

Town of Franklin

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PLANNING BOARD

January 27, 2025 Meeting Minutes

Chair Gregory Rondeau called the above-captioned meeting held in the Town Council Chambers at 355 East Central Street, Franklin, MA, to order this date at 7:00 PM. The public had the option of attending the meeting live at the Town Hall or dialing into the meeting using the provided phone number or participating by copying the provided link. Members in attendance: Gregory Rondeau, Chair; Beth Wierling, Vice Chair; Jennifer Williams, Clerk; Jay Mello; Christopher Stickney (via Zoom); Mark Mucciarone, associate member. Members absent: None. Also present: Amy Love, Town Planner.

7:00 PM Commencement/General Business

Chair Rondeau reviewed the Zoom platform call-in phone number and the Zoom link which were provided on the meeting agenda. The meeting was audio and video recorded.

B. 81-P ANR: 731 King Street

Ms. Love reviewed this is to create one buildable lot on 731 King Street. They are creating two lots: one with the house and the other with the vacant land located in the Single-Family III zoning district. The existing single-family house on the lot does comply to setbacks by creating Lot 1.

Motion to Approve the 81-P ANR for 731 King Street. Rondeau. Second: Williams. Roll Call Vote: Mello-YES; Stickney-YES; Williams-YES; Wierling-YES; Rondeau-YES. Vote: 5-0 (5-Yes; 0-No).

C. Review: 19 Dean Avenue – Color Scheme

Ms. Love reviewed that the Planning Board approved a Special Permit and Site Plan application on December 9, 2025, for 19 Dean Avenue. Condition #12 states: Applicant is required to apply with Design Review Commission. Once Design Review Commission has recommended, the applicant is to return to the Planning Board and provide a color plan of the building. The applicant is submitting the color renderings to the Planning Board and has received recommendation from the Design Review Commission. The Design Review Commission recommendation is provided. She reviewed the colors.

Mr. David Djerf (via Zoom) said he has two Benjamin Moore colors: Apprentice Cream and Coffee House Tan. He said the trim is going to be white.

Ms. Williams asked about the exterior materials legend on the drawing that identifies lap siding that is light tan. She requested clarification on the exact material and stated that the Planning Board asked for physical samples of the materials.

Person who did not identify themselves (via Zoom) said the physical samples were not presented to Design Review Commission. Ms. Love said Design Review Commission recommended it, but requested the materials be provided. Ms. Williams said she is seeing a conflict between what is on the plans which looks like wood and vinyl siding and the applicant who is providing paint color names which is not typically the exact names of the materials.

Ms. Erin Djerf, owner/applicant (via Zoom), said she had asked if she were able to send links of the colors. The construction budget is not done, but she sent the colors in a Benjamin Moore palette. She said she understood the siding would be a light tan and the darker shade will be a very slightly darker coffee house tan with the shakes at the top.

Chair Rondeau and Planning Board members said they would like to see actual samples as that is what they asked for. Ms. Wierling reviewed various colors that are mentioned on the plans; there are many different colors listed. Ms. Djerf said she sent over the color swath; it was Prentice Cream in the white trim. Ms. Wierling discussed the colors as listed. Ms. Love said she did not receive the swabs; she asked for them to be sent over. Ms. Djerf said she sent the link to the Benjamin Moore swabs last Thursday to Ms. Love. Ms. Love said she did not recall seeing that. She asked if the Planning Board wanted an actual swab or if a link is satisfactory.

Ms. Williams said she would like to see physical samples. Chair Rondeau said samples and also have it delineated on the drawing what colors are with what parts of the building. Ms. Wierling said this is the direction the Planning Board gave previously.

Mr. Stickney asked if the screen fencing was going to be painted or a natural color. Ms. Djerf said it was going to be a darker fencing to go along with the color scheme: gray and black. Mr. Stickney asked if the brick would be painted. Ms. Djerf said they were thinking of City Square Brick; it is less white than the Birchwood. Mr. Mello said he wants to rectify this so there is no confusion; right now, there is a fair amount of confusion. Chair Rondeau asked for samples and colors delineated on the building, what colors are going where, the color of the brick and trim, put it on the drawings, and then get the Planning Board physical samples.

Ms. Djerf said she kept asking Ms. Love if there is anything else that was needed, and she did not hear back. She said she was under the impression that what she provided would suffice.

