



CALL TO ORDER:

A quorum being duly present, Town Council President Dennis Gallagher called the meeting of the Bridgewater Town Council to order at 5:02 pm, on March 16, 2020 in the Academy Building Council Chambers, 66 Central Square, Bridgewater, Massachusetts.

PRESENT:

Council members present were, Fred Chase, Mark Linde, Shawn George, Dennis Gallagher, Matthew Rushton, Aisha Losche, Peter Colombotos and Timothy Fitzgibbons. Town Manager Michael Dutton and Town Attorney Jason Rawlins were also present.

ABSENT:

Frank Sousa

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

MOMENT OF SILENCE

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

- Frank Needham
- Paul Stroedter, Jr.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES - *None*

ANNOUNCEMENTS FROM THE PRESIDENT - *None*

PROCLAMATIONS - *None*

CITIZENS OPEN FORUM - *None*

APPOINTMENTS - *None*

HEARINGS - *None*

LICENSE TRANSACTIONS - *None*

PRESENTATIONS - *None*

TOWN MANAGER'S REPORT - *None*

DISCUSSIONS

- Update on COVID-19 Virus Response

Mr. Dutton began stating he Declared a State of Emergency last evening after the Governor's Announcement to limit gatherings, etc. When we declare a state of emergency, it is for something highly unusual. The State of Emergency qualifies us for state reimbursement finances. We've taken some drastic action. We have closed the town buildings to the public, including the Library, Senior Center, etc. There are no members of the public here this evening. We do that to break the chain that is a virus. As of this morning, just about every town in the area has either done the same or is planning to do so.

Mr. Dutton then spoke about how the town will conduct business this way:

- Excise taxes: If citizens don't want to pay online, they can drop a physical check at the drop box on Bedford Street side of building. We can waive the penalty and interest if the bill is paid by end of month.
- Working with departments to ensure we can accommodate most of the requests that come into the building in person. Staff is here and working. Citizens can call or email. We ask that people have patience.
- The Bridgewater-Raynham Schools originally closed for two weeks, but the Governor has closed all schools for three weeks.
- Senior Center: No Senior programming for the foreseeable future. However, we're very aware of the impact on the Seniors and spoke about the volunteer roles.
- Olde Scotland Links Golf Course, and playgrounds are closed to the public. Athletic Events are closed on town fields.
- Transfer Station – will remain open and operable based on advice from CDC; who advised there is no reason to shut down.



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- Closed Police and Fire Administrative Offices to the public. The business lines are fully operational. The Police Station sees a lot of public activity in their vestibule; we are asking people to call ahead. 911 calls are being handled and some of the protocols and responses are being changed in an effort to ensure firefighters and officers are well protected and giving best service to citizens.
- We met today with all departments. For internal meetings we will use Microsoft Teams. Councilors have that as well.
- All public meetings for next week have been cancelled and we are looking at software solutions to provide virtual meetings to convene in a public setting where the public can participate virtually.
- Have not to date received any word from DPH of any presumptive cases in Bridgewater. Know at least one case in Plymouth County and one in Bristol County.

Mr. Dutton then outlined resources for additional information to refer the public to:

- CDC website
- MDPH Website
- WHO website
- Citizens can also reach out to the Board of Health at 508-697-0903

Questions:

- Councilor Fitzgibbons asked Mr. Dutton to explain how we can have a meeting without it being open to public. Mr. Dutton responded; we're following one of the first order's issued by the Governor which eliminated some of the OML requirements. Having a quorum present was one of the waivers. In the future, it's possible we would all be logging into a website from different locations to participate in a meeting. We have set up the room to satisfy "social distancing". That format will continue.
- Several Councilors asked how the meetings would be able to accommodate citizen comments. Mr. Dutton explained he is looking at that. Citizen participation is particularly important for boards like Planning Board. The town will continue to update people on multiple platforms (Facebook, Town website, Twitter). The town has a company working with us to ensure a consistent and accurate message. Councilors also asked if future committee meetings would require people to be in the same room. Mr. Dutton explained; the important thing will be to have the technology to allow participants to remote in and allow materials to be shown on screen.
- Councilor Rushton thanked Mr. Dutton for the ongoing communication and thanked the employees who have helped prepare. He requested the town make sure the public safety departments have the resources and equipment they need.
- Councilor Fitzgibbons asked if the drop box was being cleared regularly and checks cashed. Mr. Dutton responded yes. Regarding the employees; we are making sure high-risk employees who are able to work at home, do so. We are also making temporary change to attendance policy by trying to create a temporary policy that accommodates that across the board.
- President Gallagher asked if there was an end date to Academy Building being closed. Mr. Dutton responded; originally, he contemplated two weeks, but more likely we'll get a directive in the next couple of days. President Gallagher stated; at the next meeting he will not do the State of the Town. He will tentatively move it to 4/7 at 6:30 p.m. President Gallagher asked if we would be keeping the 3/24/20 meeting. Mr. Dutton responded; he is comfortable with that, but if any councilors wish to participate remotely, we should be able to accommodate.

SUBCOMMITTEE REPORTS - *None*

LEGISLATION FOR ACTION - *None*

OLD BUSINESS - *None*

NEW BUSINESS - *None*

CITIZEN COMMENTS - *None*

COUNCIL COMMENTS - *None*

EXECUTIVE SESSION – *No Executive Session was Held.*



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ADJOURNMENT

Motion: Councilor Fitzgibbons made a motion to adjourn which was duly seconded.
A voice vote was taken, and the motion passed 8-0.

The meeting adjourned at 5:42 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 7, 2020, to approve the aforementioned minutes, as submitted by a roll call vote (8-0-1) (Councilor Sousa abstained).

A TRUE COPY ATTEST:

Ann M. Holmberg
Town Council Clerk