



Town of Bridgewater
Downtown Revitalization Ad Hoc Committee

March 5, 2026

10:00 AM

66 Central Square

Academy Building

Conference Room 201A/2nd Floor

and via Zoom: <https://us06web.zoom.us/j/83729310799>

MEETING AGENDA

A Quorum of the Town Council May Be In Attendance

- A. Call to Order**
- B. Approval of Meeting Minutes**
 - a) December 18, 2025 Meeting Minutes
 - b) February 5, 2026 Meeting Minutes
- C. Public Comment**
- D. Items Referred**
 - a) Order O-FY26-040: Establishing a Downtown Façade Improvement Program and Requesting Community Preservation Act Funding
 - b) Order O FY26-051: Declares the downtown corridor of Bridgewater a blight area
 - c) Zoning Ordinance D-FY26-009: Zoning Ordinance Amendment - Central Square Property Maintenance Standards
- E. Additional Items for Discussion**
 - a) Discussion of Downtown Development Projects
- F. Adjournment of Meeting**



Town of Bridgewater
Downtown Revitalization Ad Hoc Committee

December 18, 2025

9:00 AM

66 Central Square

Academy Building

Conference Room 201A/ Second Floor

and Via Zoom: <https://us06web.zoom.us/j/84902037550>

To attend via phone, dial: 1(646) 876-9923

Meeting ID: 849 0203 7550

MEETING MINUTES

A Quorum of the Town Council may be in attendance

Call to Order

Councilor McGrath called the meeting to order at 9:00am. The meeting took place in Conference Room 201A and via Zoom.

Councilors Present: Councilor Perry, Councilor Linde and Councilor McGrath.

Also in attendance was CED Director Robert Rulli (via Zoom), Bill Smith Chair of the Historical Commission, Ray Ajamian Chair of the Tree Committee and Brian McMahon, Tree Warden.

Public Comment - None

Items for Discussion

- a) Discussion of Downtown Development Projects

Mr. McMahon noted that there are 6 Beech trees around the common that have a disease, there is no treatment and will be dead within 6 to 8 years. Should be replaced, also a few maple trees dead, noted that 10 trees would be about \$10k.

Mr. Rulli noted that working with landscape architect for Summer Street project but it is not someone that is on call.

Councilor McGrath noted that she wants to change the common and we keep putting it off. Let's have one sign that businesses/owners have to use.

Mr. Rulli noted that we had one stop grant for technical assistance and signage for Central Square area but we were not funded because we were not in compliance with the MBTA Act. Will submit in next cycle. Looking at parking improvements. Agree improvements need to be made but it is a money thing.

Councilor Perry asked where do we stand with the firms on the designs and where do we go with what they were recommending.

Mr. Rulli noted that we were intending to move out on Phase II because of Governors budget from last year there was another \$150k earmarked in there for us to continue to look at Central Square but that money was pulled out of the budget. We can look at resubmitting something. Applied for façade program through HUD and was told that would only be eligible if the Town Council designated the downtown area as blighted. There are other funding through Arts & Councils but limited to the amount and limited scope. I would suggest having Melissa doing an assessment of the common and what she would recommend. Police Chief and Fire Chief need to be part of those conversations. Short term looking to put in blinking lights to raise awareness.

Councilor McGrath asked if there were matching grants for the sign improvement program, is that still true and Mr. Rulli noted he did not know but added that matching grants means we have to have money available to meet that.

Mr. Rulli noted that with a Façade program the Florist and SRO building are the most hideous and would be hesitant to give owners free money to make improvements.

Councilor McGrath noted that looking at current stores and want consistent signs and there is grant money we can get. Do not want to burden the stores. Historic Committee has problem with the signs.

Bill Smith, Historic District Commission noted that we have to review any changes of the building, any building that comes down has to be approved. There are CPC funds available that could be used for the restoration of those facades but owners are hesitant about CPC funds because funds would have to be paid back if sold.

Councilor Perry asked Mr. Smith what his suggestion was for signed and enforcement.

Mr. Smith noted a fee for violations is something we are considering; most towns have a fee structure in place. We are not interested in making it difficult for businesses but they are not interested in paying \$50 per day.

Mr. Rulli asked if there has been consideration for National Register and Mr. Smith noted that this was done back in the 80s and nothing has changed since then and did not qualify. HDC offers a lot more protection than the National Register does.

Councilor Perry asked where would the funding for the trees come from and Mr. Smith noted that the funding for the trees currently there came from the BIA. Mr. Ajamian noted that the Tree Committee has mitigation money.

