



Town of Bridgewater **Charter Review Committee**

August 12, 2026

7:00 PM

Academy Building

66 Central Square

2nd Floor

Room 201a

and via Zoom: <https://us06web.zoom.us/jc/86305969366>

MEETING AGENDA

- A. Call to Order**
- B. Approval of Meeting Minutes**
 - a) June 24, 2026 Charter Review Committee Meeting Minutes
- C. Public Comment**
- D. Items for Discussion**
 - a) Community Conversations: Lynsy Marshall & Scott Pitta
 - b) Identification of Key Stakeholders: Brad McKinnon and Eric Dias
 - c) Charter Review Committee Resident Survey: James Walsh and Jean DiBattista
 - d) Review of August 12th Charter Review Forum
- E. Next Steps**
 - a) Charter Review Timeline
- F. Adjournment**
- G. Public Comment**



Town of Bridgewater **Charter Review Committee**

June 24, 2026

7:00 PM

66 Central Square

Academy Building

Conference Room 201A/2nd Floor

and via Zoom: <https://us06web.zoom.us/jc/81828262851>

Meeting ID: 818 2826 2851

MEETING MINUTES

Call to Order

Charter Review Committee Chair Scott Pitta called the meeting to order at 7:00pm. The meeting took place in Conference Room 201A and via Zoom.

Charter Review Committee members present:

Eric Dias, Scott Pitta, Jean DiBattista, Ed Ivaldi, Lynsy Marshall, James Walsh and Brad McKinnon (via Zoom).

Councilor Ellenberg was also in attendance.

Approval of Meeting Minutes

a) June 4, 2026 Meeting Minutes

Mr. Ivaldi made a motion to approve the June 4, 2026 meeting minutes. This was duly seconded by Mr. Dias.

A roll-call vote was taken with the results as follows: Dias - Yea; Pitta – Yea; DiBattista – Yea; Ivaldi – Yea; Marshall – Yea; Walsh – Yea; McKinnon – Yea.

Public Comment

- Councilor Ellenberg asked if there will be a discussion on the recall provision and Mr. Ivaldi noted that the 2022 ordinance was returned by the State for a few minor amendments and it is pending with the Town Council.

Items for Discussion

a) Scope of Review

Mr. Ivaldi noted that the topics need to be what the CRC is working on.

Mr. Pitta noted that if there are questions we can bring it up and if it can be discussed we can discuss, but if cannot be discussed because of open meeting law violations, it will be added to the next agenda.

Mr. Pitta noted that looking at changing the form of government, the CRC has one year and the previous group had 3 years to research the change of government. Best we could do is notify the Town Council that a change of government committee should be formed. Mr. Pitta further noted that the Town Council should not be directing the CRC and he does not agree with the Resolution that was put on the agenda for first reading.

Mr. Dias noted that he agrees with Mr. Pitta because of the time they have. There is a section in here about changes to the Charter, 14 previous items were from the prior Charter Review Committee, how many were put forth from prior Charter Review as he is trying to understand if this committee should focus on critical changes.

Mr. Ivaldi noted that the 100 plus were general recommendations, spelling, table of contents. Then Major recommendations – term limits, recall, etc. He also noted that he believes what happened the last time was the council focused on the big ones and pushed the others aside.

Ms. DiBattista noted she is concerned what she is heard at the last meeting there was talk about public input and this is walking back on that. This Charter is looking at the form of government and she thinks the idea was that we would go out to the public and what they felt about it. Does not feel comfortable saying we are going to do this but not do that if it is part of the charter. Aware of how people are feeling out there, we should seek public input and then make that decision.

Mr. Pitta noted that maybe he did not explain himself, not that we should not hear the public but we have one year to go through this and make recommendations. That is not enough time to study forms of government and to come forward with recommendations. Previous committee took 3 years to research and come up with the recommendation. Mr. Pitta suggested that the CRC Committee suggest to the Town Council that a Government Study Committee be formed, this group just does not have that time.

Ms. Marshall noted that she was skeptical about the Resolution but the name of the committee is Charter Review and a study group should be formed.

Mr. McKinnon noted that maybe put a non-binding question on the September primary ballot regarding the form of government to get input from residents. You get results from a non-binding vote.

Mr. Pitta noted that it does sound interesting but would have to speak with the Town Clerk to find out if that is even possible.