Ms. Wierling said based on what we are requesting, based on the legend provided, that as long as the clarification is given to Ms. Love, that Ms. Love can make a decision based upon the drawing/rendering. She asked is it possible that we say in theory the color scheme looks good, and provided the colors match up with what the applicant is saying and Ms. Love confirms, instead of waiting another two weeks, so they can move forward. She asked can we give Ms. Love the okay to okay the colors provided that they match up with what is depicted. Chair Rondeau said he can look at it too. Ms. Wierling asked that Ms. Djerf work with Ms. Love and Ms. Maxine Kinhart and Chair Rondeau on this.

Motion to Approve 19 Dean Avenue – Color Scheme, upon confirmation from the town planner, Ms. Maxine Kinhart, and Planning Board Chair Greg Rondeau, that the colors match with what is shown on the rendering with samples. Wierling. Second: Williams. Discussion: Mr. Stickney said he wants to make sure the garage door is the same as the window trim. Ms. Djerf said yes. Roll Call Vote: Mello-YES; Stickney-YES; Williams-YES; Wierling-YES; Rondeau-YES. Vote: 5-0 (5-Yes; 0-No).

D. Meeting Minutes: December 9 & 16, 2024

Motion to Approve the Meeting Minutes for December 9 & 16, 2024. Rondeau. Second: Williams. Roll Call Vote: Mello-YES; Stickney-YES; Williams-YES; Wierling-YES; Rondeau-YES. Vote: 5-0 (5-Yes; 0-No).

A. Master Plan

Town Council member Glenn Jones, chair of the Master Plan Update Committee, provided a presentation to the Planning Board. He noted Franklin's new website and explained the location of the Master Plan information on the website including the 295-page final report document. He showed and narrated a slideshow presentation which was provided in the meeting packet. He reviewed his agenda is

acknowledgments, introduction and community engagement, mission statement and community vision, Master Plan goals, and implementation plan. He thanked all those who have helped develop the 2025 Master Plan. He said this plan is vital to the community's health, well-being, and growth, providing clarity of vision and a comprehensive approach for addressing all areas of community development. He discussed and reviewed that the Master Plan committee held over 27 public meetings as a group with an additional 60 public meeting working sessions with the subcommittees. He said in the spring of 2023, the Town of Franklin began to update the Master Plan. He reviewed the process which included review of the 2013 Master Plan as well as many other actions and obtaining much information. He explained the vision of Franklin is to be a vibrant, inclusive, pluralistic, innovative, and sustainable community. He noted the mission statement. He said there were six pillar goals, or overarching goals, of the Master Plan: housing diversity, complete neighborhoods, neighborhood connectivity, vibrant downtown, natural/historic conservation and accessibility, and resource efficiency. He read the Master Plan goals statement as written on a slide from the presentation which is provided in the meeting packet. The Master Plan goals included: economic development, housing, land use, natural, cultural and historic resources, open space and recreation, community services and facilities, traffic and circulation, and sustainability. He discussed and reviewed the Master Plan subcommittee groups and members. He introduced chairs and members of subcommittees as listed on the slides contained in the provided meeting packet. He said these members spent countless hours of their own time on this. Housing and Economic Development Subcommittee Co-Chair Eric Steltzer reviewed that there was a lot of public input on this topic. He reviewed and narrated some of the slides provided in the meeting packet. He said the key things they kept hearing about were high costs including the cost of living in the community. He said they kept hearing about increasing diversity of housing. He said for economic development, they have a great downtown. They paid attention to the downtown and what they can do to make it more accessible to people to visit establishments that are there. He said they were also looking at future economic opportunities and at tourism opportunities. Land Use and Zoning Subcommittee Chair Ginelle Lang noted the subcommittee members and discussed that they met quite a bit as a group to take what they were hearing from community members from public engagement, and what they know, to think about how they can use the Master Plan to define smart development for the future of Franklin while really thinking through what does growth and change mean for the future of Franklin. She reviewed the six Land Use and Zoning goals as outlined on the provided slides. Open Space & Recreation, Natural, Cultural & Historic Resources Subcommittee Chair Meghann Hagen reviewed the members on the subcommittee. She said they received a lot of feedback from the community. She summarized the five Natural, Cultural, and Historic Resources goals and the five Open Space and Recreation goals as outlined on the provided slides. Community Services, Facilities & Circulation Subcommittee Chair Cobi Frongillo said the community facilities and services is a little different from some of the others as this is looking at what we offer as services as a government and how we improve upon them and make sure that they are sustainably funded. He summarized the six Community Facilities & Services goals and the four Traffic and Circulation goals as outlined on the provided slides. Sustainability Subcommittee member Melanie Hamblen reviewed the members of the committee and noted chair Gino Carlucci. She summarized the five Sustainability goals. She noted all their goals will help the town save money.

