



Town of Bridgewater

Town Council

October 21, 2025

7:00 PM

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 Town Council meeting to order at 7:00pm on Tuesday, October 21, 2025 in the Council Chambers.

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

Absent: Dr. Kevin Perry.

Also in attendance was Town Manager Justin Casanova-Davis, Town Attorney Jason Rawlins, Finance Director Laurie Guerrini and CED Director Bob Rulli.

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

APPROVAL OF MINUTES FROM PREVIOUS MEETINGS

- a) October 7, 2025 Meeting Minutes
Councilor Striggles made a motion to approve the meeting minutes of October 7, 2025, 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 – Absent; Murphy – Yea; Hunt – Yea; Linde - Yea.
Motion passes 8-0.

ANNOUNCEMENTS FROM THE PRESIDENT

Council President Loreti read an email into the record from Veterans Agent Greg Martin regarding a kind gesture that was done for a local veteran (Mr. Levy) by D&L Appliance of East Bridgewater, Al Lacerda from Fire for Effect Foundation and David Moore from the Free Mason's Fellowship Lodge. Council President Loreti thanked them for their coordination in helping this local veteran.

PROCLAMATIONS – None

CITIZEN OPEN FORUM

- Ray Ajamian, Aldrich Road: spoke about Mr. Levy and what a wonderful person he is and how the Veterans agent has worked so good with Mr. Levy. Read a letter from the BCCR regarding immigration issues in the country.
- John Donna, 261 South Street: thanked the council for their efforts on recent issues in town. Personally believe all acting in the best interest of the town. Noted that housing is the last thing the town needs right now.
- Jill Sheridan: spoke about a past meeting and the protest over the weekend.
- MJ Spagone, 5 Lakeshore Center: spoke about ordinances on the agenda 1) concerned about tenure of office for Town Manager being 3 years; 2) extensive changes to the ethics ordinance.

E. APPOINTMENTS

- a) DEIB Committee - Jane Meyrick (Annual Term)
Councilor Striggles made a motion to ratify the appointment of Jane Meyrick to the DEIB Committee, which was duly seconded by Councilor Linde.

Councilor Ellenberg noted that she does not support DEI, does not think there should be a DEI committee in town. Voting against for DEI but wonderful she is applying for Cultural Council.

Councilor Linde questioned if someone can be on two committees. Town Manager Casanova-Davis noted that he did not see any restrictions on someone being on more than one committee. Decision on a case by case basis, depending on the committees.

Councilor Striggles noted that since she has been a councilor there has been residents ratified to more than one committee.

A voice vote was taken with the results as follows: Kennedy – Yea; Ellenberg – No; Striggles – Yea; McGrath – Yea; Loreti – Yea; Perry – Absent; Murphy – Yea; Hunt – Yea; Linde - Yea.
Motion passes 7-1.

- b) Cultural Council - Jane Meyrick (2025-2028)
Councilor Striggles made a motion to ratify the appointment of Jane Meyrick to the Cultural Council, which was duly seconded by Councilor Hunt.

A voice vote was taken with the results as follows: Kennedy – Yea; Ellenberg – Yea; Striggles – Yea; McGrath – Yea; Loreti – Yea; Perry – Absent; Murphy – Yea; Hunt – Yea; Linde - Yea.
Motion passes 8-0.

HEARINGS - None

LICENSE TRANSACTIONS - None

PRESENTATIONS

- a) Water Presentation
DPW Director Azu Etoniru gave a water presentation and included:

Water Capacity Update - permit for 1.98 million gallons per day, town averages 1.55 million gallons per day from the wells. Well 10B has been activated because water levels in the storage tanks were low; increasing the capacity to meet the water demands of users. Wells 10A & 10B being tied to the High Street Plant – 2 year timeline. Vernon Street Wells – no timeline established until all options are evaluated. Aquaria Desalination Plant – no projected timeline until further discussions with Brockton.

Water Quality Update – Town is not under a “Do Not Drink” order. Activation of Well 10B leads to discoloration and elevated manganese levels.

Water System priorities – maximize withdrawals from wells to meet water demand; meet all regulatory requirements; maintain well storage capacity for emergencies; plan for additional water sources and ensure financial stability of the water enterprise fund.

Ongoing Capital Projects – 1) Well No. 9R and 5R replacement, investigation, design and construction. 2) Wells 10A & 10B connection to High Street Plant Design and construction. 3) Flagg Street water main replacement drainage and pavement. 4) Cross Street water main replacement drainage and pavement costs. 5) Abandon 6” CI Water main along Main Street from Center Street to Central Square.

