



### **CALL TO ORDER:**

A quorum being duly present, Town Council President Shawn George called the meeting of the Bridgewater Town Council to order at 7:00pm, on February 2, 2021 via Zoom©.

### **PRESENT:**

Council members present via Zoom© were, Timothy Fitzgibbons, Peter Colombotos, Francis Sousa, Matthew Rushton, Shawn George, William Wood, Fred Chase, Aisha Losche and Dennis Gallagher. Town Manager Michael Dutton and Town Attorney Jason Rawlins were also present.

**ABSENT:** *No Councilors were absent.*

### **PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

### **MOMENT OF SILENCE**

A moment of silence was held for all veterans who have passed including:

- Michael Palandro
- Robert Cosgrove
- Richard Long
- William Scott Wright

President George announced: Pursuant to Governor Baker’s March 12, 2020 Order Suspending Certain Provisions of the Open Meeting Law, G.L. c. 30A, §18, and the Governor’s March 15, 2020 Order imposing strict limitation on the number of people that may gather in one place, this meeting of the Bridgewater Town Council will be conducted via remote participation to the greatest extent possible. There will be no in person attendance permitted. Citizens who wish to tune in to the meeting may do so via Facebook Live.

### **APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

- January 19, 2021

**Motion:** Councilor Fitzgibbons made a motion to approve which was duly seconded.

**Discussion:** None

A roll call vote was taken with results recorded as follows:

Fitzgibbons – YEA; Colombotos – YEA; Sousa – YEA; Rushton – YEA; George – YEA; Wood – YEA; Chase – YEA; Losche – YEA; Gallagher - YEA. The motion passed 9-0.

### **ANNOUNCEMENTS FROM THE PRESIDENT - *None***

### **PROCLAMATIONS**

### **CITIZENS OPEN FORUM**

President George gave a brief reminder of the rules for Citizens Open Forum.

- Pat Neary, Lakeside Drive: Ms. Neary expressed her opposition to the adding a ballot question relative to the retail sale of recreational marijuana and cited several reasons why. She further expressed frustration that the matter is being raised again.
- Suzi Robinson, Holly Lane: Ms. Robinson also opposes the proposed question on the April ballot. Ms. Robinson then expressed support for a proposed Diversity, Equity and Inclusion position for the school district and encouraged the Council to continue to have conversations with the district in support.
- Jennifer Smith, Boxwood Lane: Ms. Smith expressed opposition for the order to add a ballot question relative to the retail sale of recreational marijuana. She further raised frustration that the matter is being raised again.
- Ed Ivaldi, Boxwood Lane: Mr. Ivaldi expressed opposition to the order adding a ballot question relative to the retail sale of recreational marijuana.
- Mrs. Hanson, Pleasant Street: Mrs. Hanson read a letter she had sent to the Council in opposition to the order adding a ballot question relative to recreational marijuana.



Town of Bridgewater  
Town Council Meeting – Virtual Via Zoom©  
Meeting Minutes  
Tuesday, February 2, 2021

- Taylor Sullivan, Norlen Park: Ms. Sullivan expressed opposition to the order adding a ballot question relative to the retail sale of recreational marijuana. She further expressed strong frustration that the matter is being raised again.

#### APPOINTMENTS

- Disability Commission – *Karen Aicher*  
**Motion:** Councilor Fitzgibbons made a motion to approve which was duly seconded.  
**Discussion:** None  
A roll call vote was taken with results recorded as follows:  
Gallagher – YEA; Losche – YEA; Chase – YEA; Wood – YEA; George – YEA; Rushton – YEA; Sousa – YEA; Colombotos – YEA; Fitzgibbons - YEA. The motion passed 9-0.
- Conant Trust – *Michael Levy (Reappointment)*  
**Motion:** Councilor Fitzgibbons made a motion to approve which was duly seconded.  
**Discussion:** None  
A roll call vote was taken with results recorded as follows:  
Fitzgibbons – YEA; Colombotos – YEA; Sousa – YEA; Rushton – YEA; George – YEA; Wood – YEA; Chase – YEA; Losche – YEA; Gallagher - YEA. The motion passed 9-0.

#### HEARINGS - None

#### LICENSE TRANSACTIONS - None

#### PRESENTATIONS

- Parks and Recreation Commission Update (*Charlie Simonds*)  
Parks and Recreation Director, Charlie Simonds provided an update on recreation areas around Town and the impacts of COVID-19. Mr. Simonds spoke about projects that were in progress and completed, several with funding provided through CPC. Mr. Simonds noted the biggest project currently is the Pickle Ball court at the Senior Center. Based on Councilor questions, Mr. Simonds briefly discussed the equipment repairs needed at Marathon Park and how to fund and the possibility of re-opening access to Jenny Leonard Park as well as passive recreation efforts. Finally, Mr. Simonds briefly spoke about the volunteerism on the Parks and Recreation Commission.

