

**FRANKLIN TOWN COUNCIL
MINUTES OF MEETING
October 29, 2025**

A meeting of the Town Council was held on Wednesday, October 29, 2025, 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 Pellegrini, Patrick Sheridan. Councilors absent: None. Administrative personnel in attendance: Jamie Hellen, Town Administrator; Mark Cerel, Town Attorney; Julie McCann, Operations Manager.

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 FROM THE CHAIR: ► Chair Mercer announced upcoming events. The Franklin Cultural District and the Town of Franklin invite community members, artists, schools, businesses, and organizations to take part in the second annual A Wreath of Franklin community art program. Wreaths are due the week of December 5, 2025. To learn more please contact the Department of Arts, Culture, and the Creative Economy. He said it is a great event. ► Town Clerk Nancy Danello gave an update regarding the upcoming biennial town election on Tuesday, November 4, 2025, at the Franklin High School from 6 AM to 8 PM. She reviewed in-person voting, vote-by-mail, and absentee voting is currently at 955 ballots cast. She reviewed hours for in-person voting. She noted the Town Clerk's office will be closed on election day. She said local elections are so important; please get out and vote. She addressed a social media false statement about a candidate withdrawing from the Town Council race. She said that is not true; no one has withdrawn. She noted all candidates have submitted their campaign finance reports. She said to call the Town Clerk's office with questions and to obtain the facts. She thanked the three current Town Council members who are not running again for all the support they have given her throughout her five years as Town Clerk. She thanked all the incumbents and new candidates who are running and wished them the best. ► Chair Mercer reviewed the following as posted on the agenda. A Note to Residents: All citizens are welcome to attend public meetings in person. To view the live meeting remotely, citizens are encouraged to watch the live stream on the Franklin Town Hall TV YouTube channel or the live broadcast on Comcast channel 9 and Verizon channel 29. Meetings are also archived by Franklin TV on the Franklin Town Hall TV YouTube channel and shown on repeat on Comcast channel 9 and Verizon channel 29 for those who miss the live meeting. To listen to the meeting remotely, citizens may call-in using the provided number. This will not permit participation in the meeting. To participate in the meeting remotely, citizens are able to join a Zoom webinar using the information provided on the agenda. Any participants who wish to speak during the webinar must enter their full name and email address when joining the webinar. All participants will be automatically muted upon joining the webinar. In order to speak, participants who have entered full name and email address will need to select the "raise hand" function to request to be unmuted. All speakers will be required to state their full name and street address before commenting. ► School Committee Chair David Callaghan gave an update. He reviewed last night was the last School Committee meeting of the term and noted current members who were not running again. He thanked the current Town Council members who were not seeking re-election for all the work they have done. He said the School Committee meeting had two big items. He said Superintendent Giguere presented the superintendent goals for this year. He said if folks have questions about the schools, the goals are listed on the website. He said the other item was that they talked about their October 1 enrollment numbers for the schools. These numbers are reported to the state. He said there is a lot of different data presented to the state. He reviewed the number of students who applied for and received the free and reduced meals application. He said this number went down by 7 points. He said likely what they are looking at is the state has provided free meals to students and because of that families are not inclined to fill out these applications. He said by filing for the free and reduced meals application, it opens the door for so many other benefits throughout the school systems and supports, which he reviewed. He said please, if you are in need or neighbors or friends in need, take a look at the website and look at the application. He said from the October 1 enrollment numbers it shows what each school is at and looks at the

projections and to see how they match up, and it shows it is pretty accurate. He said this shows the forecasting model has a high degree of confidence for the next 10 years. He said this shows the enrollment trends look like they are plateauing, and in about 10 years it will be a slight uptick. He said we are in a situation where we have stable numbers. He thanked the Town Council for their time with the late-night meetings.