Mr. McKinnon will reach out to the Town Clerk to find out what it would entail and the topic will be on the next CRC meeting.

Mr. Dias noted that if we are hearing from residents that they want to change the form of government, it would be disingenuous to not add that as a recommendation.

Mr. Pitta noted that our authority comes from the Charter and if the Council passes it the CRC does not need to go by it.

Mr. Ivaldi noted that if we have our view and half the council views it differently we should sync up. If we vote that we are only going to look at the Charter, then we should let them know.

Mr. Ivaldi made a motion that the Charter Review Committee's scope is focused on amending or updating the Charter. This was duly seconded by Ms. Marshall.

Mr. Ivaldi noted that we just don't have the time to study the change in the form of government. Agree that if the Council decides to have an assessment done then form a group. People say let's change the form of government, why is something broken. Maybe something needs to be fixed in the Charter. Lack of education and Facebook posts are what is being done.

Ms. Marshall noted that she agrees with Mr. Ivaldi.

Ms. DiBattista noted that she feels uncomfortable because she feels the purpose of the committee is to look at all of it. Not saying we need to change the form of government but need the input for what the residents think. Recommending that they have a committee to look into forming a Government Study committee, want the CRC to be able to make a recommendation. People don't feel listened to. Most concerned about is how to give the residents of this town more direct control over their lives as it relates to the Town. Allow ourselves to make a recommendation to the form of government to be looked at. Think it is important, what this review is about. The old form of government allowed people to vote on the issues that exist. How Bridgewater residents are able to impact what happens, if they have concerns, whether it is through a new form of government, changes that give them more ability or more public meetings.

Mr. Ivaldi noted that there is nothing that can conclude us from making that recommendation. If we do a survey and residents note that they are unhappy with the government then we can make the recommendation that a Government Study group be formed.

Mr. Pitta made a motion to amend Mr. Ivaldi's motion by adding at the end: "should the Charter Review Committee find that a form of government change is appropriate, the Charter Review Committee shall recommend to the Town Council to form a Town Government Study Committee". This was duly seconded by Mr. McKinnon.

Mr. McKinnon noted that we could make the recommendation for change down the road, adding that he has some items that he thinks need to be changed. It will be good to hear from the citizens.

Mr. Dias noted that he supports the amendment but also concerned that we are not stopped from making the recommendation.

A roll-call vote of the amendment was taken with the results as follows: Dias - Yea; Pitta - Yea; DiBattista - Yea; Ivaldi - Yea; Marshall - Yea; Walsh - Yea; McKinnon - Yea.
Motion passed: 7-0.

A roll-call vote of the motion with the amendment was taken with the results as follows: Dias - Yea; Pitta - Yea; DiBattista - Yea; Ivaldi - Yea; Marshall - Yea; Walsh - Yea; McKinnon - Yea.
Motion passed: 7-0.

Voted Scope of Review:

Charter Review Committee's scope is focused on amending or updating the Charter. Should the Charter Review Committee find that a form of government change is appropriate, the Charter Review Committee shall recommend to the Town Council to form a Town Government Study Committee

b) Resident Input

Mr. Pitta noted that this was discussed at the last meeting and asked people if they had any ideas.

Mr. Dias noted that the last review committee did a survey and asked how the process was done.

Mr. Pitta noted that the process worked well, Facebook polls, resident surveys but the downside was we had no control over who responded to the poll.

Mr. Dias noted that the Town Clerk mentioned that the IT Department could be made available to us and we could filter non-residents. Residency could be confirmed might want to add.

Ms. DiBattista noted that it would be better to run the survey from the Town Website so that we can get input from Bridgewater residents.

Mr. Walsh noted that doing something by mail might be the way to go but it might be cost prohibited.

Ms. Ellenberg noted that perhaps a survey could go out with the tax bill and the water bill. Mr. Pitta noted that many residents are not on town water.

Mr. Ivaldi noted that he would discuss with Town Clerk what options might exist with registered voters. Adding that we have to develop the survey and we can do it at the same time as figuring out how to put the survey out. Also scheduling citizens forums. Had a 3 month plan in the past and it was data gathering, surveys, town personnel interviews, resident forums.

Ms. Marshall noted that there is a new Bridgewater notification app that we could use.

Mr. Pitta noted that you have to let people know that the survey exists and then you have to get them to respond, and then go through the data and filter out the nonsense.