Councilor Perry noted that the Lions Club would like a Christmas Tree in the center of Town and named in honor of Don Schwartz – what is the approval process/funding to do this.

Mr. Rulli noted that he will speak with Melissa the first of the year and come back and take a look and then submit a proposal to us and then go from there. It will cost some money.

Councilor McGrath asked if the Transportation Committee meets to do sidewalks and crosswalks and Mr. Rulli noted that they tend to meet on citizen reactions/inquiries to stop signs and other things. Town Manager has prioritized short term items we can do to downtown. There are things we can do and are discussing related to parking.

Councilor Perry noted that the traffic plan was the big crutch on how can we go forward with the common. Crosswalks and sidewalks depends on the traffic patterns.

Councilor McGrath noted that her focus is fixing up the buildings and the trees.

Mr. Ajamian thinks we should have another meeting and any small improvement that people can see it a good thing. We also need enforcement.

Councilor McGrath would like the building inspector to come in and will speak with the Town Manager about that.

Councilor Perry noted that he would like a list of current businesses and what it would cost. Mr. Rulli noted that Nicole in the CED office has a listing of all businesses in the downtown area. At the next meeting invite Nicole and Melissa as well as Mr. Solari.

Public Comment - None

Adjournment of Meeting

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

A roll-call vote was taken with the results as follows: McGrath – Yea; Linde – Yea; Perry -Yea.
Motion passed 3-0



Town of Bridgewater

Downtown Revitalization Ad Hoc Committee

February 5, 2026
9:00 AM
66 Central Square
Acadmey Building
Conference Room 201A/Second Floor
and via Zoom: <https://us06web.zoom.us/j/82268315041>

MEETING MINUTES

A Quorum of the Town Council May Be In Attendance

Call to Order

Councilor McGrath called the meeting to order at 9:00am. The meeting took place in Conference Room 201A and via Zoom.

Councilors Present: Councilor Perry, Councilor Linde and Councilor McGrath.

Also in attendance was CED Director Robert Rulli, Town Manager Justin Casanova-Davis via Zoom, Councilor Hunt, Bill Smith Chair of the Historical Commission and Ray Ajamian Chair of the Tree Committee.

Public Comment

- Janet Hanson, Pleasant Street: interested in what the plans are, would like to keep the historical value of the town, buildings need to be spruced up.

Councilor McGrath made a motion to take D. Items for Discussion out of order. This was duly seconded by Councilor Linde.

A roll-call vote was taken with the results as follows: McGrath – Yea; Linde – Yea; Perry -Yea.
Motion passed 3-0

Items Referred

- a) Zoning Ordinance D-FY26-009: Zoning Ordinance Amendment - Central Square Property Maintenance Standards

Councilor McGrath noted that Councilor Loreti brought this forward and we could discuss at the next meeting.

Councilor Perry noted that this is all and good but it comes down to enforcement. If no one there then how can it be enforced. I suggest we hold this for the next meeting and invite the building inspector.

Mr. Smith noted that there should be some kind of fee structure. Councilor McGrath believes that there are existing fees that would pertain to this.

Councilor Perry made a motion to continue Ordinance D-FY26-009 to the next meeting, which was duly seconded by Councilor Linde.

A roll-call vote was taken with the results as follows: McGrath – Yea; Linde – Yea; Perry -Yea.
Motion passed 3-0

Items for Discussion

a) Discussion of Downtown Development Projects

Councilor McGrath asked CED Director Rulli to discuss landscaping and Mr. Rulli noted that they are not working on landscaping for downtown, there is no money to do it. Noting that there is no ordinance in zoning for code enforcement so cannot tell property owners. Need to have a dedicated person to look at buildings at fine those not in compliance. The number one source of funding you are looking at for downtown is community block grants. We are not eligible unless the council deems the downtown area to be blighted. Previous councils did not want that designation. Applied when I first came here and we met all the requirements except the council did not designate it a blighted area.

Councilor McGrath would like to put signs up, not put the burden on the owners. Want to bring businesses into the downtown. I invited Melissa and yourself to see if we could get a preliminary plan, not sure what the cost is.

Mr. Rulli noted that last year they applied for technical assistance to achieve what you want to achieve and we did not get funded because we were not in compliance with the MBTA communities act. There is no guarantee on getting Federal money. We need a plan. Signs are not going to solve the problem. Need to know parking strategy.

Councilor Linde noted that the front of the buildings look awful; need to do that designation in order to get money.

