REGULAR MEETING **BRIDGEWATER PLANNING BOARD** **AUGUST 20, 2025**

The regular meeting of the Planning Board convened at 6:30 p.m. in the Council Chambers and via Zoom

Meeting video: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=J4biWX2e4zU&t=22s

MEMBERS PRESENT: Chair Patrick Driscoll, Michael MacDonald (via Zoom), Steve Geller, Thomas Pratti, Eric Costa (Associate), Kris Fabroski (Associate)

STAFF PRESENT: Bob Rulli, CED Director, Steve Solari, Building Inspector, & Greg Tansey, Town Engineer.

Chair Patrick Driscoll opened up the Planning Board meeting and Councilor Mark Linde, Chair of CED Committee, opened up the joint meeting with fellow CED Committee members Councilor Sonya Striggles (via zoom) and Councilor Marilee Hunt

Public Hearings:

Joint Public Hearing with Community and Economic Development Committee of Town Council (CED)

- **Zoning Ordinance Amendment D-FY26-001 ZONING AMENDMENT: MBTA Final Compliance Ordinance for the Town of Bridgewater regarding Section 3.1.1.1 (Principal Uses, Applicability of Use Regulations) and Section 9.9.4.2 (MBTA COMMUNITIES OVERLAY DISTRICT (MBTACOD), Requirements).** ***(Continued from September 3, 2025 meeting)***

Chairman Driscoll and Councilor Linde discussed how the proceedings would take place.

Councilor Striggles discussed how she sponsored the ordinance and allowed Robert Rulli, CED Director, to present.

Mr. Rulli provided a presentation giving a breakdown of the existing CBD Zoning that includes the MBTA Communities District. He noted that the town had provided the approved ordinance to the State in care of EOHLC where the states identified two issues that needed to be resolved to achieve complete compliance whereas currently the Town of Bridgewater is in conditional compliance. The Zoning Ordinance proposed would allow for the Town to be in compliance. Mr. Rulli discussed the Town's current ordinance, MBTA District, and provide information of the Town's compliance model. He additionally provided information of a TSA Scenario Calculator.

Chairman Driscoll asked Mr. Rulli what the cap would be to achieve closer to the cap, and that if they want to utilize form-based code instead they may, as the MBTACOD district is an overlay.

Member MacDonald agreed and that language should include "up to". Member Geller agreed.

Councilor Striggles stated that there needs to be parameters on the zoning.

Councilor Hunt said it is a lot at once.

Member MacDonald brought up concerns of not meeting the development of 1,401 units.

Mr. Rulli stated that only on paper and through the Compliance model that 1,401 units have to be allowed, it does not mean they have to be built.

Chairman Driscoll and Councilor Linde opened up the meeting to public comment at 7:14 pm.

Public Comments:

John Donna –261 South St – Had concerns about water issues and capacity within the Town. He has concerns about the compliance model how it pertains to Bridgewater and asked if the Town can ask the state to address the infrastructure concerns.

Janet Hanson – 665 Pleasant St – stated that it should be an “up to” limit rather than making 15 the minimum. She asked if we could go back to the state as well as Bridgewater is different than other communities.

Melissa Ramondetta – 317 Lakeside Dr -Bridgewater is complying with the MBTA communities and that the Town should request an extension. There should be restrain on the amount of density.

Carlton Hunt – 80 Austin St – He had a question regarding if the top capped it at 18 units per acre would it only be for the MBTA zone, or for the only town.

Mark Peterson – 43 Church St – comments that consideration should be based on existing infrastructure and that an extension should be requested. He asked why interest rates were mentioned in a presentation.

Councilor Adelene Ellenberg – address - spoke about a citizen petition that could take place in November. She asked when the Town needs to comply by. Mr. Rulli stated it is by September.

Donna Jewell – 50 Keith Place – Urged the Boards to take their time with their decision and not make any decisions tonight. She stated that information was not provided beforehand. She encouraged the Town to not submit in April of 2024. She urged for a complete review and for a workshop as it is too important to the Town.

