

**FRANKLIN TOWN COUNCIL
MINUTES OF MEETING
April 14, 2021**

A meeting of the Town Council was held on Wednesday, April 14, 2021, at the Municipal Building, 2nd Floor, Council Chambers, 355 East Central Street, Franklin, MA; residents could attend and participate via the Zoom platform. Councilors present: Andrew Bissanti, Brian Chandler, Robert Dellorco, Cobi Frongillo, Melanie Hamblen (via Zoom), Glenn Jones, Matthew Kelly, Thomas Mercer, Deborah Pellegrini. Councilors absent: None. Administrative personnel in attendance: Jamie Hellen, Town Administrator; Mark Cerel, Town Attorney (via Zoom); Chrissy Whelton, 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 that due to the continued concerns regarding the COVID-19 virus and Governor Baker's declared State of Emergency, we will be conducting a remote/virtual Town Council meeting for all public access and participation. The public will not be permitted to enter the building or participate in person. Only pre-approved participants on the meeting agenda will be allowed to enter the building and participate in person. In an effort to ensure citizen engagement and comply with open meeting law regulations, citizens will be able to dial into the meeting using the provided phone number, or citizens can participate by clicking on the link provided on the agenda. The provided link and phone number will be active for the duration of the meeting for citizens to ask questions/voice concerns. If residents are just interested in watching the meeting, it will also be live-streamed by Franklin TV and shown on Comcast Channel 11 and Verizon Channel 29. This meeting is being recorded by Franklin TV and may also be recorded by others. He stated that Councilor Hamblen would be participating remotely.

CITIZEN COMMENTS: ► Ms. Victoria Rios, 42 King Street, confirmed that residents could not comment on agenda items during Citizens Comments, but could comment on agenda items when discussed during the meeting. ► Mr. Dale Kurtz, Veterans Services Officer, stated that on Saturday, April 17, 2021, from 10 AM to 1 PM, the Boston VA will be conducting a COVID-19 vaccination clinic at the Franklin Senior Center. All veterans regardless of age and spouses and caregivers can attend this clinic. ► Ms. Jane Calloway-Tripp, 607 Maple Street, stated that she had spoken at a previous Town Council meeting regarding the stormwater fee and that it is not the right time to impose more fees on citizens. She stated that she was lied to by Town Administrator Jamie Hellen as she had asked if water bills were going to be raised and he said no, but they were. She stated that regarding the stormwater fees, residents should not be responsible for what mother nature drops upon us. She asked for the paper trail that states the DEP and EPA are saying that this fee must be done and demanding it be done right now. She stated that agendas are being changed so frequently, people do not know when something is being discussed. She stated that the residents' silence on this issue should not be taken as approval; it is that they do not know what is happening with regard to stormwater. She discussed that the proposed stormwater fee would include all impervious area for a property including, but not limited to, house roof, shed roof, driveway, gravel driveway, pool, patio, deck, which could add up to more than \$500 for a yearly fee. She discussed that in addition, property tax and water bills keep going up. She discussed that the Town should start working within the budget that they have. The citizens cannot afford all the fees and tax increases. ► Ms. Victoria Rios, 42 King Street, asked if at the vaccine distribution centers are the emergency use authorization forms provided to people as they provide very important information.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES: None.

PROCLAMATIONS/RECOGNITIONS: ► *Diane Daddario, MD.* ► Health Director Cathleen Liberty discussed the eight COVID-19 vaccine clinics for the Town. Fire Chief James McLaughlin and Ms. Liberty acknowledged Dr. Diane Daddario for her support for the vaccine clinics. ► Councilor Frongillo read aloud a proclamation honoring Dr. Daddario for volunteering on all eight COVID-19 vaccine clinics.

APPOINTMENTS: None.

HEARINGS: 7:10 PM. None.

LICENSE TRANSACTIONS: ► *Shaw's Supermarkets, Inc. d/b/a Shaw's, Change of Manager, 255 East Central Street, Franklin, MA 02038.* ► Councilor Jones read the license transaction. ► **MOTION to Approve** the request by Shaw's Supermarkets, Inc. d/b/a Shaw's, for a Change of Manager to Carl Verderber, Jr. by **Jones. SECOND** by **Kelly. Discussion:** ► Mr. Hellen stated this item is for a change of manager. ► Mr. Nick Zozula, Attorney on behalf of Shaw's Supermarkets, reviewed Mr. Verderber's background and experience. ► Mr. Verderber stated that he was looking forward to the position. ► **ROLL CALL VOTE: Bissanti-YES; Chandler-YES; Dellorco-YES; Frongillo-YES; Hamblen-YES; Jones-YES; Kelly-YES; Mercer-YES; Pellegrini-YES.** ► **VOTE: Yes-9, No-0, Absent-0.**