CITIZEN COMMENTS: ► Ms. Sue Cass, 146 Longhill Road, said she has two traffic matters. She said the first one is with Keller Sullivan School and the traffic coming out of there in the afternoon. It can be backed up a long distance down Lincoln Street. It seems unsafe. She said her second question regards the dog park. She said she has two dogs that she takes to the park daily. She said the parking situation for the dog park is impossible as there is really no parking for the dog park. She cannot safely bring her dogs down the hill. She asked that parking be put in for the dog park. ► Ms. Lyn O'Brien, 16 Homes Avenue, said she is the chair on the Council on Aging and a nurse practitioner who provides care to the elderly and disabled population. She said November is recognized as National Family Caregivers Month in the United States. She provided statistics on caregivers in the U.S., the Commonwealth, and in Franklin. She said the Friends of Franklin Elders are proud to host the first annual Caregivers Appreciation Day at the Franklin Senior Center on Friday, November 7, 2025, from 11 AM to 3 PM. She said there are over 40 donators and volunteers to make this a great day. She said it is free. RSVP is appreciated, but they will accommodate everyone who attends. ► Senior Center Director Sarah Amaral provided updates. She said their van still has openings for any seniors in need to get to Town Hall for early voting and some hours on November 4 to vote. Please call. She said they are getting a lot of calls about Medicare and plans. She said they have councilors to help. She reviewed deadlines. She said if you have any questions, please give them a call. She said they are also getting calls about SNAP benefits. She said if you are worried, please give them a call, and they will try to provide resources. ► Mr. Gene Grella, 36 Red Gate Lane, thanked the Town Council members for their services for the past two years. He reviewed the information he sent to the Town Council members today. He said he has done research on the comprehensive permits. He said under section 6 of the Local Initiative Program (LIP) it says the CEO, the Town Council, has a lot of control on the Friendly 40B process. He read aloud information provided on page 71 in the document about requirements and regulations indicating the project must have the written support of the CEO, which they did initially do. He read information regarding if a project changes substantially throughout the process, DHCD reserves the right to request a letter from the CEO stating the project remains locally supported as a condition for final approval. He read information from page 79 about what is a change. He said to sum up, this says the CEO, Town Council, still remains very much a part of the control of this Friendly 40B process, and they do have a say in it, and he would like to hear from the town attorney on his thoughts on this. ► Resident of 103 Central Park Terrace said this is the low-income housing in Franklin. He had concerns about the Housing Authority in Franklin. He said he has noticed they have numerous elderly residents there. He said they have a hard time getting out and about. He discussed the washer-dryer compound. He said there are two broken dryers out of three dryers. He said they have been focusing on prettying up the area rather than the needs of the people. He said he wanted to bring this to light. ► Ms. Jane Callaway-Tripp, 607 Maple Street, thanked the Town Council members. She said she respects the time of the Town Council members. She said she is speaking on a statement made at last week's meeting by the town administrator. She said Mr. Hellen said he was not able to find a ZBA person at all within the Town of Franklin. She said she has not seen that posted on the website. She said the town administrator was passionate when he was speaking and saying he could not get anyone to run for the positions because of the way the residents act. He blamed the residents. She said they should not have to have meetings at the Planning Board where police have to get involved. Everyone should have civil discussions. But to say that residents treat the people on the boards and committees wrong is very one sided. She has witnessed for herself that she has been called out for things that should have not been mentioned at a public meeting. She asked where was the accountability in that. She said she has been laughed at by a sitting Town Council member. She asked where was the concern for that. She said where is the public apologies to the residents. She said just getting those seats or positions does not just determine whether or not you are respected. You must give respect. It needs to go both ways. It is not the residents' fault for everything that is going wrong in this town. The residents deserve respect. ► Mr. Stephen Arnold, 520 Maple Street, said he is grateful the

town has a tree warden. He discussed a tree near his stonewall. He called the tree warden, and the tree warden got back to him and said the stonewall is the town's property, and the tree is his property. He thanked the tree warden for this information. ► Mr. Steve Sherlock, 13 Magnolia Lane, Franklin Matters/Franklin Public Radio, thanked the Town Council members for their services. He talked about the Caregivers event on November 7. He said 80 percent of the Franklin's registered voters do not care of the importance of this week regarding the election. He discussed historically how many voters do not vote in Franklin. He reviewed that voting is easier than ever before, but it has not increased the number of votes in an election. That is a problem that we need to address. He said voting is a civic duty. He said everyone should get out and vote as it is important. ► Ms. Jacqueline Maciel, 95 Elm Street, played music that she flew to in a kite competition from the song "We're Not Gonna Take It."