Planned Capital Projects FY26-30 – 1) Tank analysis and water supply strategy alternatives/hydraulic modeling. 2) Vernon Street new well and treatment facility. 3) Carver Pond WTP building addition for PFAS removal. 4) High Street WTP building addition for PFAS removal. 5) Sprague Hill tank rehabilitation replacement with elevated tank. 6) Connection to Aquaria Regional Desalinization Plant or Taunton Phase 1 Engineering and evaluation.

Funding Options – 1) Water system user fees. 2) Water retained earnings. 3) Low interest loans. 4) State and Federal Grants. 5) Class Action Lawsuits.

DPW Director Etoniru noted that the town is ensuring that federal and state requirements are being met; being judicious about projects that tie into the water system; undergo further study to evaluate interconnection system costs and opportunities; working with consultant and contractors to meet or exceed estimated timelines; apply for and utilize opportunities available to the town.

Councilor Linde noted that in March former Water Superintendent said that there was not enough water to support the building and asked if we now have the capacity or we will have the capacity. Can a permit be issued for large projects?

Mr. Etoniru noted that wells 5R and 9R were not on line in March, they are now. Further noted that he welcomed the projects because they will help offset some of the costs. Current projects will not be on-line for another year and a half. Summer and Spring people are filling their pools and watering their lawns and surges are happening and that is why there are limits set.

Councilor Striggles asked about the PFAS settlement funds and what that number was. Town Manager Casanova-Davis noted that \$873k has been received and put into a special account but waiting on further information from a Federal decision a few weeks ago.

Councilor Ellenberg asked how long the Vernon Street wells would take to be on-line and Mr. Etoniru noted 3 to 4 years.

Councilor Loreti asked if we knew the amount of water that can be gained from the Vernon Street wells and Mr. Etoniru noted a half a million, that is what we would be permitted per day.

Councilor Loreti asked if wells 5 and 9 have the functional capacity for the increase and Mr. Etoniru noted that they pump 200 gallons a minute. Does not pump all day long, those wells have to rest.

Mr. Etoniru further noted that the Claremont project including the apartments use less than 130k gallons per day, they don't use as much as people think.

TOWN MANAGER'S REPORT

a) Fire Station Update

CED Director Bob Rulli gave an update on the fire station. 5 weeks away from seeing the first furniture delivery. Lot of progress made, still on schedule. There have been no change orders over the past few months. Walk the building every other week. Still in good shape.

Fire Department Staffing - Chief Schlatz:

Chief Schlatz spoke about staffing concerns. Noting the challenges of staffing. 2 man engine makes it difficult for fighting fires; one has to man the hose and the other can't go in alone. Unsafe for search and rescue. Engine assists on EMS calls because ambulance needs a paramedic so that leaves the engine out of service – happened 200 times last year. Call volume has steadily increased every year. 2024 – increased 200 calls from the year prior. January to September 2025 – 151 calls higher than last year. 915 occasions there were double calls. When we move to the West side the town will be split in half. Two person engine will cover half the town. Propose we increase to 11 per group, putting a 3rd person on the engine. Would address all the safety concerns. Two options 1) hire 5 more firefighters or we can increase our minimum to 11 with our current staff which would increase overtime costs. Running at high risk, operating below standards. Trying to be proactive and hopefully we can address this issue sooner rather than later. We applied for the SAFER Grant for 5 firefighters, right now everything is on hold because of the shutdown.

Councilor McGrath asked if a firefighter works as a dispatch and Chief Schlatz noted that yes and there is a lot involved with regionalization of that. Councilor McGrath further noted that she is in favor of hiring more firefighters.

Councilor Ellenberg noted that she was in favor of hiring more firefighters and ask what the cost would be. Town Manager Casanova-Davis noted that when you account for pension, health, etc, it would be about \$750k a year. SAFER Grant would cover 75% for the first two years and 25% the year after. Could not pull from stabilization, there are a lot of factors.

Councilor Linde noted that he is concerned about the East Side and the manpower. A lot of the calls have a lot to do with BSU, we have the governor on Hale Street, is there anyway we can get BSU to help with some of the costs. Town Manager Casanova-Davis noted that he met with President Clark and asked him for additional support and resources for the Town which hasn't been done for 10 years. Trying to leverage opportunities to get more resources for the town.