#### TOWN MANAGER'S REPORT

Mr. Dutton reported on information about various activities happening around town and highlighted meetings and events. Items of note included:

- Mitchell School Update (Standing Item)  
The contractor is mobilizing. The OPM is working the numbers now that the bond has been floated and sold. We will put the tax calculator back up online once we have all the numbers. We are looking at a project completion date of July, 2022, which is still on track. The next meeting is 2/8 via Zoom. More information can be found at [www.bridgewaterschoolproject.com](http://www.bridgewaterschoolproject.com)  
At Mr. Fitzgibbons' request, Mr. Dutton to confirm the pickleball courts are insulated from school and explained the location.
- COVID-19 Update  
The town is currently hovering around 70 cases and BSU has 8 students either in isolation or quarantine. There have been two exposures in Town operations. Mr. Dutton anticipates continuing to be a red community. The town is still operating on appointment only basis. Public Safety officials were vaccinated under phase I and we are working to organize a vaccination site for phase II. Mr. Dutton briefly explained phase II and outlined locations of vaccination sites around the area. At Councilor Gallagher's request, Mr. Dutton then spoke about feedback and concerns from Seniors.
- FY2022 Budget (Standing Item)  
Mr. Dutton spoke about the preliminary budget submitted today, noting it is very general and a very broad overview. Mr. Dutton spoke about budget assumptions contained in the preliminary budget; new growth is anticipated at least \$800K. Local receipts projections have been returned to previous levels, there will be an



anticipated ambulance receipts transfer, and they are looking to level fund indirect costs. He then spoke about budget goals; maintaining town services, increase service areas where there are gaps and improve town infrastructure. Currently, Mr. Dutton does not anticipate needing to tap into Stabilization. President George asked Mr. Dutton about the School District assessment - we look at what the district asks for and what we can afford, is that accurate? Mr. Dutton agreed, noting once we get to a final number, the district allocates it as necessary. At Mr. Gallagher's request, Mr. Dutton stated he believes they were looking to use a 2.7/2.8% increase. Councilor Fitzgibbons asked how much new growth is related to Elm Street? Mr. Dutton responded; he can find out, noting the number is net of the DIF. Mr. Fitzgibbons requested the information be put on website. Councilor Rushton noted the University has made the decision to return students in full to campus in the fall.

- Items for Next Meeting: No items put forward at this time

**DISCUSSIONS** - None

**COMMITTEE REPORTS:**

**LEGISLATION FOR ACTION**

- Order O-FY21-027: Transfer Order - Employee Contractual Buyout  
President George read the committee dispositions.  
**Motion:** Councilor Fitzgibbons made a motion to approve which was duly seconded.  
**Discussion:** None  
A roll call vote was taken with results recorded as follows:  
Gallagher – YEA; Losche – YEA; Chase – YEA; Wood – YEA; George – YEA; Rushton – YEA; Sousa – YEA; Colombotos – YEA; Fitzgibbons - YEA. The motion passed 9-0.
- Order O-FY21-028: Acceptance of a Private Donation  
President George read the committee dispositions.  
**Motion:** Councilor Fitzgibbons made a motion to approve which was duly seconded.  
**Discussion:** None  
A roll call vote was taken with results recorded as follows:  
Fitzgibbons – YEA; Colombotos – YEA; Sousa – YEA; Rushton – YEA; George – YEA; Wood – YEA; Chase – YEA; Losche – YEA; Gallagher - YEA. The motion passed 9-0.
- Order O-FY21-029: Place an Advisory Question on the April 24, 2021 Town Election Ballot  
President George read the committee dispositions.  
**Motion:** Councilor Wood made a motion to approve which was duly seconded.  
**Motion:** Councilor George made a motion to amend as presented which was duly seconded.  
**Discussion (amendment):** Mr. George explained the methodology of the affirmative vote in committee.  
**Motion:** Councilor Fitzgibbons made a motion to amend the amendment by adding after the word "marijuana" in the question "limited to no more than two licenses" which was duly seconded.  
**Discussion (amendment to amendment):** Mr. Fitzgibbons explained his reasoning behind the proposed amendment. Discussion followed as Councilors expressed their opinion on the proposal.  
A roll call vote was taken with results recorded as follows:  
Gallagher – NO; Losche – NO; Chase – YEA; Wood – NO; George – NO; Rushton – NO; Sousa – NO; Colombotos – NO; Fitzgibbons - YEA. The motion failed 2-7.  
**Discussion (continued original amendment):** Councilor Wood thanked the committee and reminded all this is just a question. It doesn't change the ban.  
A roll call vote was taken with results recorded as follows:  
Fitzgibbons – NO; Colombotos – YEA; Sousa – YEA; Rushton – NO; George – YEA; Wood – YEA; Chase – YEA; Losche – NO; Gallagher - NO. The motion passed 5-4.  
**Discussion (continued on main motion to approve):** Councilor Gallagher noted he has not had one person approach him to ask to put this on the ballot, though he has citizens reach out to him on many other issues. Mr. Wood spoke about the vote in 2016 and the information reported by the Boston Globe. Councilor Rushton stated



his decision is both a moral one and one that represents the citizens as he has not received one citizen coming forward in favor. He also reminded all, if you're watching the Cannabis Control Commission – they're going to be getting rid of host community agreements. At Councilor Fitzgibbons request, each Rules and Procedures Committee member explained their vote to support the order. Mr. George pointed out his opinion has always been the matter should be before the voters.

