



CALL TO ORDER:

A quorum being duly present, Town Council Vice President Matthew Rushton called the meeting of the Bridgewater Town Council to order at 7:00pm, on March 23, 2021 via Zoom©.

PRESENT:

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

ABSENT:

District 5 Vacancy
Town Council President, District 3 Councilor Shawn George

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Vice President Rushton 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

- March 9, 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; VACANCY – D5; Sousa – YEA; Rushton – Abstain; George – Absent; Wood – YEA; Chase – YEA; Losche – YEA; Gallagher - YEA. The motion passed 6-0.

ANNOUNCEMENTS FROM THE PRESIDENT - *None*

PROCLAMATIONS - *None*

CITIZENS OPEN FORUM

Vice President Rushton reminded all the rules for speaking during Citizens Open Forum.

- Steve Rogan, Howard Street; Mr. Rogan spoke as a resident against the event that was held last weekend at Legion Field. Mr. Rogan feels it was presented as a political protest and allowed to be held, but in fact, it was a festival with vendors. However, it was not permitted. There was a lot of extremist dialogue was presented. As a resident, Mr. Rogan doesn’t want that to be the perception of Bridgewater.
- Jill Sheridan, 1101 Pleasant Street: Ms. Sheridan spoke about event at Legion Field explaining her involvement, radio media she heard announcing the other rally being advertised as a festival. Ms. Sheridan spoke about information relative to requirements on use of Legion Field. She recounted her experience as she approached the rally. Ms. Sheridan spoke about police presence and asked who funded the police detail.
- Jeff Daniels, 20 Maple Avenue: Spoke about the rally. Walked up with his children and found the people were very kind to them. The only negative experience he had was by the counter-protestors.
- Mark Linde, Michael Road: Love this town but is worried about what came into our town on Saturday. Mr. Linde feels what came into Town was a hate group. Mr. Linde feels what happened on Saturday was scary and would like to know why permits were not pulled.
- Sam Baumgarten, Short Street: Wondered what the permitting process for Legion Field is. If there is a permitting process, why wasn’t it followed.

APPOINTMENTS



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- Julia Santarcangelo – *Planning Board Alternate*

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

Discussion: Councilors thanked Ms. Santarcangelo for volunteering.

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

Gallagher – YEA; Losche – YEA; Chase – YEA; Wood – YEA; George – ABSENT; Rushton – YEA; Sousa – YEA; VACANCY – D5; Fitzgibbons - YEA. The motion passed 7-0.

HEARINGS - None

LICENSE TRANSACTIONS - None

PRESENTATIONS –

- Fire Department Update – Acting Fire Chief, Michael MacDermott

Acting Fire Chief, Michael MacDermott gave a brief update on activities in the Fire Department over the past year. He spoke about run times being down slightly, most likely due to pandemic. Mr. MacDermott spoke about the increase in residential dwellings and the challenges it presents. He spoke about the Fire Station and the search for a new station. Chief MacDermott spoke at length about the good work and community outreach of the CERT organization. He spoke briefly about the Fire Department budget and staffing, noting they are down about four people due to retirement. At Councilor Gallagher's request, Mr. MacDermott spoke about some of the biggest changes over the past year, noting delivering COVID vaccines, enumerating other services the Fire Department participates in. At Councilor Wood's request, Mr. MacDermott spoke about ambulance cycle times, stating location dictates part of the cycle times and explained the procedure of disinfecting and PPE protection and different cycle times by circumstance. Chief MacDermott spoke about the length of time to fill and train a position speaking about paramedic training and Fire Academy Training noting it can be six months to a year before they're giving back to the department. At Councilor Rushton's request, Mr. MacDermott spoke about the financial impact of the decrease in calls stating he estimates they're approximately \$300,000 less in revenue due to the decreased call volume. Mr. Rushton followed up asking if there is there anything the Town Council can be doing to work on your behalf? Mr. MacDermott responded; personnel is our biggest advantage. The change of government was definitely a step forward, noting the organization is planning - looking 5+ years down the road. Mr. Rushton asked; In addition to personnel, if we could build a fire station on the west end of town would that help with response time? Mr. MacDermott responded; that is correct, noting they are looking to obtain national standard of 3–4-minute response time. Finally, at Councilor Rushton's request, Mr. MacDermott spoke about the COVID ambulance and items and equipment funded by the CARES Act.

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)

Construction has begun. As reported last meeting relative to the budget, just about all of the savings will go to the Town. Mr. Dutton spoke about going out to bond early due to extremely low interest rates and reminded all of the projected timeline with completion date of 7/2022 and occupancy date of 9/2022. The next meeting is 4/12/21 a 6:30 p.m. Councilor Fitzgibbons asked when the tax calculator will be updated? Mr. Dutton responded; he doesn't want to put out anything that hasn't been approved by MSBA. Councilor Gallagher asked if it was a 20- or 30-year bond. He also asked about the bond terms for the High School. Mr. Dutton responded, there's about 11 years left on the High School bond.