APPROVAL OF MINUTES: ► None.

PROCLAMATIONS/RECOGNITIONS: ► None.

APPOINTMENTS: ► *Agricultural Commission - Jennifer Sweeney (Associate Seat).* ► Councilor Jones read the appointment. ► **MOTION** ratify the appointment by the Town Administrator of Jennifer Sweeney to serve as an Associate Member of the Agricultural Commission with a term to expire on June 30, 2026, by **Jones. SECOND** by **Dellorco. Discussion:** ► Mr. Hellen said they look forward to her help. ► Chair Mercer thanked her for giving of her time. ► **VOTE: Yes-9, No-0, Absent-0.**

► *Council on Aging - Roberta Trahan.* ► Councilor Jones read the appointment. ► **MOTION** to ratify the appointment by the Town Administrator of Roberta Trahan to serve as a Member of the Council on Aging with a term to expire on June 30, 2027, by **Jones. SECOND** by **Dellorco. Discussion:** ► Mr. Hellen said she speaks for herself. ► Chair Mercer said thank you. ► **VOTE: Yes-9, No-0, Absent-2.**

PUBLIC HEARINGS - 7:00 PM:

a. *Multiple modifications of a Section 15 Package Store All Alcoholic Beverages License: Change of License Manager, Change of Officers/Directors & Change of Stock – Dharma Bhakti Corporation d/b/a Liquor World, Located at 365 West Central Street – Continued from October 22, 2029 (License Transaction #7a).* ► Chair Mercer said this public hearing is continued from October 22, 2025. ► **Chair Mercer declared the public hearing open.** ► Attorney Jon Aieta of McDermott, Quilty, Miller & Hanley LLP, on behalf of the licensee, said there were three requests. He said Mr. Hitesh Patel will be replacing the current manager of record. He said Mr. Patel has nearly 10 years of experience, has been at this store for eight years, and is TIPS certified. He explained there is also a transfer of stock, and Mr. Patel will also become the secretary and director. ► There were no questions or comments from the public or Town Council members. ► **Chair Mercer declared the public hearing closed.**

LICENSE TRANSACTIONS: ► *Multiple modifications of a Section 15 Package Store All Alcoholic Beverages License: Change of License Manager, Change of Officers/Directors & Change of Stock – Dharma Bhakti Corporation d/b/a Liquor World, Located at 365 West Central Street - Continued from October 22, 2029.* ► Councilor Jones read the license transaction. ► **MOTION** to **Approve** the request for Multiple modifications of a Section 15 Package Store All Alcoholic Beverages License: Change of License Manager, Change of Officers/Directors & Change of Stock – Dharma Bhakti Corporation d/b/a Liquor World, Located at 365 West Central Street, by **Jones. SECOND** by **Dellorco. No discussion.** ► **VOTE: Yes-9, No-0, Absent-0.**

► *Farmer-Winery Farmers Market License - Blisspoint LLC d/b/a Blisspoint Meadery.* ► Councilor Jones read the license transaction. ► **MOTION** to **Approve** the issuance of a Farmer-Winery, Farmer's Market License to Jeff Venuti, Blisspoint LLC d/b/a Blisspoint Meadery by **Jones. SECOND** by **Dellorco. Discussion:** ► Mr. Hellen said this is for the winter market. He said the Town Council has approved licenses

for this in the past, and all departments have signed off. ► Mr. Jeff Venuti (via Zoom) said the winter market is on Saturdays, and it starts in November. ► **VOTE: Yes-9, No-0, Absent-0.**