Mr. Rulli noted it would not effect anyone on a day to day basis.

Councilor Hunt gave a brief update on when a grant was received in 2010.

Mr. Rulli noted that he is all for having a thriving downtown, especially with BSU being there and the 2022 Master Plan addressed that but it is a matter of money and direction. CED is available to help. Need to know what we want Melissa to do.

Councilor McGrath noted that the Town Manager is going to meet with the business owners. The Master Plan has been in place and nothing has been done. Taking chunks because nothing is getting done.

Town Manager Casanova-Davis noted that he does agree with Mr. Rulli that it is a comprehensive plan but there are some things we can do now, like line striping, etc. CPGD grant is a competitive grant and we should explore.

Councilor Linde noted that we have to take the magnifying glass and look at the downtown area. We do not have anything on the books about residents/business owners having to clear the sidewalks of snow.

Councilor McGrath noted that the new Tree Warden said that before they remove the dead trees they would like to have a landscaping plan. If I need to go to BSU I will. Not sure if there are grants to go for.

Mr. Ajamian noted that many of the trees on the common are dead so they need to be replaced so he suggested a landscape architecture.

Councilor Hunt noted that any changes would need to go through the Historic Commission.

Councilor Perry noted that the discussion in the past was the traffic flow and the sidewalks, are they being widened, etc. What do we take first. We thought we would need to decide the traffic pattern first and then go from there. If the shape of the common is not going to change then we can go forward.

Councilor McGrath noted that we are just working on the greenery, the fences are sinking into the ground. Need to get new trees planted.

Councilor Perry noted that if we are doing this work we need to make sure traffic flow and sidewalks does not affect what you are doing. The council needs to designate the area as blighted is the first step and then look at what finances we can get and use.

Councilor McGrath noted that the trees are coming down in 3 to 5 years and we need to come up with a plan.

Town Manager Casanova-Davis noted he does not see a reason why designating the area blight would cause any issues in the town. We need to look at comprehensive needs. There are some areas where we can make some changes. Striping lines, painting crosswalks etc.

Mr. Rulli noted that last year we had funding for the State and brought in a team that gave us a plan and does that bring in the businesses. The governor did have money in her budget to continue that but that money got pulled out at the last minute. Better chance of getting money when its part of a larger plan. The one offs scare funders. Better to have a plan. Prioritizing the trees can be part of the plan. There are 15 crosswalks in this area and that is way too many crosswalks, but the execution has to do with money.

Councilor McGrath noted that she thinks it can be fixed up with the trees and no matter where the sidewalks go it can be accessible.

Councilor Hunt noted that the War Memorial faces the street and the previous Town Manager had someone come in to see how it can be turned so people can see it.

Donna Jewell business owner in the Common noted that when she looks at the buildings around the common, it seems that it could be freshened up. Do all the buildings around the rotary qualify for CPC Funds? Carlton Hunt, CPC Chair noted that the common is designated as historic so CPC can pay for historic. But cannot fund maintenance, only historic restoration. Generally only fund non-profits and municipal.

Councilor McGrath asked if the business owners can tear down their buildings and it was noted that they would have to go through the historic district commission.

Mr. Rulli noted that it is not as easy as just painting, some of those building have lead paint and there is a process to remove the lead paint. We could have design standards, sign standards, etc. This downtown used to be thriving. Need to have people living downtown to attract businesses.

Councilor McGrath noted that we have a college and we need to attract better businesses, like Foxboro.

Councilor Linde noted that it would be great to see the college move the bookstore downtown so that the residents could get books there. We keep hearing the rents are too high.

Councilor Perry noted that any new businesses would have to get the buildings up to code which would means thousands of dollars.

Mr. Rulli asked Mr. D'Emilia was the challenges are of renting his first floor. D'Emilia noted that parking was an issue. Those that looked to rent the area out looked at the parking across the street and the parking was in a dumpy area and not a good look.

Mr. Rulli noted that many communities are looking at shared parking. Mr. D'Emilia noted that the problem with shared parking is who would be liable if someone slipped and fell. Mr. Rulli noted that it probably would not work in your situation but would for like Walgreen's.

Councilor McGrath noted that the action items are designating the downtown area as blighted to try to get funds, set up the tree warden with Melissa to see how we can fix it up without making huge changes.

Melissa noted there are three phases 1) where the trees would go; 2) trees that are going to die and 3) what would be the best plan, where do we want the crosswalks.