- COVID-19 Update

The Town is hovering around 20-30 community cases. BSU has 1 case in quarantine. Town Hall is open for business. Visitors should please wear masks. Mr. Dutton spoke briefly about trying to obtain vaccines for elder residential areas and homebound seniors. At Councilor Gallagher's request, Mr. Dutton spoke generally about what Bridgewater may receive from the stimulus package, noting we are looking at a \$2.7MM allocation. Mr. Gallagher would like to know what the funds can be used for. Councilor Fitzgibbons suggested looking at using those resources for legion field for restrooms. Councilor Chase asked if there was any confirmation of the UK variant in Bridgewater? Mr. Dutton will double check. Vice President Rushton asked if we can purchase a new



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ambulance under CARES if it's dedicated to COVID. He has heard the school district hired staff under the CARES act and wondered why the Recreational Commission isn't doing same.

- FY2022 Budget (Standing Item)
Mr. Dutton is cautiously encouraged by revenue trends. He is looking to submit a balanced budget 4/1/21. The Finance Director and Assistant Town Manager have worked hard to present a balanced budget. We were planning to dip into Stabilization, but no longer think we'll need to do that.
- Items for Next Meeting:
Councilor Gallagher would like to add a discussion item for the Use of Legion Field and what is required based on some of the comments earlier this evening. Attorney Rawlins advised that topic may be better discussed in Executive Session.

DISCUSSIONS - None

SUBCOMMITTEE REPORTS – None

LEGISLATION FOR ACTION

- Ordinance D-FY21-006: General Ordinance - Amend Administrative Code, Part II, Article III, Sections 7 and 16
Councilor Wood pointed out the sponsor isn't present, and the Rules speak to sponsorship. After a brief discussion, Mr. Wood asked Attorney Rawlins for an opinion.

Motion: Councilor Fitzgibbons made a motion take agenda item N: New Business out of order which was duly seconded.

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

Fitzgibbons – YEA; VACANCY – D5; Sousa – YEA; Rushton – YEA; George – ABSENT; Wood – YEA; Chase – YEA; Losche – YEA; Gallagher - YEA. The motion passed 7-0.

NEW BUSINESS (Taken out of order)

- Order O-FY21-032: Loan Order - Loan Authorization Curve Street Water Main
Mr. Dutton briefly explained the order.

Motion: Councilor Fitzgibbons made a motion to refer to the Budget & Finance and Finance Committees which was duly seconded.

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

Gallagher – YEA; Losche – YEA; Chase – YEA; Wood – YEA; George – ABSENT; Rushton – YEA; Sousa – YEA; VACANCY – D5; Fitzgibbons - YEA. The motion passed 7-0.

***Return to regular order of business "Legislation for Action"**

Attorney Rawlins read the rules and advised the Council can either vote to suspend the rules or follow the rule and postpone to the next meeting.

Motion: Councilor Fitzgibbons made a motion suspend the rules and take up Ordinance D-FY21-006 which was duly seconded.

Discussion: Councilor Wood stated he is in favor of the measure but not in favor of suspending the rules. Councilor Gallagher supports the motion.

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

Fitzgibbons – YEA; VACANCY – D5; Sousa – YEA; Rushton – YEA; George – ABSENT; Wood – NO; Chase – NO; Losche – YEA; Gallagher - YEA. The motion passed 5-2

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

Discussion: Councilors expressed support for the measure.

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

Gallagher – YEA; Losche – YEA; Chase – YEA; Wood – YEA; George – ABSENT; Rushton – YEA; Sousa – YEA; VACANCY – D5; Fitzgibbons - YEA. The motion passed 7-0.

OLD BUSINESS - None

CITIZEN COMMENTS



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- Steve Rogan, 36 Howard Street: Mr. Rogan spoke about the events of the last week, stating if people have concerns they should join a committee. He then spoke about an album of the Bridgewater Fire Department available on Facebook.
- Janet Hanson, Pleasant Street: Mrs. Hanson asked if it can be put in the rules that a dialogue can take place between citizens and council or have some type of follow up to citizen questions.
- Rebecca Fleish Cordeiro, Deerfield Drive: Ms. Cordeiro pointed out the Charter speaks to Parades & Public Gatherings and permits required. She further noted the website also provides guidance, but contrary to Charter.
- Keith Buohl, 10 Fieldcrest Drive: Thanked Fire Chief for presentation and service.

COUNCIL COMMENTS

- Councilor Fitzgibbons: None
- Councilor Sousa: Thanked the Chief for coming in. We appreciate everything they do. Mr. Sousa thanked the Planning Board appointment.
- Councilor Wood: Mr. Wood spoke about the reason he brought up the rule before is we need to follow rules. He thanked the Chief for his presentation tonight
- Councilor Chase: Happy people came forward to raise concerns and air their views.
- Councilor Losche: None
- Councilor Gallagher: Mr. Gallagher asked all to do what they can to keep the town clean.
- Councilor Rushton: Spoke briefly about last weekend's events, noting many public safety and Town Manager's office worked very hard to manage the event under trying circumstances. He hopes we can use this as a way to learn and move forward and not point fingers.
- Councilor George: Absent

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; VACANCY – D5; Sousa – YEA; Rushton – YEA; George – ABSENT; Wood – YEA; Chase – YEA; Losche – YEA; Gallagher - YEA. The motion passed 7-0.

The meeting adjourned at 8:48 p.m.

Minutes submitted 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, April 6, 2021 to approve the aforementioned Petition by a Roll Call vote (7-0-1) (Councilor George abstained).

A TRUE COPY ATTEST:

Ann M. Holmberg
Town Council Clerk