Councilor Linde noted that the Town is getting money for the Mobil Station from BSU but would rather get that money for firefighters. Our resources are used for two state facilities.

Town Manager Casanova-Davis noted that the \$100k for the gas station was a one time offer, trying to advocate for as much resources for the town.

Councilor Murphy noted that within the override we included 4 firefighter positions and it did not pass, wish we would have had this information 7 months ago. I hope citizens are watching this now to see why police and fire need the funding.

Councilor Kennedy asked if there was a grant writer and Chief Schlatz noted that the Deputy Chief is very successful at writing grants.

Councilor Kennedy noted that he would love to hear more about a regional dispatcher and thanked Chief Schlatz for his presentation.

Town Manager Casanova-Davis noted that the Chief has been proactive about this, important that the community hear these concerns and issues and that he has some experience with regionalization so exploring that.

Councilor Loreti asked for a cost benefit analysis for overtime costs vs hiring new firefighters as it is important information going into budget discussions.

b) Boards, Committees and Commissions Process

Town Manager Casanova-Davis noted that In November we will start the process of bringing boards/committees in front of the council to explain what they do. He also noted that the Appointments on the last agenda were Town Council appointments. The process for Town Manager appointment is 1) application comes in; 2) Citizens Advisory Committee interviews; 3) Town Manager interviews; 4) Town Council ratifies. Very robust process.

c) Municipal Aggregation Informational Meetings

Town Manager Casanova-Davis noted that there will be two informational meetings, 10/30 at 6:30 in the Council Chambers – will be recorded. 11/5 at 1pm at the Senior Center. The information is also on the Town Webpage and Facebook page.

Councilor Linde noted that citizens are confused about opt out choices. Asked if there is a large print edition as some can't read theirs.

Town Manager Casanova-Davis noted that when we go to the Senior Center we do try to blow up the mailers for the meetings. Timing of mailings is the post office. Depending on if you have a 3rd party supply, you will not get a mailer. If interested in the program go to the website or call the office.

d) FY26 Budget Update

Town Manager Casanova-Davis noted that he included a letter from the department heads in the packet. Thanked the collective bargaining groups for working with the town to lower COLA costs for the next two years. Also thanked the department heads.

Also included a report from the MMA which we feel is a lack of support from Beacon Hill to get the local revenue that we need. Over 60 communities went for overrides this year. Lack of revenue, lots of wants and needs. There is no answer for this, health insurance rose 12%. This year might be worse. Prop 2 ½ is not able to address those needs. Have already started meeting with Supt. Powers and Raynham.

Councilor Hunt noted that they have had a lot of calls about the schools. Given we know that the schools are struggling what are the options for the funding they need.

Councilor McGrath asked if there is something that we can do, the governor is up for re-election, we only get 26% back.

Town Manager Casanova-Davis noted that in comparison to nationwide we get less from state government. We have been talking about this for years. Need to expend funds to do a report.

Councilor Linde noted that we have a State Senator who we have never seen. Perhaps he could come to a future meeting.

Councilor Striggles asked when the Council training would be rescheduled and Town Manager Casanova-Davis noted that it is in process of being rescheduled.

Councilor Hunt noted that the training should be recorded as the public needs to know what the councilors do.

Councilor Ellenberg noted that building permits, zoning permits, electrical permits are 22% of our budget, very dependent on the building continuing.

Councilor Loreti noted that it looks dire for suburban communities; state aid is low, tax rate in MA is 7th highest in the country and lowest return back to the communities. Not fair to put on the residents but don't know what the long term solution is.

Councilor McGrath noted that the Aggie bus did not show up again, 3rd time in 2 months. Not all parents could drive their kids there yesterday.

Councilor Murphy asked for updates on who was responsible for the signage around town with the Bridgewater seal on it. Topics will appear and not sure who is determining that. Should come from the Town Manager's office and an update on the Town Center safety short term improvement for pedestrian safety.

Councilor Hunt noted that the signs are put up by the Town Clerk's office. The person who is setting up picks what is on the boards.

Councilor Linde thanked the Town Manager for his help in addressing the situation on Summer Street and the business affected over there.

DISCUSSIONS - None

COMMITTEE REPORTS - None

L. LEGISLATION FOR ACTION

- a) Proposed Ordinance D-FY26-002: Amendment to Bridgewater Town Charter: Article IV, Section 4-1 Town Manager Term of Office

Refer to Advertising: Rules and Procedures voted 3-0 to recommend at their 9/9/25 meeting.