Town Planner Amy Love reviewed the implementation plan. She reviewed that the implementation program element defines and schedules the specific municipal actions necessary to achieve the objectives of each element of the master or study plan. She thanked everyone on the committees and the consultants. She noted it has been over 18 months working on this and putting it all together. She introduced consultant Jill Slankas of Barrett Planning Group LLC. Mr. Jones explained this group played a key part in formulating this document. Ms. Slankas thanked her colleagues and Jeff Maxtutis of BETA. She commended the Master Plan committee and Town staff on their work on this project and thanked everyone. She noted that after the report is approved the real work begins with the implementation plan. Mr. Jones noted the 295-page final report document and thanked the public for their input. He said hopefully much of what is in the plan is implemented in the future. He said what you see in front of you tonight is the public's opinion on what they want this community to look like.

Chair Rondeau said they appreciate all the hard work that everyone put in. Planning Board members asked questions and made comments.

Ms. Wierling asked if any of the comments and changes the Planning Board provided two weeks ago were made. Mr. Jones said yes, as requested, including the downtown comments were rephrased and the by right portion. Mr. Steltzer thanked the Planning Board for their comments provided and said they had discussions and struck the words by right; the implementation goal is still seeking the increased density from the community. He noted some adjustments in the economic development piece regarding assets in downtown. Ms. Wierling asked about the 60 public meetings. Mr. Jones said there were three public input sessions that were outreach presentation sessions. He noted the session at Dean College. He said of the three outreach sessions, the largest was the one at Dean with about 100 people. The other meetings averaged about six to 12 people. He said they did an online survey. Ms. Wierling said she feels that some of the housing and land use goals are still not representative of the general feeling that we are allowing a lot of larger scale developments and then rezoning things to be as of right. She said she would like to hear what the citizens are saying. She said a lot of the goals and implementation items here are very aggressive and not necessarily representative of what the broader town wants. She said 100 people showing up at a public hearing and making input on something that has such a large impact to the community is not a large enough representation of what is really happening in our community. She supports some, but not a lot of the goals and objectives being presented. She said she is disappointed there is not more wording to indicate it should be discussed further, but just blanket statements. She said she sees that they renamed Single-Family IV to General Residential IV and allowed for up to four family developments. She said that she appreciates they took out the by right language. She talked about the MBTA communities and noted that one of their goals listed was to determine if we want to exceed the expectations. She said from all the meetings she attended, the clear answer is no. She said she is not sure why they have things like that as goals. She gave other examples of the wording such as using the words *any future* regarding implementation and noting that you do not know what any future is, and she has a hard time supporting anything that says *any* as you do not know what is going to happen. Regarding the wording in the Master Plan document, she discussed that downtown and adjacent neighborhoods are the ones with the most tricky properties and allowing decreases and things to that extent and then saying by right for some of these, she cannot support it, and a little more oversight is needed. She said she is not knocking anyone's hard work, but for her, the wording in a lot of these is not in a form that makes her comfortable.

Mr. Mello thanked all for their work on this. He said he is a little more pro-density than Ms. Wierling. He said it looks like some of these things are going to be difficult to accomplish, for example, preserving open space inside of I-495 and creating housing as those do not mesh. He noted the Single-Family IV going to General Residential IV.

Mr. Steltzer said this is a challenge in the community. He said they had healthy dialogue and good participation in the community surveys. He said each of them going into the communities had conversations that might not be through the formal process, but they were intentional to not just have public hearings as they know how difficult it is for people to show up. He discussed density and asked what is the right size for density and where do you put it. He said there are some recommendations about that regarding code and looking at those opportunities and at the housing stock. He said this is visionary and a dynamic document. He said there will be more conversations across the community as we look to implement this.