PRESENTATIONS / DISCUSSIONS: ► **Presentation: Franklin Elks Riders Donation to Veterans' Services Department (Legislation for Action #9a and #9b).** ► Elks Riders President Rich Gately said it was great to be back this year. This is their sixth year. They had a great season. He presented a check for \$2,000 for the Veterans' Gift Fund. ► Director of Veterans' Services Shannon Nisbett thanked the Elks Riders for their very generous donation and steadfast support. She said their total donations over they years have been at least \$12,000. She said these funds are crucial to providing assistance to Franklin veterans. She said the Elks Riders are true partners in serving veterans. She said they are part of the Franklin's Elks Lodge. She noted on Tuesday, November 11, they will be hosting the annual Veterans Day luncheon. She thanked other organizations and individuals who have made donations. She thanked all the Elks Riders members who attended tonight.

LEGISLATION FOR ACTION:

Note: Two-Thirds Vote requires six votes; Majority Vote requires majority of members present and voting.

- a. **Resolution 25-68: Gift Acceptance - Veterans' Services Department (\$2,000) (Motion to Approve Resolution 25-68 - Majority Vote).** ► Councilor Jones read the resolution. ► **MOTION to Approve** Resolution 25-68: Gift Acceptance - Veterans' Services Department (\$2,000) by **Dellorco. SECOND** by **Hamblen. Discussion:** ► Chair Mercer said thank you for the generous donation. ► **VOTE: Yes-9, No-0, Absent-0.**

- b. **Resolution 25-69: Gift Acceptance - Veterans' Services Department (\$10,480) (Motion to Approve Resolution 25-69 - Majority Vote).** ► Councilor Jones read the resolution. ► **MOTION to Approve** Resolution 25-69: Gift Acceptance - Veterans' Services Department (\$10,480) by **Dellorco. SECOND** by **Hamblen. Discussion:** ► Chair Mercer said this is great support and thank you. ► Mr. Hellen said thank you to the Adirondack Club for their \$10,000 donation and thank you to all the donors. **VOTE: Yes-9, No-0, Absent-0.**

- c. **Resolution 25-70: Adoption of Cannabis Licensing Local Approval Process and Cannabis Social Equity Policy (Motion to Approve Resolution 25-70 - Majority Vote).** ► Councilor Jones read the resolution. ► **MOTION to Approve** Resolution 25-70: Adoption of Cannabis Licensing Local Approval Process and Cannabis Social Equity Policy by **Dellorco. SECOND** by **Hamblen. Discussion:** ► Mr. Hellen said this was a goal of the Town Council because the state is telling us we have to do something. He said there is not a lot of communities who have gotten this approved yet. He reviewed information from his memo to the Town Council dated October 29, 2025. As part of the state's commitment to provide economic justice and equity for "those who were harmed by the war on drugs," the state is requiring host communities or marijuana establishments to finalize a "social equity plan." He said he has modeled this off of the Town of Shrewsbury's recently adopted policy by the state Cannabis Control Commission (CCC), as well as the Town's permitting process to date, which has been very economically successful for the community. Well more than 100 communities across the state are susceptible to this mandate. If approved tonight, this will be the fourth community to apply for approval of this state regulation. He anticipates we will receive comments from the CCC staff or the CCC themselves. We will revisit this issue in the future if the state has feedback or comments. He explained that as a manager, he has consistently had disagreement with the CCC and their regulations. He has stated many times he believes these businesses should go through local permitting like any other business and even questions the scope of the entire agency. He would note that the House of Representatives has approved a reform package of the agency in this legislative session, but the Senate has not taken that up yet, but may later this year. If finalized by the Senate and Governor, this would be the third major reform package of the 2016 voter approved laws around cannabis. Additional information in the memo included that the Town has a thriving cannabis industry with numerous businesses that are providing significant tax revenue to

the community. A few factoids on the current cannabis footprint and licensee profile in Franklin are listed in the memo. He reviewed that there is almost \$.5 million in estimated annual tax revenues from the 3 percent local option cannabis local excise (sales) tax. For those who are against raising local property taxes, this is welcome data as many out-of-town residents shop at the town's two stores and help support the town budget. ► **VOTE: Yes-9, No-0, Absent-0.**