Jennifer Smith – 225 Boxwood Lane – concerned that the amount of units requested were much higher than 1,401 units. She asked if this matter could go out to the Town for a vote.

David Moore – 54 Flagg St – support Donna Jewell’s point. Believe that education workshops would be helpful and it should be up to the Town for a vote. Supports capping the units and that about 25% of the Town is owned by the State.

Thomas Pratti believes that we postpone a recommendation vote to a later date and ask the state for an extension of time. Chairman Driscoll stated that the options are to continue the hearing and ask for corrected numbers or vote not to recommend based on the current questions at hand. Member MacDonald had concerns regarding the timing of the information provided to the Board as well as the changes occurring in Bridgewater.

There was a discussion on amount of time until the State deadline as well as amount of time to be taken regarding the Town’s deadlines. There was a discussion about a potential workshop prior to the next meeting while considering meeting the deadline.

The Board agreed that they need more information in order to make a decision.

Member Geller made the motion to continue to public hearing to the September 3, 2025 meeting and seconded to Member Pratti.

Roll Call Vote:
Driscoll – Yes, MacDonald – Yes, Geller – Yes, Pratti – Yes, Costa – Yes

Councilor Linde asked for a motion to continue to September 3, 2025. Councilor Hunt made the motion to continue to public hearing to the September 3, 2025 meeting and seconded by Councilor Striggles.

Councilor Linde asked to adjourn the CED Committee meeting. Councilor Hunt made the motion to and seconded by Councilor Striggles.

Planning Board took a quick recess.

Site Plan Review - Public Hearing (continued)

1010 Elm St – (Map 30, Lot 20) – Site Plan Review (10.6) for the construction of a 27,000 sq. ft commercial building with parking and other site improvements

Requesting *a Continuance to September 3, 2025 meeting*

Motion to allow a continuance to September 3, 2025 meeting made by Member MacDonald and seconded by Member Geller.

Roll Call Vote:
Driscoll – Yes, MacDonald – Yes, Geller – Yes, Pratti – Yes, Costa – Yes

Site Plan Review - Public Hearing (new)

0 Lakeshore Center (Assessor's Map 96, Lot 16) - Encompass Health for Site Plan Approval (Sections 9.4 & 10.6 of the Bridgewater Zoning Ordinance) and a modification to the existing Special Permit from the 1988 Decision for a proposed Inpatient Rehabilitation Hospital with associated parking & drainage

Chairman Driscoll read the legal ad of the public hearing of the public record. He provided an overview of the public hearing process and mentioned the potential of a site visit.

Barry Crimmins, Esq. of BRC law Is representing the applicant, Encompass Health. He provided an overview of the project and discussed what is being proposed for Site Plan Review as a permitted use in the district as well as modification of the 1988 Special Permit. The rehab hospital would be built in two phases.

Mathew Gooch of Encompass Health discussed the operations of Encompass Health and locations within the USA and Massachusetts area. A rehab hospital is utilized in conjunction with acute hospitals along with occupational and physical therapy.

Danielle Leonor of Kimley-Horn presented the site plan to the Planning Board and discussed the utilities, stormwater and other improvements being made as part of the proposal. She discussed water usage at the site as well how that usage fits in with the rest of the Planned Development District. She additionally discussed stormwater standards being met with the project.

Chairman Driscoll stated Town Planner O'Brien discussed the potential of shared parking situation at the site. He additionally reiterated trying to do a site walk. Opened the meeting to public comments.

Public Comments:

Jean Dibattista, 260 Lakeside Drive – concerns about a lack of consistency for information about water and seems to be inaccurate. She suggested to the Town that proof of correct water figures be provided by the appropriate agencies. Water is a critical infrastructure and is strained.

Melissa Ramondetta – 317 Lakeside Dr – She believes a new special permit is required because a hospital was not a permitted use in the 1988 Special Permit. Information about wastewater should be provided and the Planning Board should look at the bigger picture at Lakeshore Center.

Janet Hanson – 665 Pleasant St – stated that it should be an “up to” limit rather than making 15 the minimum. She asked if we could go back to the state as well as Bridgewater is different than other communities.