Mr. Mello said that as the town is expanding and dealing with increased density, that is all getting focused on the inside of town and not a lot of discussion about other density increases. He said he has some wonder about what that is going to look like. He said it looks like they could be doing more to spread that out.

Mr. Jones discussed that people always want to come to Franklin, but it makes it particularly difficult to take the current housing stock and densities that we have and kind of spread them out mainly because of the way the town is already developed. He discussed some large lots in various areas of town will probably stay large

lots unless the owners choose to subdivide. He said one of the biggest challenges is trying to have the property owners downtown make those improvements. He discussed the condos and mixed use that are going in downtown. He said these things are starting to grow. He explained the location of the densities is sparse. He reviewed that Residential VII over by Cook's Farm by the golf course was a specialty item at the time when we voted to approve it based on its location. Mr. Mello said we need more of that and find a way to make that happen. Mr. Jones said he does not disagree with that. He discussed people owning private property have the right to develop it as they choose within the zoning.

Ms. Lang said in her subcommittee they talked about where density could happen. They looked all through the town. One proposal was to encourage the town to think about ways to increase commercial and industrial districts. She said maybe all that parking is not needed and maybe those can become denser in and of themselves, and we identified different zones for potential neighborhood opportunities near gateways of the town like along Pond Street or Lincoln Street or Washington Street, and there are pockets of areas that can be developed. She said they talked about looking at the zone around Forge Park and what that could look like. She said these are areas where they did not want to say just make the downtown dense.

Mr. Stickney said this is a living document that will take us in the next 10 years. He said he agreed with Ms. Wierling in avoiding blanket statements. He would like to see the Planning Board and Zoning Board of Appeals, etc., having those control points to make sure we do not have incongruent uses adjacent to each other in certain areas. He wants to maintain the character of the community while supporting positive and smart growth. He thanked the Master Plan committee for their time and work.

Ms. Williams thanked everyone for their comments. She said everything that may come out of this will come before the Planning Board or other voting bodies. She discussed the goal of a Master Plan is to look at everything holistically and come up with lists of goals and objectives. She said she hopes that this then gets translated in a holistic approach to action rather than everything happening in different bubbles. She thinks a logical next step would be to hire a consultant to do an actual energy and carbon and facilities master plan rather than having a separate police study and a separate redistricting study for the school, and doing other separate studies like for Davis Thayer. She explained these should be looked at together by a consultant regardless of the initial cost of such a study. Mr. Jones said he thinks she is right on the money. He explained that this document is a tool for us; this tool can help to guide us. He discussed master plan goals from other communities. He noted that there were items in Franklin's old master plan that were never gotten to.

Ms. Wierling suggested a goal or objective that our boards and committees have more joint meetings for collaboration; we can all do better to communicate with each other. Mr. Jones agreed and discussed some of the biggest issues come down to communication. Ms. Wierling discussed communication between boards and said there needs to be more.

Ms. Williams said they just reinvented the entire town's brand and website, and she would like to see that incorporated into this report. Mr. Jones said it has been requested. Ms. Love said they are rolling out the guidelines to put it on documents in the next two to three weeks, so they will see if they can get it incorporated.

Mr. Mucciarone discussed that the mixed-use part needs to be tweaked as not having enough commercial space in the projects or developments does not entice businesses to come in and to entice people to walk. That is a great vision to have.

Mr. Jones said one thing that makes Franklin unique is the fact that we have such diversified neighborhoods and such a diversified community. He discussed the number of apartments units. He discussed that they are not trying to fill every hole in Franklin which is why they purchased Schmidt's Farm and Maple Hill to preserve upwards of 200 acres of land for open space and recreation. He said the goal is to try to slow down the overgrowth and do some smart planning.

Chair Rondeau said he concurs with the rest of the Planning Board. He said his biggest fear is that back in the 1980s and 1990s Franklin was growing 350 permits per year. He said all the lots we are seeing now are all the lots we did not want to touch back then as they are irregularly shaped, have water, have ledge, abandoned homes; that is all the growth now. He said there is growth, but he would promote controlled growth. He said do it in the form and fashion that is best for the town and the residents. He said you want to maintain the value of the current properties in town. He said people will keep coming to this town. He said what we need to do is control what is coming in front of us so we plan for the future. He said we all want to make sure we retain the values of our properties; we want to keep the town as a value and keep it as a small town. He said the most important thing is the controlled growth and what is best for the town. He explained what can happen if you over expand it, and he talked about the ADUs. He said they do not want to lose control of what they have; controlled growth. He thanked everyone for their time and effort on the report.