Mr. Walsh noted that he would take a first step at the survey and Ms. DiBattista noted she would like to help with the questions.

Mr. Ivaldi noted employee survey and then implementation options committee.

Mr. Pitta noted going to the Town Manager, Department heads for inputs, scheduling public forums for citizens to attend and tell them their concerns. Have one mid-week at the Senior Center, one at the Library and one on the weekend.

Mr. Ivaldi noted that it might be worth spending a few minutes at the beginning educating people how we got to where we are, why citizens voted to go to Town Council in the first place.

Mr. Dias noted that part of the education is to define our scope. What we can help with before they sound off.

Ms. DiBattista noted she agrees with doing a presentation on where we were and where we are and what the CRC can do. Put out specific topics for the meeting. What results are we trying to get and how are we going to structure those meetings to get the results.

Mr. Walsh noted that maybe the forums are recorded and those folks that are tasked with that think it would be valuable if it was a forum that could go back and forth.

Mr. Pitta will follow-up with the Town Attorney to talk about Open Meeting for the forums.

Mr. Dias noted that you want to avoid many residents standing up and saying the same thing. One having a smaller group might stop from that happening. Looking for broad stroke concerns and if you have more detail come to this meeting, fill out the survey, etc. We want to be as efficient as we can.

Mr. Ivaldi noted that July, August and September was all data gathering and then started to analyze.

Mr. Pitta noted we want to make sure we take enough time to hear from everyone. Have a good plan. Public forums

Public forum research will be done by Mr. Pitta and Ms. Marshall.

Mr. Pitta noted that the two groups will come up with the plans and then come back on 7/22 with those plans.

c) Town Official Input

Mr. Pitta noted this would be to do interviews with town officials.

Mr. McKinnon and Mr. Dias will develop a plan on who they will speak with and how they will do it and bring those results on 7/22.

Next Steps

a) Charter Review Timeline

Mr. Dias noted that there is a meeting scheduled on 7/8, should we push that meeting to 7/22.

Mr. Dias made a motion to cancel the 7/8 meeting, this was duly seconded by Ms. Marshall.

A roll-call vote of the motion was taken with the results as follows: Dias - Yea; Pitta – Yea; DiBattista – Yea; Ivaldi – Yea; Marshall – Yea; Walsh – Yea; McKinnon – Yea.
Motion passed: 7-0.

Mr. Pitta noted that the prior CRC timeline, would like to see us stick to that schedule. July/August/September information gather, October start looking at chapters of the Charter. Adopt the prior schedule.

Mr. DiBattista noted that she was not aware that she was limited to one year. Mr. Pitta noted that it is in the Charter. Mr. Ivaldi noted that they asked for an extension of one month the last time.

Mr. Pitta noted that they can analyze the data and do two sections a month, Section 10 can be dropped.

Mr. Ivaldi noted that maybe want to get on a Town Council agenda in July or August to let them know what our plans are.

Mr. Pitta noted that we did two per month and then did two meetings and looked at the entire thing to make sure not conflicting.

Public Comment

- Ms. Hanson: noted that there was a resolution to speed up what the CRC does. Also spoke about Dr. Murphy's resolution, was not to limit but to educate the public about what the CRC can do.
- Ms. Ellenberg: thinks the government charter review committee needs to ask questions of the public what form of government they want. The public could then be determining what your terrority is depending on what their vote is. Put the vote to the people first. If the people say we want to go back to open town meeting I would say that opens up your mandate or have a government study committee appointed to carry that. Want the question of open town meeting vs the charter to be included in the survey. Cut off the other is short changing the peoples ideas. The problem is people feel disenfranchised. Open town meeting people are the vote. With the charter 9 people have the vote and no one in the audience has the vote. That question needs to be put to the people.

Mr. Ivaldi noted that when people talk about the Charter and the form of government are two different things. If we are going to ask the citizens if we are going back to town meeting then why are we not listing all 4 options. It is part of the whole education process. That is why I said to give a brief overview of why we ended up where we are today. Facebook information is false. If you do not have a charter everything falls under State law.

Ms. DiBattista noted that it is the Charter in the community what form of government is going to be used and then goes into detail.

Mr. Dias noted that there is a lot to educate in a short period of time. Maybe a flyer on forms of government that talks about the distinction of forms of government as a handout.