- d. Resolution 25-67: Expenditure Limits for FY2026 on Departmental Revolving Funds Established by Franklin Town Code Chapter 73, as Provided in MGL Chapter 44, §53 E½, as Amended (Electric Vehicle Charging Stations) (Motion to Approve Resolution 25-67 - Majority Vote).* ► Councilor Jones read the resolution. ► **MOTION to Approve** Resolution 25-67: Expenditure Limits for FY2026 on Departmental Revolving Funds Established by Franklin Town Code Chapter 73, as Provided in MGL Chapter 44, §53 E½, as Amended (Electric Vehicle Charging Stations) by **Dellorco. SECOND** by **Hamblen. Discussion:** ► Mr. Hellen said this is the final vote to create the self-sustaining account for the charging stations in town. People are now paying into them, so they will pay the electricity. Some of the receipts have been coming in. They have had to up the amount to \$200,000 in that account. He would expect next year or the year after they may have to up the account again. The Finance Committee recommended it 8-0. ► **VOTE: Yes-9, No-0, Absent-0.**

TOWN ADMINISTRATOR'S REPORT: ► Mr. Hellen said the Town of Franklin officially owns the SNETT trail from Grove Street to downtown. He said it has been an incredible ride. He explained Attorney Mark Cerel worked on recording the deed and paying the money. He also thanked Mr. John Vignone who worked on this. Mr. Hellen said there is still work to be done on the trail. He said he was going to ask Representative Jeff Roy for money for the parking. Mr. Hellen said they have formally closed on Franklin Ridge, and the financing is in place. He thanked all the lenders for being a part of that. He said he anticipates information sessions in the spring at the Senior Center. He said it is anticipated this about an 18-to-20-month project. He thanked the 250th Anniversary folks for getting together. He talked about the propane tank hearing and the fire chief and deputy fire chief answered residents' questions. He said some of the fears that people have may be unfounded. He said some people did not get their abutter notifications on the day they hoped. There hearing is continued to Monday at 3 PM. He gave kudos to the Farmers Market for another incredible year. He said regarding the questions about 444 East Central Street, he is not going to comment any further on this. He explained he has emailed Mr. Grella back. He said the only way the residents are going to find the answers to the questions that have been brought up is that the community just has to go through the process of finalizing the hearing, seeing what the decisions are, and going through whatever appeals and lawsuits that come out of that. He says he emails Mr. Grella every time he emails. He said 121 Grove Street had a denied LIP from the Town Council. They went to ZBA and got an approval and went to Mass Housing and got an approval. He said he believes to quell the questions and concerns is to go through the process and see the end of it. He said when the ZBA finishes their hearing, the decisions will be made, and most likely there will be appeals and lawsuits which will go on for one or more years. He said eventually DEP will get involved. He said he understands where people's emotions are on this, and we are just getting through act 1. There is more to come. He said this is the last meeting for this Town Council. He thanked Councilor Chandler, Councilor Hamblen, and Councilor Frongillo for their service and their dedication and support for the community.

SUBCOMMITTEE REPORTS:

- a. **Capital Budget Subcommittee.** ► None.
- b. **Economic Development Subcommittee.** ► Councilor Hamblen said the EDC met tonight. She said we voted to approve multiple minutes from multiple meetings. She said they had some comments for future agenda items. She said it was a really good meeting.
- c. **Joint Budget Subcommittee.** ► None.
- d. **Police Station Building Committee.** ► None.
- e. **GATRA Advisory Board.** ► Councilor Frongillo said GATRA did not meet. He has been the representative. He said the new Director of Planning and Community Development will be taking his

place as the GATRA representative. He said he and a team of high school students will meet with a GATRA administrator next week on some of their research regarding a fixed bus route in town.

FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS: ► None.

