



Town of Bridgewater

Town Council

August 5, 2025

7:00 PM

Special Town Council Meeting

66 Central Square

Academy Building

Council Chambers/2nd Floor

The Town Council meeting was streamed Live via You Tube.

MEETING MINUTES

CALL TO ORDER

Council President Loreti called the Special Town Council meeting to order at 7:00pm on Tuesday, August 5, 2025 in the Council Chambers.

Present: Adelene Ellenberg, Sonya Striggles, Mary McGrath, Johnny Loreti, Paul Murphy, Sean Kennedy, Marilee Hunt, Mark Linde and Dr. Kevin Perry.

Also in attendance was Town Manager Justin Casanova-Davis and Town Attorney Jason Rawlins.

Councilor Loreti asked for a moment of silence for all those veterans who have passed.

ANNOUNCEMENTS FROM THE PRESIDENT

Councilor Loreti read a statement regarding MBTA Ordinance and asked people to take time to learn what a density consists off, not to learn the information from Facebook posts.

PROCLAMATIONS

a) Honoring Annie Voyer on the Occasion of Her 100th Birthday

CITIZEN OPEN FORUM

- Janet Hanson, Pleasant Street: water rates are going to be discussed, compare what the rate is now and what is being proposed. 013 – in favor of this, good idea. Citizen comments should be on all meetings. When taxes are due on a Friday the hours of the town hall should be open later.
- Brad McKinnon, 86 Spring Street: Flagg Street – will there be a new water line. Rainbows End – was told it was going out to build, what is the status. Summer Street Park – what is going on there. Grove Street – cars going up one day. Center of Town public safety – crossing at the crosswalks. Stiles and Hart – parking lot needs curb cuts.

- Elizabeth Sharp, South Street: disappointed in the outcome of the override. 281 out of 288 districts in Mass. Do not ignore the data, we are not providing the school budget that is needed. 7th lowest funded school in Massachusetts, I hope you are not proud of this data.
- Tom Arrighi, 20 LedgeWood Drive, Bridgewater Recreation: asked if the golf course was being brought up tonight. Was told no and did not speak.
- Jim Campbell, 144 Laurel Street: - how can you have the people running it to pay off the debt. Was the contract extended by 5 years before the Town Manager left? Do we get reports monthly.
- Peggy Farrell, 270 Boxwood Lane: feels Bridgewater has lost their way, taxes have gone up, how can we add more people to town.
- Jack Brace, 152 Pine Street: Pine Street has a double yellow lane which means no passing, but cars are passing. Wants speed bumps like they have on Elm Street in West Bridgewater. 4 or 5 of them. Speed Limit is 30 miles per hour.

HEARINGS

- a) Order O-FY26-010: Post Override Supplemental Appropriation
Public Hearing: *Advertised in the 7/21/25 Enterprise. Finance Committee voted 6-0 to recommend at their 7/21/25 meeting.*
Councilor Loreti opened the public hearing at 7:21pm.

Town Manager Casanova-Davis noted that \$450K was being taken from Employee Liability Fund – funds retirement buy backs, felt comfortable taking from that fund.

Councilor Loreti asked if anyone wished to speak in favor:

Tim Fitzgibbons, 238 South Drive: Raynham passed their assessment at their special meeting tonight. I urge Bridgewater to vote yes on this.

Councilor Loreti asked if anyone wished to speak in opposition: no one spoke.

Councilor Loreti asked if any Councilor had questions:

Councilor Murphy asked when school comes back next year how do we fund? Town Manager Casanova-Davis noted that there will be difficult decisions for 2027, not an ideal situation. This decision was made the day before I started and thought this was the most prudent decision since we had 45 days. We are going to roll up our sleeves and sharpen the pencils and start the 2027 budget early. Working with the collective bargaining groups for savings.

Councilor Linde noted that he commends the Town Manager and the Finance Team to come up with a creative solution.

Councilor Kennedy noted he would like a chance to work on this, opposed to using stabilization funds, would like to see continued work at the school committee for funding. Will give the Town Manager the chance to work on this and the ability to replenish the funds. Support this currently based on what I see today. Future problems need to be solved.

Councilor Ellenberg thanked the Town Manager for coming to a solution to keep things together.

Councilor Perry noted that we should not be using stabilization funds but this is special circumstances. Want to give the Town Manager the chance to work his magic with 2027 budget. We are short of funds for the Town and the school district. There will be talk of another override this time next year, the work needs to be done to show that money is being spent appropriately.

Councilor Loreti noted that he is willing to give the Town Manager the opportunity to work with us to managing the budget and working on the budget.

Councilor Loreti closed the hearing at 7:38pm

Councilor Linde made a motion to approve Order O-FY26-010, which was duly seconded by Councilor Striggles.

A voice vote was taken with the results as follows: Kennedy – Yea; Ellenberg – Yea; Striggles – Yea; McGrath – Yea; Loreti – Yea; Perry – Yea; Murphy – Yea; Hunt – Yea; Linde - Yea. Motion passed 9-0.

