

**FRANKLIN TOWN COUNCIL
MINUTES OF MEETING
December 15, 2021**

A meeting of the Town Council was held on Wednesday, December 15, 2021, at the Municipal Building, 2nd Floor, Council Chambers, 355 East Central Street, Franklin, MA. Councilors present: Brian Chandler, Theodore Cormier-Leger, Robert Dellorco, Cobi Frongillo, Melanie Hamblen, Glenn Jones, Thomas Mercer, Deborah Pellegri, Patrick Sheridan. Councilors absent: None. Administrative personnel in attendance: Jamie Hellen, Town Administrator; Mark Cerel, Town Attorney; Alecia Alleyne, Assistant to the Town Administrator.

CALL TO ORDER: ► Chair Mercer called the meeting to order at 7:00 PM. Chair Mercer called for a moment of silence; all recited the Pledge of Allegiance.

ANNOUNCEMENTS: ► Chair Mercer reviewed the following as posted on the agenda. A Note to Residents: All citizens are now welcome to attend public board and committee meetings in person. Additionally, in an effort to maximize citizen engagement opportunities, citizens will be able to continue to participate remotely via phone or Zoom. The meetings will also be live-streamed by Franklin TV and shown on Comcast Channel 11 and Verizon Channel 29. He stated that this meeting is being recorded by Franklin TV and may also be recorded by others.

CITIZEN COMMENTS: ► Mr. Leo Gallagher, 55 Hillside Road, noted that he has lived on the road and plowed it for 20 years. He stated that he no longer has a plow. He stated that it is a Town road. He reviewed that he met with DPW Director Brutus Cantoreggi in October with the documentation indicating that it is a Town road. He stated that Mr. Cantoreggi said that he would look into it and would see Tom in the DPW to get a street sign. Mr. Gallagher stated that Tom said it is not a Town road; it is a private road. Tom stated that the sign would have to be paid for and the DPW is not going to plow the road. Mr. Gallagher stated that he did not hear back from Mr. Cantoreggi. Mr. Gallagher stated that he provided everyone with the paperwork showing that it is a public way; it is a Town road of about 400 ft. He stated that he is requesting that the road be plowed.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES: ► *November 10, 2021.* ► **MOTION** to **Approve** the November 10, 2021 meeting minutes by **Dellorco**. **SECOND** by **Hamblen**. **No discussion.** ► **VOTE: Yes-9, No-0, Absent-0.**

PROCLAMATIONS/RECOGNITIONS: **None.**

APPOINTMENTS: ► *Franklin Cultural District Committee: Katherine Botelho.* ► Councilor Jones read the appointment. ► **MOTION** to **Ratify** the appointment by the Town Administrator of Katherine Botelho to serve as a member of the Cultural District Committee, with a term to expire on June 30, 2024, by **Jones**. **SECOND** by **Dellorco**. **Discussion:** ► Mr. Hellen stated thanks to the Cultural District Committee as they searched out their own new members; he recommended approval of the appointments. ► **VOTE: Yes-9, No-0, Absent-0.**

► *Franklin Cultural District Committee: Patrick Timmons.* ► Councilor Jones read the appointment. ► **MOTION** to **Ratify** the appointment by the Town Administrator of Patrick Timmons to serve as a member of the Cultural District Committee, with a term to expire on June 30, 2024, by **Jones**. **SECOND** by **Dellorco**. **No discussion.** ► **VOTE: Yes-9, No-0, Absent-0.**

► *Community Preservation Committee: Richard (Rick) Power.* ► Councilor Jones read the appointment. ► **MOTION** to **Ratify** the appointment by the Town Administrator of Richard Power to serve as a member of the Community Preservation Committee, with a term to expire on June 30, 2022, by **Jones**. **SECOND** by **Dellorco**. **Discussion:** ► Mr. Hellen noted that Mr. Power is a Planning Board member and is the Planning

Board's nominee to this committee; Mr. Halligan was previously the Planning Board's representative. ► Mr. Cerel requested a notation to the motion adding that Mr. Power is the Planning Board's representative to the CPC. ► **MOTION to Amend** the appointment by the Town Administrator of Richard Power to serve as a member of the Community Preservation Committee, with a term to expire on June 30, 2022, to state that the Community Preservation Committee has recommended the appointment of Richard Power to serve as a representative of the Planning Board by **Jones. SECOND** by **Dellorco. No discussion.** ► **VOTE: Yes-9, No-0, Absent-0.**

HEARINGS: None.

