

Town of Franklin

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OFFICE OF THE TOWN ADMINISTRATOR

Memorandum

October 30, 2020

To: Town Council
From: Jamie Hellen, Town Administrator
Chrissy Whelton, Assistant to the Town Administrator

Re: Town Council 2020-2021 Goals Update

I have attached a status update on the Goals set forth in January for the two years legislative session.

As you can see, the town departments and Administration have made substantial progress on these goals despite the pandemic. In fact, when I reviewed the list and saw how much was complete or close to complete, I couldn't believe it.

As the goals were approved 2 months prior to the pandemic, the staff also put a list of COVID-19 big picture accomplishments at the bottom. I would be remiss if I did not take this chance to express my deepest gratitude to every single member of the Town of Franklin staff (municipal and school). Their bravery, innovation, dedication and commitment to excellence has been one of the best professional experiences of my career. To date, the Town has done an incredible job managing COVID-19 for a community our size. The coming winter will present new challenges, but we have the BEST team of employees and I am certain everyone will continue to rise to the occasion during this challenging time.

I am happy to answer any questions you may have and look forward to the discussion.

**Town Council Meeting
2020 and 2021 Goals
Town Council Workshop
January 8, 2020**

Fiscal

- Approval of Annual Capital Improvement Plan -- FY20 and FY21
 - Status: Approved [FY20 Capital Plan](#). FY21 “On Hold” pending financial outlook. To be discussed November 18th at TC meeting.
- Approval of a balanced Operating Budget -- FY21 and FY22
 - Status: Approved FY21 budget. Update at November 18th TC meeting. The Town will not need to amend its approved FY21 budget form June.
- Establish Ad Hoc Subcommittee to evaluate stormwater fee analysis
 - Status: Completed. Waiting time for presentation analysis to the full Council.
- Determine Water rate increase for FY20/FY21, notably for the water treatment plant and wells loan package
 - Status: Complete. Approved water rates.
- Determine Sewer rate increase, if needed, for FY20/FY21
 - Status: Sewer rate increase not needed due to the savings and efficiencies at the Charles River Pollution Control District.
- Seek new borrowing capacity for municipal and school building capital improvements and sidewalks
 - Status: Complete. \$15 million capital authorization.
- Discussion on the Community Preservation Act
 - Status: Complete. On November 3rd ballot.
- Discussion on Trash & Recycling account
 - Status: Not needed at this time. Likely Spring 2021 review.
- Continue to ask for OPEB solutions with state officials
 - Status: Discuss at a future legislative update. Difficult to see how this is a priority in the near future for state leaders.
- Explore new revenue options, generally
 - Status: Always on the look, never done looking for ways to
 - The Town Administrator negotiated 3 new solar tax agreements worth approximately \$200,000 in new revenue in 2021/2022. Also negotiated 800 households to get a 15% reduced electricity bill if they sign up for the solar credits.
 - The Town Administrator worked with the Planning Board to approve two cannabis retail stores will generate new revenues in 2021/2022.

- Revised ambulance rate chart to help fund four new paramedics.

Economic Development – To the EDC

- Revise Solar Bylaw in Residential districts
 - Status: Complete.
- Continue Lot Line “Clean ups” around town
 - Status: Completed 4 lot line clean ups. Two more are in process. Almost complete with larger proposals. 2021 will see us get into parcel specific lot line changes.
- Present Economic Profile to the Town Council
 - EDC to evaluate or implement ideas based off of the recommendations in the final report
 - Status: Complete/In progress. Report complete and presented. EDC implementing recommendations. 5 Listening business sessions.
- Nu-Style (Grove Street) options
 - Status: Reviewing state and federal grant options. Preparing a new procurement strategy.
- Zoning Changes
 - Master Plan Update before the Council -- Expected June/July 2020
 - Status: Complete.
 - Draft and Adopt state Affordable Housing Plan
 - Status: In progress. Municipal Affordable Housing Trust had its first meeting in 6 months recently and looks to have them monthly to get back on track.
 - Inclusionary Zoning bylaw proposal to stabilize the Town’s Affordable Housing Inventory with the state to ensure we maintain 10% affordable housing stock and preserving local zoning
 - Status: Postponed as COVID-19 hit and real estate market seems uncertain at the moment.
 - Residential 5 and C-1 density
 - Status: See Inclusionary Zoning above.
 - The Franklin Crossing Neighborhood District rezone
 - Status: No progress.
- Ferrara Parking Lot Lease for continued commuter rail and free municipal parking in downtown
 - Status: Complete.
- Review and cleanup Marijuana Overlay District
 - Status: No progress; not the right time to review. Will consider after the market settles. EDC prioritized this later in the session.
- MBTA parking Lot in Downtown

- Status: No progress.

