

**FRANKLIN TOWN COUNCIL
MINUTES OF MEETING
September 20, 2023**

A meeting of the Town Council was held on Wednesday, September 20, 2023, 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.

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

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

CITIZEN COMMENTS: ► Town Clerk Nancy Danello discussed the two upcoming elections. She stated that the Tri-County election for the construction of a new school is on October 24. The election is to be held at the Franklin High School from 12 PM to 8 PM. She explained that this election is not precinct specific. She stated that Tri-County will be sending out notices to the public regarding the election; they will also be at the Harvest Festival. She stated that information is available on the Town's website. She discussed the November 7 election at the Franklin High School from 6 AM to 8 PM. She said that vote by mail and early voting are options. She discussed that the Town Clerk's office will be having extended hours. She stressed that they are running two different elections at the same time; the envelopes will be clearly marked. She requested that people put the correct ballot in the correct envelope and noted that ballot envelopes must be signed by the voter.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES: ► *August 16, 2023.* ► **MOTION to Approve** the August 16, 2023 meeting minutes by **Dellorco. SECOND** by **Jones. No discussion.** ► **VOTE: Yes-9, No-0, Absent-0.**

PROCLAMATIONS/RECOGNITIONS: **None.**

APPOINTMENTS: ► *Council on Aging: Collette Ferguson.* ► **MOTION to Ratify** the appointment by the Town Administrator of Colette Ferguson to serve as a Member of the Council on Aging with term expiration June 30, 2026 by **Jones. SECOND** by **Dellorco. Discussion:** ► Mr. Hellen stated that the Council on Aging recommended Ms. Ferguson. ► Chair Mercer thanked Ms. Ferguson for volunteering. ► **VOTE: Yes-9, No-0, Absent-0.**

► *Finance Committee: Heather Sanscoucy.* ► **MOTION to Ratify** the appointment by the Town Administrator of Heather Sanscoucy to serve as a Member of the Finance Committee with term expiration June 30, 2025 by **Jones. SECOND** by **Dellorco. Discussion:** ► Mr. Hellen stated that he had the same comments as for the previous appointee. ► Councilor Jones thanked Ms. Sanscoucy for volunteering. ► Councilor Cormier-Leger stated that he endorsed this candidate. ► **VOTE: Yes-9, No-0, Absent-0.**

► *Municipal Affordable Housing Trust: Kimberly Mu-Chow.* ► **MOTION to Ratify** the appointment by the Town Administrator of Kimberly Mu-Chow to serve as a Member of the Municipal Affordable Housing Trust with term expiration June 30, 2024 by **Jones. SECOND** by **Dellorco. Discussion:** ► Mr.

Hellen stated that he had the same comments as for the previous appointees. ► **VOTE: Yes-9, No-0, Absent-0.**

HEARINGS – 7:00 PM: None.

LICENSE TRANSACTIONS: None.

PRESENTATIONS/DISCUSSIONS: ► **Presentation: Franklin Elks Riders Donation to Veterans' Services Department (Legislation for Action #9a).** ► Veterans Services Officer Shannon Nisbett and Veterans Services Assistant Debra Martin addressed the Town Council. ► President of the Elks Riders Rich Gately, alongside other members of the Elks Riders, stated they had a very successful ride this year and noted they have 32 members. He stated they will offer \$1,000 to the Veterans Gift Fund. ► Ms. Nisbett thanked the Elks Riders for their generous support and all they do for the veterans.

► **Presentation: Franklin Elks Bingo Donation to Veterans' Services Department (Legislation for Action #9a).** ► Mr. Mark Ellis of the Franklin Elks stated that they try to do a lot for the community. He said they are here tonight on behalf of their members and officers. He thanked the 25 people who work the bingo every Wednesday night so they can do donations like this. He presented to the Town Council a \$10,000 check for the Veterans Gift Fund. ► Ms. Nisbett expressed gratitude to the Franklin Elks Club Bingo for the generous donation. She stated that they provide continuous support to the veterans. She said the funds will be used to positively impact the lives of veterans.