A roll call vote was taken with results recorded as follows:

Gallagher – NO; Losche – NO; Chase – YEA; Wood – YEA; George – YEA Rushton – NO; Sousa – YEA; Colombotos – YEA; Fitzgibbons - NO. The motion to approve, as amended, passed 5-4.

#### **OLD BUSINESS - None**

#### **NEW BUSINESS**

- Order O-FY21-030: Acceptance of Non-Recurring Revenue to Capital  
**Motion:** Councilor Fitzgibbons made a motion to refer to Budget & Finance Committee and Finance Committee which was duly seconded.  
**Discussion:** None  
A roll call vote was taken with results recorded as follows:  
Fitzgibbons – YEA; Colombotos – YEA; Sousa – YEA; Rushton – YEA; George – YEA; Wood – YEA; Chase – YEA; Losche – YEA; Gallagher - YEA. The motion passed 9-0.
- Order O-FY21-031: Establish Town Manager Goals  
Councilor George briefly explained the order.  
**Motion:** Councilor Fitzgibbons made a motion to refer to Strategic Planning Committee which was duly seconded.  
**Discussion:** Rules & Procedures Committee Chair, George explained his intent that this go to Strategic Planning.  
A roll call vote was taken with results recorded as follows:  
Gallagher – YEA; Losche – YEA; Chase – YEA; Wood – YEA; George – YEA; Rushton – YEA; Sousa – YEA; Colombotos – YEA; Fitzgibbons - YEA. The motion passed 9-0.

#### **CITIZEN COMMENTS**

- Jennifer Smith, Boxwood Lane: Ms. Smith expressed frustration with the vote on the ballot question and that the issue of marijuana was before the town again.
- Mrs. Hanson: Expressed disappointment with the vote this evening. Ms. Hanson doesn't understand why Mr. Wood needs to continue to bring this up.
- Suzi Robinson, Holly Lane: Ms. Robinson spoke in favor of community input and buy in but thinks that methodology applied here. Ms. Robinson then spoke about other options for reaching constituents.

#### **COUNCIL COMMENTS**

- Councilor Fitzgibbons: Thanked President George for running another good meeting via Zoom. Mr. Fitzgibbons thinks we all have different opinions, now it seems we'll have a vote of the citizens.
- Councilor Colombotos: No comments.
- Councilor Sousa: Would like to see every council member spend 27 minutes looking into why we don't have businesses coming into town. He noted 27 minutes is how long the Council spent discussing the ballot question.
- Councilor Rushton: Spoke about Dementia Training offered at the Senior Center. He congratulated Emily Williams and Kathy Hayes. Mr. Rushton spoke about the budget meeting earlier. Encouraged all to go to district website to look at the budget.
- Councilor Wood: Mr. Wood spoke about the budget override many years ago, which has formed his approach from then forward. When asked what drives him, often times the answer is finding new revenue sources. Mr. Wood feels it's important to listen to the citizens who are loudest and those who are not shouting. He addressed some of the comments previously as well as the potential tax revenue benefits that could be considered.
- Councilor Chase: Thanked everyone who participated in the discussion this evening as well as those who have expressed their opinions. He has received opinions on both sides.
- Councilor Losche: No comments.



Town of Bridgewater  
Town Council Meeting – Virtual Via Zoom©  
Meeting Minutes  
Tuesday, February 2, 2021

- Councilor Gallagher: Thanked Karen Aicher for volunteering and thanked Michael Levy for continuing to serve the town. He thanked the residents who expressed their opinions.
- Councilor George: Appreciates all who participated. The recreational (marijuana) issue is a very impassioned one. In this case Mr. George firmly believes the town should vote on this.

**EXECUTIVE SESSION** – *No Executive Session was held.*

**ADJOURNMENT**

**Motion:** Councilor Fitzgibbons made a motion to adjourn which was duly seconded.

A roll call vote was taken with results recorded as follows:

Fitzgibbons – YEA; Colombotos – YEA; Sousa – YEA; Rushton – YEA; George – YEA; Wood – YEA; Chase – YEA; Losche – YEA; Gallagher - YEA. The motion passed 9-0.

The meeting adjourned at 9:11 p.m.

Minutes submitted form by: Ann Holmberg

**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, February 23, 2021, to approve the aforementioned minutes, as submitted by a Roll Call vote (8-0) (Councilor Colombotos not present).**

**A TRUE COPY ATTEST:**

---

Ann M. Holmberg  
Town Council Clerk