Facilities

- Approve borrowing authorization for 5-year facilities capital needs
 - Status: Complete. \$15 million capital authorization.
- Future of Old South Meeting House
 - Status: Completed study. Cost to rehab is approx \$1.1 million.
- Review Police Station space – Look to FY21 Capital Plan to invest in the \$150,000 study and Council discussion
 - Status: On hold due to capital plan on hold and drop in free cash revenue.
- Transfer/Recycling Center improvements when land transfer complete
 - Status: Completed a new shed for staff. Finalizing land swap. See below.
- Apply for Cultural Facilities Fund grant to restore Historical Museum cupola and refurbish Museum basement with proper preservation storage
 - Status: Archivist looking to apply in January 2021.
- **Note:** COVID-19 has also afforded our Facilities staff some additional time to clean the backlog of capital projects, including some larger projects:
 - Completed the Parmenter School improvements, including canopy;
 - Completed the Keller-Sullivan HVAC (we added in UVGI, too);
 - Completed the security improvements at HMMS;
 - Made significant progress on the Public Safety fiber transition; and
 - Made progress on the HMMS drainage issues.

DPW

- Implement StormWater Plan Division -- Establish Utility bylaw, establish Ad Hoc committee and evaluate stormwater fee & credit system
 - Status: Ad Hoc Stormwater committee completed its work. Discussion at TC meeting later in Winter.
- Prioritize Road Funding annual appropriation in the operating budget
 - Prioritize \$650,000 line item town budget, per Town fiscal Policy
 - Status: On hold. Budget.
- Continue Implementing the Water Main 5-year plan
 - Status: Completed FY20 water main projects, notably Lincoln Street.
- Construct Water Treatment Plant & Wells 3&6. FY20 will require a water rate hike to pay for the loans
 - Status: Treatment plants and wells are making huge progress; on budget and on schedule.
- Present future options for Beaver Street interceptor

- Status: Completed a feasibility study with 3 alternatives. The furthest the Town has even made on this project. Next steps are to cost out the options and present to the TC in the winter.
- Continue sewer system infrastructure improvements
 - Status: On hold during COVID-19 any new expenditures.
- Fund sidewalk plan for Beaver Street/Washington Streets -- find a funding source
 - Status:
 - Sidewalk on Beaver Street is funded for a portion.
 - Washington Street on hold -- need funding source.
- Consider a long-range sidewalk master plan.
 - Status: On hold.
- **Note:** Grove Street/Washington Street - Approval of an authorization to reconstruct the intersection of Grove Street and Washington Street with a new light, bike lanes, new pavement and so forth. Town applied for a \$2.25 MassWorks grant. Also have a dedicated revenue source to pay for this project if not awarded the grant. Design to begin in early 2021.

Recreation/Open Space

- Continue to invest free cash into our parks and fields each year.
 - Beaver Street Course and Nason Street Tot lot are priorities for 2020-21
 - Status: Capital investments on hold.
 - Status: It is important to note the generous donation and construction of the new courts at Fletcher Field were built during this pandemic.
- Purchase Open Space as may be available
 - Status: None available to date to buy.
 - I am talking to a landowner regarding 50+ acres of riverfront to the Charles River under an APR.
 - The Town Council and Town Administration have more than doubled the cash in the Open Space Stabilization front.
 - The Town is still far behind on open space investments.
- Finalize and begin to implement pedestrian Franklin Greenway Network --
 - Approve Complete Streets Policy, develop and finalize plan
 - Status: Staff have a Complete Streets policy draft. Future TC meeting in Winter.
- Take over Concerts on the Common in 2020 and move to Friday nights and add family movie nights on the Common
 - Status: Complete. We hope to add more to this program post-COVID-19.
- Continue to implement 2016 Open space/recreation plan
 - Status: See notes above.
- Continue supporting SNETT trail development and other trail projects

- 2020 Prospect Street tunnel will be built by the state
- Status: Complete. Tunnel is now complete!
- Continue on Delcarte improvements
 - remediate weed and fish issues, etc
 - complete capital improvements at Delcarte
 - Status: 2021 is hopefully the last round of treatments and then will reevaluate. 2020 treatments were still applied despite COVID-19.

Community – Generally

- Continue to accept Public Ways
 - Status: We have two more street acceptances prepared. Awaiting guidance from the Registry of Deeds. Hopefully start the process in January 2021.
- Implement “Green Community goals” - apply for competitive grants in 2020
 - Status: Complete. Received a grant for electric vehicles and electric vehicle charging stations at Municipal Building and Library.
- Revise Demolition delay bylaw with Historical Commission and Building Commissioner
 - Status: On hold. 2021 hopefully.
- Implement “Master Plan” recommendations at the Historical Museum
 - Status: Exhibits subcommittee was established prior to COVID-19.
 - The Jim Johnson “Great Room” should be completed and installed within a few weeks.
- Begin process to decommission Spring Street from 140 to the new solar field on Spring Street through the state park with Town Attorney
 - Status: 2021.
- Successful Cable contracts negotiation with Comcast -- expires October 2020
 - Status: In progress. Chrissy and I are finishing negotiations and hope to have an agreement before the Council in December.
- Finalize 3-year Collective Bargaining cycle - Spring of 2020
 - Status: All contracts are complete and successful.
- 5G bylaw
 - Status: In progress. Meeting with Special Cable Counsel to review draft bylaw next month. We hope to have a proposal in early 2021.
- Implement Electric Aggregation, when appropriate -- last bid December 2019
 - Status: Complete. Town received a .107 rate for 3 years and with 100% renewable wind energy to continue our commitment to green energy, vehicle savings residents on their electricity costs. The current rate is 1 ½ cents/kw less than the active national grid rate.