Ms. Wierling noted that for the top item on the survey of what you see as the top focus area facing Franklin, managing growth and change was at 63.2 percent.

Motion to Adopt the Master Plan. Wierling. Second: Williams. Roll Call Vote: Mello-YES; Stickney-YES; Williams-YES; Wierling-YES – with the caveat that she expresses concern about the wording of some of the housing and land use implementation; Rondeau-YES. Vote: 5-0 (5-Yes; 0-No).

7:00 PM **PUBLIC HEARING** – *Initial*
124 - 126 Grove Street
Site Plan Modification
Documents presented to the Planning Board are on file.

Ms. Love confirmed the applicant is looking for a continuation to February 24, 2025.

Motion to Continue 124 - 126 Grove Street, Site Plan Modification, to February 24, 2025. Rondeau. Second: Williams. Roll Call Vote: Mello-YES; Stickney-YES; Williams-YES; Wierling-YES; Rondeau-YES. Vote: 5-0 (5-Yes; 0-No).

7:00 PM **PUBLIC HEARING** – *Continued*
488 & 496 Summer Street
Special Permit & Site Plan Application
Documents presented to the Planning Board are on file.
TO BE CONTINUED

Chair Rondeau said the applicant is looking for a continuation. Ms. Love said she was told she would have plans this week. The applicant requested to be on the February 10 meeting agenda, but that agenda is full.

Ms. Wierling said before there is a motion, she wanted to say that the applicant has been on the Planning Board's agenda since April 2024. She would like to say that if they do not come to the meeting that they are continuing to, we will ask them to withdraw until they are ready to be before the Planning Board. They are holding up space for applicants that are ready. Or, if they do not respect that request, the Planning Board should vote on the plans submitted to that point. Chair Rondeau said okay. Ms. Williams asked if the abutters can be renotified. Chair Rondeau said no.

Ms. Wierling said they come to the meeting on February 24, 2025, tell us where you are at, and show us some changes or withdraw, or we will vote on the plans as submitted.

No Motion Made. Second: Williams. Roll Call Vote: Mello-YES; Stickney-YES; Williams-YES; Wierling-YES; Rondeau-YES. Vote: 5-0 (5-Yes; 0-No).

7:00 PM **PUBLIC HEARING** – *Initial*
164 Grove Street
Special Permit & Site Plan Application
Documents presented to the Planning Board are on file.

Motion to Waive the Reading. Rondeau. Second: Williams. Roll Call Vote: Mello-YES; Stickney-YES; Williams-YES; Wierling-YES; Rondeau-YES. Vote: 5-0 (5-Yes; 0-No).

Ms. Love said this is for a marijuana dispensary. She reviewed that the site is approximately 1.5 acres and is located at 164 Grove Street in the Industrial Zoning and Marijuana Overlay District. The applicant is proposing to construct a 4,150 sq. ft. building with 70 parking spaces. The main use of the building is for retail marijuana. There will be no product manufacturing, testing, or research operations at the facility. The applicant has filed the following Special Permits: To allow non-medical retail marijuana facility under 185 Attachment 3, Part II Section 2.23. The purpose of the Special Permit and Site Plan is change in ownership. The Site Plan remains exactly the same as approved on November 2, 2020, by the Planning Board. She explained that the Special Permit runs with the owner of the facility of the land.

Mr. Dave Choplinski, owner’s representative for CC Lights who is the current owner of the property, addressed the Planning Board. He said we are a multiple business operation in Franklin. He said they enjoy being members of the community. He said Ms. Love was fair in dealing with them to be successful and helped them many times. He said Allan Mellski, principal of Interform Design and Architects of Chicago and three staff members of his firm were on the call. He noted Meridian Associates are the engineers on the project, and Mr. McCarthy, the CCC professional. He said they are resubmitting what has been previously approved. They have gone to their neighbor Planet Fitness, and the access is not a problem. He showed a rendering of what they propose. He said there are only three changes to the original plan: by code they had to add a charging station for an electric vehicle, the entrance block was in the front of the building and they slid it to the side, and they added small concrete pads in the back of the building for housekeeping measures. Otherwise, they are submitting what was previously approved.

