

Bridgewater Marijuana Ad Hoc Committee
Minutes for the Meeting that Convened on Thursday, June 8, 2017

Academy Building, 66 Central Square, Bridgewater
Town Council Chambers, Room 203

Meeting called to order as formal session by Councilor Edward (Ted) Haley in accordance with rules governing meetings and quorum filled. Meeting starts at 5:05 PM.

Committee Members Present: Councilor Edward Haley, Patricia Neary, Matthew Rushton, Patrick Hohman, and Irving Smith

Committee Members Not Present: Peter Robillard, Linda F. Carp, Karen Peabody, Eric Desrochers, and Betsy Chouinard

Public Officials/Employees in Attendance: Michael Dutton, Town Manager; Kimberly Williams, Assistant Town Manager; Michael J. Spagone, Confidential Assistant

Approval of Agenda: The Committee accepts the agenda for the current meeting.

New Business: The Committee engages in a discussion of new business.

Introductions: The Town Manager and members of the Committee discuss introductions of those in attendance. Members in attendance provide short background on their interests in the committee and experience:

Patrick Hohman – New resident to Town, interested in being involved in the community, comes from a family of public employees (parents both worked in government).

Edward "Ted" Haley – Currently a member of the Town Council (Councilor at Large), comes from a family background of public service; has experience in the medical devices industry.

Matthew Rushton – Assistant Chief of Campus Police at Bridgewater State University; has an extensive career in law enforcement field. Is interested in assisting town with making prudent decisions with respect to marijuana-related sales; open to all views on topic.

Patricia Neary – Active retired resident who has focused on environmental issues and community-oriented causes; has a background in real estate industry and believes volunteerism on this group is an additional way to give back to the community.

Irving "Smitty" Smith – Long term resident of town since 1975, currently a retired Field Service Representative from the engineering industry; is open to all views, but asks for valid and concise reasoning when presented with an idea. Also, a former volunteer coach for basketball and softball in local leagues.

Note: Introductions for the absent members, Robillard, Carp, Peabody, Desrochers and Chouinard will be included in the next meeting which they are present.

Committee Mission/Purpose: The Town Manager and the Committee engage in a discussion of the purpose and mission of the Marijuana Ad Hoc Committee.

The mission of the committee is to serve in advisory capacity to the Town Council to provide input on the matters of retail marijuana in the Town of Bridgewater. The Committee was brought into existence to review the current retail/recreational marijuana laws and how they may affect the Town's policies/rules/guidelines/directives/zoning of such commerce. The Committee is only to advise, not to impose any singular opinion or measure, purely to offer suggestions to the Town Council in their decision-making processes. All meetings of the Committee will be open to the public and all discussions will take place in the public meetings; the public will also be encouraged to provide comments at each meeting.

The Committee is expected to provide their advice and findings to the Town Council no later than March of 2018, this is when the state regulations and requirements for retail/recreational marijuana will come into effect.

Open Discussion: The Town Manager and Committee discuss various matters in open discussion.

Mr. Smith asks if the issue of retail/recreational marijuana will require the Town to eventually have a Licensing Department. The Town Manager notes that is something Bridgewater may have to look at, as local licensing responsibility falls to the municipality. The Town can create licensing regulations; whether the Town wishes to establish a separate Licensing Department will rest with the community can be a part of the long-term development discussions. The Town Manager further notes that the Town can create regulations and rules that are stronger than the Commonwealth's (this option is available with respect to all state laws)

Ms. Neary asks if the Town has acquired a new Town Attorney, as their expertise with municipal law and the state laws could be helpful to the Committee. The Town Manager indicates a new Town Attorney is scheduled to be selected on June 27th.

The Town Manager also shares some of the topics which the Committee may consider advising to the Town Council including but not limited to the following: Local option sales tax on retail/recreational marijuana products; consideration of retail marijuana zoning or zoning in existing retail areas; a moratorium on sales; ban of retail sales; acceptance of Commonwealth's 10%-16% proposed tax rate (to become effective July 2017). In addition, the Massachusetts Municipal Association (MMA) has offered their legislative staff expertise and knowledge to local marijuana ad hoc groups to aide in their research and study. If the Committee so chooses, the Town Manager can reach out to MMA to invite their legislative staffer to speak to the Committee; this could be done for the group's next meeting. Ultimately, the Committee needs to have its recommendations to the Town Council no later than March 2018.

Mr. Rushton asks if the Town has desire to act on any options which the Committee may offer or advise; "Wouldn't it just be easier to allow home-grown recreational marijuana instead of retail regulations? The way the state law is written, it seems more agreeable to home-growers than actual retail. What if the Town wants to just outright ban recreational marijuana altogether?" The Town Manager states that the Committee can advise the council on may options; of which a ban is certainly one of the options.

Mr. Haley states the issue of retail/recreational marijuana will be more than just placing a business zone in the Town; the Committee and the Community need to make informed decisions. Mr. Haley further notes that the Committee needs to conduct its due diligence as any misinformation or incorrect data could in fact be detrimental to the process of consideration.

Ms. Neary asks if there is a rule where retail/recreational marijuana can be sold at a medical marijuana dispensary (two currently are preparing to open in the Elm Street area); "can that be done?" The Town Manager notes that kind of setup could happen if the Commonwealth does not formalize rules separating the two types of marijuana sales; those establishments would still have to apply for a retail license to sell recreational marijuana and be subject to the laws on such sales. The Town Manager further suggests that the Committee can invite the Building Inspector/Zoning Enforcement Officer, Public Safety Chiefs (Fire & Police), as well as Town Attorney or MMA to future meetings to gain input.

Discussion of Rules and Procedures: The Town Manager provides copies of the Town's Volunteer Handbook for Board and Committee Members with a brief background on the Open Meeting Law. The Town Manager encourages the Committee members to review the handbook so they are apprised of volunteer committee rules and procedures. Should there be any questions regarding the Open Meeting Law, the Town Manager notes he is available to provide guidance to Committee members.

The Committee also discusses timing and frequency of their future meetings. A suggestion is made to hold the next meetings on selected Wednesdays around 6PM. The Committee can meet as frequently or infrequently as they desire, as long as they meet the March 2018 deadline to provide the Town Council with their findings. The Town Manager suggests that once the minutes are drafted, those not in attendance can receive the draft document and also provide input on their availability for meeting on Wednesdays instead of Thursdays. The Town Manager's Office will poll the Committee members to work with their schedules in mind when setting the next meeting.

Public Comments: There are no public comments for the current meeting.

With all business having had formal consideration, the motion is made to adjourn: The motion to adjourn the current meeting is offered. By unanimous approval of the Committee, the meeting is hereby adjourned.

Meeting is hereby adjourned by unanimous consensus of the members in attendance in accordance with rules governing meetings. Meeting adjourns at 5:58 PM.

I hereby affix my hand to this document that the minutes of this meeting are true and accurate to the best of my ability, note-taking, and penmanship as so ordered by the Chair of the Committee this Eighth Day of June, Two Thousand and Seventeen.

A True Copy Attest,

**Edward Haley, Town Council
Councilor at Large**

**Michael J. Spagone, Confidential Assistant
Town Manager's Office**