Civic Engagement (NEW)

- Research the potential for a “Citizen’s Academy” course for citizens
 - Status: On Hold.
- Research the ICMA Citizen Satisfaction Survey through the National Citizen Survey and National Research Council
 - Status: On hold.
- Continue to update and reinvent the Town website, social media accounts and consider implementing a TOF podcast (Soundcloud/ Anchor)
 - Status: Ongoing and in progress. Increased media, social media and communications presence with a Town Instagram acct, Historical Museum Instagram acct, and a series of interviews with the Town Administrator on Anchor.
 - “Think Franklin First” Business campaign will begin Fall 2020.
- Expand E-Permitting and online payment options
 - Status: Complete. Added Board of Health and added new features to address COVID-19 challenges (eg outdoor licensing)

Presentations/Discussions (tentatively/confirmed scheduled dates)

- Community Preservation Act - February 5 (scheduled) COMPLETE
- Housing Authority w/ Lisa Audette - February 12th (confirmed) COMPLETE
- Transitional Assistance - February 12th (confirmed) COMPLETE
- Economic Profile Study -- March/April (pending delivery of final report) COMPLETE
- MECC Regional Dispatch -- May 6th 2020 (confirmed) COMPLETE
- Department Presentations: Land Use & Permitting Departments -- June 2020 COMPLETE
- Master Plan midway Update -- June/July 2020 COMPLETE
- Charter Review Discussion - Late 2020 ON HOLD 2021

Thoughts/questions/ideas from Town Councilors

- Approve Snow Removal bylaw on sidewalks
 - Status: Complete. Added Board of Health and added new features to address COVID-19 challenges (eg outdoor licensing)
- Animal Control Presentation (presentations & discussions) COMPLETE
- Evaluate Fire Department substation and training center (Facilities) ON HOLD
- Fisher Street superfund site (community- generally)
 - Status: EPA Continues to clean up the site. Suspended as of COVID-19.
- Recycling Center Land Swap at Beaver Street (DPW)

- **Status: In progress. We have a proposed solution. Awaiting time to do a full legal review. Expected completion early 2021.**
- Review BioTechnology Bylaw (EDC) **ON HOLD. Later EDC priority.**
- Survey DPW to see if we have new well opportunities (DPW) **No progress.**
- EV Charging Stations (Facilities) **COMPLETE**
- Revise Over 55 Overlay, including open space requirement (EDC) **No progress**
- Monitor MBTA Land in Franklin Crossing & rail bed line to SNETT (Open Space)
 - **Status: On going.**
- No Place for Hate Resolution Pledge (Community) **COMPLETE**
- Monitor Mixed Innovation Business District (EDC) In progress.
- Emergency Management Policy Discussion (Presentations/Discussion) **Power Outage conversation complete. Future presentation from Fire Chief.**
- Review and Prioritize Historical Commission List of Historic Homes (Community) **No progress**
- Vehicles & Procurement Presentation & Discussion (Finance) **COMPLETE**
- Analyze Food requirement and closing hours for restaurants (EDC) **On hold**

COVID-19

And if this was not enough progress, I have added in a COVID-19 section as this was not anticipated when the goals were approved:

- Consistently ranked as one of the lowest infection rates for cities and towns above 30,000 population.
- To date, the Town staff have been very safe and have not had a large cluster affect town services, town buildings, programs employees or citizens. The Town's staff have been very safe and committed to keeping everyone safe.
- Received approximately \$ 2.4 million in federal grant money (CARES Act, FEMA) and have applied for an additional 2.1 million in federal grant money.
 - 4,000 new Chromebooks.
 - All PPE has been paid by the federal government.
 - Installing cutting edge UVGI (ultraviolet technology) on the Municipal Building and High School starting this week. Phase 2 bids are in for the campus schools, Library, Senior Center; expected to be done by December 31st. 2021 will see us work to finance and complete the remaining buildings in Town with UVGI.
 - Purchasing special air purifier units for remaining schools and classrooms.
- Received \$90,000 in Micro-enterprise competitive grant funds for Small Businesses in Franklin with 5 or less employees to alleviate some of the burden the COVID pandemic has brought to their business.

- Successful implementation of the Outdoor Dining Licensing for many restaurants in town.
- Implementing a 25% fee reduction for local restaurants in 2021.
- Successful retrofit of the Council Chambers for in person meetings with Franklin TV. Franklin is now a model on how to conduct in person meetings.
- Successful recreation department supervised summer programs
- Online and in person innovative Senior Center outreach and programs
- Comprehensive social media and website portal for COVID-19 information for citizens and staff.
- Exceptional customer service for citizens and businesses navigating COVID-19.