LICENSE TRANSACTIONS: ► 2022 Annual Alcohol License Renewals. ► Councilor Jones read the license transaction for the 2022 Town of Franklin Alcohol Licenses Renewals; he read aloud the list that was provided in the Town Council members' meeting packet. ► **MOTION to Approve** the renewal of alcoholic beverages licenses listed on the attached Renewal List for the year 2022 with the issuance of licenses that have inspections, fees or taxes outstanding to be withheld (physically held in the Town Administrator's Office) until all items are resolved by **Jones. SECOND** by **Dellorco. Discussion:** ► Councilor Hamblen noted that last year renewal fees were lower for restaurants by 25 percent due to COVID. She asked if this year the fees were back to the normal amount. ► Mr. Hellen stated that the fee is back to the full amount. He confirmed that no issues have been reported to the ABCC this year. ► Police Chief Thomas Lynch stated that there have been no problems with Dean College. He stated that as soon as he has the staff, he will do compliance checks. ► **VOTE: Yes-8, No-0, Absent-0, Abstain-1.** (Chair Mercer abstained.)

PRESENTATIONS/DISCUSSIONS: ► Human Resources: Karen Bratt, Human Resources Director. ► Mr. Hellen stated that Ms. Bratt provided this presentation to the Finance Committee on October 13, 2021. He stated that her presentation provides a comprehensive look at the Human Resources Department and the compensation packages. ► Ms. Bratt narrated her slideshow presentation: Town of Franklin Human Resources Department & Benefits. She provided an overview of the Human Resources budget and the benefits budget. As outlined on her slideshow presentation, she reviewed the functions of Human Resources including managing all hiring activity, processing resignations and retirements, providing employee relations and policy enforcement, and managing all benefits for active Town employees and retirees. She stated that she is a member of the management team that reviews annual health insurance plans and rate changes. She stated that she maintains compensation and classification plans. She stated that the Human Resources budget comprises two full-time staff members: Director Karen Bratt and HR Administrator Sandy Golebiewski. The School Human Resources Office is also two full-time staff in the school budget. She noted that additional investments may be needed in the future as benefits become more intensive and time consuming. The HR expense budget in FY22 is \$53,650. The majority of the budget is split between health/medical services at \$22,500 and advertising at \$3,000. She reviewed the benefits budget for FY22 of \$13,987,350 of which the three major cost drivers are: Norfolk County Pension assessment, employee and retiree health insurance, and annual OPEB deposits. She noted that health insurance for active employees is approximately \$5 million. She reviewed that the Town of Franklin is in the Norfolk County Pension Assessment. The Norfolk County Retirement System is only 63.5 percent funded. The FY22 assessment is \$6,693,600. She reviewed that all active employees working 20 or more hours per week are eligible for health insurance through the Town. There are two HMO Plans and one PPO plan. The Town budget covers active Town employees. There are 256 active full-time employees eligible for benefits; 175 are currently receiving Town health insurance. She noted that she works with the Town's consultants at NFP and the Town's Insurance Advisory Committee each year to review health insurance options. She reviewed the HMO and the high deductible plans. She reviewed the retiree health insurance. She noted that active employees eventually become vested at 10 years of service and are then eligible for both a pension and health insurance/life insurance benefits as retirees. She noted that once a retiree reaches age 65, they are required by law to sign up for Medicare. Currently, there are about 500 retirees on the Town's health insurance plus and an additional 152 spouses. She reviewed Other Post-Employment Benefits (OPEB). She stated that the Town has financial policies which prioritize investing into OPEB each year: \$550,000 in FY19 increasing by \$50,000 each year and currently at