LEGISLATION FOR ACTION:

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

- a. **Resolution 23-53: Gift Acceptance - Veterans' Services Department (Motion to Approve Resolution 23-53 - Majority Vote).** ► Councilor Jones read the resolution. ► **MOTION to Approve Resolution 23-53: Gift Acceptance - Veterans' Services Department of \$11,000 by Dellorco. SECOND by Hamblen. Discussion:** ► Mr. Hellen said thank you. ► Councilor Jones said thank you to the Elks for the donation. ► Councilor Dellorco said that he thanked his brother Elks for the great work they do all year long. ► Chair Mercer said he appreciates all the Elks do for the community and the veterans. ► **VOTE: Yes-9, No-0, Absent-0.**

PRESENTATIONS/DISCUSSIONS (continued): ► **Discussion: Town Council Goals Update.** ► Mr. Hellen stated that he hopes the goals speak for themselves. He said that provided in the meeting packet is a document regarding the goals that the Town Council and Town Administration set. He said that the message to the community is that almost all the goals got completed. He said that he cannot say enough about the entire Town staff about their dedication and work ethic. He said this is a team effort. He said the achievement of the goals showcases the difference between Franklin and other communities. He said everyone works very collaboratively together. ► Chair Mercer reviewed the process of how and when the goals are set. He noted that in January 2024, the new Town Council will sit down and create goals for the next two years. ► Councilor Jones stated that there are so many things on the list of goals that have been completed in a timely and efficient fashion. ► Councilor Cormier-Leger said that he echoed the other councilors. He said this list shows that things can get done and people can work together and make a community better. ► Councilor Chandler said that everyone is very proud of this list. He discussed that the Town received more than \$6 million in federal funding, so we were able to do a lot more for this goals session. ► Councilor Hamblen said this is her favorite time of year where she can sit back and look at what they have done; it is amazing what they can achieve. She noted that it is very good that Director of Planning and Community Development Bryan Taberner got a grant to work on the NuStyle situation. ► Councilor Frongillo said that he has pride for how much they have accomplished. He said that he

wanted to point out some things that he will be keeping his eye on including Franklin for All and Housing Production Plan, complete streets and expanding biking trails, trail maintenance plan, solid waste master plan, and net zero plan. ► Councilor Dellorco said that he wanted to echo everyone else's comments, and he thanked the staff and his fellow councilors. ► Chair Mercer said that he was proud of what they were able to accomplish over the past two years. He said there were so many things. He suggested that all members of the community go on the website and pull up the goals that they set and look and see what has been accomplished by the sitting Town Council, administration, and department heads.

LEGISLATION FOR ACTION (continued):

- b. Resolution 23-54: Ambulance Transfer & Appropriation (Motion to Approve Resolution 23-54 - Majority Vote).** ► Councilor Jones read the resolution. ► **MOTION to Approve Resolution 23-54: Ambulance Transfer & Appropriation by Dellorco. SECOND by Hamblen. Discussion:** ► Mr. Hellen reviewed that this resolution will appropriate \$406,223 from the Receipts Reserved for Appropriation Ambulance Fund to pay for the replacement ambulance. The order has been placed for months, but with rising costs, we need to assure the company the funds are there to not result in inflationary costs to the vehicle. He said that if an order was placed today, an ambulance would be 34 months before delivery. It is critical to get this done to save funds from going up. ► Fire Chief James McLaughlin said a year ago we penciled our name to the vehicle with no obligation and the vehicle would be ready in 18 months; one year later they say the vehicle will be ready in 22 months. He said the truck will be ready in July 2024 which will replace a truck that is three years old and has approximately 90,000 miles. He said every three years they like to do that rotation with the front-line trucks. He said if this item is passed, they can go under contract with the vendor. ► Councilor Dellorco stated that he ordered a vehicle in his job, and it will not be coming for three years. So, it is important to get this item signed. ► Councilor Jones asked if there is any additional staffing or training for this. ► Chief McLaughlin said no. ► **VOTE: Yes-9, No-0, Absent-0.**
- c. Resolution 23-55: Authorizing the Placement of a Debt Exclusion Ballot Question Relating to the Town's Allocable Share of Debt Service on Debt of the Tri-County Regional Vocational Technical School District on the Ballot for the Town Election to be Held on November 7, 2023 (Motion to Approve Resolution 23-55 - Majority Vote).** ► Councilor Jones read the resolution. ► **MOTION to Approve Resolution 23-55: Authorizing the Placement of a Debt Exclusion Ballot Question Relating to the Town's Allocable Share of Debt Service on Debt of the Tri-County Regional Vocational Technical School District on the Ballot for the Town Election to be Held on November 7, 2023 by Dellorco. SECOND by Hamblen. Discussion:** ► Mr. Hellen reviewed that he is asking the Town Council to approve Resolution 23-55 which will formally put the funding mechanism for the Tri-County School on the ballot on the November 7 local election. The district-wide authorization vote will be October 24. He stated that the MSBA approved the Tri-County building project and that \$90 million of the full cost will be paid for by the state. The October 24 vote is simply saying that we want it. Each individual community will have to finance the project themselves. He noted that of the 11 communities, there are many financing strategies. He stated that Franklin is the second largest driver of the students there and the host community of the school. He said from the financial perspective, with 30-year borrowing estimated at 4 percent, if a person's house is appraised at \$500,000, the cost on average is about \$148 per household per year. He discussed that the payments could go up or down a little every year based on the enrollments. ► Chair Mercer asked Mr. Hellen to explain that since the vote has not happened yet, why are we voting on the financing. ► Mr. Hellen said there are two reasons. He said the debt exclusion would stay in perpetuity until the project got approved. He said that he is being honest that the building is needed. He said even if the district vote was not approved this October, he would suspect that the school would come back again at another time. He stated that the community is engaged right now, and they tried to work with the state. He said why wait three years to deal with this issue. He discussed that if you do not raise the revenue to