Chair Rondeau said they went through this in great detail in 2020. Mr. Stickney asked how they get their product. Mr. Choplinski said for this facility, we get product elsewhere, but we do cultivate two doors down at 160 Grove Street. Ms. Williams asked did the volume that is the vestibule or the entry shift to the plan east. Mr. Choplinski explained the location. Ms. Williams confirmed the location of the doors. Chair Rondeau asked for the size of the pad they are putting in the back. Representative of Meridian Associates said they think it is a total of 60 sq. ft. of concrete. Mr. Choplinski said it is a pad for some equipment/housekeeping.

Motion to Close the public hearing. Rondeau. Second: Williams. Roll Call Vote: Mello-YES; Stickney-YES; Williams-YES; Wierling-YES; Rondeau-YES. Vote: 5-0 (5-Yes; 0-No).

Motion to Approve 164 Grove Street, Special Permit & Site Plan Application, as submitted. Wierling. Second: Williams. No vote was taken.

Ms. Williams read aloud the following.

Special Permit: Non-medical retail marijuana facility under 185 Attachment 3, Part II Section 2.23.

- a) Proposed project addresses or is consistent with neighbor or Town need.
Mello-YES; Stickney-YES; Williams-YES; Wierling-YES; Rondeau-YES. Vote: 5-0 (5-Yes; 0-No)
- b) Vehicular traffic flow, access and parking and pedestrian safety are properly addressed.

Mello-YES; Stickney-YES; Williams-YES; Wierling-YES; Rondeau-YES. Vote: 5-0 (5-Yes; 0-No)

c) Public roadways, drainage, utilities and other infrastructure are adequate or will be upgraded to accommodate development.

Mello-YES; Stickney-YES; Williams-YES; Wierling-YES; Rondeau-YES. Vote: 5-0 (5-Yes; 0-No)

d) Neighborhood character and social structure will not be negatively impacted.

Mello-YES; Stickney-YES; Williams-YES; Wierling-YES; Rondeau-YES. Vote: 5-0 (5-Yes; 0-No)

e) Project will not destroy or cause substantial damage to any environmentally significant natural resource, habitat, or feature or, if it will, proposed mitigation, remediation, replication or compensatory measures are adequate.

Mello-YES; Stickney-YES; Williams-YES; Wierling-YES; Rondeau-YES. Vote: 5-0 (5-Yes; 0-No)

f) Number, height, bulk, location and siting of building(s) and structures(s) will not result in abutting properties being deprived of light or fresh air circulation or being exposed to flooding or subjected to excessive noise, odor, light, vibrations, or airborne particulates.

Mello-YES; Stickney-YES; Williams-YES; Wierling-YES; Rondeau-YES. Vote: 5-0 (5-Yes; 0-No)

g) Water consumption and sewer use taking into consideration current and projected future local water supply and demand and wastewater treatment capacity, will not be excessive.

Mello-YES; Stickney-YES; Williams-YES; Wierling-YES; Rondeau-YES. Vote: 5-0 (5-Yes; 0-No)

The proposed use will not have adverse effects which overbalance its beneficial effects on either the neighborhood or the Town, in view of the particular characteristics of the site and of the proposal in relation to that site.

Mello-YES; Stickney-YES; Williams-YES; Wierling-YES; Rondeau-YES. Vote: 5-0 (5-Yes; 0-No)

Chair Rondeau said he wanted to make sure they got the general notes 1-3 from the Department of Planning. Ms. Love said they are not conditions, just an overview.

Ms. Wierling asked when they were going to start construction. Mr. Choplinski said as soon as it warms up. He thanked everyone.

Motion to Adjourn the Planning Board Meeting. Wierling. Second: Williams. Roll Call Vote: Mello-YES; Stickney-YES; Williams-YES; Wierling-YES; Rondeau-YES. Vote: 5-0 (5-Yes; 0-No).

Meeting adjourned at 8:49 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Judith Lizardi,
Recording Secretary

--Planning Board approved Minutes at March 10, 2025 Meeting