Mr. Rulli noted that blighted is just for the town to be able to solicit funds, property owners will not be notified. There are absentee landlords who are making money and don't want to put money into their buildings. Need new development to fund a DIF. The economic climate we are in it is difficult to get deals. Commercial side it is hard to get money and some rates are 13% to 14%. Perkins and Friendly's site the banks are not taking into consideration the commercial portion.

Councilor Linde asked what can be done with the parking lot in the back, no one wants to park there.

Mr. Rulli noted he cannot speak about the lease with Laz but it is a concern for BSU as well. Been trying to come up with a plan. Abandoned cars back there, who is the code enforcer.

Mr. D’Emilia noted that there used to be a parking enforcement officer who was funded with the parking tickets and it also made revenue. Also noted that there used to be a part time building assistant that helped.

Town Manager Casanova-Davis noted that it all comes down to funding. There are a lot of opportunities in Bridgewater. We need to repave that parking lot but there is a cost associated with that. That is why partnering with BSU for funding is being looked at, trying to be creative.

Mr. Rulli noted that there have been many conversations happening but it comes down to money.

Councilor McGrath asked about the billboard in the historic district and whether it should be there.

Mr. Smith noted that they tried 20 years ago to have it removed and a ton of lawyers fought it. Tried to say that the building could not hold the sign. Maybe it is something that we can look into now.

Adjournment of Meeting

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

A roll-call vote was taken with the results as follows: McGrath – Yea; Linde – Yea; Perry -Yea.
Motion passed 3-0



Bridgewater Town Council

Introduced By: Johnny Loreti, Councilor
Date Introduced: 2/17/2026
First Reading: 2/17/2026
Second Reading:
Amendments Adopted:
Third Reading:
Date Adopted:
Date Effective:

Order O-FY26-040: Establishing a Downtown Façade Improvement Program and Requesting Community Preservation Act Funding

WHEREAS, the Town’s Comprehensive Master Plan identifies a Façade Improvement Program as a recommended tool to revitalize Downtown Bridgewater and enhance the Central Business District;

WHEREAS, the entire Central Square area is located within a designated historic district, making it eligible for Community Preservation Act funding under the historic preservation category;

WHEREAS, similar programs in other Massachusetts communities have successfully leveraged CPA funds to support downtown revitalization;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT ORDERED BY THE TOWN COUNCIL OF THE TOWN OF BRIDGEWATER THAT:

1. Establishment of Program

The Town of Bridgewater hereby establishes a Downtown Façade Improvement Program (“the Program”) to provide matching grants to eligible property owners and business tenants within the historic district for exterior improvements. Eligible improvements may include façade restoration, windows, doors, signage, lighting, and other historically appropriate enhancements consistent with adopted design guidelines.

2. Program Development

The Town Manager, in coordination with the Community & Economic Development Department and the Historic District Commission, and other relevant boards, is requested to:

- a. Develop detailed Program guidelines, including eligibility, match requirements, design standards, and procedures; and
- b. Present these guidelines to the Town Council for review prior to the Program’s official launch.

3. Application for CPA Funding

NOT FOR ACTION - FIRST READING

VOICE VOTE - REFER TO RULES AND PROCEDURES

The Town Manager is requested to submit applications to the Community Preservation Committee for Community Preservation Act funding to support the Program. Such funding may include the creation of a dedicated reserve account for façade improvements within the historic district.

4. Establishment of Dedicated Account

Upon a favorable recommendation from the Community Preservation Committee and subsequent appropriation by the Town Council, a dedicated account titled “*Downtown Façade Improvement Program – CPA*” shall be established and used exclusively for the Program’s matching grants.

BE IT FURTHER ORDERED

Nothing in this Order shall obligate the Community Preservation Committee to recommend, or the Town Council to appropriate, any specific amount of CPA funding. All appropriations shall remain subject to M.G.L. c.44B and the Town Charter’s financial procedures.

Committee Referrals and Dispositions:

Referral(s)	Disposition(s)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Town Council 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2/17/25: Referred to Downtown Revitalization Committee
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Downtown Revitalization Committee 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meeting 3/5/26.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •

Attachments: None



Bridgewater Town Council

Introduced By: Mary McGrath, Councilor
 Johnny Loreti, Councilor
 Date Introduced: 2/17/2026
 First Reading: 2/17/2026
 Second Reading:
 Amendments Adopted:
 Third Reading:
 Date Adopted:
 Date Effective:

Order O FY26-051: Declares the downtown corridor of Bridgewater a blight area

WHEREAS, within this area, most of the buildings are physically deteriorating, some unoccupied, others have a high occupancy turnover and are in violation of local codes.