pay for the project, then that means on an annual basis of about \$2.1 million will be spent out of the town budget to pay for the project. ► Chair Mercer explained that if the school did not pass and the funding did pass, the funding can be used for nothing but building Tri-County a new school.

► Councilor Jones asked for clarification regarding the 3 percent allocated for capital projects. ► Mr. Hellen said that this preserves that money; if it does not pass, the sum of that capital money may have to go to pay for the bond on this in three or four years. ► Councilor Jones said he is in favor of making improvements to the Tri-County School. He said that it is important to get students back into the trades. ► Councilor Dellorco said he was in agreement with Councilor Jones. ► Councilor Cormier-Leger said he wanted to show his complete support for the project. He said that people need to understand that a debt exclusion is for a specific project, and it is different than an override.

► **VOTE: Yes-9, No-0, Absent-0.**

- d. ***Resolution 23-56: A Resolution Adopting the Town of Franklin 2023 Open Space and Recreation Plan (Motion to Approve Resolution 23-56 - Majority Vote).*** ► Councilor Jones read the resolution. ► **MOTION to Approve** Resolution 23-56: A Resolution Adopting the Town of Franklin 2023 Open Space and Recreation Plan by **Dellorco. SECOND by Hamblen. Discussion:** ► Mr. Hellen reviewed that this resolution will allow the staff to forward the Open Space and Recreation Plan to the Commonwealth for their review. Similar to the Housing Production Plan, the state must approve the plan. He explained that this is one of the reasons that the conservation agent position went from part time to full time. He said that this plan takes Franklin to 2030 and beyond. ► Conservation Agent Breeka Li Goodlander narrated a slideshow presentation. She read aloud the slides including the purpose which she said is a tool through which a community plans for the future of its conservation and recreation resources. She said it is a way to connect with residents about local conservation and recreation issues. She reviewed that the process for this included focus group meetings, public comment, and citizen participation questionnaire. She said she is seeking a review letter or vote from Town Council. She reviewed the five main identified goals through this process. She said she thanked all those who worked together on this. ► Town Council members asked questions, made comments, and thanked Ms. Goodlander and the Conservation Commission for their hard work. ► In response, Ms. Goodlander said that the five goals are further broken out into many objectives. She said there were different species of trees that were planted in DelCorte in the open recreation area, and they all have different bloom times and habitat values. She explained that for Maple Hill and for all the other conservation areas, it is a professional goal of hers to put stewardship plans on all of the properties. She explained that the stewardship plans are 10-year plans that are paid for by DCR for municipalities to hire an arborist to come out to identify the health of the stand/forest, history of the stand/forest, and even history of the property to help identify goals for those properties that grant funding can be received for. She said that the open space plan and these plans coincide quite well. She provided examples of some of the forest stewardship plans and grants that she is looking at. ► **VOTE: Yes-9, No-0, Absent-0.**