TOWN MANAGER'S REPORT

a) Boards, Commissions & Committee Update

Town Manager Casanova-Davis gave an update on the Boards and commissions openings. Noting that he has introduced himself to some of the committees and they have had some quorum issues.

Councilor Linde noted that the Open Space Committee needs members, they have not been able to meet.

b) Community Engagement Update

Town Manager Casanova-Davis noted that he plans to host some meet and greets, two have been scheduled: August 20th 10:30am at the Sr. Center and 8/25 at 5pm at the Academy Building.

Town Manager Casanova-Davis noted that he posted a survey about the Town Website, looking for resident feedback for a new webpage.

Councilor Linde asked about the fire hydrant outside of Town Hall and since it was removed, what fire protection does the Town Hall have now.

Councilor Kennedy would like an update on Flagg Street – time table, street is a mess.

Councilor Ellenberg noted that Whitman Street needs updating in bad shape.

Councilor Murphy asked for a list of grants for the MBTA compliance.

Councilor McGrath would like to know who requests the committees to come before the council, would like to start having them come to a council meeting.

Councilor Kenndy asked if the MBTA zoning and Hanson Farm is there a direct connection, would that be received or have to be paid back.

LEGISLATION FOR ACTION

- a) Order O-FY26-007: Acceptance of Gift - Lopieke's Family Trust
Budget & Finance meeting 8/5/25. Finance Committee voted 6-0 to recommend at their 7/21/25 meeting.

Councilor Perry made a motion to approve Order O-FY26-007, which was duly seconded by Councilor Kennedy.

A voice vote was taken with the results as follows: Kennedy - Yea; Ellenberg - Yea; Striggles - Yea; McGrath - Yea; Loreti - Yea; Perry - Yea; Murphy - Yea; Hunt - Yea; Linde - Yea. Motion passed 9-0.

- b) Order O-FY26-011: FY26 Water Rates
Budget & Finance meeting 8/5/25. Finance Committee voted 6-0 to recommend at their 7/21/25 meeting.
Councilor Murphy noted that Budget & Finance voted 2-0 to recommend.

Councilor McGrath noted that it would be good to look at it for one year and then see how it is working.

Councilor Ellenberg noted that this would have incentive for conserving water because it is charging more for the big volume users. Provide money for the Enterprise Fund and help upgrade equipment.

Councilor Kennedy noted that there was a great presentation at the last meeting, does not like raising rates but we have to fix out water system. Can pay for things we may need in the future.

Councilor Ellenberg asked what the total water usage was for the college. Water Superintendent Jonas Kazlauskas noted that he did not know the exact percentage but could get that to the Town Manager.

Town Manager Casanova-Davis noted that the average bill with this change will be 7% lower with this structure than with the previous structure.

Councilor Loreti noted that this shifts liability to the larger users, BSU and larger commercial users.

Councilor Kennedy noted that in the old structure if you are paying \$88 quarterly you would go up to \$102. With the new structure, if you are paying \$88 it would go up to \$92.

Councilor Striggles made a motion to approve Order O-FY26-011, which was duly seconded by Councilor Perry.

A voice vote was taken with the results as follows: Kennedy - Yea; Ellenberg - Yea; Striggles - Yea; McGrath - Yea; Loreti - Yea; Perry - Yea; Murphy - Yea; Hunt - Yea; Linde - Yea. Motion passed 9-0.

- c) Order O-FY26-012: FY26 Sewer Rates
Budget & Finance meeting 8/5/25. Finance Committee voted 6-0 to recommend at their 7/21/25 meeting.
Councilor Murphy noted that Budget & Finance voted 2-0 to recommend.

Councilor Loreti noted that sewer rates were flat rates before but now tiered rates which will shift liability to larger users.

Town Manager Casanova-Davis noted that the current structure all users were paying a fixed rate, in this structure it will be based on meter size. Actual rate for usage drops.

Councilor Striggles noted that this goes hand and hand with the water, and if we do not combat our problems we are never going to fix them, create a system to see if it works. It is a good trial run for a year.

Councilor Linde noted that it is a trial for one year and hopefully it will work.

Town Manager Casanova-Davis noted that this team is committed to being transparent with the public and the council and will have more meetings for the public.

Councilor Kennedy made a motion to approve Order O-FY26-012, which was duly seconded by Councilor Linde

A voice vote was taken with the results as follows: Kennedy – Yea; Ellenberg – Yea; Striggles – Yea; McGrath – Yea; Loreti – Yea; Perry – Yea; Murphy – Yea; Hunt – Yea; Linde - Yea. Motion passed 9-0.

d) Order O-FY25-073: Town Clerk's Salary

Finance Committee voted 4-1 to recommend salary change at their 7/21/25 meeting.

Councilor Murphy noted that this is roughly a \$2k raise or 2.5%, good justified amount for the Town Clerk.

Councilor Perry asked if any change in hours with the change of money and Town Manager Casanova-Davis noted that this is an elected position so they can set whatever hours they determine.