\$700,000, plus 10 percent of the Town's free cash each year. She reviewed Workers' Compensation and stated that if a person is injured on the job, the Town is responsible for all medical bills and a portion of the employee's salary, without using their accrued sick or vacation time. She discussed Medicare tax, unemployment, and compensation reserve. She reviewed hiring activity and stated that 89 full-time employees have started with the Town since the beginning of FY18 and an additional 22 part-time positions. She stated that the Town has hired 11 new department heads since January 1, 2016. She reviewed HR accomplishments since FY18 which include implementing the minimum wage standard for all municipal employees, Massachusetts Equal Pay Act (2018), collective bargaining agreements, redrafted employee manual, redrafted Town Human Resources bylaw, first annual benefits fair in 2019, COVID-19 leave policy, coordination, and employee assistance, and significant reorganizations and changes in Police, Fire, and DPW. She discussed strategic initiatives including compensation and classification study, remote work policy, collective bargaining FY23-FY25, HR application software, and continue succession planning to hire workforce. ► Town Council members thanked Ms. Bratt for the presentation and asked questions. ► In response, Ms. Bratt reviewed ways that employees with COVID leave had been and currently are being paid. She confirmed that generally employees with concerns or crisis contact her, but MIA is a great resource. She discussed the benefits of applicant tracking software. She reviewed the drug testing required for CDL drivers and discussed substance abuse rehabilitation and resources. ► Mr. Hellen noted that there are collective bargaining provisions for Police and Fire buyouts which is a savings.

SUBCOMMITTEE REPORTS:

- a. **Capital Budget Subcommittee.** ► None.
- b. **Budget Subcommittee.** ► None.
- c. **Economic Development Subcommittee.** ► Councilor Hamblen stated that the next meeting is on January 5, 2022, at 5:45 PM; zoning updates will be discussed.

LEGISLATION FOR ACTION: None.

TOWN ADMINISTRATOR'S REPORT: ► Mr. Hellen stated that he received a letter from State Senator Karen Spilka and the legislators regarding the ARPA federal relief bill. Of the money that went to the State, Franklin received four appropriations: \$700,000 for the extension of the SNETT trail; \$130,00 for the development of affordable and accessible senior housing in Franklin (Franklin Ridge); \$150,000 for the production of affordable rental supportive senior housing in Franklin (Franklin Ridge); and \$20,000 to support access to public transportation in Franklin. He wished everyone happy holidays.

FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS: None.

COUNCIL COMMENTS: ► Councilor Cormier-Leger thanked all those who contributed to the Santa Foundation which helped many families; he wished everyone happy holidays. ► Councilor Chandler asked if the generators at the DPW will be sold. ► Mr. Hellen noted that the specifications were just designed for the generators. He stated that the facilities director told him that they will be putting out that bid in mid to late January. He stated thanks for the annual Town report. ► Councilor Pellegri thanked the Town Clerk for the Town report. She stated happy holidays to everyone. ► Councilor Sheridan wished everyone happy holidays. ► Councilor Frongillo requested an update on the Housing Production Plan. ► Mr. Hellen stated that he has no timeline on when they will be approved by the State. ► Councilor Frongillo stated that the Love Franklin open mic night was fantastic. He asked everyone to treat everyone with as much respect as they can. ► Councilor Hamblen noted people across the country who have been affected by the tornadoes and the lives lost due to COVID; she wished everyone stays safe and leads with kindness. ► Councilor Jones gave prayers to those affected by the tornadoes. He noted the missionaries who are still captive in Haiti. He stated that regarding COVID, everyone's guard cannot be let down at this time. ► Councilor Dellorco noted the people affected by the tornadoes. He wished everyone happy holidays. ► Chair Mercer noted the spikes in COVID. He stated that he wants 2022 to be looking in the rear-view mirror for COVID. He noted the Town Council's goal setting sessions in January. He wished everyone happy holidays.

EXECUTIVE SESSION: None.

ADJOURN: ► MOTION to Adjourn by Dellorco. SECOND by Jones. No Discussion. ► VOTE: Yes-9, No-0, Absent-0.

Meeting adjourned at 8:21 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Judith Lizardi
Recording Secretary