TOWN ADMINISTRATOR'S REPORT: ► ***Migrant Housing Update.*** ► Mr. Hellen said that the National Guard is onsite during the daytime hours. He said their responsibilities are not public safety; their responsibility is really just helping out any way they can within their training. He said they are still frustrated that the rapid response team and other state agencies have not been onsite at all. He said that the Town of Franklin has a community that has a strong woven fabric between the Town staff, elected officials, and non-profits. He said that the situation over there is very stable. He said there are about 35 rooms occupied with about 100 people. He said there are 30 school-age children. He said that he was over there. He said the Board of Health staff have been great. He said the hotel manager and hotel staff have been great to keep the site tidy and orderly. He said that they have started weekly meetings with the groups he thinks can have an impact and address the needs and actually what people need right now. He explained that the Franklin Food Pantry has already been onsite. He said that the food that the state has provided is not really the food that is needed. He said it is generally microwaveable meals. He said that

the SAFE Coalition is helping. He thanked the Library staff for providing books and some programs. He thanked the YMCA and the Interfaith Coalition. He noted that Random Smile Project does not have the capacity to assist at the level they would like to right now. He thanked the School Department for their work at the site and getting the kids to school. He stated that this community has come together to address this issue, and we should be grateful, thankful, and proud. He thanked the residents in town for paying attention to the news and updates. He said that things are stable over there, and he continues to speak to the state. ► ***Demolition Delay Bylaw Report.*** ► ***Decommission Spring Street Report.*** ► Mr. Hellen said these were two goals for this year. He said that the Historical Commission has been asking for years for a review of the Demolition Delay Bylaw. The bylaw was reviewed and all came to the consensus that the bylaw is working very well. He said the Historical Commission will have some discussions about when to start those demo delays in terms of the year. He said that the Decommission of Spring Street is very interesting. He said that Spring Street is a public way. He said that the goal was to give better access to Franklin State Forest and to the open space. He stated that they are looking at what if they could create a trail head along Spring Street through the state forest. He said there is an opportunity to connect with the YMCA at Forge Park. He said they will work with DCR and the state forest folks to see if there is any way to collaborate on enhancing the trail and the road on the public way. ► Chair Mercer clarified that that there is only one or two National Guard persons at the site for a few hours a day, not trucks and tanks. ► Town Council members asked questions and made comments. ► Mr. Hellen said that like with other emergencies, there is a lot of work to go, but they are trying week by week as a team to try to chip away at it. He thanked the hotel staff. He said they were told that by October 1, the entire hotel will be filled. He said that in response to residents wanting to drop of winter clothing, they need to evaluate the needs, and they will be able to get messaging out to the public. He explained that there are about 30 school children spread across all grades. ► Councilor Pellegri asked about birth certificates and vaccination papers. ► Mr. Hellen said that he does not know about birth certificates; he said the Superintendent of Schools is handling all of those issues just like they would for any other child who moved to Franklin. He said that if anyone has any questions regarding school-related issues, he encourages everyone to email the school administration. ► Councilor Chandler discussed the cost to educate a student is about \$15,000 per student and discussed what if there were 100 children. ► Mr. Hellen said the state has already approved \$104 a day per child for reimbursement which is about \$17,000 to \$18,000 per child for a school year. He said the questions from local officials is when will that come in and what are the requirements. He said they need to give the state some time to work through this. He noted that some other communities are dealing with more than Franklin. ► Chair Mercer discussed if one or more students need special instruction of some kind and where does that money come from. He said that number scares him more than anything as it can be a very large number. He said the only answer he has received to date is that there may be a \$1,000 adjustment to that \$104, but that is not definitive. He said one of the bigger questions is when are we going to get it and no one can give us that answer. He said we need to give the state some time to go through all of this, and at some point, hopefully, we will get the answers.

SUBCOMMITTEE REPORTS:

- a. **Capital Budget Subcommittee. None.**
- b. **Economic Development Subcommittee. None.**
- c. **Budget Subcommittee. None.**
- d. **Master Plan Update Committee.** ► Councilor Jones said they met on September 13 in regard to the upcoming Harvest Festival. He said they will have a booth at the event. He said they will be revealing the new logo and new slogan. He said their subcommittees are meeting, and they are waiting for more information from BETA. He said the next meeting is September 27.
- e. **Davis-Thayer Building Reuse Advisory Committee.** ► Councilor Pellegri stated they had a meeting last night. She said they had on their agenda police, recreation, and cultural. She said the police chief said he was not interested in the school and did not think it was large enough. She explained the thought of keeping the current police station and having an annex. She said the recreation department liked the idea of using the school, but it may be too large. She said there was a thought for them to use

what they have and additional space at the school. She said a lot of good ideas are coming forward. She said that representatives were there and one said he did not see a police department going into that building. She said this will be in the meeting minutes. ► Mr. Hellen confirmed two open houses on October 20 from 2 PM to 5 PM and on October 21 from 10 AM to 2 PM for people to look at the building. He noted there is no elevator and stairs only. ► Councilor Pellegri stated that there was a large discussion on cleaning out the school. She said there might be a lot of people out there that would want some of the desks.

f. **Police Station Building Committee. None.**

g. **GATRA Advisory Board.** ► Councilor Frongillo said they met today, and it was a quick meeting. He said there was a packet telling Advisory Board members what their role is and some basic information about GATRA. He said he thinks this will help with the sustainability of the organization.

FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS: ► Councilor Frongillo stated that he wanted to revisit the flag policy conversation so it does not fall off the map in whatever form that should take. ► Councilor Cormier-Leger said that he wanted to second the flag issue. ► Councilor Pellegri asked for a report about what is going on and where we stand on the old museum, the Brick School, and the Meeting House. ► Mr. Hellen said the cupola is not scheduled to get to work until next spring at the earliest. He stated that the community will be invited for a ribbon cutting for the Brick School hopefully very soon; the exterior is done, the DPW is working on the landscaping, and there are a few punch-list items to be done. He said he will get back with Councilor Pellegri after the meeting regarding the museum. ► Councilor Pellegri asked why the cupola was taking so long. ► Mr. Hellen said there are so many other items to do in town; he said it will get done.

COUNCIL COMMENTS: ► Councilor Cormier-Leger thanked everyone from the Elks for the amazing donations. He discussed a good meeting with the SAFE Coalition. He explained they received a grant from Rockland Trust to do some preventive work to help LGBT youth in Franklin before they reach the point of substance abuse. He discussed that he thinks this evolves into their willingness to host a community of providers in that space. He stated they talked a lot about that other groups were doing work to help LGBT kids, LGBT adults, and LGBT seniors, and rather than duplicating services, let's get everyone together. He thanked everyone who is handling this migrant situation because it is not easy; everyone involved is to be commended. ► Councilor Chandler discussed that the U.S. Senate today took away their dress code; he said he does not really agree with that. ► Councilor Pellegri said she agreed with Councilor Chandler. ► Councilor Sheridan said this was a good meeting with the Elks, the open space, and coming together for the migrants. ► Councilor Frongillo said when the Elks care for the veterans and provide their donations to the veterans, that is a special moment. He said there are office hours at the Senior Center tomorrow at 8:30 AM; everyone is welcome. He stated the Harvest Festival is next Saturday from 12 PM to 5 PM. He discussed that the SAFE Coalition is helping the migrants. He noted Franklin Area Moms and other groups have been working together to help the migrants. He suggested that if anyone wants to help, they should check with the SAFE Coalition. He thanked The Black Box for the Volunteer Fair last Wednesday.

► Councilor Hamblen said she echoed all the sentiments that have been mentioned. She thanked the Elks Bingo and Riders for their donations. She thanked the conservation agent for the presentation. She noted the Harvest Festival. She said the Farmers Market is ongoing; the last Farmers Market is on October 27 and that is the great pumpkin weigh in and other activities. She thanked the town administrator for trying to get information from the state. She thanked people in Franklin for their help. ► Councilor Jones noted there may be some confusion over the ballots for the Tri-County election and Town election and that the Town Clerk said during her presentation earlier in the meeting that the envelopes would be stamped either red or green. He wanted to know if there could be a color code on the ballot. ► Councilor Pellegri stated that the ballot is not anything that you can touch. ► Councilor Jones noted Habitat for Humanities and getting that going. He thanked the Elks. ► Councilor Dellorco thanked the Elks for all their hard work. He discussed how Jen Knight of the SAFE Coalition was a great choice for that role. He gave a shout-out to whoever does the

food for the schools. He gave a shout-out to the first responders for their help in an accident of a family member. ► Chair Mercer said he wanted to reiterate what all the councilors have said. He thanked the Elks. He thanked the department heads and administrative team for their help in achieving the list of goals and for their compassion shown in the migrant situation, especially Cathy Liberty in the Board of Health. ► Mr. Hellen spoke to Town Clerk Nancy Danello on the phone. Ms. Danello said she cannot change the color of the envelopes as they come from the state, and the ballots will clearly state Tri-County and the Town of Franklin.

EXECUTIVE SESSION: None.

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

Meeting adjourned at 9:16 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Judith Lizardi
Recording Secretary