COUNCIL COMMENTS: ► Councilor Cormier-Leger thanked the Franklin Elks Riders and other donors. He was glad about the local family who is benefitting from the Habitat for Humanity Housing. The food pantry has put out an emergency need due to ending of SNAP benefits. He thanked the Interfaith Council and Representative Roy for the anti-Semitism panel they conducted last night at the high school. He thanked everyone for all the work they have done on the Town Council, and he is proud of the work these nine members have done. ► Councilor Chandler said he has been here six years and has been honored to serve the community. He thanked Mr. Hellen's department, the department heads, and the residents. ► Councilor Pellegrini talked about the food pantry and said to send a donation. She said on Facebook, people had been talking about Halloween and the Police Station event that we are not going to do. She said she put a challenge on Facebook that we can do something for Christmas. She said anyone who would like to help her they can put together a group and try to plan for the Common and Santa's arrival and a little parade. She said she already has four or five people who got in touch with her. She said she was pleased that Mr. Grella came forward. She said it seems like the state versus the town. She said we have to take a stand and show the people that we are not wimps. She said we can make a decision on what we can do. She said that is her opinion. She said she wishes we could vote to disband it and see what happens. She talked about the sign at Dacey Field and said the sign is terrible, and it was a waste of money. She said what are we showing the residents of Franklin. We are supposed to be watching our pennies. We have done away with programs in the school and town, and then we go and change the sign there. She said she thinks the money could have been used elsewhere. She thanked the Elks for their donations. She thanked Town Clerk Nancy Danello for her time coming to the meetings. She said we have to get people to come out to vote. She said she is thrilled about Franklin Ridge, the SNETT trail, and the Farmers Market. She noted the Town Council members who will not be coming back and thanked them for all they have done. She said she hopes she will still be here after the election; she would like to continue. ► Councilor Sheridan thanked all the Town Council members and said happy Halloween. ► Councilor Frongillo said there is a Planning Board candidate night tomorrow at 8:30 PM; the Zoom link is on Franklin Matters. All three candidates will be attending. The video will be available on YouTube. He reviewed his history of running for his first election and the letters he has written every year. He said he was going to read aloud an abridged version of his final Dear Neighbor letter and said a more complete version can be found in his newsletter and on social media. ► Councilor Hamblen said it has been a pleasure, and she thanked Chair Mercer, fellow Town Council members, town staff and departments, and boards and committees. She said everyone has to work together to get things done. She read aloud some of her list of items that have been accomplished and a thankful note she received from a resident. ► Councilor Jones said everything was said tonight. He said he thanks the full Town Council that is sitting here as they are a great team. He said everyone should be proud of all their accomplishments. He said this is by far one of the best jobs he has had in his life. He said we are here to vote and support 34,000 people in this community. This should never be about ourselves or individual groups. We make decisions for everybody in this community. He said Chair Mercer has brought a sense of pride to this Town Council. He thanked the department heads and staff for their hard work. ► Councilor Dellorco said pretty much everything has been said. He thanked the Town Council members and said it has been an honor to work with all of you. He thanked Mr. Hellen and all of the staff. He said we were here to do the greater good. He thanked Chair Mercer for all his help. ► Chair Mercer said he wanted to go back to the town administrator's report and the purchase of the SNETT trail. He said Mr. Hellen's team did a fantastic job of bringing those issues to closure in a short period of time. He thanked the Elks Riders and said the community continues to show support. He noted the food pantry is looking for donations, and this is the holiday time of year. He said anything anyone can do to help is appreciated. He said he wanted to give his remarks on this final meeting. He reflected and expressed his heartfelt gratitude to the citizens of the community. He said there was a true partnership of the community and the Town Council. He said to his colleagues on the Town Council that it has been a privilege to serve alongside you. He recognized the commitment, time, and thoughtful discussion each member brings.

He noted the town administrator, his team, and all department heads and thanked them for all they do for the Town of Franklin. He recognized and thanked the members of the Town Council who are not seeking reelection and what they have accomplished. He said it has been an honor to serve and he will continue to do so if reelected.

EXECUTIVE SESSION: ► None.

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

Meeting adjourned at 9:03 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Judith Lizardi
Recording Secretary