James Walsh -60 Crescent St – Had comments regarding date for the water and wastewater usage and that the applicant should provide comparable usages from other hospitals in the region.

Donna Jewell – 50 Keith Place – Agreed with other speakers that water is a huge issue in Town. Sees this project as something that the Town should consider for job creation and if its done right, it could be a benefit to the Community.

Bill Lovett, works for Claremont, stated the water usage as part of the site should be correct. The MEPA certificate information provided comes from Title 5 usage comparative to actual usage.

Chairman Driscoll discussed that the water information be clarified and properly provided to the Board. A Site visit will be scheduled and placed on the Town’s website.

Member Pratti made the motion to continue the public hearing to the September 17, 2025 meeting and seconded by Member Geller.

Roll Call Vote:
Driscoll – Yes, MacDonald – Yes, Geller – Yes, Pratti – Yes, Costa – Yes

<u>**0 Pleasant St - Claremont Bridgewater Hotel II LLC – Landscaping Plan Update as per Site Plan Conditions of Approval (Decision: January 24, 2024) - *(Continued from August 5, 2025 meeting***</u>

Attorney Edward Brennan representing Claremont Bridgewater Hotel II LLC presented the landscaping plan before the Board. He expressed that this not a new hearing, but rather a meeting for approval pertaining to a condition made by the Board in the decision. He believes that the landscaping plan meets the criteria of the approval.

Robert Mckinney, arborist, and Thomas Minor, Landscape Architect of Hawk Design presented the landscaping plan on behalf of the applicant and provided the landscaping plan. Mr. Mckinney stated all the trees tagged and provided information regarding the trees that they considered invasive or in fair/good condition or in poor condition.

Chairman Driscoll asked Mr. Minor if the plan achieves screening and protection of healthy trees. Mr. Minor provided that it would be fairly screened with the protection of some trees. They confirmed that it was a buffer strip within the 80 ft as required.

The Board suggested that the landscape plan be updated to reflect additional screening and protection of additional trees.

Ray Ajemian, representative of the Planning Board to the Tree Committee, suggested that the planting schedule be provided to the Tree Committee.

Public Comments:

Jean Dibattista, 260 Lakeside Drive – concerns about the buffer strip and should be more winter plants and that more screening should be provided.

Pat Neary– Lakeside Dr – concerns about all trees being taken down along Lakeside Drive which is not being shown on this current plan

Linda Schmook– Sunset Ln– Discussed the conditions of the Planning Board decision and asked if this is the only one being before the Board tonight and also asked about the distance of 80 feet.

Melissa Ramondetta – 317 Lakeside Dr – She discussed the MassDEP review of the project and discussed other concerns.

Janet Hanson – 665 Pleasant St – discussed that the goal is that the landscaped plan is to provide screening and that light could shine across to the lake.

Member Geller made the motion to continue this item to the September 3, 2025 meeting and seconded by Member Pratti.

Roll Call Vote:
Driscoll – Yes, MacDonald – Yes, Geller – Yes, Pratti – Yes, Costa – Yes

Oldfield Estates, Phase I – Request for release of Road Bond Monies (Quail Run Road & Oldfield Rd)
(Continued from August 5, 2025 meeting)

Chairman Driscoll stated that Town Engineer Greg Tansey had provided an update.

The Planning Board discussed voting to release all monies with the exception of $10,000 and the funds for two trees ($2,000)

Member Pratti made the motion to release bond monies conditioned about and seconded by Member MacDonald

Roll Call Vote:
Driscoll – Yes, MacDonald – Yes, Geller – Yes, Pratti – Yes, Costa – Yes

Director's Report:

There was a discussion about the site visit as well as the MBTA workshop. Town Planner O'Brien will be back at the next meeting.

Adjournment: The Motion to adjourn was made by Member Geller seconded by Member Pratti and it was unanimously voted.

Roll Call Vote:
Driscoll – Yes, MacDonald – Yes, Geller – Yes, Pratti – Yes, Costa - Yes