Adjournment of Meeting

Mr. Ivaldi made a motion to adjourn, which was duly seconded by Mr. Dais.

A roll-call vote of the motion was taken with the results as follows: Dias - Yea; Pitta – Yea; DiBattista – Yea; Ivaldi – Yea; Marshall – Yea; Walsh – Yea; McKinnon – Yea.

Motion passed: 7-0.

Meeting adjourned at 8:41pm.

2026 Charter Review Committee
Department Head Questionnaire

Base questions:

1. Do you feel the current Charter is effective?
2. What improvements, if any, to the current Charter would you recommend (I.e. revisions, additions, etc)?
3. Do you think nine members of the Town Council is too many or too few?
4. Do you feel we should maintain the current town councilor split of 6 at-large councilors and 3 district councilors or would reverting to 6 districts and 3 at large councilors be preferable?
5. How do you think we could improve communication between residents and the Town government?
6. Do you feel that, in general, residents understand the purpose of the Town Charter? Please explain
7. What could we change to make communication throughout the whole government flow better?
8. What are the Pros/cons of being labeled a town vs city in the Charter

Interviewees:

Town Manager

Assistant Town Manager

Council Clerk

Committee Clerk

Finance department

Town Clerks Office

Police Chief

Fire Chief

Water and DPW Supervisors

DPW Superintendent

HR Department

Building Commissioner

Town Councilors

Library Trustees

CED Department

Committee Chairs (Planning Board, ZBA, Conservation, Community Preservation Committee and Finance)

Bridgewater Charter Review Committee – Resident Survey (Draft for Committee Review)

Purpose: Understand whether residents feel their input is effectively reflected in town decisions, how satisfied they are with the current form of government, and where the Charter Review Committee could help to increase resident satisfaction and participation in key town decisions which affect their lives. All free-text questions are optional. Yellow "Committee note" cells flag the few items still needing a decision or input before release. They are internal and would be removed from the resident-facing version.