PRESENTATIONS/DISCUSSIONS: ► *Norfolk County Sheriff Patrick W. McDermott.* ► Norfolk County Sheriff Patrick W. McDermott provided his background, education, and career history. He reviewed the roll of the sheriff including the responsibilities and duties. He discussed the public safety programs that have been implemented to help citizens and communities. He discussed the TRIAD program to enhance the delivery of law enforcement services to seniors, and he reviewed the Are You OK program which is a free service that establishes a prearranged time for participants to receive a regular phone call inquiring about their welfare. He stated that they also focus on the at-risk populations including youth. He discussed the one-week youth leadership academy to be held at Dean College this summer for middle school children. He stated that his goal is to reach out to all elected officials in each community to ensure services are readily available to each town. ► Councilor Bissanti asked about women's incarceration. ► Sheriff McDermott stated that is being worked on. ► Councilor Jones noted the SAFE Coalition. ► Sheriff McDermott stated that he would like to be a resource. ► Councilor Dellorco stated that he would reach out to Sheriff McDermott regarding the SAFE Coalition. ► Councilor Chandler asked how a young person would apply to work for the Sheriff's department. ► Sheriff McDermott reviewed the process and suggested email is a good way to contact the office. ► Councilor Hamblen stated that she liked the Are You OK program and suggested the sign-up procedure should be on the Town website. ► Mr. Hellen congratulated Sheriff McDermott on his victory. He reviewed the work crew inmate program that works with the DPW. ► Sheriff McDermott encouraged towns to call to work with the inmate program. ► Chair Mercer thanked Sheriff McDermott for his presentation.

► **Other Post-Employment Benefits (OPEB) Actuarial Update - Dan Sherman.** ► Mr. Hellen stated that the Town's net liability has increased \$4.46 million from \$68,554,870 to \$73,019,673. ► Mr. Sherman reviewed his Post Retirement Benefits Actuarial Valuation of the Town of Franklin, June 30, 2020 Actuarial Valuation Report, GASB 74 & 75 report. He explained that a full valuation must be done every other year. In the off year, an update is done, which was provided to the Town Council members in their meeting packet. He discussed that during the year the Town's net position increased by about \$1 million, \$970,000 was put into the OPEB Trust, expenses were about \$33,000, and benefit payments were \$2.4 million. The total assets are up to \$6.8 million. He reviewed changes in the OPEB liability during FYE 2020. The June 30, 2019 Liability was \$74,261,856; June 30, 2020 Liability is \$79,806,924. He explained that the Plan Fiduciary Net Position as a percentage of the Total OPEB Liability is 8.5 percent which is up from last year. He reviewed net OPEB liability of water, sewer, and solid waste enterprise accounts calculated using the current trend rates as shown on page 5 of his provided report. He reviewed that the OPEB total Expense for FYE 2020 is approximately \$6.2 million. He noted that a full valuation is scheduled to be done next. ► Town Council members asked questions. ► Mr. Hellen stated that there is \$8.6 million in the Trust Fund currently. Additionally, that does not include the \$273,000 the Town Council authorized on April 7, 2021, nor does it include another proposed \$700,000 deposit in the FY22 Town Administrator budget. He noted the Town will have its next OPEB Trust meeting in June. ► Chair Mercer thanked Mr. Sherman for his presentation.

► **GATRA - Mark Sousa, Executive Director.** ► Mr. Hellen explained that this is the new leadership team at GATRA. He stated that they had a meeting with some seniors, Representative Roy, and residents who shared some concerns about ridership. ► Mr. Sousa stated that he started with GATRA last year a few weeks before COVID-19 hit. He stated they never stopped service during COVID-19; but they did cut back. However, as COVID-19 is hopefully leveling off, the drivers and other staff are still in place. He discussed a new software program for the residents of Franklin and surrounding towns; the program is very successful. ► Ms. Joanne LaFerrara explained that during COVID, they took away the fixed route bus in Franklin and opened it up to all Dial-A-Ride as a free service for essential needs. When it came time to bring back service, through a partnership with National Express, they are now doing a micro-transit service. There was a micro service transit service in Mansfield. It is an on-call service; it can be called on an app. The service will take Franklin residents to four towns. All the vehicles are accessible. She stated that this is a great service for a rural area. People can go on demand very inexpensively. She reviewed statistics on the ridership. ► Mr. Sousa stated that they would like to expand the program. He stated that this one-year pilot will give the data they need to go forward. He further explained the micro-transit program. ► Town Council members asked questions. ► Ms. LaFerrara, in response to questions, discussed communication and stated she could have a staff member go to the Senior Center to review the new service. She stated that it is the same vehicles and drivers, it is just a different software for booking the rides. ► Mr. Sousa stated the phone numbers are the same. He explained they are funded by FTA, and he reviewed the federal COVID funding they received. ► Ms. LaFerrara explained how residents can get to the Mansfield MBTA station. She explained that micro-transit is the name of the software, and it is like an Uber or Lyft. It can be called for on an app and paid for on an app. ► Mr. Sousa stated that because of COVID, they can only service one or two people in an eight-to-ten-person van. When COVID protocols end, they can adjust. ► Councilor Dellorco suggested putting the schedules on Franklin TV. ► Mr. Sousa reviewed what the federal COVID money was spent on. He noted every vehicle has protective barriers to protect the drivers. He discussed that they continue to bring people to Gillette for vaccines. ► Representative Jeff Roy asked questions. ► Ms. LaFerrara stated that the passes were grandfathered in and noted with the dispatch office. She explained that the person who was left without a ride encountered that situation because the vehicle software went down for a period of time. She stated that if a person needs to go to Boston on Monday or Wednesday when it is not scheduled for Boston, they will be taken to Boston for their appointment. She stated they will consider free fares to the Senior Center. ► Mr. Sousa stated that anyone can contact him directly on his cell phone if they have questions.

