; Ellenberg – Yea; Murphy – Yea; Perry – Yea; Linde – Yea; Chase – Yea; Striggles – Yea; McGrath – Yea; Motion passed 8-0.

- c) Order O-FY25-044: Contract Ratification - Town Manager
This measure was not referred to committee. 14 days has elapsed per Section XVII of the Council Rules & Procedures, therefore this measure may be finally considered this evening.
Councilor Chase made a motion to approve Order O-FY25-044, which was duly seconded by Councilor Striggles.

Councilor Linde asked that now that the Town Manager is a Town of Bridgewater employee, do they have full authority to appoint an Assistant Town Manager? Town Attorney Rawlins noted that the Town Council cannot weigh in on the hiring of employees as noted in the Charter.

A voice vote was taken with the results recorded as follows: Loreti – Yea; Ellenberg – Yea; Murphy – Yea; Perry – Yea; Linde – Yea; Chase – Yea; Striggles – Yea; McGrath – Yea; Motion passed 8-0.

- d) Order O-FY25-046: Emergency Order - An Order to Establish the Voting Procedure for the Appointment of a Town Manager

Councilor Striggles noted that due to candidates going from 4 to 2 we should be able to follow a simple nomination procedure. The intent of this Order was to create a process that was different when we voted for the council in replacing Councilor Robinson. Councilor Striggles withdrew her order.

Town Attorney Rawlins noted that the Council would be following Roberts rules, a nomination and then a vote in hiring the next Town Manager.

Councilor Murphy asked if it needed to be a majority vote, 5 councilors and Attorney Rawlins noted that yes if 4 to 4 for both then Ad Hoc needs to meet again.

OLD BUSINESS – None

NEW BUSINESS

- a) Proposed Zoning Ordinance D-FY25-018: ZONING MAP AMENDMENT: Business B and Residence C Districts In the Bedford Street, Winter Street and Flagg Street Area
Councilor Chase noted that proposed zoning ordinance was written by planning department for parcels located within his district. Had a similar situation in front of the council when a certain portion of main street was divided into two zoning districts and was no reasoning for the lines to be drawn the way they were, had adverse impact.

Councilor Striggles made a motion to refer Zoning Ordinance D-FY25-018 to Planning Department and Community and Economic Development. This was seconded by Councilor Chase.

A voice vote was taken with the results recorded as follows: Loreti – Yea; Ellenberg – Yea; Murphy – Yea; Perry – Yea; Linde – Yea; Chase – Yea; Striggles – Yea; McGrath – Yea; Motion passed 8-0.

- b) Order O-FY25-047: Transfer Order for Town Manager's Office

Councilor Linde made a motion to refer Order O-FY25-026 to Budget & Finance and Finance Committee, which was seconded by Councilor Striggles.

A voice vote was taken with the results recorded as follows: Loreti – Yea; Ellenberg – Yea; Murphy – Yea; Perry – Yea; Linde – Yea; Chase – Yea; Striggles – Yea; McGrath – Yea; Motion passed 8-0.

CITIZEN COMMENTS

- Kathryn MacDonald, 2 Oldfield Road: noted that she is concerned with the number of kids in a classroom and if there is an emergency.
- Janet Hanson, Pleasant Street: happy to hear of the support to hold on building.
- Ashley Mallard, Grange Park: disturbed by the water presentation, they need to get numbers.
- Donna Jewell, Keith Place: concerned with the Town Manager search, only one who attended every Ad Hoc public meeting held over the past few months, wants 4 candidates.
- Stef D'melia, Harvest Lane: 2 days for paradigm to come up with candidates. Need to go back and ask the other candidates. Need someone from in town who has passion for the town.

- Dave Gabriel, Elmwood Crescent : out of the 7 there was a Bridgewater resident, did not have Town Manager experience but has Bridgewater experience, need to include the Bridgewater resident.
- Lisa Curley, Atkinson Drive: noted that she was asked to do the flag pole. Keith is her partner and they are divided but we work together, need to compromise.
- Ray Ajamian, Aldrich Road: want to thank the councilors for sticking their necks out for the resolution.
- MJ Spagone, 5 Lakeshore Center: one space left on the Finance Committee and shares concerns about the Town Manager process.

COUNCIL COMMENTS

- Councilor Loreti: noted his open office hours for Monday 3/10/25 from 4pm to 6pm.
- Councilor Ellenberg: noted that the citizens need to contact our state rep to get more money for our town. Conduct ourselves according to the golden rule – do unto others what you want done to you. Thinks the Town Manager search needs to be re-opened, been disturbed by the process and asked if the citizens would be interested in starting a petition to stop building.
- Councilor Murphy: thanked everyone who presented tonight and the citizens that spoke. There is a lot that needs to be don.
- Councilor Linde: thanked the residents that are still here and agrees with the residents about the search process. Also noted that the State Senator is on the MIA list, need to get him to a meeting.
- Councilor Chase: thanked Ms. Curley for her comments and noted that it is regrettable that two finalists have chosen to withdraw. Also noted that even if the search was to open again, would lose those 2 candidates and would not blame them. It would show that the town does not know what they want in the first place. Narrow field of people who are qualified for this work and have the experience. If we reopen a search now who do you think will be available to apply. Process was well organized and managed and we were able to get it down to 7 and interviewed them. Do not see it feasible to choose to open the search.
- Councilor Striggles: noted that the two candidates are high qualified. Thanked everyone who came out tonight and those that stayed. Noted that she was hosting Sunday office hours 9:30 to 11 at the Juice Mill. And 3/22 9:30 to 11 at the same location. Thanked Career Services at BSU. Congratulated Connor James for the advancement on the Voice.
- Councilor McGrath: noted that BSU is a good resource for the town and proposes that we have BSU intern in our schools.
- Councilor Perry: been a long road in finding a new town manager. Left in August and now it is March. We came up with a good process, we engaged the community at every level possible, would have loved to see more candidates but in the end 2 dropped out. The two we have are the top 2 candidates. If we try to bring others back we will lose the two we currently have. We can't go backward, we need to go forward.

EXECUTIVE SESSION - None

ADJOURNMENT

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

A voice vote was taken with the results recorded as follows: Loreti – Yea; Ellenberg – Yea; Murphy – Yea; Perry – Yea; Linde – Yea; Chase – Yea; Striggles – Yea; McGrath – Yea; Motion passed 8-0.

Meeting adjourned at 11:05pm.

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, March 18, 2025, to approve the aforementioned minutes, as submitted.