WHEREAS, the existence of such blight area contributes to the decline of the town's economic wellbeing by discouraging new businesses to this location, as well as significant decline in property value.

WHEREAS, many, if not all, of these blighted properties can be rehabilitated for commercial and residential use.

WHEREAS, it is the intent of the town of Bridgewater to protect and preserve this Historic area, while requiring owners of property to maintain their property.

THEREFORE, by the definition of the Massachusetts General Law, Chapter 121b, that the corridor of the Town of Bridgewater is declared a blighted area.

Committee Referrals and Dispositions:

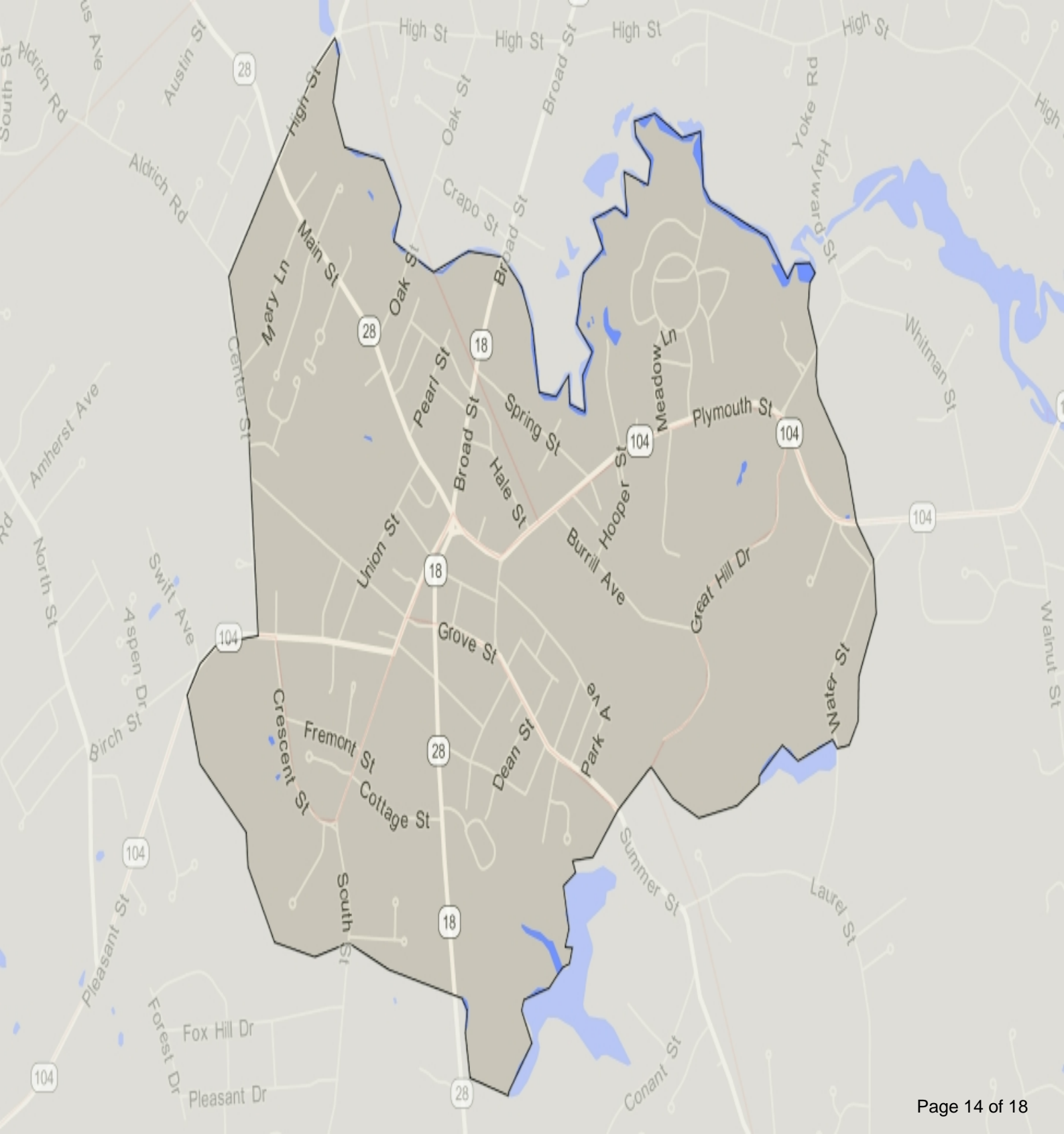
Referral(s)	Disposition(s)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Town Council 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 2/17/25: Referred to Downtown Revitlization Committee
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Downtown Revitalization Committee 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Meeting 3/5/26.