► **Downtown Commercial Zoning District & Commercial Zoning District 1 Parking requirements.** ► Mr. Hellen reviewed his letter to the Town Council dated April 9, 2021. He explained that as requested by several councilors at recent meetings, the Council will have a discussion regarding the current parking requirements in the Downtown Commercial Zoning District as well as the Commercial Zoning District 1. In addition, included in the Town Council's meeting packet is a memo from the Director of Planning and Community Development Bryan Taberner providing additional information about this topic worked on three years ago by the Town Council. He noted that having zero parking requirements in the district did not work well. Similarly, the requirement right now may be too high and unrealistic. He stated that also provided in the meeting packet is the bylaw that was passed in 2018. ► Councilor Bissanti stated that he reviewed the bylaws back to 1983. He noted there were improvements and drawbacks to the Downtown Commercial Zoning District. He stated that he would like the old C1 zone back to the center of town. He reviewed the old C1 requirements and parking. He stated that the current Downtown Commercial Zoning District requirements for parking may be too difficult for developers. ► Councilor Chandler discussed how he has always heard that there needs to be more parking in downtown. ► Mr. Hellen stated that zoning is very complicated, but very important. These issues are important to the quality of life in the Town. This issue is dealing with parcels of land and the requirement for parking for parcels for land being re-developed. ► Mr. Taberner stated that parking will always be an issue in a town or city, and it is a balance between what the Town believes is needed and what the developer believes is needed. The Planning Board can waive the requirement for parking; there can be negotiation. He stated that he believes there needs to be some kind of parking requirement. Even in transit-oriented developments, there is often a need for parking. If there is no requirement at all, then developers may come in and try to put in a building with no parking and then have

the Planning Board tell them that they do need parking. It would be better to let developers know that parking is needed to begin with. ► Councilor Pellegrini stated that she agreed with Councilor Bissanti. She remembers that there were no parking requirements for buildings years ago. ► Chair Mercer confirmed that the Town Council changed the parking requirements three years ago. ► Councilor Kelly stated that the Town's restaurants are going out of business downtown. He talked about the zoning restrictions and the available parking in downtown. He stated the Town has 89 spaces. He stated that if we entertain the idea of bringing restaurants to downtown, we will find the parking; if parking needs to be expanded, they could make a second or third floor parking garage. He would like to bring housing to the downtown area. ► Councilor Frongillo stated that he feels confident that a developer would put in the required parking than have to deal with the Planning Board. ► Councilor Dellorco agreed with Councilor Kelly. He stated that the downtown is dead. ► Councilor Bissanti said we are trying to bring back the center of Town; we are trying to make sure there are businesses in downtown. Developers are going to need the latitude of a zero-parking requirement. A residential mix is what is needed in the downtown. He stated the C1 zone needs to be moved back to the center of Town. ► Councilor Jones stated that he thinks they made a mistake when they approved the downtown parking requirement, and he thinks the parking restrictions should be removed. ► Councilor Hamblen stated that maybe the parking requirements are too restrictive. ► Chair Mercer told the Town Administrator that he has heard the consensus of the Town Council, and they would like to change some of the downtown parking restrictions. He requested the Town Administrator work with the Planning Department and bring it to EDC before it returns to the Town Council. ► Mr. Hellen confirmed the consensus was zero parking across the board. He confirmed there are 89 Town-owned parking spaces in the downtown. ► Mr. Cerel pointed out that the Town Council can do what they want with policy, but legally, if the parking requirement is completely removed, the Planning Board cannot impose a parking requirement unless there is some authority in the zoning for the Planning Board to do it.