Councilor McGrath made a motion to amend Ordinance D-FY26-002 by adding “The Town Council shall appoint by a majority vote of the full Town council, a Town Manager” between language and with on the line reading “Replace existing language with the following:” This 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 – Absent; Murphy – Yea; Hunt – Yea; Linde - Yea.
Motion passes 8-0.

Councilor McGrath made a motion to refer Ordinance D-FY26-002 with amendments made to advertising. This 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 – Absent; Murphy – Yea; Hunt – Yea; Linde - Yea.
Motion passes 8-0.

- b) Proposed Ordinance D-FY26-003: Amendment to Bridgewater Town Charter Article VIII, Section 8-2 Citizen Referendum Petition Timeframe

Refer to Advertising: Rules and Procedures voted 3-0 to recommend at their 9/9/25 meeting.

Councilor Kennedy noted that the ordinance changes the timeframe from 10 days to 30 days. Is 30 days too much? Should we change it?

Councilor Ellenburg made a motion to refer Ordinance D-FY26-003 to advertising, which was duly seconded by Councilor Linde.

Councilor Striggles noted that it could go either way, 30 days may be too much, perhaps 15 to 21 das.

Councilor Ellenberg noted that she thinks the proposed 30 days is good because it gives the citizens a chance to be involved. In favor of the 30 days as proposed.

Councilor Kennedy noted that sitting around 21 days, we need an access for citizens to get involved. Would like to hear from citizens at the public hearing.

A voice vote was taken with the results as follows: Kennedy – Yea; Ellenberg – Yea; Striggles – Yea; McGrath – Yea; Loreti – Yea; Perry – Absent; Murphy – Yea; Hunt – Yea; Linde - Yea.
Motion passes 8-0.

- c) Proposed General Ordinance D-FY26-004: Amendment to Chapter 3, Article II, Section 1 - Business Ethics and Conduct

Refer to Advertising: Rules and Procedures voted 3-0 to recommend at their 9/9/25 meeting.

Councilor Kennedy noted that he will be asking to continue to the next meeting because some of these positions are under contracts. Entire section changed because the rules have changed.

Councilor Kennedy made a motion to continue Ordinance D-FY26-004 to the next meeting, 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 – Absent; Murphy – Yea; Hunt – Yea; Linde - Yea.

Motion passes 8-0.

OLD BUSINESS - None

NEW BUSINESS - None

CITIZEN COMMENTS

- John Donna, 261 South Street: appreciate the opportunity to get up and speak as a resident.
- Chris Ajamian, Aldrich Road: spoke about No Kings Day in Bridgewater.
- MJ Spagone, 5 Lakeshore Center: thanked Azu and Chief Schlitz for speaking. Look forward to hearing from other officials in town on what their departments do.

COUNCIL COMMENTS

- Councilor Linde thanked the citizens who commented. School funding needs to be addressed. Suburban districts need to address the issues.
- Councilor Hunt noted that there is a Walk for Survivors on Saturday at the Middle School, starts at 9:30am.
- Councilor Murphy noted that the Lights on the Common crew have some upcoming events. Friday at Tropical Smoothie and Saturday Trunk or Treat at Town River Landing and 11/1 at Black Hat Brew Works. Great causes and great people putting it together.
- Councilor Striggles thanked everyone who came to the meeting especially her Dad. Noted that she is a resident of the Town of Bridgewater, finds it concerning that anyone would question that. Very much a resident of the Town of Bridgewater. Want everyone to continue to go to Boundless Bean and help them. Thanked President Loreti for working with her on a few things over the weekend.
- Councilor Ellenberg also noted about the Walk for Safety on Saturday. Thanked Fire for Effect Foundation for the great Farmer's Market and Craft Fair.
- Councilor Kennedy asked people to support local businesses and support these events. On 10/27 there will be a first meeting for SEPAC, more information on Facebook page. Thanked the citizens.
- Councilor McGrath noted that there will be a Trunk or Treat this Saturday at Town River Landing.
- Councilor Loreti noted that he would encourage people to focus on local politics. Will not be rescinding my comments, they were among other comments about unity.

EXECUTIVE SESSION - None

ADJOURNMENT

Councilor Ellenberg made a motion adjourn, 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 – Absent; Murphy – Yea; Hunt – Yea; Linde - Yea.
Motion passes 8-0.

Meeting adjourned at 9:34pm.

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, November 4, 2025, to approve the aforementioned minutes, as submitted.