NOT FOR ACTION - FIRST READING
 TO BE REFERRED TO SUBCOMMITTEE(S)

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Attachments:

1. Downtown Census Map (002)
2. Downtown Census Map 2 low mod (002)







Bridgewater Town Council

Introduced By: Johnny Loreti, Councilor
Date Introduced: 12/16/2025
First Reading: 12/16/2025
Second Reading:
Amendments Adopted:
Third Reading:
Date Adopted:
Date Effective:

Zoning Ordinance D-FY26-009: Zoning Ordinance Amendment - Central Square Property Maintenance Standards

BE IT ORDAINED by the Town Council of the Town of Bridgewater that the Zoning Ordinance, effective March 4, 2025, as amended, is hereby further amended as follows:

SECTION 1. NEW SECTION ADDED

The Zoning Ordinance is amended by inserting a new Section 6.5 under general regulations, “**Central Square Property Maintenance Standards (CSPMS)**”, as follows, and renumbering subsequent sections as needed.

§ 6.5 CENTRAL SQUARE PROPERTY MAINTENANCE STANDARDS (CSPMS)

A. Purpose

The purpose of this Section is to:

1. Maintain Central Square as a clean, safe, and visually appealing downtown;
2. Preserve the historic and architectural character of buildings in Central Square; and
3. Support economic activity and protect property values.

This Section is adopted pursuant to **G.L. c. 40A** and Article 89 of the Amendments to the Massachusetts Constitution.

B. Applicability

1. Applies to all principal and accessory buildings and structures within:
 - a. The **Central Business District (CB)**; and
 - b. The portion of the CB District located within the established historic district around Central Square.
2. These standards are **in addition to** all other provisions of the Zoning Ordinance, the State Building Code, and any Historic District Commission requirements. Where standards conflict, the **more restrictive** shall apply.

NOT FOR ACTION FIRST READING

C. General Maintenance Standard

All exterior building elements visible from any public street, sidewalk, or public parking area shall be maintained in **good repair, safe condition, and a clean, orderly appearance**. Failure to do so is a zoning violation.

D. Exterior Building and Façade Maintenance

Property owners shall:

1. Façades & Surfaces

- Keep exterior walls, trim, and decorative features free from:
 - Peeling or flaking paint;
 - Significant cracking, rot, rust, or deterioration;
 - Missing or broken elements exposing the structure to weather.
- Repair or replace damaged materials with similar-appearing materials.

2. Windows & Doors

- Maintain windows and doors in working, weather-tight condition.
- Broken or missing glass shall be repaired or replaced within a reasonable time.
- Long-term boarded windows or doors are prohibited except where required by safety orders.

3. Signage, Awnings & Lighting

- Maintain signs, awnings, and exterior lighting in good condition, securely attached, and free of tears, excessive fading, broken components, or burned-out illumination.
- All signs must comply with **Section 6.2 – Signs** of the Zoning Ordinance.

4. Site Conditions & Rear Areas

- Keep alleys, rear entrances, and service areas visible from public ways reasonably free of trash, debris, and abandoned materials.
- Fences, railings, and site walls visible from public ways shall be structurally sound and reasonably maintained.

E. Historic Character

1. To the extent feasible, repairs and maintenance shall be compatible with the building’s historic character and architectural style.
2. Nothing in this Section limits the jurisdiction or requirements of the **Historic District Commission**.

F. Administration and Enforcement

1. The **Building Inspector/Zoning Enforcement Officer** shall enforce this Section pursuant to **Section 10.2 – Enforcement and Penalties** of the Zoning Ordinance.
2. The Enforcement Officer may issue written notice of violation and require corrective action within a reasonable time.
3. Failure to comply may result in fines and other remedies authorized by **G.L. c. 40A, §7** and the Zoning Ordinance.
4. Aggrieved parties may appeal enforcement actions to the **Zoning Board of Appeals** in accordance with Section 10.3 and G.L. c. 40A.

Committee Referrals and Dispositions:

NOT FOR ACTION FIRST READING

Referral(s)	Disposition(s)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Town Council 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 12/15/25: Referred to Downtown Revitalization Committee
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Downtown Revitalization Committee 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2/5/26: Voted to continue to next meeting
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •

Attachments: None