SUBCOMMITTEE REPORTS:

- a. **Capital Budget Subcommittee.** ► None.
- b. **Budget Subcommittee.** ► Councilor Kelly stated they met with the departments on Monday evening. One of the items spoken about at length was the Davis Thayer property and what was the plan. The superintendent is not ready to declare it surplus until after the school year is over. They talked about \$3 million from the American Rescue Plan. He encouraged all citizens to watch the meetings.
- c. **Economic Development Subcommittee.** ► Councilor Hamblen stated that they met tonight before the Town Council meeting. They discussed the Community Planning Grant program and the four expressions of intent. They discussed the Nu-Style property. They will probably be meeting twice in May.

LEGISLATION FOR ACTION:

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

- a. **Resolution 21-22: Authorization for Intermunicipal Agreement with the Town of Foxborough for the Town of Foxborough to Provide Emergency Motor Vehicle Technician Services (Motion to Approve Resolution 21-22 - Majority Roll Call Vote).** ► Councilor Jones read the resolution. ► **MOTION to Approve** Resolution 21-22: Authorization for Intermunicipal Agreement with the Town of Foxborough for the Town of Foxborough to Provide Emergency Motor Vehicle Technician Services by **Dellorco. SECOND** by **Kelly. Discussion:** ► Mr. Hellen explained that not only will the Town be saving money, but we will be building a relationship with the Town of Foxborough. It is a very good opportunity for the Town. ► Fire Chief McLaughlin stated that with two new engines coming in this summer, this will be a great way to complete preventative and regular maintenance. He stated that currently they use private vendors for maintenance and repairs. ► Councilor Chandler asked why one of Franklin's DPW workers was not asked to become certified. ► Mr. Hellen stated that he has not heard it discussed in the past. ► Councilor Bissanti asked why more mechanics cannot be hired. ► Mr. Hellen stated that the return on investment for someone to become certified would have to be determined. ► Chair Mercer confirmed the Town will be saving money on this. ► **ROLL CALL VOTE: Bissanti-YES; Chandler-YES;**

Dellorco-YES; Frongillo-YES; Hamblen-YES; Jones-YES; Kelly-YES; Mercer-YES; Pellegrini-YES.
► VOTE: Yes-9, No-0, Absent-0.

TOWN ADMINISTRATOR'S REPORT: ► COVID-19 Update. ► Mr. Hellen stated that the budget will be released Friday, April 16, 2021. He stated that the Finance Committee hearings on the budget start on April 27, 28, 29 and May 4, 2021. He cautioned the community that the last few months have been dry with little rain; there is a level 2 drought. The Town is going back to water conservation measures. There will be a DPW notices about this going out. He stated that the drive through window at the Treasurer's office will be closed this Monday and Tuesday because they are doing brick work around the window. He stated that if anyone has any questions about the vaccine, there is information on the Town's website and all the links and updated information from the state. He stated that residents should contact the Board of Health with vaccine-related questions. He noted that the Commonwealth of Massachusetts is running all the vaccines. He offered to meet with Ms. Jane Calloway-Tripp to discuss stormwater concerns and additional fees. He stated that he will show her some of the information that the EPA is mandating on the Town. He received a grants report from the Finance Director; he stated that in 2021 to date, they have received \$1.948 million in state grants.

FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS: ► Councilor Frongillo stated that he is looking forward to further review of downtown zoning. ► Councilor Bissanti explained opportunity zoning and asked that it be brought up under future agenda items. ► Chair Mercer stated that Councilor Bissanti should bring this up at the EDC. ► Councilor Chandler asked if the police chief could do a use of force and training with tasers versus guns presentation.

COUNCIL COMMENTS: ► Councilor Hamblen thanked all tonight's presenters for their interesting presentations. She said great job to the staff for all the grants. ► Councilor Frongillo noted that Senior Coffee hours are tomorrow morning. He stated that the Franklin Bellingham Rail Trail Committee will hold their annual trail race virtually on May 22-31. This is their biggest fundraiser of the year. ► Councilor Bissanti said great job on the grants. He thanked Ms. Victoria Rios and Ms. Jane Calloway-Tripp for attending the Town Council meeting; residents' input is very important. ► Councilor Kelly noted that next week is school vacation week. He requested that Dean College be told that their students are not pushing the walk button, they are just walking across the street. ► Councilor Dellorco thanked all the presenters who attended tonight's meeting. ► Chair Mercer stated there was good discussion tonight.

EXECUTIVE SESSION: None.

ADJOURN: ► MOTION to Adjourn by Dellorco. SECOND by Kelly. No Discussion. ► ROLL CALL VOTE: Bissanti-YES; Chandler-YES; Dellorco-YES; Frongillo-YES; Hamblen-YES; Jones-YES; Kelly-YES; Mercer-YES; Pellegrini-YES. ► VOTE: Yes-9, No-0, Absent-0.

Meeting adjourned at 10:00 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Judith Lizardi
 Recording Secretary