#	Question	Response type	Response choices	Context shown to respondent	Committee note (internal)	Potential Conflict with Town Manager Survey
SECTION 1: About you						
R1	Full name	Text		Collected to confirm you are a Bridgewater resident.		N/A
R2	Street address (in Bridgewater)	Text		Used only to verify residency against town records.		N/A
R3	How long have you lived in Bridgewater?	Single Choice	Less than 1 year / 1–5 years / 6–15 years / 16+ years			N/A
R4	In the past year, have you attended a public meeting or contacted a town official or department?	Single Choice	Yes, attended a meeting / Yes, contacted the town / Both / Neither			N/A
SECTION 2: General						
1	How familiar are you with the Bridgewater Town Charter?	Numeric Rating Scale	1 - Not familiar at all, 5 - Very familiar		Question added: It was asked in the last survey, and sets a initial baseline for how much awareness of the Town Charter the respondent has.	N/A
SECTION 3: Effective Communications						
2	How satisfied are you that residents receive enough information about significant town decisions and initiatives to stay informed?	Numeric Rating Scale	1 – Least satisfied, 5 – Most satisfied		Note #1: Lynsy's proposed question #1. Lynsy's comment on potential charter implication: If residents consistently feel uninformed, the committee could explore whether the charter should add/revise communication responsibilities. For example.. we could add in or amend Article IV - Town Manager under section 4-2 to reflect something as such: The Town Manager shall promote transparency in municipal operations by ensuring that information regarding Town programs, services, finances, and significant initiatives is made readily available to the public in accordance with policies adopted by the Town Council. Note #2: Question slightly reworded to better align with proposed answer choices.	Potential Conflict with Town Manager Survey Question #2 - Communication With the Public Sub option.
3	Do you know how and when to weigh in on a decision BEFORE it is made by each of the following? (1) the Town Council (2) Boards, committees, and commissions (3) The Town Manager and town personnel	Single Choice (per body)	Yes, clearly / Somewhat / No		Question moved to this section to highlight the below: Question 3 is similar to question #2 & 4. Determine whether to keep both as they are, merge them, or eliminate one. The charter set rules for public notice and participation; this asks whether those channels work from the resident's side.	Partial Potential Conflict with Town Manager Survey Question #2: Communication with the Public sub option. Also, has some similarities to questions 4, 5, and 6 but is much more specific than all of the above questions.
4	How easy is it to understand which Town officials or bodies are responsible for making different types of decisions?	Numeric Rating Scale	1) Very difficult, 2) Somewhat difficult 3) Neutral, 4) Somewhat easy 5) Very easy		Note #1) Lynsy's proposed question #3. Lynsy's comment on potential charter implication: If people overwhelmingly answer difficult, our committee could examine whether the charters governance structure is unnecessarily complex or unclear. (section 2-2. General Powers & duties and Section 4-2. Administrative Powers and Duties)	See above
SECTION 4: Public input & responsiveness						
5	When major town decisions are being considered, do you feel residents have enough opportunity to provide input before decisions are made?	Numeric Rating Scale	1) Never, 2) Rarely, 3) Sometimes, 4) Usually, 5) Always		Note #1: Changed existing question to Lynsy's version as they were very similar. Lynsy's comment: Review whether public hearing requirements or resident engagement provisions should be strengthened. Refer to Article II, section 2-3c 5&6. Sections 2-6(c), Article V, section 5-1(b) and Article VIII	N/A
6	Is there something you think could be done to improve town official or personnel responsiveness to the input, questions or concerns raised by residents? If "yes", what would you recommend?	Single Choice with Text	1-Yes, 2-No, 3 - No Opinion, Text option		Question simplified.	Potential Conflict with Town Manager Survey Question #2 - Communication With the Public Sub option, however, question is much more specific.
SECTION 4: Citizen participation mechanisms						
7	Are you aware of Bridgewater's citizen participation mechanisms: the Citizen Initiative and the Citizen Referendum?	Single Choice	Aware of both / Aware of neither / Only aware of the Initiative / Only aware of the Referendum	Bridgewater's charter gives residents two direct ways to act on local measures. A Citizen Initiative (§8-1) lets voters propose a new measure by petition—starting with 50 signatures, then signatures equal to 10% of voters—after which the Town Council either adopts it or sends it to a special election. A Citizen Referendum (§8-2) lets voters challenge a measure the Council just passed: a petition of 5% of voters within 10 days can suspend it and force reconsideration or a public vote.	Article VIII - Citizen Participation Mechanisms, Section 8-1 and Section 8-2 Question asks how aware citizens are of these mechanisms.	N/A
8	How likely are you to use the above citizen participation mechanisms? Why or why not?	Single Choice with Text	1 - Very Likely, 10 - Not Likely at all. Text.		Article VIII - Citizen Participation Mechanisms, Section 8-1 and Section 8-2 Added this question to determine resident obstacles or concerns related to effective use of the above mechanisms.	N/A
9	Should Bridgewater's new recall provision include a recall mechanism for elected officials based on a "no confidence" vote?	Single Choice	Yes / No / No opinion	Need to add a summary of the recall provision.	<i>Given reaction by some town council members to the current recall provisions recommended by previous CRC members, this question could be controversial.</i>	N/A

SECTION 5: Budget and finance						
10	Is 45 days enough time for the town council to review the annual budget provided to the clerk of the town council by the town manager? Why or why not?	Single Choice with text	Yes / No / No opinion, text		Question added per CRC input/request. Town Charter Reference: Article VI Finance, Section 6-3 Action of the Budget, (b) Adoption of the budget.	There are questions pertaining to Finance on the town manager survey, however, they don't specifically relate to this question.
11	Do you have any recommendations for improvements to the budget process as outlined in the town charter? If, yes, please provide those recommendations.	Single Choice with Text	Yes/No/No opinion, text		Question added per CRC input/request. Article VI Finance	There are questions pertaining to Finance on the town manager survey, however, they don't specifically relate to this question.
SECTION 6: Open-ended questions						
12	Are you satisfied that the current town form of government most effectively serves town residents?	Text (optional)		Bridgewater currently operates under a Council-Manager form of government: an elected Town Council represents residents and an appointed Town Manager handles administration. Elected officials decide on residents' behalf after hearing their input.	Charter Reference - First paragraph, Section 1 -3 Division of Powers, Section 1-4 Powers of the Town, Section 1-5 Interpretation of Powers Question measures how satisfied Bridgewater residents are with the current form of government, and whether a Form of Government Study Committee should be recommended.	N/A
13	If you could change one thing about how our local town government operates, what would have the most positive impact on your daily life?	Text (optional)			See above	N/A
14	Is there anything about how the town governs itself that is working well and should be continued?	Text (optional)			See above	N/A