Councilor Hunt noted that the Town Clerk works whatever hours that they need to work.

Councilor Kennedy asked how this lines up with other Town Clerks in the area and Councilor Loreti noted that we reviewed other towns and it is a hard position to compare. This is in align with the Town Clerks in our area.

Councilor Linde made a motion to approve Order O-FY25-073, which was duly seconded by Councilor Striggles.

A voice vote was taken with the results as follows: Kennedy – Yea; Ellenberg – Yea; Striggles – Yea; McGrath – Yea; Loreti – Yea; Perry – Yea; Murphy – Yea; Hunt – Yea; Linde - Yea. Motion passed 9-0.

NEW BUSINESS

a) Order O-FY26-013: An Order Creating an Ad hoc Forensic Audit Committee for the Town of Bridgewater

Councilor Ellenberg noted that there has been persistent comments from residents that things are not being done right. The Town is supposed to be earning certain revenues when reach a 20% threshold and more revenue at 30%. Curious about seeing the books, are we getting that 20% or 30%. Ad Hoc committee can start with the golf course and then go to the ballot and go to the school system. At this point the Town Manager has said there is no money allocated to this committee.

Councilor Hunt made a motion to refer Order O-FY26-013 to Budget & Finance and Finance Committee, which was duly seconded by Councilor Linde.

Councilor Linde asked how many ad hoc committees are we going to create, Budget & Finance can handle this. We should look at everything.

Councilor Hunt noted that we already have committees, should use what we have.

Councilor Perry noted that he believes that this order is overreaching for the Council. The Town does not have the money, no one on this panel is a forensic auditor, do not like how it is worded.

Councilor Perry made a motion to table Order O-FY26-013, which was duly seconded by Councilor Striggles.

A voice vote was taken with the results as follows: Kennedy – No; Ellenberg – No; Striggles – Yea; McGrath – Yea; Loreti – No; Perry – Yea; Murphy – Yea; Hunt – Yea; Linde - No. Motion passed 5-4

CITIZEN COMMENTS

- Janet Hanson, Pleasant Street: how going forward is the town getting money from the golf course. Who is going to look more closely at the golf course to make sure getting money.
- Mike Flaherty, 416 Forest Street: Recreation Commissioner when Dutton gave the contract. Inspector general said that the management of golf courses is the biggest rip off. A forensic audit to the way to go. Golf course not friendly to anyone from Bridgewater. Invited everyone down to his house and no one showed up.
- Jim Campbell, 124 Laurel Street: why would you allow them to go up to \$2,000 but only get a smaller portion. Needs a casual look at it.
- John Donna, 261 South Street: spoke about MBTA issue as it relates to water.

COUNCIL COMMENTS

- Councilor Linde: thanked the citizens who came out, golf course issue – we have a new Town Manager and we can ask him for information on that. That is what we should do. Lets give him an opportunity to get us some numbers. There is a recreation commission and maybe they should be more involved.
- Councilor Hunt: thanked everyone who came to listen and speak. Great news about the website improvement. Meeting citizens tomorrow from 4:30 to 6:30 in Room 201B.
- Councilor Murphy: had a golf course discussion at the June Budget & Finance meeting, learned that the golf course was putting revenue back into the general fund. MBTA piece asked for the grants awarded, want to understand what we are getting or could get in being in compliance and what towns are not getting that are not in compliance. I want to know how we have benefited from this. Walked through the Fire Station with the Project Manager, incredible space, excited for the firefighters and the Town.

- Councilor Perry: FY23 realized \$443K from the agreement, FY25 is \$465k and the number is going up every year. The town does not have to run but can count on the money. FY02 to FY15 there were only 4 years where the income exceeded the expenses. It is going in a good direction. Not opposed to reviewing the numbers but it is in a better position. Information being passed around on social media is inaccurate.
- Councilor Striggles: thanked everyone who came and engaged. First TIF Ad Hoc meeting took place on 7/23, Mr. Cormier came and provided an update and the ground floor of starting. Next meeting is tomorrow at 6pm via hybrid meeting.
- Councilor Ellenberg: thanked everyone who came to the meeting.
- Councilor Kennedy: thanked the public for the involvement. Happy we are moving forward with water and sewer. Looked forward to the questions being answered by the Town Manager.
- Councilor McGrath: voted no on the golf course because we do not have \$50k but would work with Councilor Ellenberg to find out more information.
- Councilor Loreti: thanked Councilor Hunt for the Nip agreement. We will just double check that is the most updated version. Happy to dive into the golf course issue. Thanked the council for coming to the special meeting.

ADJOURNMENT

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

A voice vote was taken with the results as follows: Kennedy – Yea; Ellenberg – Yea; Striggles – Yea; McGrath – Yea; Loreti – Yea; Perry – Yea; Murphy – Yea; Hunt – Yea; Linde - Yea. Motion passed 9-0.

Meeting adjourned at 8:40pm.

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 2, 2025, to approve the aforementioned minutes, as submitted.