

SENATE No. 3080

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

**In the One Hundred and Ninety-Second General Court
(2021-2022)**

An Act further regulating elections in the town of Bridgewater.

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives in General Court assembled, and by the authority of the same, as follows:

1 SECTION 1. Section 1-9 of the charter of the city known as the town of Bridgewater,
2 which is on file in the office of the archivist of the commonwealth, as provided in section 12 of
3 chapter 43B of the General Laws, is hereby amended by inserting after the definition of
4 “Charter” the following definition:-

5 “District”, a geographically bounded unit for election purposes, which consists of 1 or
6 more contiguous precincts.

7 SECTION 2. Said section 1-9 of said charter is hereby further amended by inserting after
8 the definition of “Multiple member body” the following definition:-

9 “Precinct”, the smallest geographically bounded unit used for election purposes;
10 provided, however, that a “precinct” shall be bounded by the center-line of streets or other well-
11 defined boundaries such as streams or other bodies of water, railroad tracks, power lines or other
12 clearly visible geographic figures.

13 SECTION 3. Said charter is hereby further amended by striking out section 2-1 and
14 inserting in place there of the following section:-

15 SECTION 2-1. COMPOSITION; ELIGIBILITY; TERM OF OFFICE

16 (a) Composition - There shall be a town council consisting of 9 members, which shall
17 exercise the legislative powers of the town. Three of the members, to be known as district
18 councilors, shall be nominated and elected by and from the voters of the 3 districts into which the
19 town is divided and 6 of the members, to be known as councilors-at-large, shall be nominated
20 and elected by and from the voters at-large.

21 (b) Eligibility - Any voter shall be eligible to hold the office of councilor-at-large. A
22 district councilor shall be a voter and resident of the district in which election is sought. If a
23 district councilor or a councilor-at-large moves out of the town during the term for which they
24 are elected, such office shall immediately be deemed vacant and filled in the manner provided in
25 section 2-5. If a district councilor moves from the district from which the councilor was elected
26 or is removed by a change in district lines and more than 14 months remain in the term for which
27 the councilor was elected, the office shall be deemed vacant and shall be filled in the manner
28 provided in said section 2-5; provided, however, that if less than 6 months of the term remain,
29 the district councilor may continue to serve during the term for which they were elected so long
30 as they remain a resident of the town.

31 (c) Term of Office - After completion of the transitional terms outlined in section 10-7,
32 the term of office of district councilors and councilors-at-large shall be staggered terms of 3
33 years each, beginning on the next business day following election and continuing until their
34 successors are qualified.

35 SECTION 4. Section 7-3 of said charter is hereby amended by striking out subsection (a)
36 and inserting in place thereof the following subsection:-

37 (a) Signature Requirements — The number of signatures of voters required to place the
38 name of a candidate on the official ballot to be used at an election shall be: (i) for an office that is
39 to be filled by the voters of the whole town, not less than 50; and (ii) for an office that is to be
40 filled by the voters of a district, not less than 25 from the district.

41 SECTION 5. Said charter is hereby further amended by striking out section 7-4 and
42 inserting in place thereof the following section:-

43 SECTION 7-4. PRECINCTS AND DISTRICTS

44 The territory of the town shall be divided into 9 precincts as specifically illustrated on the
45 precinct map, which shall be appended to this charter. The town shall also be divided into 3
46 districts. Each district shall be comprised of 3 precincts as set forth in this section and in
47 accordance with the General Laws. The districts shall be established so as to consist of as nearly
48 an equal number of inhabitants as is possible based on compact and contiguous territory,
49 bounded insofar as possible by the center line of known streets or ways or by other well-defined
50 limits. The town council shall, from time to time, but not less than once every 10 years, review
51 the districts to ensure their uniformity in number of inhabitants. The composition of the 3
52 districts shall consist of:

53 District 1: Precincts 1, 2 and 7.

54 District 2: Precincts 5, 6 and 8.

55 District 3: Precincts 3, 4 and 9.

56 SECTION 6. Said charter is hereby further amended by striking out section 10-7 and
57 inserting in place thereof the following section:-

58 SECTION 10-7. TIME OF PRECINCT AND DISTRICT CHARTER AMENDMENTS
59 TAKING EFFECT

60 (a) The election of the newly constituted town council shall occur within 180 days of the
61 effective date of this act.

62 (b) The town council elected pursuant to subsection (a) shall take office immediately
63 upon election and certification, subject to the following transitional provisions:

64 (i) the term of office of a district councilor serving prior to the election in subsection (a)
65 shall immediately expire and the term of office of each district councilor elected pursuant to
66 subsection (a) shall commence upon certification of the election;

67 (ii) the term of office of a councilor-at-large serving prior to the election in subsection (a)
68 shall immediately expire and the term of office of each councilor-at-large elected pursuant to
69 subsection (a) shall commence upon certification of the election; provided, however, that any
70 councilor-at-large serving prior to the election in subsection (a) that has not fulfilled their full
71 term of office shall be entitled to serve the remainder of the term for which they were elected to
72 serve;

73 (iii) the term of office of the district councilor elected pursuant to subsection (a) to serve
74 district 2 shall expire upon the election and certification of a successor at the April 2023 election
75 annual town election;

76 (iv) the term of office of the district councilor elected pursuant to subsection (a) to serve
77 district 1 shall expire upon the election and certification of a successor at the April 2024 election
78 annual town election;

79 (v) the term of office of the district councilor elected pursuant to subsection (a) to serve
80 district 3 shall expire upon election and certification of a successor at the April 2025 election
81 annual town election;

82 (vi) the term of office of a councilor-at-large elected pursuant to subsection (a) shall be as
83 follows, as each such term is determined by the ballot bearing the council-at-large's name:

84 (A) 2 councilors-at-large shall serve upon election pursuant to subsection (a) until the
85 April 2025 annual town election;

86 (B) 1 councilor-at-large shall serve upon election pursuant to subsection (a) until the
87 April 2024 annual town election;

88 (C) 2 councilors-at-large shall serve upon election pursuant to subsection (a) until the
89 April 2023 annual town election.

90 (c) After the terms set forth in this section, all town councilors shall serve 3-year terms.