

MEMORANDUM

To: Department Leaders and Committee Members
From: Michael Dutton, Town Manager
Date: May 17, 2023
Re: State of Emergency Recission

As you can read, as of May 11, I have rescinded the local State of Emergency. Similarly, the Governor has rescinded the State's Emergency Declaration.

Although there will be few changes in our day-to-day routine, this ends the financial protocols we put in place to manage through the pandemic and removes the extraordinary powers granted (but largely unused) to the Town Manager.

The lifting of the Emergency does not affect the current practice of remote board and committee meetings. One of the after-effects of the pandemic was the very rapid advancement of technology and its use by municipalities. Bridgewater had already invested heavily in technology prior to the pandemic and used our CARES money to invest even more. During this time, we also had a burst of interest from volunteers to sit on our boards and committees. I have appointed many volunteers who have families, full-time jobs and, in some cases, jobs that take them all over the country.

I know there are many who would like to return to in-person meetings, or to allow for "hybrid" meetings where people (including board members) could be either remote or in-person. While I understand that there are very valid reasons to return to some form of in-person meetings, I have to balance a host of competing factors such as:

1. The loss of board and committee members who cannot attend in-person meetings;
2. The need for additional technology to effectively run hybrid (in-person and remote participants) meetings;
3. The requirement that every board and committee meeting be recorded;
4. The additional staff required to run technology during meetings;
5. Residents' easy access to virtual meetings;
6. Increased participation in virtual meetings;
7. Staff availability to attend in-person meetings;
8. The substantial investment to properly run hybrid meetings;
9. BTV's schedule for technology upgrades;

While I understand the urge to get back in person, I am asking for patience as we spend time this summer sorting out the issues with which we must contend locally and gauge the state legislature's inclination to permanently allow some form of hybrid meeting. Currently the ability to be remote or hybrid extended to March 2025. No one knows what will be permitted after that.



Town Manager's Office

Municipal Office Building

66 Central Square
Bridgewater, MA 02324
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RECISSION OF EMERGENCY DECLARATION

WHEREAS, on March 10, 2020 the Governor of the Commonwealth declared a State of Emergency for the Commonwealth of Massachusetts to facilitate and expedite the use of Commonwealth resources and deployment of federal and interstate resources to protect persons from the impacts of the spread of the COVID-19 virus, and;

WHEREAS, I, Michael M. Dutton, Town Manager of the City known as the Town of Bridgewater, on March 15, 2020 believing that the impending dangers due to COVID-19 created a condition of extreme peril to life and property, declared a State of Emergency on March 15, 2020, and

WHEREAS, as of this day, May 11, 2023, the Governor of the Commonwealth has rescinded the State of Emergency for the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, and

WHEREAS, it is appropriate for the Town Manager to concurrently rescind the Town's State of Emergency,

NOW THEREFORE, I, Michael M. Dutton, Town Manager of the City known as the Town of Bridgewater, Massachusetts, hereby rescind the State of Emergency as of 5 p.m. Thursday, May 11, 2023.

Date: May 11, 2023

Michael Dutton

MICHAEL M. DUTTON, TOWN MANAGER
City known as the **TOWN OF BRIDGEWATER**